Towards a Theory of a Diasporic Epistemology:
How Filipino Canadian Young Men Make Sense of Educational Success and Failure

by

Tawnee Collymore

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts
Graduate Department of Sociology and Equity Studies in Education
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto

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Abstract

This thesis forwards the concept of “diasporic epistemology” in order to better understand how Filipino Canadian young males make sense of their educational success and failure. Diasporic epistemology means a dual frame of reference created by the intersection of both structural and cultural conditions specific to a particular diaspora. To investigate this concept, I examined the interview transcripts of six Filipino Canadian young men using the constructivist approach to grounded theory. My research reveals that school structure and Filipino consciousness play a significant role in educational success and failure. Situating my thesis within the academic fields of epistemology, intersectionality, and student achievement, I contend that understanding the diasporic epistemology of racialized minority and immigrant students challenges certain truism in educational research, such as current belief that family’s socio-economic status and parental education are predictors of students’ academic success. The implications for education are greater teacher-student-home relationships and alternative schooling methods.
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# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Abstract</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Acknowledgements</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Table of Contents</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Appendices</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 1: Introduction</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Towards a theory of Diasporic Epistemology</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance and Implications</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Context of the Philippines as a Sending Country</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Context of Canada as a Receiving Country</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher Role</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview of Thesis Chapters</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 2: Literature Review</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epistemology</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intersectionality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Achievement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filipino Canadians</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 3: Methodology</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constructivist Grounded Theory</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethics Protocol</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Validity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Procedure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Selection and Profiles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Good enough” Research Methods in the Coding Process</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lessons Learned Conducting “Good Enough” Research</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 4: “I’m kinda just like an open space”: Perception of Self and Diasporic Epistemology</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Dual Frame of Reference</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence and Self</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence and Family</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time as Casual</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 5: “We’re close but we’re like an impersonal close” - 86
Family and Diasporic Epistemology
   Impersonal Care
   Unconditional Love
   An Indirect Communication System

Chapter 6: “I go to school, I don’t go to class” - 100
Education as “Optional” and Diasporic Epistemology
   Education
   School Culture
   Teacher Role
   Cultural Capital
   Failure

Chapter 7: Conclusion 121

References 129

List of Tables

Table 1. Philippine-born Immigration Population in Canada, 2006
Table 2. Examples of Degraded Professional Status among Filipinos in Toronto
Table 3. Participant Profiles

List of Figures

Figure 1. Visual Model of a Diasporic Epistemology
Figure 2. Immigration Categories of Philippine-born Immigrants to Canada, 1980-2001

List of Appendices

Appendix A. Data Storage
Appendix B. Preliminary Codes
Appendix C. Participant Demographic Form
Appendix D. Interview Protocol
Appendix E. Participant Consent Form
Chapter 1: Introduction

In order to teach my students, I have learned as an educator that I first need to understand them. I have also learned to respect that they will only learn what they can learn within the constraints of their goals in school—which may be different from the ones I have made or desire for them.

Years ago, Marlon was a student in my Family Studies course at San Lorenzo high school, a self-directed secondary school in the Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB). He struggled to keep up with the course work, especially with the writing assignments. I knew that he enjoyed writing and wanted him to get the credit for the course, so I extended many deadlines for him to complete the assignments. The following year, Marlon was assigned to my homeroom Teacher Advisor (TA) group.

He enjoyed writing and performing spoken word, and every Wednesday he performed at our spoken word sessions. In these sessions, he rhymed about stress, the pressure he felt in school, and the constraints of time that haunted him. As his Teacher Advisor, I met with him biweekly to discuss his course progress, his deadlines, long term and short term goals. Each time, he told me that school was important and that he knew the deadlines. But, there was hesitation about “when” he was going to get the work done. My concern was that he did not really know what he was doing with his education and he was already halfway through his “victory lap”. Although the Ontario school system only has four mandatory years of high school, students can choose to return for a fifth year (the “victory lap”) if they need more time to finish courses, upgrade courses, or take prerequisite courses that they had missed in prior years. Staying to complete a fifth year is generally discouraged since required and elective courses are evenly distributed across four years of high school. At the time, Marlon saw no urgency in finishing in accordance with school deadlines, and I could not help him move any faster or give him the purpose that he seemed to lack. He confided to me that his father had been injured and stayed at home, which meant that Marlon had to help at home. This is when I realized there was a lot more going on with Marlon than I was aware of.

After encountering other Filipino male students with the same detached attitude towards school, I became more interested in exploring how these young men saw the
purpose of education. I felt like there was a gap between me and them, because their seemingly detached attitude was something I could not understand. It was the one piece of their mentality that I could not comprehend. This gap represented the difference between my frame of mind and that of my students, particularly my Filipino Canadian young men who seemed to have a different agenda, desire, and interest in attending school. I could not fill the gap nor fully comprehend its significance since I was not born and raised as a Filipino Canadian young man. I did not have their experiences, and I could not see or hear what they saw and were told. My immediate assumptions then, which undergird this problem, were that “good students” do not experience the same “complications” as these young men, and that I did not consider these young men “good students” because their educational success was so strongly affected by factors associated with their home and family. These factors left them falling behind in their courses, unmotivated in school, and subsequently less likely to pursue higher education. Therefore, understanding how exactly these young Filipino men made sense of their education became the cornerstone of my research study.

My concern about the educational success and failure of young Filipino Canadian men is supported by a small nascent body of scholarly literature examining their situation. For instance, Pratt (2012) finds that Filipino Canadian young men have lower rates of high school than completion in comparison to their female counterparts. For instance, in Toronto 11 % of Filipino males who immigrated between the ages of 0-11, 25 % between the ages of 12-16, and 19 % between the ages of 17-24, do not have high school certificates compared to Filipino females at 7 %, 15 % and 6 % respectively. Pratt (2012) also finds that Filipino Canadian men have lower rates of university degree completion than their female counterparts. In terms of higher education, the difference between genders is staggering. For Toronto’s Filipino males that immigrated between ages 0-11, 34 % had a university degree, for ages 12-16, 17 %, and 31 % for ages 17-24. In comparison, Filipinas had significantly higher percentages with 46 %, 26 % and 47 % respectively. Thus, as Pratt’s (2012) report shows, the number of Filipino Canadian male students pursuing higher education or postsecondary schooling altogether is low, in combination with an enormous gender discrepancy between the number of Filipino Canadians and Filipina Canadians in school. Furthermore, in comparison to Filipino
Canadians, a Statistics Canada (2001) report shows that 21% of Black males attained a high school diploma, in comparison to that of 18% for Filipino males, and 21% of Latin Americans between the ages of 24-35. At the same time, only 20% of Black males, 18% of Filipino males, and 27% of Latin American males had a university degree. Thus, Filipino Canadian males are not the only visible minority male populations in Canada with low rates of academic achievement. This calls for a closer look at the literature about the productivity and engagement of these students in Toronto schools. Some theorists argue that it is social circumstances affecting the academic achievement and student success of immigrant children. Others blame the school system itself for impeding on the advancement and engagement of these students. A few studies suggest that imposed racial categories or lack of ethnic accuracy force immigrant youth, like Filipino male students to either conform altogether or disassociate themselves entirely from the academic process. This study serves as an entry point into the everlasting ramifications and consequences of migration for immigrant youth, particularly young Filipino-Canadian males. A research inquiry on Filipino Canadians can help educators, researchers, and parents determine and address the source of the gap between students and teachers. The research findings from this study indicate that it is a complex combination of factors colliding with one’s affect which is the ultimate predictor of student educational outcomes. This includes being pushed out of school and academically under-achieving in schools.

The central research questions guiding my research are: How do young Filipino-Canadian men make sense of educational success and failure? What criteria do they use to define and measure success and failure? What are the effects of their sense-making of educational success and failure in regards to how they view themselves, their decisions, and actions? To investigate these questions, I pursued a qualitative research study based on constructivist grounded theory. More specifically, I interviewed six Filipino Canadian men aged 19-27, who were all born in the Philippines but immigrated to Canada between the ages of 1-13. All six participants graduated from the Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB). Three of them attended San Lorenzo high school (pseudonym), a self-directed learning institution where I used to teach; and the other three attended St. Beatrice high school (pseudonym), a “regular” schooling institution in the school board.
In order to understand how these young men internally make sense of their educational experiences in Canada, consideration must be given to a myriad of factors including family history and composition, their socio-economic class, and the political and economic contexts of the Philippines and Canada. According to Li (2001) “compared to European immigrants, visible minority immigrants [in Canada] have to undergo a more tempestuous acculturative process because they are at risk of many potential stressors, such as racial stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination” (p.479). Moreover, Lee (2009) describes how particularly, Asian persons are often considered “model minorities” because of their strong family values and dedication to their work, yet discrepancies between each Asian community remains unnoticed. Filipino Canadian students fit the model minority stereotype in the sense that they do often come from families consisting of both parents, strong family values, and a demeanor of complacency in their work ethic. However, in contrast to the model minority stereotype, Filipino Canadian youth are not faring as well as their Asian counterparts academically. In addition, as Filipino pesos is worth much less in Canadian dollars, immigrant families often find themselves in a lower socio-economic bracket compared to other Asian populations in Canada. This model minority stereotype affects the way Filipino Canadian students are treated and viewed in schools as educators and administrators believe in the model minority stereotype and expect their Filipino Canadian students to follow suit: good families, hard working, and excellent academic ability. However, this is not the case. Consideration of the external factors that differ between Asian communities reveals the difficulty in assessing the educational success and failure of Filipino Canadian students in comparison who have not had experiences alike. This research project does not attempt to generate a completely new theory on the phenomena of the academic under-achievement of Filipino Canadian male youth. Rather, it looks to extend Dillard’s (2000) notion of epistemology, which focuses on race, gender, and the experiences of Black women to that of Filipino Canadian young men. In agreement with Dillard’s (2000) work, my findings suggest that Filipino Canadian young men seem to have their own epistemology which appears to be somewhat consistent between individuals constructed upon their experiences as Filipino male diaspora.
Key Terms

Before I present the findings for this research inquiry, I believe it necessary to forefront the meanings of terms such as diaspora, epistemology, intersectionality, young men, educational success, and educational failure. According to Beine et al. (2011) the term Diaspora (in ancient Greek, “a scattering or sowing of seeds”) refers to dispersion of any people or ethnic population, voluntarily or by force, from their traditional homelands and the ensuing developments in their culture in the destination, mostly as a minority. In the economic sense, this Diaspora refers to migrants who gather in relatively significant numbers in a particular destination, country or region (p.31).

My thesis focuses on the Filipino diaspora in Canada, specifically in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). While my research will reveal that young Filipino Canadian males make sense of their educational success and failure through a rather complex process, their starting point is their recognition of being diaspora and thus having two places of reference: the Philippines and Canada.

The second term of most significance in this study is epistemology. For the purposes of this thesis paper, epistemology shall be understood as “knowledge construction…[obtained]…from external authorities” since time of birth, also known as “formula following” (Pizzolato et al., 2008, p. 304). Dillard (2000) also describes one’s worldview or epistemology as the “way in which people make sense of life and the universe” (p.32). In reference to participants interviewed, after locating the self between two continents, participants’ knowledge construction appeared largely reliant upon those around them - their family. At certain moments in their responses, they also seemed to be internally in conflict with their worldview and new experiences. Pizzolato et al. (2008) denotes this as, “crossroad moments,” which is the “recognition of a need to internally define values and beliefs as part of the knowledge construction process” (p.304). This would explain the turmoil in participants’ responses as Pizzolato et al. (2008) writes that formula following is abandoned in those moments. Thus, family and the construction of epistemology for these young men became the second largest informant in their process of sense-making. By young men, I mean Filipino Canadian males. These are young males that were born in the Philippines and then immigrated to Canada (between the ages of 1
and 13). If they were born in Canada, I would say they were Canadian Filipino. In making this distinction, the country of birth is the country named first, followed by the country of ethnic origin after. This distinction was made by participants who felt that their birth country (first place of citizenship) should go before their second country of citizenship.

Anderson and Collins (1992) report that “traditionally social science has defined emotional engagement as an impediment to objectivity” (Andersen & Collins, 1992, p. 4). However, I firmly believe that firsthand accounts of first generation Filipino Canadian young men is the best way to access and illustrate the raw reality of their educational experiences. In looking at the experience of these males students objectively, there is not one single factor that can explain or justify the way things are or their circumstances. Thus, as this inquiry considers the schooling experiences of these young, racialized, male students, I also utilize the scholarly work on intersectionality by McCall (2005) who defines intersectionality as a methodology of looking at the connections “among multiple dimensions and modalities of social relationships and subject formations” (p. 1771). Through these firsthand accounts participants revealed that they use their knowledge of self and family to define their ideas of success and failure. By educational success, I mean the process involved in becoming a highly trained professional, a process requiring good work ethic and education (Macleod 2009). By educational failure, I am referring to the inability to achieve this standard. In contrast to these definitions, my participants defined educational success as what you want, or as what you make it to be. They also felt that failure at something was only failure if you tried something with effort and did not succeed at it. If you didn’t put in the effort, it couldn’t be considered failure. These definitions, suggested by Filipino Canadian men are significant for researchers and educators because they reveal that students have a different interpretation of school terminology and culture. These different meanings trouble the current school teachings and the order of structure expected in Canadian schools. They signify the change that is occurring in Canadian schools. Given the definitions of these terms, I turn to an in-depth discussion of my research process and final theory.
Using a constructivist approach to grounded theory to analyze the narratives of six young Filipino Canadian men, I forward the concept of “diasporic epistemology,” a grounded theory in response to my central research question. My theory is that participants make sense of their educational success and failure by filtration of their experiences through a diasporic epistemology. Based on the data collected, I define a diasporic epistemology as a dual frame of reference which affords immigrant subjects some individuality, created by the intersection of both structural and cultural conditions specific to a particular diaspora. By individuality, I mean to account for individual experiences of immigration which will not occur or be exactly the same for everyone. Structural factors include: migration or displacement from one country to another (can be voluntary or involuntary), the physical geography which creates a dual frame of reference, and school structure. Cultural factors include specific cultural signifiers such as language, or tradition continued in the new country of residence, and family dynamic. In terms of culture, I rely on William’s (1965) definition of culture as a “particular way of life which expresses certain meanings and values; all the characteristic activities and interests of a people” (in Hebdige, 1979, p. 433). For individuals of Diaspora, it is the very internalization of those structural and cultural conditions which materialize in their daily life experiences and decisions. It is an epistemology at the very core of self existence in which experiences, thoughts, and decisions of young Filipino Canadian males are first filtered before any action is taken. And by action, I am including cognitive processing and understanding, language used, and consequent decisions made.

**Visual Model of a Diasporic Epistemology**

Through participant responses I have identified three major themes: Perception of self as located between two countries, open-parenting, and education as optional, or simply: self, family, and schooling. Based on the data analysis chapters which outline three themes, I have deduced a visual representation of the way in which these young men perceive their daily lived experiences (See figure 1).
The visual representation consists of a series of three concentric circles. The first, innermost circle represents self. The circle of ‘self’ represents the first theme, “perception of self” and is based solely on knowledge systems originating primarily from the moment of conception, and location of the self in terms of physical geography. Not only is this the point in one’s life in which individual epistemology including identity, ideology, and cultural tradition are initially constructed, but for Diaspora individuals, it is also the place in which two frames of reference are established between two countries. The structural factor in this ring is physical geography which is what creates the dual frame of reference for participants. The cultural factors in this ring are notions of independence and time held by young Filipino Canadian young men.

In succession of this ring, is the ring of ‘family.’ I have made this the second ring in the model, as their statements imply this almost as their first priority it is the closest entity to their location of ‘self.’ Family in this ring represents the theme of “open-parenting” as participants described their family dynamic primarily around this concept. In this ring, family influences the shape, mould, and expansion of the first ring of the ‘self.’ Metaphorically speaking, there’s a permeable membrane between the rings of self and family as dependency is mutual between these themes. To clarify, by dependency, I allude to the fact that the self is informed by family, and likewise that family is affected by the self- as in the role that participants choose to accept. Families provide support, encouragement and a scaffold of behavior and morale. In support of this notion, Dillard (2006) describes how individuals often rely on the knowledge they derive from authority figures or people that they uphold as prominent figures in their lives. For these young men that look to their parents as their role models, their knowledge base, and their foundation, this becomes the way in which they begin to build upon the ‘self,’ the way in which they begin to understand who they are and what they believe in. Participants identified as Filipino first before identifying as Canadian, not only because it was their
country of birth, but also because of continued cultural signifiers such as language, food, tradition, and value of family. Structural signifiers such as constant cognitive comparison, awareness of distinctions between the Philippines and here in Canada, and the understanding of self through political, historical, and social contexts, are all entities which inform the Filipino epistemology. Therefore, for these young men, I have discovered that priorities are ranked in accordance with their epistemology. In this hierarchy, maintaining an identity of ‘self’ as Filipino is their first priority, their second priority (which informs the first) is family and it has to remain as second priority to account for individual agency. Last priority, are other matters which may be deemed important or not based on the expectations upheld by self and family.

According to my theory of hierarchical rank, the last ring in the model represents the circle of schooling. I admit this term is very broad. I use the term schooling to represent school and education, ideas about the future, success and happiness. Based on participant responses, a Diasporic epistemology reveals that these aspects of life such as school, well-being, and success, are considered less urgent priorities for the young Filipino-Canadian men interviewed. While seemingly important or essential concepts in mainstream society in terms of priority, these various concerns are considered less trivial for these young men and have different meaning for each of them as a result of their individual circumstances.

I believe that concentric circles are an ideal representation of the process through which participants view the world around them as all of their experiences seem to be filtered first through ‘self’, then family, then ‘schooling.’ Of course, this means that information or sensory input can travel inwards towards the ring of ‘self’ and also from ‘self’ to ‘schooling’, particularly as the young men will draw on their entire knowledge base during Pizzolato et al.’s (2008) crossroad moments, when attempting to compare or weigh new knowledge against stored knowledge. According to this visual model of the sense-making process for Filipino Canadian males, it is clear that in the long-term this criteria causes them to rearrange priorities and at times avoid decisions while simultaneously enabling them to accept their choices and be comfortable with who they are. In support of this theory, (Kutcher, 2011) writes that the adolescent years comprise a period of proliferation, pruning, and myelination for the brain- essentially when
information is retained or discarded. This means that some information, while meant to be a learning curb may actually be replaced or trumped by certain values central to both self and family dynamic. A diasporic epistemology has a significant impact on the educational success and failure of these young men because it influences the way in which they make sense of their life decisions and experiences. It also determines the order of priority for the decisions of these young men, which differs from the order that is expected in Canadian schools and society. In my experience, this theory explains the gap that I began to feel between myself and Marlon, as my expectations for Marlon conflicted with what he and his family wanted for himself.

**Significance and Implications**

Research findings that provide evidence of a diasporic epistemology will affect three areas in educational research: epistemology, intersectionality, and current theories of student academic achievement.

Dillard (2000) argues that her concept of an endarkened feminist epistemology is a contribution to educational research paradigms (particularly as they are white male-centered). In extension of her work, my proposal of a diasporic epistemology would enable multiple research paradigms and also illustrate the importance of Collin’s notion of intersectionality (race, gender, and class) in education, as my findings reveal that epistemology is created through a combination of structural and cultural factors. Scholars in education will have to consistently acknowledge and understand the Diasporic epistemology of the community that they are researching and think about their research findings (especially those that are qualitative) in dual terms - meaning from their own epistemologies and those of their participants, especially in analyzing their data collection. In my experience, generally in Canadian schools, discussion of student culture, identification, and ethnicity are often brushed aside or dismissed in discussions of student progress. Student achievement is frequently blamed on structural factors alone – school programs, student socio-economic status, or student-teacher relationship (Dei et al., 1995). A theory of a diasporic epistemology brings together the work of primarily three important scholars: Dillard, Willis, and Valenzuela. This theory builds upon their findings by adding the Diasporic component to their definitions but looks specifically at its application to the schooling experiences of Filipino Canadians. Current theories of
student achievement argue that socio-economic class and parental education are the strongest predictors of students’ academic success (Willis, 1977). However, a diasporic epistemology does not place blame solely on these two factors or one’s culture. Rather, it reveals the value system of each individual student. In addition, qualitative description of the experiences and perceptions of these young men indicates that more needs to be done as a society and for schools as an institution to accommodate these families, be it through programs, access to resources/jobs, or even emotional support via improved development of parent-teacher relations. These findings can also be extended to males from other ethnoracial groups who may have their own Diasporic epistemologies influencing their educational success and failure.

This research also contributes to current boys’ education theories as the Diasporic aspect highlights current notions of masculinity in proving that young men in Canada are having a hard time identifying with a role that is functional for them at both home and school. A Diasporic epistemology reveals the effectiveness of anti-racism education and instructional pedagogy in schools which can better accommodate individual needs of students, as opposed to a ‘one size fits all’ model of teaching. Participant responses indicate that there is a need for structural change in schools and increased support from teachers in order to ensure that school structures address racial and minority concerns (Dei, 2011). The concept of race in school needs to be retheorized as an ongoing social process, with its negative meanings and conceptualizations disassociated in efforts to disrupt pre-existing dichotomies such as, “us” and “them” (Dei, 1996) and distinctions between students made on the basis of language alone. As clearly made evident through the narratives of these young men, integration into a foreign education system is difficult as a result of the complex intersectionality of language, gender, and socio-cultural meanings which dominate student epistemologies. Participants reveal a gap between teachers and particular students in terms of what educational success and failure means. In agreement with Gresson (2008) “as demographic data makes clear, the gap is everyone’s concern…our nation’s economic strength and social cohesion depend on all children being well educated” (p. 51)
The Context of the Philippines as a Sending Country

Since the early 1970’s, in government initiatives to ease an increasing unemployment rate via overseas employment opportunities, the Philippines has become the world’s most potent source of exported labour. Cuenca (1998) denotes that

the impetus for emigration…was…a complex web of interrelated factors: the economic situation of the Philippines, facets of sociological and cultural dynamism and other actors (government policies advocating labour export, recruitment mechanisms, and networks) that fuelled a ‘migration mentality (p. 24).

Shortly after World War II, America enlisted several military personnel and students, while both Canada and Australia sought medical assistance and oil-rich countries such as Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Kuwait searched for OCWs and engineers as well as crewmen for their Intercontinental ships (Cuenca, 1998). Not soon after, oil abundant countries in the Middle East sought cheap labour from other countries, prompting the Philippine government to enact the “manpower exchange program” which was aimed” to create the development, promotion, and regulation of overseas employment” (Parreñas, 2001, p. 51). This inevitably resulted in a swell of Filipino labour migration in the 1990s, with a “gradual shift of employment destinations” in very gendered ways. Whereas men went to the Middle East as engineers and manual labourers, women sought domestic and nursing jobs in Asia, Europe, and North America. Furthermore, as positions began to fill and poorer countries such as the Philippines began to feel the pinch from “labor oversupply and underemployed and unemployed citizens” (Cuenca, 1998, p. 24), citizens were faced with both socio-economic and cultural reasons (push and pull factors) for seeking migration opportunity.

Overseas employment opportunities allowed for certain individuals in specific fields of work. In looking at the particular job avenues solicited, Pratt (2004) found that “between 1990 and 1994, almost 42 per cent of Filipinos who became landed immigrants entered Canada through what is now called the Live-in Caregiver Program (LCP)” (p.81). The program enables the temporary residence of certified individuals to provide care for minors, senior members of the community and persons with severe disability. Following the duration of 24 months, these individuals may then apply for permanent resident status, and subsequent Canadian citizenship thereafter (Palmer 2010). However, not all
individuals that make it to Canada are immediately classified as part of the LCP. There are also foreign domestic workers that are defined by Spitzer and Torres (2008) as contract workers who pass into Canada as live in caregivers who must make an application to the LCP. If their application succeeds they too can obtain a work permit. Parreñas (2001) has observed that “the contemporary outmigration of Filipinas and their entrance into domestic work is a product of globalization” and declares the Philippines as an “export-based economy in globalization” (p.59). Of course this political designation of the Philippines was not created overnight, historical and social factors played a tremendous role in the spawn and maintenance of Filipino labour migration. However, with the promise of overseas opportunity, especially in more established and lucrative countries, immigration was considered a more viable option with the potential of many long term benefits to consider.

Outside of the LCP in Canada, little is heard or mentioned of the Filipino Diaspora through public announcement. Moreover, media attention given to Filipino Canadians usually centers upon work circumstances or living conditions in regards to Filipina domestic workers in Toronto homes tending to the children of middle and upper class families. Yet, discussion of family dynamic for these domestic care-givers is avoided and rendered obsolete. Furthermore, as 59% of immigrants from the Philippines between 1985 and 2005 were women (Kelly et al., 2009) rendering Filipino genders in disproportionate numbers across Canada, young Filipino Canadian males are left to fend for themselves in the absence of male parental figures. After looking at Pratt’s (2012) findings of Filipino Canadian males and females that pursued higher education, it is clear that age of immigration and gender are factors impacting the academic achievement of these young men. As an educator in Toronto, my concern here are the ramifications and effects of the gender discrepancy, family integration and settlement within this Diasporic community on first-generation Filipino Canadian males, particularly, the academic success of these males in Toronto schools. Without successful involved male role models, my belief is that young Filipino Canadian males do not have any male figures with whom they can associate with or turn to in times of educational assistance and guidance in the Canadian school system.

**The Context of Canada as a Receiving Country**
The Filipino Canadian population is an ideal diaspora community to study in Toronto as they have proven to be one of the largest, most recent immigrant populations to arrive. Statistics Canada shows that from the 2006 census, out of 303,195 immigrants born in the Philippines, in comparison to Montreal and Vancouver, Toronto was the Canadian city of choice with the largest Filipino population of 130,315 (Kelly et al., 2009, p. 8) see Table 1. Although it must be noted that most Filipinos appear to immigrate for the sole purpose of both family reunification or pursuit of work through the Live-In Caregiver Program (LCP), see Figure 2.

*Table 1. Philippine-born Immigration Population in Canada, 2006*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period of Immigration</th>
<th>2006 Population</th>
<th>% of 2006 Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-1991</td>
<td>107,765</td>
<td>35.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996-2000</td>
<td>52,060</td>
<td>17.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-2006</td>
<td>77,880</td>
<td>25.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>303,195</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Kelly et al., 2006

*Figure 2. Immigration Categories of Philippine-born Immigrants to Canada, 1980-2001*

Source: Kelly et al., 2006
Overall, the conditions in the Philippines have created an unfortunate gendered process of recruitment in Canada for Filipino citizens, particularly Filipina live-in caregivers resulting in the separation of families between mothers and their children, and eventual disorientation for Filipino youth when sponsored by their mothers to come to Canada at a later time (as made evident in by Pratt’s (2012) demarcation of school success according to gender and age of immigration.

In a Statistics Canada (2001) report on unemployment rates, Filipinos were dubbed as “model minorities: hardworking and economically productive” clearly distinguishing them from other visible minority groups. However, this title is problematic for Filipino Canadians as Lee (2009) warns that the model minority stereotype is simply a “hegemonic device” driven by the appeal of neoliberalism (p.10). Lee (2009) writes that “the stereotype first appeared in the middle of the Civil Rights era…[in an attempt to]…silence the charges of racial injustice being raised by African Americans” (p.10). Furthermore, she explains that “members of [that] minority are a testament to the success of the incorporative capacities of the US, politically, economically, and culturally” (p.7), or at the very least that’s how they are made to appear. Although Canada’s historical context is different from the United States, the model minority stereotype as a hegemonic device still applies. It reinforces the Canadian policies of multiculturalism by perpetuating a false notion of meritocracy amongst ethnic groups in Canada. It persuades them to feel as though they are fully integrated Canadian citizens with equal access and rights to opportunity in Canada.

However, the reality in Canada is that Filipinos face an entirely different context of discrimination, one that challenges and deprives them of settlement and claim to legitimate citizenship. Despite the fact that “in 2006, 41.3 % of all Filipino immigrants residing in Toronto aged 25 years and over had a university qualification at the bachelor’s level or above, compared with 28.8 % of all immigrant groups and 31.9 % for non-immigrant residents of Toronto,” (Kelly et al., 2009, p. 4) overall job opportunity and average annual income rates for Filipinos are still lower. In support of this (see Table 2), Kelly and his colleagues (2009) find that most Filipino immigrants are “deprofessionalized,” meaning that they are “lower-paid [and have] lower status [and] professionally recognized jobs,” which “leads to a common experience of a downward
mobility” (pp.10-11). Because of debts to pay for immigration to Canada and commitments to remit money to their families, many Filipino Canadians are forced into “survival jobs” that would enable them to earn money quickly (Kelly et al., 2009, p.19). In the meantime, children are left at home, sometimes all day with no parent at home, or in the care of grandparents or siblings. Furthermore, seeing their parents emotionally frustrated from deprofessionalization and family separation leaves youth believing that education will not guarantee them success or happiness.

Table 2. Examples of Degraded Professional Status among Filipinos in Toronto

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation in the Philippines</th>
<th>Occupation in Canada</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mechanical Engineer</td>
<td>Machine Operator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midwife</td>
<td>Health Care Aid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registered Physiotherapist</td>
<td>Physiotherapy Assistant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registered Nurse</td>
<td>Nursing Assistant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountant</td>
<td>Billing Clerk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dentist</td>
<td>Dental Office Administrator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality Engineer Training Supervisor</td>
<td>Quality Assurance Technician</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Professor and Dean</td>
<td>Supply Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Analyst/ Credit Analyst</td>
<td>Administrative Assistant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Kelly et al., (2009)

For the Filipino population in Canada, it becomes clear that adoption of the model minority label has bittersweet meaning. On the one hand, they are recognized as model minorities who are highly qualified professionals due to their employment experiences, academic training, and English proficiency. Yet, as shown by Kelly and his colleagues (2009) as they are cornered into specific professions in the job market which promise neither security, stability, or longevity in a career of choice, their qualifications are made to appear as though they do not ‘measure up’ to Canadian job requirements. This reinforces Lee’s (2009) argument that “the model minority stereotype [only] maintains the dominance of whites in the racial hierarchy by diverting attention away from racial inequalities and by setting standards for how minorities should behave” (p.7). Thus, the struggles in opportunity that many Filipino families endure upon immigration to Canada, barriers faced in obtaining work, proper wages, and ultimate acceptance as a legitimate
Canadian citizen are quite grave and ill-acknowledged by Canadian government and associate institutions.

Attention must be paid to the repercussions of this process. What about the youth in these families? My findings indicate that the traumatic labor experience, emotional stress, and financial hardships of parents are being internalized by their children and in turn, surfacing in the classroom via academic achievement in school. In turn, I have discovered that this discursive, structural, and affective dynamic is played out in the meaning making and sense making process which youth experience. I assume that immigrant youth experience feelings of displacement in transition between their native country and their new country of residence. In my study, I have found that this has can result in a shared outlook or mindset which entails a set of codes enacted (in this case) by young Filipino Canadian men. It is this familial struggle and learned communicative practices at home which prepares students for success or failure at school, and it is my intent to critically examine the results of these intersections in order to create and expand upon best pedagogical strategies to support the needs of these students.

**Researcher Role**

I have a very personal stake in my research. Although I am privileged to be a part of the Filipino community, I am not a Filipino Canadian. My parents are from the West Indies, and I was born in Canada. My significant other is a Filipino Canadian who came with his family to Toronto when he was eight years old. His mother initially worked as a live-in caregiver, and then moved to Toronto where she sponsored her own family eight years later. When I first met my eventual partner, I assumed that since we both have immigrant parents and are both considered visible minorities, he would have been pushed very hard to pursue higher education since it is an important way to “move up” in a mainstream white society (Roksa & Potter, 2011). However, after four years together, I realized that he viewed education quite differently. At one point, we travelled to visit his family still residing in Manila, Philippines. Going there I had this notion of an exotic place in my mind, but upon landing and after the first few days, I felt like I was back in the Caribbean in my parent’s homeland. I started to realize both during and especially after the trip (especially in working at high school populated with mostly Filipino- Canadian students) that education was viewed differently by my partner. For his family,
supporting the family and taking care of the household was more important than being away at school. School did not promise better job opportunities in the Philippines. Furthermore, this was the reality experienced by my partner both in the Philippines and in Canada.

In relation to my findings now of a Diasporic epistemology, I realize now that the dual frame of reference and structural and cultural factors for my partner (growing up) were very different from my own. In contrast to my partner's family, my parents did not come to Canada through a “program”. They applied, wrote tests, and had help being sponsored by family that was already established in Toronto. In addition, as their native country was colonized by the British, they still brought the British value system with them to Canada. Realizing that there was no way to get a good job in Canada coming from a third world country with an accent and brown skin, my parents vowed that they would do whatever it took to enforce education for their children in the hopes that we would fare better than they did. Thus, for my diasporic epistemology, it is different from that of my partner’s because we did not experience the same historical, political, and social circumstances. Unlike the West Indies, the Philippines was not colonized by the British, and thus stratification or racial hierarchies do not prevail, family and community is most important. As the West Indies is a mixed nation, with Asian, European, African, Indian, and Indigenous people, the meaning of community is hard to come by as different ethnic groups are in constant competition with one another. Thus, having an education evades part of the colour barrier as it creates something shared between two individuals that maintain difference. As I started teaching, I began to notice greater difficulty in convincing some of my immigrant students to pursue school. Furthermore, I discovered that male students did not think about and pursue education like their female counterparts, and as I became further amazed by conversations with parents about academic success and career goals, I started to realize that this was something I wanted to study.

My research interests might seem puzzling to some, considering I myself am not Filipino-Canadian, nor am I male. Like most scholars, I have a very personal investment in my research, in some ways it defines my purpose in life- both professionally and privately. The difference in worldview that I started to feel between my partner and I
went beyond cultural values, more of something historical and political in some ways, something that could not be changed, negotiated or compromised. On a personal level, planning a future with my partner, I started to realize that my children would identify as half Filipino, and would likely share his perspective. That question that comes up so frequently in Toronto when one is not white, “where are you from?” Often times the reply, “I’m Canadian” not being enough, being forced to explain a history of colonization one recites there family tree (this all being from experience). However, on a more personal note, I realized my own kids would be asked the same thing. They would be speaking Tagalog, spending summers in the Philippines, eating *sinigang* (soup), *lechon* (roasted pork), and *halo halo* (iced dessert). They would presumably then, have a mix between my epistemology and that of my partner. Professionally, at work I had students who couldn’t submit their homework or graduate on time because they were planning their debut, didn’t come to school because they were working part-time to help support their parents, never planned to leave home because their cousins are all married and living at home. Their stories showed me how strongly children are influenced and affected by what happens at home. In support of my experiences both professionally and personally, my findings show how a diasporic epistemology in some ways is transferable as it is created by the remnants of historical, political, and social circumstances which affect the decision-making processes of everyone in a shared household, including students. By transferable, I am referring to my teaching experiences with various immigrant youth in that they too may have their own diasporic epistemologies which affect academic ability and achievement. After much thought, and several sample questions, this is how I came to the central research question.

The implications from this study for myself as a practicing teacher are enormous, especially as I taught three of the participants. I realize now that I missed certain aspects of their lives, partially because I was consumed in the moment by my job and the number of students assigned to me in that environment, and because I didn’t know enough about them at that time. In an independent work environment it is hard to get to know students on a personal level. Teachers do not see their students every day, students do not have to work with or go to their assigned teacher for help, and the physical absence of a shared classroom omits the everyday nuances that would be noticed by a caring educator about
each student. If I knew then what I know now, I would have worked harder to collaborate more with the parents of these students to ensure that they obtained their credits on time (for Briar and Marlon, as Samuel was a different case). However, in retrospect, I did catch Marlon in time (although I did not know his situation fully) to get him into the alternative program that he needed in order to obtain his remaining high school credits. Whether his parents understood the measures taken to make sure that he received his Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) I am not entirely sure. I am positive that he explained the alternative program to them as he seems to have had enough support and confidence to pursue the university program that he is currently enrolled in now. In terms of Briar, I did not know that he found his homeroom teacher unhelpful at the time. Although, I was very proud of his ability in spoken word (like Marlon) and made sure to give him constant praise as he wowed me each time with the lines he created. I believe that my encouragement along with that of others, in addition to his success in spoken word competitions granted him the perseverance that he has developed in regards to pursuing his current university program. As for Samuel, I never actually talked to him about his family in school. I tended to focus more on answering the questions he posed about each assignment and his belief about certain social aspects of his life at the time. Based on my findings, I have learned that I need to learn more about my students in order to understand them. I need to ask them about home, family members, and how they spend their time when they’re not in school, in order to ensure both interest and success for them in my class.

For this research inquiry, I understand that there is no way to fully divide myself from the research as the data is first filtered through my worldview before it is transferred onto paper. I recognize and fully acknowledge that I am not an expert on the Filipino population in Toronto. I concede that my study does not speak for or represent the entire Filipino Canadian male population in Toronto, nor do I wish to create or perpetuate an essentialist notion of Filipino. The life experiences of people who immigrated through the LCP will be different from those that came to Canada as skilled workers, business, entrepreneurs, and students, not to mention that the year of immigration and age have significant influence on individual settlement and integration experiences. Therefore, the immigration experiences of Filipinos need to be viewed under an intersectional lens.
embodying various political, historical, and economical factors pertaining to each individual. In support of this sentiment, one of my participants, Samuel, has proven to be somewhat of an outlier in comparison to the other five young men. For most of my main ideas, this participant always appeared to be the exception. To account for his individual experience, I have provided an in-depth look at his responses at the end of my thesis, in the conclusion chapter where I describe Samuel as somewhat an outlier to my theory.

A constructivist approach in my work allowed me to explore participants’ thoughts and ideas as is, while acknowledging my own subjectivity as the researcher in the process of trying to understand how they make sense and meaning of their academic success and failure under particular circumstances. I have been very transparent with participants concerning the objective and purpose of the research and particularly within the methods I have chosen. Memo-writing has allowed me to keep my own bias and preconceptions in check and retract when I am imposing judgment or my position on my findings. Through constant written reflection of how and why I did things in a certain manner, I wholeheartedly present my thesis paper as just one interpretation of meaning-making for young Filipino-Canadian males. My intention is that this paper be considered a starting point, a snapshot of some knowledge about the Filipino community in Toronto, urging educators to ask themselves, “have I really done everything I can to help my students?” especially when trying to ensure students meet and exceed their academic potential. Keeping in mind the purpose of this thesis, to the best of my abilities in setting out to find an answer to my inquiry, I am confident that I have employed what I think are “good enough” research methods (Luttrell, 2000).

Overview of Thesis Chapters

This thesis has a total of seven chapters. This first chapter outlines the central research question and key subquestions, terminology, significance of data collection on the academic success of Filipino youth in Toronto, and my position in regards to this topic. The second chapter on Literature Review entails a detailed description of how this research inquiry contributes to three areas of educational research including: epistemology, intersectionality, and current theories on student achievement. This chapter is largely situated within the work of three scholars: Dillard, Willis, and Valenzuela. Dillard looks at epistemology and describes an endarkened epistemology maintained by
Black women, while Willis and Valenzuela look at how different youth groups develop oppositional cultures or forms of coping with school culture. In addition to their findings include findings from a few other prominent scholars in education with similar studies, and I discuss how their findings are useful in understanding the educational experiences of young Filipino Canadian males. In the third chapter on Methodology, I explain my reasoning in choosing to do a qualitative study and why I chose constructivist grounded theory. This chapter is also organized around arguments of validity for this project, and a central focus a few main lessons learned during my investigation. Following are three chapters comprising my findings of the participant interviews: perception of self, family-dynamic, and education as optional. There are three data chapters in total: one chapter for each theme. Through these themes, I discuss the structural and cultural factors which shape the ways in which participants conceptualize their educational success and failure. In the seventh and final chapter, I conclude with suggestions of implications and limitations of my theory of diasporic epistemology. Suggestions are also made for future direction and areas of need, with emphasis on the utility of anti-racism education and valuable insights to come from cross-cultural comparison studies.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Schooling in Toronto allows for little acceptance and tolerance of cultural attitudes and expectations (Valenzuela, 1999), and based on participant statements, it appears that Ontario pathways makes it very difficult for students to continue with their schooling as they left it in their home countries.

The first goal of this literature review is to investigate the key scholars in support of epistemology and explore the application of their definitions to understanding the sense-making and meaning-making process for young Filipino Canadian males. This is followed up with discussion of intersectionality as a theoretical framework, and its utility in helping to understand student academic performance and output.

The second goal of this literature review is to contribute to a larger body of growing literature on theories pertaining to student achievement, and schooling. It is here that I consider the impact of immigration and culture on immigrant youth as well as notions of masculinity and different types of learners in school. After I have presented the major theories on boys’ education, I look at the importance and influence of schooling on the academic achievement of these young males. I also explore the issue of racialization in institutions which I argue appear to perpetuate a social hierarchy in Canadian schools, and essentially “push” minority male students out. For each section of this chapter, I explain the ways in which each study has been either helpful (or not helpful) in explaining the conditions of these young men.

The third goal of this literature review is to illustrate how the experience of immigration to Canada needs to be scrutinized further as it extends beyond a physical move, and results in far graver family dynamic, emotional stress and cognitive comprehension for both parents and their children. In order to understand how these young men internally make sense of their educational experiences in Canada, I argue that consideration must be given to a myriad of factors including family composition, socio-economic class (both in Canada and in the Philippines), family history, and political and economic background of their country of origin. Considering the external factors which involuntarily affect these families and young men reveals the difficulty in assessing their
academic achievement in comparison to other individuals that have been saved their experiences. In addition, looking at Filipino Canadian integration as an ongoing process rather than something that has passed clearly demonstrates a gap in the current Canadian schooling system. In accordance with the findings of the scholars presented in this chapter, the gap represents the ill acknowledgement and support of the unique and distinct identities of these young men and the many gifts that they have to offer.

**Epistemology**

In recognition of individual values, one must consider the very source from which those values are derived, the synthesis of knowledge and its materialization to truth. This brings into question one’s frame of mind, or worldview, which again, according to Dillard (2000) is the “way in which people make sense of life and the universe” (p. 32). Dillard further explains that the largest aspect of our worldview is cultural, and thus our reality and perspective are a result of our environment, including the people around us, the community to which we belong, and most of all the people that we esteem to have authority over us. Dillard writes about her experiences through the lens of an endarkened feminist epistemology as the way in which

> reality is known when based in the historical roots of Black feminist thought, embodying a distinguishable difference in cultural standpoint, located in the intersection/overlap of the culturally constructed socializations of race, gender, and other identities, and the historical and contemporary contexts of oppressions and resistance for African American women (p. 3).

This idea of individual epistemologies makes sense and has exceptional applications when considering student actions and behaviours. Ogbu (1998) found similar results in ongoing research studies in the United States of America, where he interviewed several students and found that many racial minority groups shared the same worldview, or ‘cultural models’ as he referred to it, and as a result would interpret and process instructions differently, with instruction having different meaning per each group. He defined worldview as “ways that members of a minority group understand or interpret their world and guide their actions in that world” (p. 9). He suggested it was composed of one’s frame of reference, their beliefs about accomplishment, dependency on the
dominant society and its various institutions as well as individual perceptions of integration and assimilation.

The scholarly work of both Ogbu and Dillard has been very helpful in the creation of a definition for a diasporic epistemology. Furthermore, the notion of “crossroad moments” proposed by Pizzolato et al. (2008) is helpful when considering participant perspectives on the meaning of educational failure and success. In building upon their definitions, I have denoted a Diaspora aspect to one’s epistemology which results in two frames of reference, and thus split-epistemologies for those individuals. This debunks the current myth that highly educated parents will result in highly educated children (Lee, 2009). Although, the concept of a ‘Filipino epistemology’ has not been explored by any researchers thus far, Maggay (n.d.) has written of an indigenous Filipino consciousness. He describes an indigenous Filipino consciousness as a “split-level in the practice of Christianity…whereby Filipino religion remains primarily a transaction with the powers” of harmony with society and reality (p.368). In Maggay’s (n.d.) work, he argues that this indigenous knowledge for Filipinos causes them to view notions of sin and time (in contrast to Western ideology of both terms). Maggay explains that in committing a sin (sala) “one may have erred, but not sinned; one may have lost face, or caused others to lose theirs, which is maladroit and hopefully negotiable” (p.366). In terms of time, Maggay describes how Filipinos understand

\[
\text{time as process…[which] manifests a kind of present orientedness: events are confronted only when they present themselves. For our people, focus on the present allows spontaneous response, an openness to whatever contingencies arise (p.370).}
\]

Maggay’s (n.d.) definition of a Filipino indigenous concept supports the idea in this study that young Filipino Canadian men are using another source of knowledge to inform their current epistemology. In agreement with his understanding of sin for Filipinos, most of the participants in this study seemed to express the same view particularly when talking about failing school. For example, Marlon had talked about how his parents would have been upset if he had failed but they still would have supported him and “treated it as a learning experience.” Meaning, they would have acknowledged that he “erred” but negotiated the severity of the error made. Maggay’s
concept of time is also crucial in this study as participants demonstrated the same idea of time when being asked about their educational success and failure. When speaking about choosing to skip class, Junior remarked “I knew there was always consequences, I just didn’t care at the moment.” In this statement, Junior acknowledges a sense of time, but time as in the future, something that he does not need to worry about at present. This thesis builds on Maggay’s work as it explores other concepts besides sin and time which may be informed by the same idea as a “Filipino indigenous consciousness.” However, instead of studying the correlation between one’s position of religion and spiritual balance with surroundings, this thesis considers the impact of this consciousness on the academic achievement and importance of education for Filipino Canadian young men. Furthermore, in replacing ‘Filipino’ with Diasporic, my aim is to eventually extend my theory to the schooling experiences of other visible minority groups, which could explain why certain other boys are underachieving in school as well.

The work of Dillard (2000) and Maggay (n.d.) reveal that epistemology is also a result of the way in which one is affected by both their culture and subsequent notions of individual agency. Ogbu’s (1998) study on the academic performance of minority students argues that it is cultural context and beliefs instead of race which influence the academic performance of students. Ogbu explains that in certain ‘settler’ societies such as the United States and Canada, there is a dominant population consisting of individual’s intent on increasing their socioeconomic status, access to opportunity, and education. This dominant group then creates a norm of ideologies central to society and maintains that all members accept and utilize those same ideologies. However, Ogbu cautions that there are always two minority groups in this type of society: voluntary migrants (people who willingly chose to immigrate for better opportunities) and involuntary migrants (in which temporary and domestic workers are included, people forced to immigrate for better opportunities). In making sense of the voluntary/involuntary taxonomy, he writes that “it is a group's history- how and why a group became a minority and the role of the dominant group in society in their acquisition of minority status that determines its voluntary or involuntary status rather than its race and ethnicity” (p. 167). He reasons that it is the way in which minorities choose to understand and accept their current living context and adjust to new circumstances, in light of their histories, which determine their
outlook on education and success in school. In support of the idea of diasporic epistemologies – especially in regards to the Filipino diaspora in Canada where many have travelled to Canada seeking work as migrant workers, Ogbu’s classification of migrant/guest workers as involuntary minorities clarifies that they are merely passerby citizens interested in short term work opportunity with potential goals of permanent residence at some point. This would make Filipino Canadian families that have come to Canada via the LCP and domestic/migrant work opportunity involuntary minorities. Consequently, in accordance with the educational success of young Filipino Canadian men “they tend to learn only as much of their host's culture and language as necessary to achieve their temporary goals, which may not include school credentials” (Ogbu, 1998, p. 165). In addition, in further acknowledgement of a Diasporic epistemology maintained by these young men and accounting for differences in their life stories and individualism, Ogbu proposes four aspects of their worldview: the lens they use to situate themselves, their beliefs of “making it” based on individuals they look up to, their confidence in dominant society and its institutions, and their perspective on the effects of adopting dominant society views in place of their native cultural views. In agreement with the aims of this research inquiry, the findings of Ogbu render plausibility of diasporic epistemologies, illustrating that while not all individuals identifying as members of a particular minority group will respond in the exact same ways, certain members of those groups will share very similar perspectives which influence and predict their academic achievement. Furthermore, in consideration of the relationship between cultural contexts, beliefs, and race and the ultimate goal of this thesis, he writes that understanding how the system affects minority school performance calls for an examination of the overall white treatment of minorities. The latter includes the barriers faced by minorities qua minorities. These barriers are instrumental discrimination (e.g. in employment and wages), relational discrimination (such as social and residential segregation), and symbolic discrimination (e.g., denigration of the minority culture and language) (p. 158).

For young Filipino Canadian males, this is an accurate description of the very same factors which have affected their own families and ultimately their success in Canadian schools. Ogbu’s work highlights then, the importance of the intersection between one’s culture, worldview, and race as both informing and influencing their
individual epistemology. But as the impact of Diaspora in relation to Ogbu’s concept of worldview is absent and left to speculation, in this inquiry, its role and impact is heavily referenced in participant statements and reflection.

In another study on the educational success and failure of Chinese immigrants, in comparison to Ogbu’s work, Li (2001) explores the parental expectations of specifically Chinese students in Ottawa. Li also uses qualitative data collection of one-on-one interviews and in accordance with Ogbu’s findings agrees that cultural expectations and ideologies are responsible for the value of education that students will have. Chinese parents interviewed by Li explain that education in China is highly valued and from the time that they were children, education was always emphasized by their parents as well. In contrast, Filipino Canadian young men have parents that were educated in the Philippines where an emphasis on education is not as strong as it is in China. Moreover, as Filipino money is not worth much in the Canadian market, most Filipino Canadian parents are consumed by sending remittances and paying off the debt incurred to migrate to Canada. As long as they are not receiving any phone calls from the school, they believe that their child is doing well. They maintain that since education is so highly prized in their home country, it is not hard for their children to assimilate into the Canadian school system. In principal accordance with Ogbu, Li also references one Chinese mother who identified as feeling ‘othered’ in Toronto as non-white and non-native Canadian born. This mother admits to reminding her child that especially as a non-white citizen of Canada, they must make sure to obtain the highest education that they can “so as to earn the respect of others” and ultimately build their own advantage by having others aspire to their efforts. Like the others, Li’s study is also an indication that future studies of male Filipino Canadian youth should include more than just their perceptions of non-belonging and experiences of racism in the Canadian education context, but also the interference of their split identity between two countries.

In contrast to cultural arguments, other researchers contend that student achievement might be simply a result of different types of learners. According to Carter (2005), there are three types of learners: the non-compliant believers, cultural straddlers, and cultural mainstreamers. The non-compliant believers, which she identifies as mainly male students, are in school but they’re not really interested in learning, they tend to
resist authority and restrictions and constantly question what they are told. Whereas the cultural mainstreamers, try to fit in to the mainstream school community while still maintaining their work ethic and not fully understanding the purpose of their education. They continue to push along in acquiescence to their parent’s reinforcement that it is the right thing for them. Carter’s work did not support my discussions with young Filipino-Canadian males in the sense that agency alone did not seem to explain participant actions (ie. students choosing to listen to their parents or not). Instead, participants’ sense-making and meaning-making of their educational outcomes appeared to be the consequence and product of previously existing conditions outside of their control.

However, Carter’s work did inform my final theory as it prompted me to consider age and timing of immigration as a predictor of educational success when taking into account the fairly recent presence of the Filipino Diaspora in Canada. In contrast to other countries, such as the United States which has been residence to several generations of Filipino-Americans, at this point there’s no way of really telling whether my research findings apply only to first-generation Filipino-Canadians and/or if they would also reflect the perspectives and outlook of both second and third-generation Filipino Canadians.

Understanding student epistemology is essential in education as it dictates the way students form their self identity and decisions. In agreement, Dillard (2000) explains that

if we see identity…as a coalescence of mutually responsive (if sometimes conflicting) modes of conduct, habits of thought, and patterns of evaluation, we can recognize that it is constructed, even invented, sometimes with an abundance of inaccuracies, perpetuated by both the person claiming it and those attempting to read it. The problem is that identity, as constructed by most of us still rests primarily on biologically rooted ideas of race (p. 104).

Thus, epistemology which ultimately creates one’s identity and belief system is affected by many factors, one of which has already been highlighted by Dillard as that of race. For young Filipino Canadian males however, their gender and socio-economic status are also factors that must be considered in relation to the development of their individual epistemologies. This is possible with the utility of an intersectional lens.
Intersectionality

McCall (2005) defines intersectionality as a methodology of looking at the connections, “among multiple dimensions and modalities of social relationships and subject formations” (p. 1771). McCall’s work then is an ideal theoretical framework for this study given the complex interlaced fabric of factors that both directly affect and influence the educational and life outcomes of these individuals, in despite of human agency. In reflection of Filipino Diaspora experiences, when a country exports its female members as a means for financial gains, and families are subsequently separated for nine years versus nine hours of care outside the homes of predominantly white middle-upper class families, class and race issues are brought to the forefront (Pratt, 2010). In light of this, Andersen and Collins (2004) warn that “blacks and other colored minorities, must generally know two cultures to survive – the culture of middle class whites and their own culture” [and], “if we ignore the specifics of the situation of our own minority groups, in essence we both deny who we are and our own complexity” (p. 13). Thus, this has been the experience for Filipino Canadian males who endure this conflicting reality. In trying to integrate into the Canadian school system, these students are faced with having two frames of reference, and pressure in trying to “pass” in Canadian schools (trying to fit in good enough to ‘make it’).

As clearly made evident in the struggle to immigrate and the fact that most Filipino-Canadian citizens have University degrees yet make lower incomes on average further alludes to the weight of one’s class or socio-economic status. In getting here, these families may have been middle to upper class back home, but in competing for good jobs and legitimate citizenship here, they find themselves being deskilled and forced into a lower class bracket. Moreover, as Canada has a higher number of Filipina migrants, most reports reveal that children are often left in the Philippines with their father as sole parent for extended periods of time which has many consequences for the way in which children come to perceive the individual role and responsibilities of each parent in a family (Parreñas, 2005; Pratt, 2012).

In the meantime, while Canada appears to solicit an image of equality and opportunity “in the myth of a classless society, [where] ambition and intelligence alone
are responsible for success” (Andersen & Collins, 2004, p. 40) this image is far from the reality of conditions here. This image also results in the belief among the working class and the poor that there can be different opportunities in life for them, especially in seeing enough examples showing that they too can make it. And, it reinforces existent hierarchical class systems as well as middle/upper class ego while simultaneously perpetuating the idea that one’s position is a result of personal merit and self effort – as opposed to the result of unequal opportunity. In considering the role of race and ethnicity, particularly exercised at the school level, there is no chance for equal opportunity if everyone is not on an equal playing field. Andersen and Collins (2004) continue to explain that class is all-encompassing and most importantly in correlation to the goals of this study, class directly affects culture which in turn is reflected in language. As education has the ability to change one’s position and status in life, consideration awarded to the intersection of race, class, and gender in the epistemologies of these young men can provide valuable insights to the ways in which they have come to make sense of their educational success and failure.

In entertaining discussions of intersectionality, masculinity ideologies are also very much a part of the development of individual epistemologies. A major theory in regards to boys’ crises in education rests on arguments of certain masculinities enacted in schools. These masculinities are considered to be problematic as they neglect to make space for other forms of masculinity. McCready (2009) describes the overarching form of masculinity enacted in schools as a “cognitive framework of binary thinking that defines masculinity in terms of its difference from and dominance over multiple others” (p. 136). In response to this transparent form of masculinity, in agreement with many scholars as well as schools where I have worked, there does appear to be various coping behaviors and strategies which have been adopted by certain groups of young men.

One argument of male resistance- in opposition to this identification of hegemonic masculinity, is made by the suggestion that students adopt another realm of presentation, exhibiting ‘swag’ behaviours such as different styles of dress, speech, clothing, and gestures, defined as ‘cool pose’ or ‘black macho’ (James, 2004, p. 112). In this way, male students are able to resist institutional instruction, simultaneously maintaining an identity for themselves and distinction from other groups. If Sewell is
correct, students exhibit their own agency in finding a balance between home expectations and school expectations. However, this notion overlooks the interference and influence of home expectations and values on student behavior, also known as home-school dissonance. Kennedy et al. (2010) define home-school dissonance as the “difference between the values and operations existing in students’ home or out-of-school environment and those salient throughout their formal schooling experiences” (p. 411). This theory could partially account for why Filipino-Canadian males are not exactly jumping for opportunities in higher education as participants have clearly indicated that education in their homes did not grant their families greater opportunity. In further agreement with Kennedy et al. (2009), style of dress does not address student values or knowledge systems. This is precisely why in this study it became crucial to look beyond clothes and attitudes as mere defiance to a hegemonic masculinity, but instead as a way of students enacting their own masculinities. Particularly, values and attitudes that they consider to be masculine or ‘macho’ male values (Jones & Myhill, 2004) which my participants demonstrated as an outlet through which they could mask their own feelings.

One of the main scholars in support of this theory of masculinity is Willis (2003) who used the term “lads” to denote young males that resisted their social conditions. Willis interviewed 12 lads in a small town in England and found that the young men in his study developed a counter-culture to school-culture in various ways. Willis found that the young men preferred a distinct style of dress, openly expressed disagreements with teachers, and referred to most other young males in the class (who they deemed inexperienced and immature) as “ear‘oles”’. He found that the young men developed a counter-school culture as a result of a working class culture perpetuated by their parent’s socio-economic status and dismal attitudes towards education. Furthermore, he concluded that a common tendency of working class individuals was to believe that no job or future education will change their social class. The work of Willis is fundamental to the findings of this thesis because the young men interviewed appeared to share the same perspective as Willis’s lads’ in regards to the usefulness of education’s and school structure. However, although Willis refers to a shop floor culture or working class culture which agrees with participant belief that education is only necessary depending on the job you want, his work does not consider the diasporic aspect (a dual frame of reference) of many
immigrant and ethnoracial minorities nor the influence of race as a construct of identity altogether. In contrast to Willis’s lads’, Filipino Canadian young men are immigrant and racialized subjects, as they are unfairly grouped under the model minority stereotype and the broader category of ‘Asian’ with no acknowledgement of their individual differences in comparison to that of other ‘Asian’ groups (Lee, 2009). Through careful scrutiny of participant narratives, this thesis questions the role and presence of a hegemonic masculinity perpetuated in schools, which in accordance with the work of McCready, Sewell, Kennedy et al., and Willis, young Filipino-Canadian males did identify when describing their experiences in school. Moreover, the findings of these scholars reveal the importance of lending consideration to both structural and cultural factors when attempting to understand student epistemologies. However, consideration needs to be given to the diaspora experience of these Filipino Canadian young men in order to better understand their perspectives of schooling. In this study, I hope to determine which form of masculinity Filipino-Canadian male students choose to embody (if present at all) and whether their choice is a response to opposition, or culturally inherent and expected.

**Student Achievement: Current Theories**

Noguera (2008) has found that

> since the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) act and its requirement that schools and students be held accountable for achievement through annual standardized tests, a sense of urgency has developed over the need to improve the educational outcomes of under-performing students (p. 90).

But what happens when this is not viewed or understood as a ‘win’ for these students? In support of my theory, in this section of the literature review, I draw upon the research of other scholars with similar studies in order to examine the application and utility of my own theory in combination with their work. It is in this regard that I address other areas of study needed placing particular emphasis on the increasing lack of attention to the epistemologies of Diaspora youth. For each study, I conclude with recommendations of further inquiry into particular aspects of education in order to best foster and accommodate student needs in order to ensure optimal success and academic achievement in school.
Schooling

Another theory with respect to the academic achievement of male students is that members of immigrant populations are treated as racialized minorities and uncaring relationships with school staff; this essentially “pushes them out” of school. In one study conducted at a secondary school in Houston Texas, Valenzuela (1999) observes and interviews immigrant American and Mexican American students in an attempt to find a reason for their low academic achievement. She proposes that school ought to follow Noddings (1984) belief of caring in schools where “the caring teacher’s role is to initiate relation, with engrossment in the student’s welfare following from this search for connection” (p. 21). Based on her findings, Valenzuela (1999) concludes that schools employ subtractive schooling which enables the school to subtract resources from youth in two ways: First it ignores student definitions of education (rooted in their culture) as well as the idea of care suggested by Noddings (1984). Second, Valenzuela further explains that subtractive schooling, “encompasses subtractively assimilationist policies and practices that are designed to divest [Mexican] students of their culture and language” (p. 20).

Valenzuela’s (1999) theory is key to this study as many of the young men interviewed alluded to a school structure fostering “redundant” and “repetitive” work that some young men had either already completed in the Philippines or did not see the connection between the kind of work they were doing and the profession they were pursuing in school. In agreement with Valenzuela’s work, my participants did find that the school’s definition of education did not match their own definition of education as optional, not the only way. Furthermore, as they described how teachers only had relationships with certain students, and how some teachers did not really “care,” they reveal the truth in Valenzuela’s belief that “schools are structured around an aesthetic caring whose essence lies in an attention to things and ideas” (p. 22). Although Valenzuela does talk about the influence of different generations on the academic achievement of youth and their country of origin in terms of how long they had been in America, there is no mention of student experiences in their native country or their comparisons of ‘there’ versus ‘here’ (there new country of residence). In contrast to my study, Valenzuela looked at both males and females in her study and also included
parents, teachers, and administration as sources of information to inform her theory. In building on Valenzuela’s work, I have used her theory in trying to understand the way in which Filipino Canadian young men view their educational success and failure. I believe that Canadian schools “subtract” the strength and resources of Filipino Canadian young men by ignoring their dual frame of reference, and the social and cultural circumstances from home (their resources) which inform their sense-making.

Another crucial scholar with research work that informs the analysis of this study is that of Dei. In 1997, Dei, a renowned critical race theorist and advocate of anti-racist educational pedagogy conducted a study on the Black youth population in Toronto urging educators and policy makers to rethink the term ‘dropout’. Similarly to my study, Dei also used grounded theory as his research methodology and participant narratives to collect perspectives on the term ‘dropout’. His sample group consisted of youth that were considered ‘dropout’ high school students, students that were not considered ‘dropout’ high school students, parents, teachers, and members of administration. Keeping consistency with the theory of Diasporic epistemologies, upon analyzing the data, Dei also found that students made sense of dropping out based on “certain ideological positions.” In other words, they either believed students were forced out of school based on external influences, had various “individualized” or “meritocratic” paradigms in which the individual assumes sole responsibility for their life trajectories, or placed fault on the school, educators, and curriculum for student disengagement and disinterest in pursuing education. In relation to Filipino Canadian young men, these “ideological positions” tend to place blame on one individual as opposed to acknowledging and working with the ideological position in itself. Dei’s study is important to my work, as it illustrates the importance of understanding and working in collaboration with student worldviews, particularly when investigating ideals of success, school and failure.

However, Dei also identified one more element in student narratives as a factor in student disengagement and that was racism which is relevant to my study, but not specifically named by my participants. Racism is a factor in this thesis paper, as participants described a lot of rules, routines, and expectations which excluded them (whether they acknowledged it or not). In contrast, Dei’s participants blatantly reported often experiencing a sense of indifference and non-belonging in school which they would then
internalize, altering their ability to rise above and maintain interest in school as everyone around them assumed they would fail. This notion is also supported by Noguera (2008) who writes that Black male students are frequently discouraged and manipulated into minor roles by figures of authority that are supposed to be helping them.

In accordance with Dei’s thoughts about the impact of race, my inquiry also showed evidence of race as a factor affecting student achievement. This became evident when trying to access documents about the ethnic backgrounds of students enrolled in the Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB) as I was told that information that specific is not collected, rather, upon enrollment, students are asked to identify themselves based on language spoken at home and are then categorized according to what language they speak. The first document I obtained was entitled “Languages spoken at home: Field Descriptions” derived from Trillium in October 2010 languages listed include Filipino, Spanish, Portuguese, Ukrainian, Tamil, Chinese, Polish, Arabic, Assyrian, and Italian (TCDSB, 2010). Documents as such do not account for Black students from the Caribbean or second-generation Caribbean students that speak English, and this is just one example of the racial groups excluded from this categorization process of identifying ethnicities. In this list, Filipino is listed as a language, but many Filipinos understand this term to represent ethnicity, not language. The list is also inept of languages including Hindi, Urdu, and as English is not listed, it must be assumed as the common language.

This categorization of individuals based on such a futile cultural quality as language, affirms Hall’s (1989) concern that using ethnicity, “disavows the realities of racism…and enables white to be forgotten as an ethnicity” (p. 15). Here, it is assumed that white, or those presumed to speak English rather, is not an identity, however, in also categorizing ethnic groups in this way, ironically, white is not the only ethnic group excluded. In the Toronto Catholic District School Board, this practice impacts Filipino Canadian students because it only recognizes or counts Filipino Canadian students based on whether they speak English or Tagalog. The reality is that there are a lot of Filipino Canadian students that do not speak Tagalog and are therefore missing from the data (in terms of ethnic identity). This practice also ignores the gender dimensions as there is no way of knowing whether more Filipino Canadian males speak English or Tagalog than
Filipino Canadian females and vice versa, which could also have been very useful in my analysis. Dei (1996) defines race as “a socially constructed category which lacks any sound scientific validity,” which continues “to gain in social currency, because of its utility in distributing unequal power, privilege and social prestige” (p. 2). How are these students being accurately accounted for? I believe that the role of race at the institutional level then, is the acknowledgement and exposure of “race as a fundamental principle of social organization and identity formation” and ultimately, a construct which “reflects the negative tendencies of dissociation and exclusion”, while ethnicity “reflects the positive tendencies of identification and inclusion” (Banton, 1967, p. 8), however, in a more strategic attempt to silence race. Thus, by acknowledging people through language, and disavowing their origin - the individual entirely, it is a blunt omission of the existence of other communities and realities altogether. Moreover, at the institutional level, there is no possible way for everyone to be treated equally or work cooperatively if some are privileged and others are non-existent. This is just one example of Valenzuela’s suggested “assimilationist policies” whereby the student’s language and culture is approximated.

Now it must also be noted that it is impossible to entertain the notion of race in the absence of alluding to the manifestation and relations of power. Dei (1996) states that “we must understand the racial divide as, in fact, caused by differentials in power” and come to understand race as an “ideology, a process of signification and a system of categorization based on a hierarchy of groups” (p. 9). Furthermore, Li (1990) contends that both “race and ethnicity as consequences of unequal relationships, produced and maintained by differential power between a dominant and a subordinate group” (p. 5). Thus, we need to recognize dominant and subordinate groups in this circumstance, particularly as “the dominant group has the power to define socially what constitutes a subordinate group, using physical and social features” (Li, 1990, p. 6), in this case of Filipinos, language is seen as the defining social feature. In keeping track of racial identities by mere language titles, certain individuals are being excluded. Filipino is the title of ethnicity associated with people from the Philippines. The language is called Tagalog, or Visayan, or Ilonggo, or Ilocano, or the many other dialects that are spoken there. In accordance with Dei’s research, in not stating these languages as well,
individuals are forced together collectively through sameness. The benefit of this practice is that it ignores geography, so regardless of the country from which one initially came they can be counted as an English speaking individual. However, the disadvantage of this practice is that differences between dialects, and hence ideologies and meanings from each province (in the Philippines) are ignored. Why not simply ask people to identify their ethnic background, what is accomplished through the exclusion and avoidance of this information? This strategy, is yet another form of “minus one ethnicity’, so called… when members of the dominant group add up the number of ethnic groups in their country, [and] count all of the groups except their own” (Banton, 1967, p. 24). This is further proof of Filipinos as a racialized minority subject in relation to other students at school.

The recognition of ethnic groups and race via language spoken is a prime example of how racism is discreetly embedded and maintained within group relations. This form of racism “has more to do with the construction of distance between the self and other, between and us, and them… [ensuring]…a politics of resentment” (Dei, 1996, p. 10). In terms of my research, a “politics of resentment” was see when participants explained how they felt more comfortable speaking Tagalog in public places and made it a point to identify as Filipino first before saying they were Canadian. Race becomes a signifier of identity and difference, and becomes functional through “attempts to fix and naturalize the difference between belongingness and otherness” (Hall, 1989, p. 15). Registering new students in the TCDSB via language underlies and reinforces the, “assumption that racial groups are distinguished by appearance and ethnic groups by cultural characteristics: such as language…” (Banton, 1967, p. 25). Furthermore, these cultural characteristics, termed cultural differences for Dei (1996) “have become signifiers and/or markers of race, and the basis for racist practices and other forms of social discrimination” (p. 9). This form of discrimination then becomes and fosters, a “common sense” racism (Lopez, 1995, p. 193) supporting the silencing of race, racial practices and meanings which function as part of daily basis routines and social processes, in this case, exclusionary board practices. In addition, as stated by Banton (1967) “when for convenience, larger ethnic categories are created in this way, people may not be conscious of their inaccuracies” (p.2) and it also takes away any possibility or opportunity for minorities to
“define themselves differently from the way in which they are defined by others.” Thus, this also reinforces the cliché construct of race as merely an idea, rather than a much larger social exclusionary process.

In agreement, Li (1990) explains that “throughout the history of Canada, physical and cultural characteristics, whether real or presumed have been used to justify segregating and discriminating against ethnic groups...usually distinguished by socially selected cultural traits (p.3) as in this case of discriminatory categorization, language has been the socially selected cultural trait. The research of these scholars is helpful in understanding the conditions of young Filipino Canadian males as it highlights the silent exclusions of race which persist within the very same institutions where race is not supposed to matter. Their arguments aid in locating the Filipino male as a racialized subject that is different and “othered” in comparison to Canadian born youth, and explains why most of the participants in this study felt they were Filipino first before Canadian, and tried to maintain their language. However, entertaining conversations of race quickly leads to the tendency of finding a scapegoat, the attribution of blame to this sole factor. Instead, this inquiry proves that racialization in institutions is not the only factor influencing the academic success of young males and that a variety of structural and cultural factors must be considered as well. The work of Valenzuela and Dei is significant to this inquiry as they reveal that the schooling received is a predictor of educational success and failure. The schooling of these young males needs to change in a way that accommodates and respects their individual needs and ideologies.

**Filipino Canadians**

Previous studies in Canada reveal that family is the most important value for Filipino Canadians. Findings from Chen (1993) on 95 % of the Filipino population in Thunder Bay, Ontario suggest two different types of migration kinship relations: internal and external. Chen explains that once sponsored, internal kin provide immediate residence and financial aid which is maintained by external kin in the surrounding area. Out of the 95 % population interviewed by Chen, 82 % had been sponsored by family and her findings suggest repetition in the process itself of sponsoring external kin. This means that future generations will likely continue the same trend in providing assistance. Chen’s study provides evidence of the way in which Filipino culture maintains the value
of family as one of the primary and most innate obligations. However, Chen does not consider the impact of this value, or the implications of his findings on the academic performance of Filipino Canadian youth.

In another study with high school students in the United States, Wolf (1997) found that upon being asked about what it means to be Filipino, (similar to the young men in this study) the young men often referenced language, food, and family relationships. Wolf (1997) also describes on p. 465 the way in which, “a number of the students in the focus group referred to Filipino language and culture in a manner that may suggest a "nostalgic but unacquainted allegiance to an imagined past.” Thus, similar to the young men in Canada, these young men also reveal the way in which their knowledge systems derived from home are readily influenced by their circumstances. Furthermore, her findings demonstrate a unique trend where Filipino parents were seen to pressure children differently in that Filipinas (female daughters) are pushed more than Filipinos (male sons) to succeed academically. Her participants also demonstrated the same attitude as my participants, when asking for help as Wolf writes that

Filipino family ideology has taught the students we interviewed that all problems should be kept within the family. A child's problem that is revealed to an "outsider" be (s)he a friend, teacher, or, in the worst case, a counselor, would create gossip and bring shame (hiya) and embarrassment to the family because it insinuates that they have a problem (p.469).

Therefore, in accordance with the findings from my research, Wolf (1997) shows that there are definitely other factors at play in terms of the sense-making process for young Filipino Canadian males. The gender dimension of ideology in the household has severe implications for the knowledge systems of Filipino Canadian children, as clearly the insistence and importance of getting an education for Filipino Canadian young men is absent, this theory supports my research as two participants believed that there sisters were better or more capable in school than them. Furthermore, the description of a Filipino family ideology is a potential explanation for their avoidance of self-disclosure and asking for help when experiencing difficult. Wolf’s work shows that these other factors greatly impact the decisions and interest of Filipino Canadian young men in school and their ability to both short-term and long-term goal plan.
On the other hand, Hindin (2005) considers the schooling experiences of Filipino Canadian youth in her analysis, before looking at their academic achievement in Canada. Hindin (2005) reports that in general, dropout rates are higher for Filipino males than females with boys having a rate of 15.5% versus that of 8.6% for Filipinas (p. 303). By age 17, Hindin reports 45% of young men in the Philippines having dropped out of school. Her research shows that clearly something is affecting the academic achievement of young Filipino males. Her findings are contributory to the study because all of the participants in this study educated in the Philippines at one point, talked about having a really hard time in school, one so much as admitting he thinks that’s why he gave up. Acknowledgement of student’s past difficulties in school may tremendously help with their educational progress, and so Hindin’s work highlights the importance of factoring in the Diaspora aspect in the experiences of these young men, particularly in order to see the dual frame of reference that they have. The work of Chen, Wolf, and Hindin, shows that a diasporic epistemology is definitely affecting the educational success and failure of Filipino Canadian young men. Their scrutiny of family relationships, Filipino identity and their self location between two countries are factors that need to be considered by both teachers and schools.

**Conclusion**

In accordance with the goals outlined at the beginning of this chapter, this research inquiry seeks to extend currently existing theories of prominent scholars in the areas of epistemology, intersectionality, student achievement, schooling, and the Filipino diaspora community in Canada. The research findings of this inquiry fills in the gap identified by educators and researchers between students and schools by revealing that student academic ability is determined not by parental socio-economic status (as currently presumed) but by a combination of structural and cultural factors that are specific to each minority group. This study will make a tremendous difference in both professional and scholarly circles. The data from this study indicates that educators need to recognize and learn to work with the factors which most affect each student. This means abandoning a one-size-fits-all pedagogy and philosophy and adopting a student-centered approach that is cognizant and acquiescent to individual student needs. In terms of scholarly circles, this data obliterates the theory that parental socio-economic status is
the strongest predictor of student academic achievement. Scholars specializing in student achievement and schooling need to place more emphasis on the significance of student epistemologies and its impact on the educational success and failure of students. One of the theoretical applications of this notion is that the concept of epistemology adopted from Dillard’s (2000) “Black woman,” Willis’s (2003) “the lads,” and Valenzuela’s (1999) Mexican American students, can be applied to that of Filipino young men. Of course the limitations of this are that the experiences of both individuals will never be exactly the same and that there is no way of measuring any precise differences between the experiences of the two individuals. However, sometimes when trying to understand a phenomena or something that cannot be explained, looking at what works for one person can be useful in helping another person with the same phenomena. Thus, I posit that diasporic epistemologies are universal as many other diaspora students in Canada seem to be experiencing the same barrier between home and school. In applying this theory to that of other populations, I suspect that scholars will develop a more effective model of school structure and refine current pedagogical strategies most helpful in ensuring the success of these young men.
Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

This chapter provides an in-depth description of the deliberate research scaffold in support of this inquiry. In the first section, I explain how grounded theory as a research methodology can be a useful tool in unveiling a theory that has not yet been explored. Grounded theory allows for investigation into how and why a particular phenomenon is understood specifically through the words used and statements made by participants. Here I delineate further that for the purposes of understanding how and why young Filipino-Canadian males feel about their educational success and failure one-on-one in-depth interviews adopting a constructivist approach to this phenomenon was a key component in siphoning out their individual perspectives. During interviews, participants were able to describe their feelings, emotions, attitudes, and sometimes even contradictions. Given that ethnic minority groups with histories of oppression have a unique voice frequently inaudible to other racial groups, this opportunity allowed for their voice to be heard in support of larger efforts attempting to make society more equal (Broido & Manning, 2002).

In the following section, I outline the steps I took to ensure to the best of my ability that my findings were valid. I then outline the utility and ease of both purposeful sampling and snowball sampling, particularly as I already knew some of my participants and felt that these would be the best methods of recruitment. Coming from an occupation working in a school setting, I had direct access to individuals identifying as Filipino-Canadian male and eager to participate in the study, for which I am truly grateful. Purposeful sampling and snowball sampling made participant selection easier for me and random as each individual had their own background story and experience. This leads to my reasons behind participant selection and methods of recruitment employed where I defend my choice to deliberately work with a small group of individuals, and explain how working with familiar participants helped interviews to run smoothly as conversation came confidently and with ease and ensured direct access to participants at all times during the study, also helpful if I needed to follow up with any questions or
small concerns. Lastly, I conclude with an explanation of what I felt was “good enough” research and review several moments during both data collection and analysis in which I overcame the tensions presented in my work. I include a few limitations to the study which seemed to work out and I end with key lessons learned which all say something about me as the researcher, and provide me with new beginnings to take along with me for future research projects.

Overall, through the processes of data collection and data analysis, I realized that the investigation of a researcher is never completely finished. If I wanted to, I could get carried away by reflection and constant analysis of participant statements. The trick was learning to recognize when I was veering away from my central goal in this research project and accepting that not everything could be answered in one study alone.

**Constructivist Grounded Theory**

To access raw feelings, thoughts, and experiences of my participants I chose to use a qualitative research methodology of grounded theory. Being particularly interested in the language and words used by these young men, I wanted my resultant theory to be directly grounded in their responses (Creswell, 2009). In using qualitative research methods, I had hoped to find explanation in their responses as to what they think about school and consequently the underlying reasons why they are not doing well in school academically; particularly as such a theory for the Filipino population in Toronto is currently nonexistent (Creswell, 2009). Goulding (2004) recommends grounded theory as a highly appropriate methodology when little research is currently available on the topic of interest at hand. In contrast to qualitative research methods, I feel that quantitative research methods would be less helpful as this inquiry is more about investigation and understanding of the way in which these young men think and respond in certain situations, essentially the phenomenon of their migration experiences. As the thought processes that I am seeking cannot be measured quantitatively, and as I wish to embrace the perspectives and individuality amongst participants, I employed purposeful sampling to obtain participant statements because it allows the researcher to select, “individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem” (Creswell, 2009, p. 125). In relation to grounded theory, purposeful sampling is
ideal because the researcher is creating a theory that does not already exist for a particular phenomenon, and therefore will benefit from individuals that can “purposefully” inform the study. In addition, I also used snowball sampling, whereby people of interest suggest other participants that they know would be interested in the study (Creswell, 2009). I will discuss the benefits of both methods in a later section of this chapter. In reflection of my intent, I decided to not just stick to traditional Glaserian and Straussian grounded theory methods, but instead to follow a more constructivist approach to grounded theory by Charmaz (2006) which allows for the discovery of processes, patterns, and supports flexible interpretation and understanding between researcher and participant, while respecting the meaning-making and perspectives of the participant, even if impartial to that of myself, the researcher. To clarify, constructivist grounded theory is not an analytic framework. Creswell (2009) writes that it

lies squarely within the interpretive approach to qualitative research with flexible guidelines, a focus on theory developed that depends on the researcher’s view, learning about the experience within embedded, hidden networks, situations, and relationships, and making visible hierarchies of power, communication, and opportunity (p. 65).

Constructivist grounded theory does not “embrace a single process or core category” as in other approaches suggested by other scholars (Creswell, 2009, p. 65). The findings of this study are simply an interpretation of participant experiences, both influenced and filtered through my own epistemology as well as knowledge previously acquired from the academic research and literature of others. As I have diligently collected field notes and documented reflective memos to keep my own bias and identification as a member within Toronto’s Filipino community in check, the constructivist

perspective assumes that people, including researchers, construct the realities in which they participate…to the best of their ability, constructivists enter the phenomenon, gain multiple views of it, and located it in its web of connections and constraints. Constructivists acknowledge that their interpretation of the studied phenomenon is itself a construction” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 63).
As an educator in Toronto, I have already identified myself within this phenomenon. Working backwards from here, in writing from the perspectives of participants, my aim is solely to understand this phenomenon through the synthesis of a possible theory grounded in their very own statements. However, as part of my interpretation of participant responses, I have included external theories on Filipino cultural beliefs which have been shown to influence the construction of one’s epistemology. This is permitted using the constructivist approach to grounded theory as it enables the researcher to develop a theory which amalgamates with “the researcher’s view.” Thus, in accordance with the flexibility of constructivist grounded theory as a research method, I admit to some parts of my writing and analysis as primarily deductive, only in that my findings and “interpretation of the studied phenomena” stems from my own epistemology and “multiple views” of the phenomena.

**Ethics Protocol**

After deciding upon a research methodology, I realized I needed ethic protocol approval to conduct my qualitative research study using human subjects. It is the responsibility of the researcher to make sure that participants have given written consent to their participation in the study, and are made fully aware of any risks or threats posed to them during their involvement (Creswell, 2009). I deliberately chose participants above the age of 18 to be a part of the study as I wanted to avoid the process of going through school board approval to obtain interviews. I felt that this would be too timely, and considering the purpose of this inquiry and that I planned on continuing this project by pursuing my doctorate, I decided I would leave that process to a later date. I also felt reassured in choosing participants 18 and older because I believe that at that point they are better able to make their own decisions and not say things out of “formula following” but from reflection upon their own experiences.

For this project I submitted a joint ethics protocol to the University of Toronto alongside Dr. Lance McCready’s research inquiry on the educational trajectories of young Black men. I had to make very few revisions and resubmit the protocol in July of 2011 and shortly after it was approved by the ethics committee. Dr. McCready’s research project is similar to my study as it essentially involves the same age group and an ethnoracial minority population that has not been faring well academically in Toronto
schools. However, in contrast to Dr. McCready’s project, his work is centered more around social identity processes and particularly the individuals, programs and services that impact the educational trajectories (or pathways) of these young men. For my study, I’m more concerned about the social identity process for these young men because in my experiences, I have seen it have a stronger impact on educational attainment than any other factor in schooling. Their social identity process is directly linked to their diasporic epistemology as their experiences as diaspora create a dual identity for them (between two countries) and structural and cultural factors (between two countries) dictate their priorities in life. By conducting my study alongside that of Dr. McCready, I feel that my work builds upon the Diaspora aspect of his project and hopefully can contribute to parts of the analysis for his study. I strongly recommend that if pairing up with a professor or colleague researching a similar topic is an option, take it. Working with someone else on the ethics proposal saved a lot of time and guaranteed that each section of the final product always had a second revision before both completion and submission.

Validity

Angen (2000) argues that validation is “a judgment of the trustworthiness and or goodness of a piece of research” (p. 379). How can a researcher truly know if their findings are truly valid? Creswell (2009) lists eight strategies for qualitative researchers to utilize to ensure validation of their findings. He recommends that researchers use at least two, and I have employed three in the process of my data collection and analysis. One way to ensure validation is to engage with participants over a period of time to ensure trust, correct miscommunication, and learn the culture. Also, in accordance with the ideas of Lincoln and Guba (1985) another method of validation is for researchers to have a peer debriefer or “devil’s advocate” who can keep the, “researcher honest” (Creswell, 2009, p. 208). For this project, this was the primary role of my thesis supervisor but I also had several peers review each draft of writing to help me keep any bias in check. Two of my peers were English high school teachers, and one of the participants in this study, Jole, helped to read over my final drafts to ensure that my writing was not offensive to the Filipino community (ie. blaming the culture). This highlights the last strategy of validation proposed by Creswell (2009) that was used in this study, and that was declaring my research bias from the very beginning, so that the
The reader will better understand my background and position in regards to my research work. The utilization of peer debriefers taught me that in some ways data analysis is a two way process. It involves an outpour of ideas from the researcher, which is reliant on the feedback and support of the reader (in the editing phase – the peer debriefer). This reliance is essential as the reader reminds the researcher of the purpose in their work and the obligation to answer the initial research questions and parameters outlined at the beginning of the research study.

**Research Procedure**

**Credibility**

The criteria for validation suggested by Creswell (2009) was also helpful in the execution of my research, particularly when establishing credibility, determining storage methods, and memoing. His suggestion to declare research bias from the beginning helped me to establish some credibility in my findings. Creswell (2009) denotes that the researcher’s findings are credible when “the results are an accurate interpretation of the participants’ meaning” (p.206). In my study, I feel that my results are credible as I have declared all research bias upfront and acknowledged my study as an *interpretation* of participant perceptions.

Creswell (2009) also cites the work of Eisner (1991) who explains “to demonstrate credibility, the weight of evidence [itself] should become persuasive” (p.208). Being mindful of this, in total I had 22 questions in my interview protocol, which I brought a copy of each time I did the interview, in addition to participant demographic forms (previously filled out). I found that in this way I could conveniently refer back to the demographic form if I needed to check something. I also found sometimes that I needed to ask questions that were not on the protocol to probe for additional information, thus the interviews seemed to follow more of a semi-structured format. This approach helped to build trust and conversation with participants, in opposition to following a structured interview which may not have elicited the same quality of data. I made sure to stick closely to the interview protocol as I had spent a lot of time on its development and I wanted to have as much information as possible to work with during my data analysis. During each interview, a tape recorder was placed in a central location between me and the participant on max volume so that I would be able to hear their responses clearly and
also protect myself from the peril forewarned by other scholars after going through an entire interview only to find out it did not record.

I made sure to distribute a consent form (refer to Appendix E) to each participant at the beginning of each interview outlining the purpose and guidelines of the study. At the bottom of the consent form I left a space for them to both print and sign both their first and last names, and made sure to check that all forms were signed before collecting them back (just in case participants overlooked this area). From my focus group interviews with Dr. McCready, I’ve learned that sometimes participants may be unclear about how to fill in the demographic form and the meaning of certain questions. So I suggest reviewing both the consent and demographic form with each participant at the beginning of each interview. I also found this a good time to assure all of the participants that their identities would remain confidential as well as all of the personal information that they had provided (most of their personal information was obtained via demographic forms which I distributed and collected via e-mail prior to interviews). The demographic form asked participants to provide basic details about themselves, age, country of birth and citizenship, occupation, etc. (see Appendix C).

Storage

In terms of storage issues and privacy concerns, I kept all of the electronic data-demographic forms, audio files, and interview transcripts in the same file folder in a password-protected computer. In addition, the paper copies of demographic forms, along with each participant’s consent form and copy of interview protocol with my scribbled field notes were all kept in a file folder in a locked drawer at my residence. I also made sure to back up all electronic files on a USB key and place it in the same drawer along with the tape recorder used at interviews (see Appendix A). Following interviews, I made sure to transfer audio files to my computer immediately following each interview, as well as stay an extra twenty minutes to write a personal memo to record my own thoughts or questions I was left with (refer to Appendix A to see storage methods).

Memoing

Whittemore et al. (2001) document memoing as an analytic technique that contributes to “the validity in qualitative research” (p. 522). For myself, and much to the assurance of readers, memoing also served as a strategy to elicit “rich thick description
[which would] allow readers to make decisions regarding transferability” (Creswell, 2009, p.209). Memos became very important to me after discovering surprises and dismay at some of the responses shared by participants. In recording memos I could keep track of what worked when questioning participants, add-on questions to ask and questions that needed to be asked differently in order to elicit as much information as possible. Subsequently, this is also what helped me to create the description of participants in Table 3. I was also able to practice the skill of memoing while simultaneously working on a research project outside of my project. I found that if I wrote down all of the things that I was thinking immediately following an interview it gave me a better idea of what topics really stood out during the interview. These are the precautions that I took to ensure that to the best of my ability the data obtained was rich, truthful, and credible. My relentless efforts to secure my work, justify my reasoning, and maintain raw emotion in the data, surely speak to the goodness and trustworthiness of my final theory.

**Participant Selection and Profiles**

For this study I chose to incorporate a combination of purposeful sampling (also known as theoretical sampling) and snowball sampling. In contrast to convenience sampling, Strauss and Corbin (1998) describe theoretical sampling as the inclusion of participants that “maximize the potential to discover as many dimensions and conditions related to the phenomenon as possible,” which is very similar to the definition provided earlier by Creswell (2009, p. 210). As I taught in San Lorenzo High School with a predominantly Filipino population, I had the opportunity to get to know various former students to see if they would be a good fit for the study. Of course, this is also the way in which snowball sampling emerged because as I began to tell students about the study, they suggested other people who they knew and thought would be able to contribute to my data findings. Once I explained my research interest to them, they agreed to be part of the study. For purposeful sampling, I decided that my participants needed to have three criteria: they had to be initially born in the Philippines (first generation Filipino Canadian), a talkative personality (so that I would be able to elicit quality data) and a mix of experiences in high school (students that struggled or failed, and students that did well). After this decision, I thought about possible students that I could ask to participate.
Out of the final total, three participants were alumni students from the high school where I worked, of which two I taught, one requiring a fifth year in school to graduate. The third student was part of a spoken word club I supervised at the school, and also required a fifth year to graduate. The other three participants were school friends of my significant other whose specific histories I had never inquired about until now. I deliberately chose not to include my significant other in my study (also born and raised in the Philippines) as I did not want my analysis to be influenced by prior knowledge obtained from my own personal experiences with him. As I always saw Samuel in the Science department and talked to him frequently about his school work, he seemed like a good candidate. As for Briar, I had been in discussion with him a lot because of his involvement with the school’s Spoken Word and seemed to have strong leadership qualities. Thus, I asked Samuel and Briar, and after hearing about the purpose of the study, Briar suggested I ask Marlon. Up to that point, I had never even thought to ask Marlon, but after thinking about how much I had worried about his graduation and how many discussions we had about work completion, I realized he would be an excellent candidate as well. Samuel suggested another student that I ask but when I told him about the study he seemed unsure about the time commitment required. This is when I decided to stick with these three alumni students. The other three participants from St. Beatrice high school were chosen from my own personal network and also agreed with my criteria specified for purposeful sampling: personality, first generation Filipino Canadian status, and range of high school experiences. Jole was very intelligent, reflective and had been unsure of what program to take after high school, so he just stayed home. Junior had once told me that he was surprised he passed high school and his always relaxed demeanor made me curious about his priorities. Lastly, I knew that Carlos did not graduate high school so I thought including his experience in the Canadian school system might glean great insights into the experiences of the other participants. Although, the St. Beatrice participants urged me to include another young man (from our circle of friends) who also met the criteria for participant selection, he was not from St. Beatrice or San Lorenzo and I wanted to keep the comparison between both of those schools in my data analysis (thinking that may play a role in educational success and failure). I was curious to know if there were patterns in the perspectives of these young men. How were their
perspectives similar or different, and were they shared? If so, were they shared by all first generation Filipino Canadian citizens simply because of their immigration experience? These were all questions I had about the way in which these young men understood the purpose of education and schooling. In support of the idea behind theoretical sampling where all participants are specifically chosen based on one set of criteria (Creswell 2009), first generation Filipino Canadian status was the most important criteria for selection as I wanted to explore participant perspectives as diasporic individuals, having lived between two countries. Eventually, this method of sampling would prove to be beneficial, as data analysis revealed a dual frame of reference for participant perspective. All participants chosen had to have been born in the Philippines and immigrated to Canada. In total, I interviewed six individuals at length. In this study, I chose not to use participants’ real names to respect the privacy of their identities. Instead, I gave them each a pseudonym and have provided detailed descriptions of each participant in the table below grouped according to high school attended and current status (see Table 3 for participant profiles). Please note that in the descriptions of participants, I do allude to connotations of class or socio-economic status, by my standards. By upper-middle class family, I mean that money is not a concern, the family lives in a detached home and can afford to send their children to school (post-graduate studies). By lower-working class, I refer to families that live in social housing, apartment, or townhouse, and cannot afford to send their children to school (post-graduate studies).

Table 3. Participant Profiles

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<tr>
<td>Samuel San Lorenzo U of T-</td>
<td>Samuel is 21 years old, was born in Manila, and came to Canada right before his first birthday. His family is considered upper-class in Toronto. His father is an optician, and his mother is an orthotics dispenser. His parents qualified for immigration to Canada through the points system, and now own various businesses. Samuel is the oldest child with two brothers and one sister. One brother is a student at York University, Samuel is a Life Sciences major at the University of Toronto but is contemplating dropping out. He would rather complete a shorter program at Centennial College, which would enable him to take over his father’s business.</td>
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53
mother still works in a financial institution. They recently purchased a semi-detached home. Junior has one younger sister who is a student at George Brown College. He is currently working as an auto-mechanic, a trade he learned in a co-op placement in high school. This helped him to complete high school in four years. He does not see himself doing the same thing in five years but has no idea what he would like to do.

Jole is 24 years old and was born in Manila. His family came to Canada when he was two years old. His mother is an accountant, his father is an apartment superintendent and his family is considered middle-upper class in Toronto. His mother entered Canada through the immigration points system and then sponsored the rest of her family. Jole has two older siblings: a brother who dropped out of high school and still lives at home with his girlfriend and their child; and a sister who is studying at the University of Toronto. Jole initially attended Centennial College for computer studies but left the program due to disinterest. He is currently a Psychology major at York University.

Interviewing participants had many benefits and some limitations. I had originally planned to interview eight individuals but after taking into consideration that each interview was about two hours long and provided me with more than enough quality data (purposeful data) that I could use I decided against the pursuit of this idea. In any case, I realized at this point that conducting more than one interview would have most likely resulted in way too much information to sort through given the time restrictions of the study. Furthermore, snowball sampling allowed me to have direct and frequent contact with my participants (since most of them knew each other) if and when I needed additional information. In addition, because of the fact that I only interviewed once, there were some disadvantages to be expected. To begin, this left me with a smaller sample size than I had initially intended so I was initially worried that my findings would not be considered significant. I also worried that because I only interviewed young men from two high schools in the greater Toronto area (GTA), this would create some bias in student ideologies and perspectives as there were only two schools to compare results with. However, in support of Creswell’s (2009) criteria for purposeful sampling, the
number of participants is not important if they are crucial to informing the theory. Given what I know now, I would not have interviewed more than once if I had to repeat this study as I learned that it is possible for few participants to yield rich quality responses. More than one interview would have resulted in a large volume of data making it hard for the researcher to begin coding and too much data to sort through.

Currently, four participants attend university, with one having some college education, one individual is a high school dropout and the other barely finished high school. I would say that three of the participants (the San Lorenzo students) saw themselves as successful in school and in life at the time of data collection as they were all at a place in life where they wanted to be. The other three St. Beatrice students did not feel successful in school and life as they did not feel as though they had accomplished any major goals they once had and were not at a place in life where they wanted to be. As all of the participants were originally born in the Philippines, some moved to Canada at a young age and others came at a later time. Table 3 indicates participant age, country of birth, level of schooling obtained in Canada vs. level of schooling obtained in the Philippines, whether they immigrated out of LCP opportunities and the socio-economic class that they belong to in Toronto. Keep in mind that while some individuals identify as working class or middle class in Toronto, they may actually be coming from or still belong to higher income families in the Philippines. All of the participants attended both Catholic elementary and secondary schools within the Toronto Catholic District School Board. Participants also all identified as male, in the early to mid-twenty age range.

“Good Enough” Research Methods in the Coding Process

According to Lutrell (2000), “good enough” research methods are implemented when “researchers view their fieldwork as a series of ongoing realizations that lead to complex choices and decision-making” (p.1). By “good enough” I mean thinking about research decisions in terms of what is lost and what is gained, rather than what might be ideal.” In this section, I describe various points during data collection and analysis at which I decide on something to be gained or something to be lost. This section is divided into two parts. The first part focuses on decisions made during the coding process. The second half reveals lessons that I learned in the process of data collection. In agreement with Luttrell and loyal to the constructivist approach to grounded theory, it was
impossible to keep my own interpretations, understandings and disposition entirely apart from my thought processes. As “there is no clear and easy route by which to confront the self who observes,” (Lutrell, 2000, p. 12) it is my intention that readers simply find comfort, reassurance, and recognition in the moments of reflection, doubt, and uncertainty that I have outlined in the process of conducting fieldwork.

To begin, in terms of the memoing process, most of my memos captured the setting, and participant reactions to questions and moments or words that stood out to me in the interview. At these times, I also tried to write down any comparisons that I noticed (especially between interviews that were close together) as Strauss and Corbin (1998) write that effective grounded theory involves constant comparison. It was at this time, that I made the first decision to use Ryan and Bernard’s (2010) method of cutting and sorting from the memos I had which would give me a vantage point in eliciting primary codes; otherwise it would have been very difficult to start organizing over one hundred codes. In support of this idea, Charmaz (2006) reasons that, “memo-writing catches your thoughts, captures the comparisons and connections you make, and crystallizes questions and directions for you to pursue. In this way, I was able to keep track of tangents in my memos, another strategy of triangulation which helped me to locate some of my own biases and my position with regards to my data (Creswell, 2009). Although this also helped me to keep track of ideas that I had wanted to investigate further when looking for supporting literature, (see Appendix B for a list of preliminary codes) it also served as a limitation in the sense that it restricted my thoughts and perhaps as well, other aspects of the study or theories that I could have included. However, I realized quickly that as I did not have the time nor capacity of space to pursue many of these tangents further. I had to set aside these ideas for future projects and press on with the few concepts that I could concentrate on given the allotted time and purpose of this thesis. This is when peer reviewers came in handy. During these moments of uncertainty I would check in or refer back to my notes with my thesis supervisor. He would remind me of the main research questions that I was trying to answer and my original intentions in pursuing this study. In turn, this helped me to reevaluate and concentrate only on the themes that addressed my research questions and supported the development of my nascent theory.
In contrast to memos, my field notes were not as nicely coherent as personal memos. As the first set of codes from memoing left me with several codes, the second decision I made was to use the method of the salience hierarchy proposed by Wolfinger (2010). Using this approach, I jotted down words, or observations that were significant to me because they somehow connected with other thoughts or previous scenarios in my mind. In addition to this, I eased into the habit to make a lot of scribbled notes during interviews beside each question alongside the interview protocol. Afterwards, I would underline words that made me think about changing the order, or questions altogether for the following interview, which is considered ideal when collecting data through audiotapes and transcription (Bogdan & Biklen, 2010). By keeping track of facial expressions and hand gestures, I was also able to detect major categories – or areas of each interview that I needed to concentrate on specifically during data analysis. Both my field notes and personal memos played an important role in strengthening and structuring the main argument of my thesis. Once I developed a list of topics, I learned that I could sort them and use them as further starting points for coding (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003).

As I identify with being more of a visual learner, I made sure to colour categorize primary codes, associating each participant’s transcribed codes with a particular colour. This helped me to better remember redundancies between participants. Following this, I made a third decision of using focused coding to review all of the codes that I had developed in the first two phases of coding, but I was more selective in this round in an attempt to reduce my initial set of codes. I compared all of the interviews to each other and looked for words and sentences that again were often repeated. Ryan and Bernard (2010) also recommend coding for contradictions and metaphors. Thus, I coded for contradictions made by participants to see if these indicated shared feelings or revealed anything about the thought processes of these young men. Following this, I coded for metaphors used by the participants to study attitude in certain situations and to see if that too was shared, but soon decided to drop this category as only one participant used metaphors which I found to be unrelated to what I was looking for. Lastly, I cut out all of my codes and sorted them together to decipher major categories amidst all of the codes, thereby allowing me to visualize the amount of support (via number of codes placed below) for each major category. Although tedious, I found it to be a really helpful process.
as going through the entire interview transcripts was too overwhelming. Laying out the codes on paper in front me (after they were narrowed down) helped me to capture patterns that I initially overlooked or forgot altogether. Coding the data several times, in many ways, and with lots of comparisons resulted in solid findings. After all, the strength of a theory is only as good as the process by which it has been constructed (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

One thing that really surprised me during data collection was that out of all of the interviews, I found that the guys that I knew more personally held conversations with me a little longer, I think partly because they often compared their situations or circumstances to each other. Also, one participant mentioned that he often mistook me for my partner and felt as if he was talking to my partner instead of me at times. I mostly focused on the participants’ facial expressions and gestures during interviews, making note of these on the interview protocol, but deciding against heavy emphasis on these later on as I found they did not really help me with analysis and considering that they were not language based, and this is after all a language-based theory. I tended to write down single words that they seemed to stress in their tone or repeat. I chimed in on the interview protocol asking participants to elaborate when they had a hard time explaining something, made a cheeky or fast remark, or repeated a fragment more than once in their response- this is what I had learned from Jole’s interview. I decided against giving participants fixed interview times because I know from experience as a research assistant, interviews can sometimes run over and as I learned from planning, locations may not be certain. This is how structured interviews became semi-structured, although I initially planned structured interviews so that I could be in control of time.

After this, I made sure to give each individual a figurative idea of timing and then closed each interview by asking what their final thoughts were about the interview and if they wanted to discuss anything further – ie. was anything about the conversation bothering them or still lingering on their mind. I did this after learning in a qualitative methodologies course that qualitative interviewing can sometimes bring up bad memories or mixed emotions for participants. I also tried to keep my recording device running during this time as I did not want to miss out on documenting their feelings post-interview, a likely possibility that was also discussed in that same methodologies course.
At the end of each interview, I thanked each participant and explained a little more about what I was hoping to find in my research and reassured them that they would receive a final summary of the results when I was finished. As aforementioned, all of the individuals were supportive of the study, particularly as they all seemed aware that little information on Filipino youth in Toronto is circulated, and wanted to do what they could in sharing what knowledge they could of the community.

For this study, I began my data collection in June 2011 and ended in October 2011. During this period, I utilized 3 types of qualitative research techniques including in-depth one-on-one interviews, demographic forms (distributed prior to interviews) and personal memos for my own thoughts to be revisited during data analysis. In the process of transcription and translation I learned that having to continuously write and rewrite memos, categories, and ideas for categories speaks volumes in terms of research validity and is a testament to the full development of a solid theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

After allowing interviews to go beyond an hour, data analysis for this inquiry did take quite some time. Transcription occurred over a span of 3 weeks – completed in a few hours at a time as I was working as a full time teacher while conducting my research study. I tried to type what I heard per question, then go back later, usually the following day to fill in corrections. As I chose to use grounded theory for my research methodology I wanted to keep each participant’s narrative word for word, especially as they appeared to be using the same words and sometimes even repeating each other’s sentences. I decided to stick as closely as I possibly could to the audio recorded to ensure that my theory would be directly grounded in participant statements (Creswell, 2009).

As Charmaz (2006) outlines that coding in grounded theory consists of two main phases: initial coding and focused coding, I first went through each interview with initial coding, just to try to get a sense of all major categories. This required skimming through each interview and coding one sentence at a time. This took quite some time, especially as Charmaz cautions that it is important to preserve the action in each code, otherwise you could end up with a set of meaningless information- which is what happened the first time. The first time I coded I forgot to keep the action within the code and so my codes lost their meaning. I must concede that it is also at this point where I would refer back to my memos to help in the development of these primary codes. Although tedious, I
searched each memo for repeated words, sentences, and similar experiences. In total I must have coded at least over five times during the process of data analysis.

Lessons Learned Conducting “Good Enough” Research

By extending Lutrell’s (200) idea of “good enough” research, I denote the five major lessons that I learned in the process of data collection. Following these lessons, I conclude with a reflection of what I learned about myself through the research process.

Lesson 1

In looking back now at the measures taken before data collection began, the biggest lesson that I have learned is to trust that my research methodology is “good enough”. When I initially only chose six participants, I was worried that the sample size would be too small and my findings wouldn’t be credible. Nonetheless, the quality and significance of participant statements illustrates that this sample size was actually a good enough start in regards to the nature of this thesis as an exploratory investigation of a highly understudied population in Toronto. Moreover, perhaps in agreement with Sandelowski (1995), my selection could also be considered more as a “statistically nonrepresentative stratified sampling strategy…that is, while the sample is statistically nonrepresentative, it is informationally representative in that data will be obtained from persons who can stand for other persons with similar characteristics” (p. 81). As participants all shared in the phenomenon of consequences long past their migration, (family dynamic, household structure, identity) they provided me with rich data.

Lesson 2

The second major lesson that I learned is that an interview protocol is not that easy to develop. In the final interview protocol I used, I asked a total of 22 questions – really, less than 10 questions divided into shorter questions. Creating questions for the interview protocol took time and practice. The first list of questions I created did not really elicit the information that I would need in order to answer my central research question. It was not until I tested the questions out on a colleague that I figured out how to word them in a way that would reveal the information I was seeking. For one of the questions, I asked all of the participants whether they had attended school in the Philippines. If they answered yes, I asked them to describe differences they noticed
between Canadian schools and their schools back home. However, I asked this question not because I was particularly interested in what they liked or disliked about each school, but rather, I was trying to get a sense of their thoughts about school, what they thought about getting an education and I was hoping that in their answers the meaning or value they had assigned to education would emerge. Contrary to my intent, I did not get to the information that I initially sought in posing this question. Instead, participants revealed more about their understanding and perception of education and success when directly asked about each separately. This taught me that some questions needed to be reworded in future and that it was well worth it to get into the habit of conducting a “trial” interview before actually interviewing as another way of ensuring that questions are clearly written and make sense to the interviewee.

**Lesson 3**

The third lesson I learned during the process of data collection: do not assume you are working on your own time. I say this, because when I initially started thinking about where I would have interviews and imagining how they would be, I envisioned a smooth and easy process. However, planning interview locations and times alone proved to be a tricky task. I started with a schedule of conducting all six interviews in the span of one week – this did not happen. Three of the participants had exams, and the other three had shifts for work. This is when I realized that I would have to work around participant schedule, meaning revise my timeline. As most researchers have a writing deadline timing is crucial. After I realized I was not going to be able to complete all of the interviews before the date that I had set, I had to reschedule dates for data transcription and analysis, as well as follow up with participants for any missing information.

**Lesson 4**

The other lesson learned during interviews was that of location. As three of the participants were previous students of mine, and still consider me as an authority figure, I wanted to choose public spaces that they would feel comfortable in – to reinforce the idea of the interview as a conversation and not an interrogation (Scheurich, 1997). Two of the interviews were conducted in school settings, one at the University of Toronto, Scarborough campus outside, and one at San Lorenzo shortly after regular school
dismissal time. After that interview, between having teachers pass in and out of the office and keeping the door open to appease teacher conduct policy, I began to suspect that the student felt rushed and uncomfortable because he started to end his responses sooner. I also began to feel like the space was too quiet and it seemed to change the relaxed atmosphere of the room. I realized then that I would need to rethink the location of interview with the next student.

To give an idea of how the next interview went, after my experience with Briar, I thought Starbuck’s would be a good location of choice and scheduled an interview at the Starbuck’s closest to the participant’s house. After arriving at Starbuck’s finding it very crowded and very loud, the interview was then moved to a mall hallway located nearby the student’s home. Sensing worry, my participant suggested that we try McDonald’s McCafe in the mall- a first time for me. When that location proved to be a bad choice consequent of excess background noises recorded on tape, I was almost ready to give up and reschedule for another day, but as participant availability was limited, and this was already the fourth time we had rescheduled, I pressed on. Lesson learned, choose location very carefully. For the other three interviewees, as they were family friends this gave me a slight advantage of scheduling interviews in more personal spaces as I was more familiar with their work schedules and places of convenience. For this reason, I decided to have one interview arranged at the home of one of the participants – where I go quite often to repair my computer, one was held at a public library, in the presence of the participant’s girlfriend, and one was held at a quiet restaurant in Toronto, close to the participant’s home. I feel that casual environments enabled participants to feel more in control of the interview which I didn’t mind as I was very interested in hearing their narratives in an effort to understand the way that they viewed and made sense of their educational success and failure. In future, I would stick to library or school conference room locations for interviews to avoid any noise issues.

**Lesson 5**

After working out interview locations, interview structure proved to be less stressful in terms of planning (as I already had an interview protocol developed), but more work especially in terms of social interaction between myself and the participants. During participants’ interviews, particularly during questions around family relationships,
I began to notice awkward pauses, silences, one-word answers, and vague responses, leaving me scrambling to bridge into my next question, or sit stunned while mentally comparing the participant to their response. This included questions like, which parent is the disciplinarian, and how come you didn’t tell your mother you were having difficulty in school? Each interview lasted a minimum of one hour and a half, and started with participants reading and signing a consent form either agreeing or declining to be part of the study. In the first interview with Jole, I remember even scribbling down facial expressions, but looking back that practice did not help me much so I chose to stop doing that for future interviews. Another thing that I learned from the first interview was to try as much as possible to immediately follow up on any reply that seemed unclear, or took participants a lot of time to articulate. I felt that this would be the best way to probe for deeper responses and for some participants, I found letting them talk longer, gave them more time to really think about the question posed. I soon discovered though that this was not the best approach for everyone as some participants were quieter than others, and this also increased the interview length – which in the end I still had to type out.

Conclusion

In these lessons, in their minimalist fashion, I hope to share with other researchers some of the challenges and small victories that I have encountered in my own research work. Too little are these intricacies and emotional decisions whilst in research presented in the written observations of researchers. As an educator, the sharing of resources with others is one of the best practices that I have learned in the classroom. This habit allows for both self-reflexivity and insight into possible ways in which to alleviate common personal dilemmas that one is often afraid to voice. Grouping my difficulties into lessons learned, mirrored the black and white way in which I see things, presenting what is and what is not as clearly as I can manage. This is why I felt that the Charmaz’s (2006) constructivist approach to grounded theory was most helpful for me in my methodology as it allowed my personality to be part of the methodology. The methods of Glasser and Strauss were helpful in terms of starting from the very beginning to develop the initial codes and categories. The benefits of the constructivist approach also became evident when I grouped working on my thesis into planned sections at a time, rather than sporadic attempts to work on it whenever I had time. It also reveals to readers certain aspects of
my personality (casual and outgoing) which could not be hidden in my work; hence the utility of the constructivist approach to grounded theory for my research work. My frame of reference, my personal opinion and position is found throughout this thesis in the form of ‘I.’ ‘I’ delineates my perspective, or epistemology on all that I encounter and influences my interpretation of my experiences.

Through this research process I learned that I am not very flexible as I had a hard time dealing with things (like timing) that did not meet my expectations. I also learned that I am very impatient and did not tolerate outstanding work or deadlines well; emotionally they took a large toll on me. I learned that I could not head into interviews expecting them to be exactly one hour, or anticipating that participants will be available on the days that I suggest. I still struggle with this lesson and although I have learned some tolerance, this is the reason why I strongly believe in Luttrell’s idea that the type of individual you are drastically affects this process. As a person that likes to plan things according to a time schedule and finish large amounts of a task at one time, I found it really hard to be flexible during this process. Though, I soon realized I still had a long stretch to go and that interview completion was nothing compared to the time it took to write the entire thesis.

Out of all the lessons I learned, if I had to repeat this process again there are two things that I vowed I would never do again. I vowed I would never transcribe interviews alone, code alone, or write alone if I ever repeated this procedure again. The first thing I would do is find help with interview transcription and coding. Even if it was via technology, such as software that transcribes audio-text for you, that alone would be helpful. I found it too overwhelming to do both alone.

Secondly, I also feel that I should have scheduled more “check-in” sessions with my thesis supervisor, or peer reviewer mostly for moral support and also for more guidance along the way while writing. Instead, I had preferred to go ahead on my own completing large chunks of work at a time and then submitting them for review and feedback. This left me with too many revisions to make at one time, often adding to my frustration and stress. I found writing to be the most frustrating and solitary activity I have ever completed and for that reason I would strongly seek help with this part of the process in future.
Chapter 4: “I’m kinda just like an open space” - Perception of Self and Diasporic Epistemology

Introduction

Based on my research, I argue that self is constituted by the intersection of dual frames of reference between the self that participants know in the Philippines (or based on their Filipino heritage) and the notion of self they have created in Canada. I argue that the Diasporic perception of self for these young men, the way in which they come to be and understand themselves stems from the very internalization of their displacement between the Philippines and Canada. And, by internalization of their displacement, I am referring to the feelings and memories associated with moving (or knowledge of having been born in the Philippines and subsequently moved to Canada), which I believe are suppressed, kept inside, and essentially hidden from open discussion. I suggest that this hybrid lens remains internal and both consciously and unconsciously surfaces in all thoughts, actions, and realms of their life. I concentrate on three prominent aspects of Diasporic self perception as articulated by these young men: Geography, and two characteristics of internal development: a growing sense of independence, and a unique concept of time. Under consideration of each aspect, I explore the impact of both structural and cultural factors in the synthesis of individual knowledge systems, with particular emphasis on family structure. I explore each aspect of self both in relation to and as a product of a dual frame of reference lived by participants. I advocate that a dual frame of reference founded upon geography and two different characteristics of internal development plays a key role in the way in which these young men have come to develop and employ a Diasporic perception of self on a daily basis and its subsequent effect on their academic performance and achievement.

A Dual Frame of Reference

In Canadian schools, students are subjects within the institution of education. In turn, the institution maintains follows a particular structure and dictates rigid routines instilling discipline to create specific knowledgeable subjects. Foucault (1995) writes that “discipline increases the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes
these same forces (in political terms of obedience)” (p.98). This is precisely the way in which the subject or students are molded by schools to become successful independent adults. In this model of education, the school – or teachers are the masters of students and dictate the behaviours and moral code that students are expected to follow in order to succeed. Furthermore, Foucault also explains that “from the master of discipline to him who is subjected to it the relation is one of signalization” (Foucault, 1995, p.96). So for students at school, learned signals are meant to ensure the correct behavior, attitude, and identification as a disciplined subject intended to perform in suit along with other students. However, in contrast to Foucault’s description of the disciplined pupil, participants demonstrated other forms of obedience and acknowledgement of school’s supreme control.

Geography is the first aspect of a dual frame of reference that creates a Diasporic perception of self. In the young men’s narratives, one thing that became quickly evident was self identification as Filipino first, then Filipino Canadian. This very distinction marks the intersection of two frames of reference that establish a diasporic self perception. One frame is located in the Philippines, the other, in Canada, meaning that students often understood situations and decisions presented to them through their knowledge system developed in the Philippines or being Filipino, and the knowledge system they have learned here. Furthermore, perceptions of self and self identity appeared to be a product of family structure and dynamic in the lives of these young men also emerged in participant statements. Geography or self identification between the Philippines and Canada directed much of the language, behavior, and peers that participants chose to associate with.

When asked how participants identified themselves and what they used as proof of identification, Junior responded “I felt like I was a Filipino because I wasn’t born here…like I would have to feel more Canadian if I grew up here, but I didn’t so I always felt like I’m a Filipino, always”. For Junior, being born in the Philippines and having not immigrated to Canada until the age of twelve makes him consciously identify with being more closely associated to being Filipino then Canadian. Yet, he also reflected later on in the interview that his parents came to Canada to give him and his sister better opportunities and he wouldn’t ever return to the Philippines unless he had a lot of money.
Junior’s explanation illustrates the dual frame of reference which helps him to locate his identity in relation to his environment. He identifies as Filipino first, then Canadian, consciously recognizing his experience of moving from the Philippines, as well as acknowledging that he is now a Canadian. In junior’s conscious identification as Filipino, but now Canadian he consciously identifies with being Canadian and at the same time unconsciously identifies as (or with the benefits of) being Canadian as well. He also identified language – his ability to speak and understand Tagalog as a signifier or proof of his “Filipino-ness”. In this duality he is able to see himself as both Filipino and Canadian simultaneously.

On the other hand, Jole identified having Filipino foods as signifiers of self, and going to family parties regardless of what he was doing or initial plans that he had made and felt that his attendance was always viewed as mandatory at Filipino family gatherings. This development of self identity and perception via physical location and cultural practices is explained by Tatum (1997) who has found that we deal with a process “located” in the core of the individual and yet also in the core of his communal culture…in psychological terms, identity formation employs a process of simultaneous reflection and observation, a process taking place on all levels of mental functioning, by which the individual judges himself in the light of what he perceives to be the way in which others judge him in comparison to themselves and to a typology significant to them. (p.19)

Junior and Jole’s association of Filipino-ness with language, foods, and practices can be seen as both identification with the norms of their communal culture as well as examples of observation and reflection upon their histories-more specifically, their experiences coming from another country and adapting to a new language and new practices. These young men illustrate that first instinct relies on these communal cultural norms before considering new norms and environment. Furthermore, particularly in Jole’s example where he admits that even if he did have anything else to do it can be inferred that he would most likely still be expected to attend a family event or celebration. This leaves Jole in quite a predicament between two “important” places as he simultaneously tries to please his Filipino communal norms, and yet also assimilate to Canadian norms.

Elaboration of participant defined norms also revealed both conscious and unconscious aspects of their development of a Diasporic perception of self. While
participants explained that they stuck to speaking mostly English in school, they spoke about the pressure to be more Filipino or retain their language and culturally shared behaviours (for example pointing at something with your mouth or using certain words in Tagalog) when immersed in all-Filipino environments, such as at home when speaking to parents and siblings and amongst peers. In support of this, Briar explained how he used Tagalog (especially when out with his brother) in some public settings, conscientious that others did not know what he was saying. He explains that he did this when he felt out of place.

Fairclough (2001) writes that those who exercise power through language must constantly be involved in struggle with others to defend or lose their position. Maintaining the practice of sticking with Tagalog in public areas and institutional settings enables these young men a sense of community, identity and most significantly a distinction between them and others, or in the words of Fairclough, a defense of their position in a Canadian context. Briar’s revelation of consciousness, specifically when choosing to use Tagalog or not, is a cultural factor which affects his simulation and integration to Canadian settings. His decisions about when or when not to use Tagalog also illustrates an unconscious process of deciding whether he should or should not resort to his native tongue or not in certain situations – a decision, and a process that many other students are not subjected to. Furthermore, Pratt (2010) found that for Filipino-born immigrant youth in Vancouver “children who speak Tagalog at home tend to have grade point averages at the lower end of the continuum and perhaps most disturbing have a relatively low likelihood of graduating from high school” (p.16). So, although language as a cultural signifier and product of geography might serve as a form of distinction, it also hinders progress in Canadian schools where an English-speaking student is mandated, and where a minority student may be struggling to fit in rather than stand out. Jole and Junior illustrate that through the capacity of communal cultural norms such as food and language they are able to jointly locate themselves as both Filipino in certain settings and as Canadian in other contexts at the same time.

Participants also reflected a lot on being surrounded by peers with similar backgrounds. Most of them reported hanging out with other Filipinos, some because that was just their school population, and others recalled this tendency starting as far back as
elementary school. Whether it was a consequence of similar immigration experiences and integration into Canadian schools or something more remains questionable as Carlos lamented, “I dunno Filipinos just stick together”. They described that at the time, while still having difficulty with English and getting used to the different school structure compared to back home, hanging out with other students that had also recently immigrated seemed more natural to them. One plausible explanation for this tendency described by Tatum (1997) is that “when feelings, rational or irrational, are invalidated, most people disengage. They not only choose to discontinue the conversation but are more likely to turn to someone who will understand their perspective” (p.59). In relation to the descriptions of self provided by Juan and Junior, experiences and feelings of non-belonging in identifying with Canadian norms becomes all too clear. Although it could not be articulated by Carlos, in light of Tatum’s work, it can be ascertained that participants gravitate towards other Filipinos as they have disengaged based on previous experiences and find comfort and reassurance in the presence of others that have shared similar life experiences. Furthermore, association (albeit with other like-minorities) affirms security in knowing that others like them are experiencing some success and achievement despite their life history, and in conjunction it also enables the persistence of their dual frame of reference in support of a Diasporic epistemology as it enables them to continue being Filipino while also being Canadian.

In this case, self identification via a dual frame of reference was also made possible by a fascinating context which is normally non-existent or easily accessible: a predominantly Filipino school population. Tyler et al. (2010) writes that “students from cultures outside the mainstream may experience a sense of dissonance when the cultural values, beliefs, and practices of their home or out-of-school environment are discontinued in their school” (p.2). However, when talking about attending high schools with a predominantly Filipino population participants acknowledged that there weren’t many other students to associate with and this is what enabled them to continue speaking Tagalog and hang out with other Filipinos. Moreover, based on this mundane quality about school, according to Briar, it became important to make a distinction, “outside of the school as Filipino cause there’s more diversity, like it’s more of a distinction thing like if you say you’re Filipino in a group of Filipinos then it’s ok, you’re like oh well. To
make yourself more distinct, you’re like I’m Canadian with Filipino background, but I guess when you’re outside with other people, I guess it has more of an impact.” In support of Fairclough’s notion of the power in language, participants demonstrate once again that maintaining their Filipino identity in all settings helps to separate them from other ethnic groups and in agreement with Tatum, maintain a sense of affirmation in self and belonging. Although, other scholars could argue that the distinction made by these young men could also be an assertion of their masculinity in specific environments, particularly those of public spaces where perhaps they feel threatened. This notion, being more coherent with the theory of “cool pose” or “rudebwoy” behavior suggested by Tony Sewell which is defined as “a way of thinking and acting that satisfies an individual’s desire to exist outside of the subjectivities exerted by individuals and society’s dominant institutions” (Majors, 1990, p. 34). Thus, noticeable affirmation of identity in public places via both language and association could also be a display of masculinity for these young men. Although not as boisterous as the idea of a “rudebwoy” attitude (Majors, 1990) or swag behavior, it still appears to demarcate territory or a status of some kind for these young men, especially as Briar thought of it as having, “more of an impact,” and, “weird to shout manong (brother) across a room full of people in public” but did it anyways when required.

**Independence and Self**

When it came to talking about perceptions of self, almost all of the young men made similar statements: “an open space,” “I do my own thing,” and, “open”. While some statements at first seemed to be based solely upon self reflection and personal habits, other notions of self also appeared to be learned via cultural signifiers and physical geography. The opening quote in the chapter title was said by Junior. At first thought generic, as the participants started to speak about their experiences, I started to see that the subsequent way in which they described self was largely based on accommodations that they made given their particular dislocation as Diaspora youth. In other words, I realized that participants were not literally an “open space” but described themselves as such as there were no role models or figures of trust around that they felt they talk to about life direction or long-term goals. In general, participants described themselves as lazy, laid back and stubborn. Sometimes they gave examples to support
this sentiment, but most often they reflected that they could not explain their attitude, or blamed it on the behavior of their siblings (both past and current). Interestingly, I found that all of the participants described themselves similarly as “just hard headed,” a “free thinker,” “naturally lazy,” having a “don’t care” attitude, and “a hands on guy that likes to move around.” At first, these types of statements seemed sporadic but in conjunction with other statements like “if it’s more hands on work than I’d be more interested in it as opposed to just reading a textbook and writing it out,” and “I like to learn by myself;” they began to shape a very specific learned form of independence. By independence, I am referencing their idea or outlook on their life situations that they are their own person, a capable individual with their behavior and their problems belonging solely to them, only because they cannot rely on others for fear of worrying or displeasing them. Therefore, in opposition to the ideology of independence maintained as minimal social interaction and the expectation of individual efforts, one aspect of a Diasporic epistemology is a form independence acquired via learned accommodations made on behalf of past and present family structures. This seemed to be the active definition of independence in the narratives of these young men. In discussing educational experiences through this lens momentarily, I was also able to get a better understanding of how exactly these young men coped with stressful moments and/or difficulties in school and in turn the effects of these moments on their self perception and educational success. Often, they cited similar statements when describing their motivation to learn and seek help in school.

In contrast to schools which create a specific type of learner, the first thing that the young men talked about was the idea of being self motivated to learn, this appeared to play a major role upon analysis of their definition of independence. It seems like common sense, but almost all of the young men emphasized the importance of learning based on interest and action, a notion popularly supported by many advocates of boys education’ primarily Martino et al. (2004) who discovered that a more ‘hands on’ instructional teaching program coupled with the incentive of competition significantly increased student achievement and success in an all-boys school. In other words, if students are not interested in what they are learning, they will not learn, and this is a problem for educators. Jole explained that, “I need to have a purpose in doing it, one that provokes interest like it’s not just like a means to an end.” In other words, if he wasn’t interested,
he was not doing the work, no matter what the consequence – which most times he did not really envision as severe to begin with. Similarly to Jole, other participants also expressed that learning something hands on by themselves was more valuable and rewarding than simply reading a textbook, or having someone else teach them. The idea behind this being of course that they earned, or self learned the answer/information. In support of this sentiment, Briar explained that

“I’m more proactive, I wanna know by myself. I wouldn’t ask a teacher I’d find the answer, and then I’d see like how did this get to here, like how did I find the answer, as opposed to like if I get a teacher to explain something to me than I’m not gonna listen, but if I figure it out on my own then that’s how I figure out problems, I wanna learn it through my own experiences, again like I’m not book smart, but I guess that’s how I was raised…I guess I like learn through life experiences and stuff.”

Once again, in agreement with Martino et al. (2004), Briar also specified that he preferred to work with his hands as opposed to reading the textbook and felt that he remembered things more after doing them first hand.

In keeping with the concept of independent learning Jole further explained how behavior factored into demonstrations of independence. In discussing the importance of going to school and classes, Jole showed that this concept of independence played a role in student-teacher relationships when he reflected that, “regardless they’re still the authority figures as soon as you walk into that class so if anything the onus is on you.” For Jole, the suggested concept of independence meant not only self teaching but self discipline; taking full responsibility for your actions when situated within the school setting and recognizing your position or status in relation to others. In this way, the individual’s actions belong solely to him and does not implicate or involve others in the consequences to follow (if any). The emergence of this mode of independence can be seen in these examples given by a few of the participants, but it is also adopted when these young men needed help with something. While research suggests that most students do actually retain more information and remain more motivated through hands on learning instruction (Bennett & Rolheiser, 2001), the statements of participants progressively became more specific in describing exactly how difficulty is managed – or lack thereof.
Perhaps, this is why when it comes to asking for help or conversations about a problem or stressful situation, participants chose to avoid disclosure of their feelings and concerns to others. They adamantly defended that the problem (or situation) is there’s alone to deal with, and so I postulate that this is another avenue through which their demonstrations of independence differ from the type of independence students are encouraged to foster in schools. This attitude also has severe implications for the disconnect between self motivation and academic success as participants clearly illustrate how they disengage from school based on previous experiences of failure (or when they feel they failed). In addition, this attitude can also be attributed to both participant dual frames of reference and ideas of masculinity. On the one hand, based on historical experiences, participants have learned to deal with their problems without the help of their parents and extended family, and that other things, (primarily the family) are more important and take precedence over smaller issues such as setbacks in an academic task. On the other hand, avoidance of an issue and the determination to handle it alone could also be a demonstration of ego and masculinity in taking care of one’s problems in the absence of handouts from others. For example, for junior, when asked about how he handled something he found difficult, he replied, “I leave it alone.” When probed further about his disclosure in regards to feelings of doubt and concern, especially after I pointed out that in life there would be many stressful situations to come that could not be dealt with via avoidance, he explained that

“Usually my own problem is my problem. I don’t try to tell other people about it, I just deal with it how I wanna deal with it, I dunno I guess that’s just the way I am…but I feel like I’m my own person like if I have my own problem. It’s my problem unless I really need some help and I need something from you, but at the same time I’m not afraid to ask for help but I try not to ask for help…but I just feel like I should deal with it myself like It’s my problem, like if I don’t have to bother anybody with anything.”

In dealing with a problem alone, Junior’s attitude demonstrates one of the primary limitations of the participant definition of independence. After time, this particular outlook on independence begins to manifest itself in many ways – not only as self learner, but also as a learned habit of avoiding disclosure. This does two things: it allows these young men to keep their family out of the problem (to avoid causing extra grief and
trouble for their parents that have done so much for them) and also exude a false front showing capability and determination to learn and cope alone (a form of masculinity).

Avoidance of disclosure based on the fear of causing parents additional grief, worry, and disappointment could be seen in participants’ shared opinion that their parents practiced more of an “open-parenting style”. For instance, Jole explicated the avoidance of disclosure in a more detailed manner. When asked what happens to him when he encounters difficulty or experiences failure, he stated “I think a lot, like I’m always like I’m in my head a lot when that happens,” and he lamented that “I’d be withdrawn like it’d always be in the back of my mind though and like I’d be thinking about it.” I asked him if having it in the back of his mind would then convince him to ask for help then, but he replied no. So in contrast to Junior, making decisions or handling difficulty alone is not only coherent with the shared idea of independence that the young men had, but it is also a space for self reflection offering the possibility to self-learn without inconveniencing anyone else –especially parents that could not relate having been schooled in a completely different system and entirely different country.

In contrast to Jole, Briar did not ask school staff for help, but instead relied on the input of his older brother. Before selecting courses, Briar explained how he would consult with his brother beforehand to see which courses he had taken and with which teachers and then he would decide whether to take it or not. As his older brother attended the same school, he figured that he would know him best and be able to ascertain whether he could handle the work or not. If he was still unsure, he would check at school with teachers-but only two teachers that he associated closely with. While this participant conceded that he was not confident enough at the time to choose his courses alone, the way in which he went about soliciting advice on the courses also indicates the same attitude of independence. Note that the participant asked only teachers whom he felt comfortable with (a very limited few) and his brother, which from my understanding, can still be considered as confronting of self before disclosure to others.

The idea of self understood in comparison to both family history and current family illustrates yet another aspect of self perception inhabited by these young men. I supposed this can also be seen in a way, as another aspect of sibling dependency. In suggesting that asking a brother is almost like self consultation, I realize that this seems
absurd, particularly as so much emphasis on identity in North America is based on emphasis of being an individual. Yet, the young men all shared that they are constantly measured up in relation to both past family members and current family members. For this participant, like himself, his older brother also took an extra year to complete high school, and as they were only two years apart and shared a room together he reported being very close. When he discusses his progress and choices made in school he again makes reference to his migrational experience, his family back home, and himself in relation to his brother. He explained that

“Well since were like the first generations like me and my bro and everything are in like the first generation, they have I guess really high expectations cause like oh we didn’t have this quality of education in the Philippines so you better take advantage of it, and plus like, yeah I know it sounds bad, but no, (laughter) and in the Philippines my grandparents one was a principal of a high school and one was ahh, ahh one retired as an English teacher over there so then there’s also the (pause) like you come from an academic backgrounds so you should be really good at this, especially teaching, yeah there’s a lot of pressure on it actually.”

Choosing to become a teacher after high school reveals that Briar’s decision and effort in school was weighed in comparison to what he knows about life back home in the Philippines. His statements also imply that a history of education for families and identification as a first generation Filipino play a significant role in his decision. This is essentially four layers of analysis (dual frame of reference plus two family generations) and one complicated major decision that should be based on self alone, with some parental assistance, not generations of people. Not only is this a lot of pressure placed on one individual, but for a teenager it would have significant ramifications for their outlook on life, their perception of school, and their priorities on an everyday basis, aside from their own personal self esteem and self awareness. So here again, reference back to norms in another country is another sign of the persistent dual frame of reference that participants experience. It is a central pillar in both the formation and residual permanency of the Diasporic epistemology.

In another example, Junior compared himself to his sister, both by himself and based on the amount of interest he perceived shown by his parents to each sibling. He explains that
“I dunno lets say like grade 7 till like grade 10 and then I didn’t really do too good in school, so when they realized I don’t really care about school they just left it alone they didn’t really talk about it well unless college, they wanted me to go to college but I didn’t really care for it, so they didn’t like harp on it, like they did talk about the purpose of getting in over here but they just know that like I don’t really care for it, , well they stayed on my sister because I guess they felt like it was too late…my sister had potential from young…like every Wednesday or something she would have to go to a different school like it was like a gifted school since she got on that my parents had to stay on her to like stay on school.”

Here, Junior can be seen to distinguish himself from his sibling in terms of ability while simultaneously demonstrating a “crossroad moment” conceived through treatment, statements, and references made by his parents. In addition, in accordance with Briar, he reveals that his parents also made mention of their move to Canada for better opportunity but as he said, they stopped bothering him when they realized he was not interested in school.

I use Pizzolato’s (2008) term “crossroad moment” here to illustrate Junior’s thoughts as an example of how young Filipino Canadian men pause and waiver as they acknowledge their two different realities. On the one hand, Junior acknowledges he has a problem, but it is a problem in Canada because it is a priority in Canada, furthermore Junior has no one to go to about it. He knows if he were in the Philippines, it would be less of a priority and either way he would have had family around (that has experienced it before) to ask for help.

Based on their descriptions of their childhood, three out of the six participants – Junior, Carlos, and Marlon had lived surrounded by family members back home in the Philippines; surely they would have had a senior family member to ask. In contrast, Jole, Samuel, and Briar were left to consult with older siblings, some having not actually fared much better in the Canadian school system either. I assert that students learn a particular avoidance behavior, masked as a demonstration of independence, and formulate their perception of self as an accommodation for their positions at home –home alone frequently, raised by an older sibling as a result of parents at work all day, and/or living in the presence of grandparents alone. As five out of the six participants identify as being Filipino and associating more with being Filipino than Canadian, this would explain why they constantly see themselves and navigate though their circumstances based on a dual
frame of reference between past knowledge systems and present. If it weren’t for their family circumstances, they would have had someone to talk to. Structural factors then such as household arrangement render a double bind for these young men. On the one hand they are faced with having to first locate themselves in relation to their surroundings, remembering that they are not back home in the Philippines but here in Canada where the school system and home functions differently. They are comforted by limited resources, few people with similar experiences, and no other options besides going to school. Acknowledging this reality, they then attend a school environment where they try to enact the avoidance behavior they have come to master at home. At the same time, participants neglect to recognize that their conditioned avoidance behavior (or oppositional form of masculinity) conflicts with the school expectations for students here who are frequently encouraged in Canada to ask parents and teachers for help when they do not understand or experience difficulty with something.

**Independence and Family**

On top of identification of self as Filipino first before Canadian, participants frequently referenced themselves in relation to family dynamic, or in the words of Pratt (2010) how “the border continues—in an enduring way—to follow them inside” (p.23). Most of them described an intriguing family arrangement as a result of both structural and historical circumstances. I use the term structural because of their referencing of various ways in which their family came to reside in Toronto to begin with; which seemed to have a lot to do with immigration policy and procedure. The term historical refers to family circumstance and position in the past which also appeared to precede experiences of the youth interviewed. Patterns of migration described by all participants have resulted in unique relationships of sibling dependency as well as “open-parenting” methods described by the participants (to be discussed in the following chapter). This conception and configuration of family directly impacts the processes of meaning and sense-making of self and subsequent decisions for these young men.

When discussing family background, one of the structural factors that emerged from the participant narratives was that all of the families had been through some sort of separation or experience of hardship through their migration process to Canada. Most which changed or restructured the maintenance of a ‘nuclear household’ often assumed in
Canadian contexts, and produced unique structural arrangements of immediate family members, also referred to as transnational families by Parreñas (2001) defines transnational families as “families characterized by displacement, often having emotional, filial, and monetary obligation to family members back home and in the new place of residence” (p.12). In keeping with the characterization of a transnational family, while participants were proud to be in Canada and understood their parent’s reasons for migration, they also remained well aware of extended family remaining in the Philippines and animatedly described the possibility of going back for vacation at any time as favorable.

Of the six participants, in terms of historical factors impacting the idea of open-parenting, immigration patterns played an important role in establishing family dynamic in Canada. Moreover, open-parenting is seen to result in frustration and avoidance for young Filipino-Canadian males as it makes them feel like they can’t relate to their parents and their parents cannot help them because they were schooled in a different system. For example, Marlon and Briar reported that immigration resulted in them being raised by their grandparents in Canada whereas Carlos and Juan recalled being raised by their grandparents back home in the Philippines which of course was discontinued upon their arrival to Canada. In contrast to extended family involvement in childrearing, Jole and Samuel were predominantly taken care of by one parent alternating shifts with the other parent following their immigration to Canada. In terms of structural factors encompassing the circumstances under which participants migrated to Canada, four participants reported being sponsored by previously established extended family members in Canada as opposed to Jole and Junior who did not require sponsorship whose parents were both self-employed and had sufficient means to immigrate on their own. For Jole, his mother was a chartered accountant which paved the way for her family to immigrate to Canada. Jole remembered being raised primarily by his father after moving to Canada as his mother worked in Mississauga at the time. His father made dinner for him and his siblings every night and he rarely saw his mother except for a few hours each night and on weekends. For Jole, he was raised in the presence of his immediate family members in contrast to other participants who solely relied on grandparents and older siblings. Furthermore, Jole’s family had sufficient means to buy a home for the family and support
their academic needs and interests. Jole’s ideology of self then stems from his experience of being raised primarily by one parent every afternoon in school along with his siblings, an ideology that would not have been possible had it not been for both the structural and cultural circumstances that resulted in Jole’s living arrangements.

For Briar, his mother immigrated to Canada through the Live-In-Caregiver program (LCP), and was a single mother supporting two boys who were separated from their father. Briar recounted that his grandparents raised him and his brother and because of this, his brother filled the void of a missing father figure. When asked if Briar’s mother had ever specifically instructed Briar’s brother to fulfill this role, Briar was unsure. His response was, “I don’t think my mother ever told him, but obviously like he’s your younger brother watch him, but I don’t think there was ever like, this is your responsibility, like this is your job now because your fathers not here, I think it was a little bit of both, I think it’s just the person that he is.” Again, like Jole, Briar illustrates the hardship and sacrifice endured by his mother (in this case) to provide him and his brother with better opportunities. Therefore, structurally, the involvement of Briar’s mother in his everyday life is limited as she is part of the LCP and worked three jobs to support her family, particularly during Briar’s developmental and formulative years of growth. Culturally, Briar is plagued by the knowledge that his parents split as a result of immigration and the way things would have been had he been raised back home and his mother decided not to come to Canada. Although, Briar and Jole were both brought to Canada at the age of one, their experiences are not necessarily much different from those of the other participants that arrived at a much later age. Furthermore, their migration serves as a reminder of the intersection of various influences on their epistemologies and the repercussions both physically and emotionally of structural and cultural factors which continue to shape their lived experiences to this day. For Briar, he had to counter with a divided family and he never had the chance to communicate with his mother on an ongoing basis. In Jole’s case, his life was also bereft of one parent and he recalled frequently being, “left to my own devices.” Lending consideration to both Jole and Briar’s situation it makes sense that they would experience difficulty assimilating and integrating into the Canadian school system, robbed of constant input and support provided by parents that were simply not available or informed enough to help.
Thus, encounters of immigration highlight a common process – the dislocation of family members and its subsequent family structure often resulting in the reversal of parental roles as well as the reunification of children and their parents several years beyond childhood- physically and emotionally. Cultural patterns of displacement and dislocation including family members affected and socioeconomic status, consequent of the Canadian immigration system create an, “invisibility of separation” which shields schools from the cruelty of migration (Pratt 2010). As in the case of Briar and Jole, the school was never made aware of their circumstances at home, or the amount of weight that they carried wanting to do better to please their parents, just not quite being shown how. This invisibility of separation encompassing issues of race, gender, age, manifests itself through the very concept of independence that these young men describe- doing things alone because one is witness to the reality of help not available in the form needed. For Briar, he ethnically identifies first as being Filipino first before Canadian because of his family arrangement, in terms of gender issues he is left solely as witness to his mother’s strength to support the family and his mother as his primary role model. Lastly, although he arrived at the age of one, in being raised by his grandparents until his mother was released to one job, it was years before he spent any real time with his mother and at that point there was just too much time that had passed between them. On the other hand, high school in Canada is typically meant to prepare these young men for a different type of independence, the responsibility and obligation to pursuing education with the intention of securing a good job to become a ‘successful’ adult. Yet, in comparison, the reality shows that these young men are not hurrying to follow suit. Surely lack of motivation cannot entirely account for the educational trajectories of these young men.

In regards to their thoughts about education and success, hesitation in their replies and a distinct casual sense of time and notions of future began to emerge. Time for these young men, became another aspect of independence to be explored as a potential cultural factor affecting their schooling experiences in Toronto. For these young men overall, there was a general lack of sense of time. Time was whatever was considered fun in the moment - whatever they did not have to think about immediately if it could be avoided. Time made certain things unattainable, and so for these young men time is not important, what is seen as important is action.
For example, all of the young men except for Samuel experienced difficulty in completing their school work in high school. When asked about what their thoughts were at the time, or how they looked at their progress, they would talk about the fun that they had with their friends, in school clubs, sports, or skipping classes together, despite the fact that most of them were kicked off of school teams and programs because of poor academic achievement. Junior recalled, “I thought it was all fun and games… I was just having too much of a good time with friends and stuff and hanging out.” Similarly, Marlon, “I had my friends and stuff, why am I going to sit down and do work.” These statements demonstrate a limited sense of time. Time is seen here as enjoyable, an entity defined by what these young men are getting to enjoy at a particular moment. But what about the later?

**Time as Casual**

In addition to their responses about the fun that they were having, there was also a sense of avoidance in their concept of time, an unusual attitude that nothing was urgent, everything could wait until later. Statements such as, “I just forgot about doing work,” and “I didn’t really think about it at all, I just pushed it off until fifth year,” “I just didn’t care, like at that moment I wasn’t really thinking about my education,” or “I’ll just do it tomorrow,” are examples of the attitude of detachment shown by these young men towards school. What appears to be a poor attitude seems to be a verbal method of the same avoidance or display of independence outlined earlier. It is not that these young men felt they could do everything on their own; their concept of independence is a result of many experiences over time of seeking help and being disappointed by parents, extended family, and teachers, and becoming disengaged as a consequence of that disappointment. These statements are a materialization of the same concept of independence, as a means of coping with the ramifications of structural, historical, and cultural circumstances imposed on these young men. Being left alone, having to adjust to a new school system during the most important years in one’s life, having siblings that did not fare well in the same environment under the same circumstances, and most significantly being in the presence of others in similar situations and/or socioeconomic status, have incurred tremendous emotional scars and weight for these young men. Based
on the data, I posit that participant lack of urgency and future orientation in relation to
time is the product of specific structural and cultural factors.

Some participants remembered that the fourth year of high school was the most
stressful because their classmates seemed to be applying to academic or career programs,
and they confessed about not really thinking much about a future after high school. Jole
recalled that at that time, “[I] was really puzzled by the stress.” In this statement, he
demonstrates how before he did not really think about choosing a career or post graduate
program as something to stress about. Unlike Jole, Junior remembered that he started an
apprenticeship at an automotive mechanic shop because of the pressure he felt to do
something with himself and make a decision. As the decision had to be made quickly, he
took auto so that it would get him out of school, while earning credits and money all at
the same time. He thought neither about what he really wanted for himself out of the
available programs, nor about how long he would stay in that profession. Ten years later,
he is still an auto-mechanic. When I asked if he’s concerned about his future, he replied,
“I was never thinking about later on, till now I don’t ever think about later on.” His
statement further supports the lack of urgency intertwined with his knowledge system.

Junior’s parents also realized that he was not interested in school. They felt he
was old enough and responsible enough to make his own decisions, and saw him earning
money while going to school. As Junior’s family is well off back home but considered
working class in Canada, from a structural perspective, Junior’s attitude towards working
and going to school supports Willis’s (1977) idea of a “counter-school culture” which he
describes as having, “profound similarities with the culture its members are mostly
destined for – shopfloor culture” (p. 52). In the case of Junior, not only does he boast a
sense of accomplishment in making the decision to take on auto-mechanics, his response
also reveals a sense of privilege which is also described by Willis (1977) as the “rejection
of school work by ‘the lads’ and the omnipresent feeling that they know better is also
paralleled by a massive feeling on the shopfloor, and in the working class generally, the
practice is more important than the theory” (p. 56). Therefore, lending consideration to
structural factors, such as the class bracket of Junior and his family, a counter-school
culture enacted as a boastful or mocking attitude towards the importance and necessity of
education masks the reality that Junior needed that coop as a member of working class to
both obtain his high school diploma and have a form of income at the same time. Willis (1977) writes that “once the working class boy begins to differentiate himself from school authority… [moving away from school culture to working culture]…there is a powerful cultural charge behind him to complete the process” (p. 74). At home, either because of socioeconomic status or in doubt of Junior’s possibilities in the job market, his parents had long lost faith in his pursuit of higher education. Thus, rather than being pushed back to the institution, cultural charge further affirmed Junior’s choice. In support of this notion, Maggay (n.d.) suggests that culturally for Filipino people, time is “dynamic” and “unfixed” in contrast to North America’s concept of time which is linear and sequential. In Canada, generally life events such as education, marriage, and starting a family follow in some sort of relative sequence, particularly daily events and life events. Yet, Maggay (n.d) has found that Filipinos do not follow the same concept of time and instead view time as a process marked via a “present orientedness [where] events are confronted only when they present themselves” (p.10). This understanding of time can be seen as a cultural factor pushing Junior to feel simultaneously more hopeful and reliant on his job as an automechanic as his culture supports a general “lack of anxiety about tomorrow…bahala na” (Maggay, n.d., p.11).

The cultural attitude of bahala na was made further apparent when asked about his current job and his future in it: Junior remarked “this is just one of those things that I spent a lot of time in so I might as well finish it.” This cultural attitude travels as a diasporic epistemology as it comes from parents and hence, factors into participant knowledge systems. For Junior, time is casual, and he figures that since he has invested a lot of time into what he was doing, he reckoned that it must be worth something. However, when asked whether he saw himself doing the same thing in five or ten years, he replied no. He explained that he didn’t know what he would be doing but he couldn’t see himself doing what he was doing now forever. When probed further for more details on what job it would be he responded

“Well definitely before I even think about proposing or getting married or have children I wanna have something settled that like I could see myself doing for more than 10 years and making a lot of money. It doesn’t have to be what I’m doing now, as long as it’s something that I know I’m gonna be there for a bit and I’m gonna make some good money enough to support two people.”
Yet, Junior has no plan in motion to accomplish this deadline he set for himself when he becomes 30 years old, which would have been five years away. Thus, although Junior did not seem to see time as a direct determinant of job attainability, the constraint of time was still present—whether he chose to acknowledge it or not. He sort of indicates that he is aware of it because he provides the number of thirty. Does he realistically understand the amount of time that he has and is he planning to use that time accordingly? Doesn’t look too probable.

Similar to Junior, when finally getting down to serious conversations about future plans with other participants, particularly in terms of a profession, a few of the young men started to show how they felt that this peculiar conceptualization of time, a product of both cultural and structural entities diminished all career opportunities. Their stories also revealed how they started to see time as a determinant of job attainability. For example, Carlos recalled once aspiring to become a police officer and felt that he couldn’t now because he didn’t feel like he was “there anymore.” He disclosed that sometimes when he would compare his progress to that of his friends, he would say to himself, “oh should I just quit my work and do a part-time and go back to school now or should I just keep doing what I’m doing and get like that manager position that I wanted before.” In Carlos’s situation, work seemed like the best option. Both of his parents belonged to a working class culture, they worked at local factories. His closest sibling had fared no better in school, and his other two siblings who did obtain higher education (college) were not able to obtain professional careers either. Thus, Carlos revealed that he needed the money, not because he didn’t have food, but just so that he could be independent and not have to bother his parents for money all the time. Like Junior, in securing immediate work at a young age (having not even graduated from high school), the structural and cultural conditions of his household pushed him further into the “shopfloor” mentality and away from the institution that could not guarantee any success or immediate income. Furthermore, when asked about success, Carlos expressed the same attitude - considering it as something that had already passed. He stated, “Success in education is like coordination in sports. If you didn’t play any sports when you were younger you just won’t have that coordination later on in life.” Like Junior, Carlos also expresses this idea that time has passed, even though he is only in his mid-twenties. What
he doesn’t realize, or cannot realize within the confines of a working class culture is that time really has not passed, and that this is only a sense of defeat speaking up, the very same disengagement resulting from years of invalidated feelings. Although it appears that for these young men time restricts their ability to do what they once wanted to do, time in the sense of fun is different now, time instead has become a predictor of job attainment and security. In reality, their very lack of sense in time and urgency is merely a product of the structural and cultural complexities in which they are caught, that cannot be undone simply by getting an education.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, based on participant statements pertaining to self, I have identified the impact of physical geography (Canada and the Philippines) as a structural factor, in combination with cultural factors of independence and time as crucial components in the development and maintenance of a diasporic epistemology for Filipino Canadian young men. As these young men were born in the Philippines, they identify as being Filipino first, before they consider themselves as Canadian. Furthermore, they explain how the continuation of habits including language, food, and cultural traditions followed their journey to Canada and reminds them that they are not Canadian. This was made particularly evident as participants had a hard time keeping their immigration experience separate from their explanations of self identify and sense of self. This diasporic epistemology is problematic as it clashes with some of the expectations that these young men are faced with in Canadian schools and in Canadian society. Through discussions of self based on a dual frame of reference, descriptions of identity and state of being, it is also clear that some aspects of a diasporic epistemology “travel” from parents to children. This brings the significance of family in the development of individual knowledge systems to the forefront. The following chapter will explore the impact of family on the diasporic epistemology of Filipino Canadian young men.
Chapter 5: “We’re close but we’re like an impersonal close” - Family and Diasporic Epistemology

Introduction
Not only does immigration create a dual frame of reference for the self, but the plague of separation between back home and here also creates a tremendous shift in household position, responsibility, and family dynamic. In this chapter, I explore how a particular distance is maintained between participants and their parents, and I suggest that a combination of structural and cultural factors result in unusual household arrangements and a loving, yet impassive family dynamic. At the beginning of this chapter, I entertain a discussion of Filipino cultural values which set up family dynamic in particular ways. Following this, the bulk of the chapter is focused on participant conceptualization of “open-parenting,” a term used by Briar and Marlon to explain their feelings and relationships at home. By looking at the narratives of a few participants specifically, I explain how these Filipino Canadian young men identify with an unconditional, yet impersonal care that they receive from their parents, whereby, as a result of the consequences of migration for the family, a superficial relationship within the form of unconditional love is also seemingly established. I explore how family arrangement and this unconditional, yet impersonal love has resulted in a reversal of gender roles in the family, and a subsequent interpretation of this by participants leaving them vulnerable at school. I conclude that the reality of “open-parenting,” is a consequence of structural factors including migration, labour, and the discontinuation of typical family organization, coupled by the discontinuation and misinterpretation of Filipino cultural factors upon settlement in Canada. These factors have serious repercussions for these young men as they absorb the pressure and conditions at home as part of their Diasporic epistemology and in turn experience great difficulty in navigating through both school and family.

Impersonal Care
As a result of parents being away at work, and split family arrangements, brothers filled the void of fathers, sisters as mothers and lola’s (grandmothers) were considered to be closer than mother. Briar talked about this when recalling his parents’ separation after
the move to Toronto. He explained that, “my mother she wasn’t always well off when we were growing up, like so she was always at work, so I guess my main caretaker was my brother so I guess I was always close to him.” He described how his brother always picked him up from games, corrected him when he made mistakes and from that he grew closer to him even though his brother is only 2 years older than him. Briar demonstrates how in the absence of a father, his brother fulfilled that role. This much is understandable, especially when one parent is not in the picture. But I was curious to know whether parents played a direct role in sibling dependency. Did they instruct their children to rely on each other, teaching a family first philosophy?

When I asked him about whether his mother instructed him to rely on his brother, he said that she never explicitly said it but he suspected that maybe she had talked with his brother privately. He claimed that his brother was just a nice guy and that was just his temperament, predicting they would have been close anyways. But he also explained the importance of using titles of respect for older siblings – a traditional practice upheld in many families. Briar lamented that he was most familiar with the term “manong” (meaning older brother in the dialect of Ilocano) and said that he often used it, particularly in formal places when they were out together both out of respect and again to set them apart from their surroundings. For other participants, the term was “kuya” (also known as older brother in Tagalog) and again used as a sign of respect, as opposed to older sisters which are referred to as “ate” (in Tagalog) before their first name. Again, according to Briar, titles serve as a sign of identity, respect, and display of family affinities. In turn, these young men come to understand both a particular role and obligation to other members of their family, despite their actual feelings about those individuals.

In contrast to Briar, Carlos also voiced that “I don’t actually call my brothers kuya anymore, but I call my sister ate, she’s the only one that I call ate, that’s it, but the siblings I have in the Philippines I call them all that stuff.” Unlike Briar, he felt there was no point in using that term for his brothers close in age often, but he rationalized using it to address his sister, the parent in charge when his parents were away at work. Note here once again, Carlos’ tendency to refer to what he would do back home in comparison to what he does here. When explaining the difference between his brothers and his sister, he
recalled that when he was younger he often felt his sister gave him a hard time when she was taking care of him and he never liked when she told him what to do. As a teenager he described how, “she’d kinda be like do this and do that and I guess cause she was older right we were supposed to listen to her, but now I respect her a lot more because I’ve gotten to that age where I’ve realized that she is older and I gotta just man up and do whatever she tells me to do.” Both of these young men reveal that they are clearly very dependent on their siblings, more than just as a playmate but with a heavy role to monitor their behavior and stick together – another sign of the importance and significance of the revised family structure in the lives of these participants, and undoubtedly a neon sign in terms of the way in which the roles of individuals within the institution of family have been revised. The practice of addressing siblings in a particular manner and the level of authority that older siblings have also serves as an illustration of the way in which a diasporic epistemology has transferred from parents to their children as children have come to believe in these practices they have been taught as the norm. These family arrangements and cultural factors reinforce the precarious conditions resultant in moving from the Philippines to Canada and at the same time, they also create an unconditional yet impersonal form of care provided by parents which has both positive and negative consequences for these young men.

Despite a few differences, individuals reported experiencing a similar type of relationship with parents (both those raised by one parent and those by grandparents) which they defined as “impersonal close.” When asked about the process of immigration and childrearing in the Philippines, they all described father as the main caregiver and head of the household back home, as is custom in most patriarchal societies. However, as a result of revised family structures in Canada (as family members were left back home), both Marlon and Briar reported that they were closer to their grandparents than their parents and most often dialogued about their everyday schooling experiences with their grandparents. Similarly, the other participants raised by parents also referenced a “don’t speak, don’t ask” relationship with their parents. The participants explained that they were aware that their parents were working, trying to support them and felt it sufficient enough that their parents still asked ‘surface’ questions such as ‘how’s school?’ Or ‘what classes are you taking?’ Although cognizant of emotional distance between themselves
and their parents, participants did not appear emotionally affected by their family
dynamic, Briar shared that

“We were never really too close, like we don’t have problems but umm it goes
back to like I never really lived with my father, and my mother was always at
work, and so like we didn’t really have dinner conversations of stuff like that…
’cause she was never really there so I guess when we grew up, even though she
works less now, even though my bro and I we support ourselves, were just not
gonna have those conversations.”

He continued to explain that he felt that this particular configuration established
practices of saying hi and bye and out of habit, as a result, they would never be too
personal in each other’s lives. In support of Briar’s feelings and description of an
impersonal close, Pratt (2012) describes on p.66 the separation between children reunited
with parents years later as “a tall building keeping you apart.” She follows that, “for
some mothers and children, they were never able to enter into the emotional space – the
tall building that divided them” (p.66). In other words, nothing could make up for the
time that had been lost for participants dislocated from their parents. Moreover, even for
participants that immigrated at a young age, the same divide can be seen between them
and their parents as a result of their parent’s working conditions and employment. This
reality is very much connected to the creation and sustainment of a Diasporic
epistemology because even if spared the external trauma of displacement at later age as
Pratt (2012) writes, “the border continues – in an enduring way – to follow them inside”
(p.16), particularly as significant family relations are still left eschew. In addition, these
young men need to learn how to mediate between borders in order to balance their needs
at home with their needs at school.

**Unconditional Love**

In agreement with Briar, Marlon acknowledged a similar style of parenting. He
described his home life as

“Like I have a really loose household… I dunno how to explain it…It’s like we,
we aren’t really that-we don’t have strict chores likes you have to do this because
it’s your day today or you have to take out the garbage… like you have to study
or you have to go to sleep at 11, we never had that… like it was more free.”

He also perceived them as not the type to “say like you’ve failed us, but it’s just
like an inner feeling to do the best that I can with it.” All of the other young men made
similar statements about their parents and through their ideas, in opposition to the open parenting style that they identified, I like to think of it more as an unconditional yet impersonal care resulting in both positive and negative consequences. In sort of a positive feedback loop, this impersonal yet unconditional care reassures the young men that they would not be given up on. In support of this, responses of these young men showed that they believed they had a safe house and therefore did not consider or experience any consequences.

For example, Carlos explained having been primarily raised by his mother back home after his father came over to Canada, because of this he felt that he still regarded her as head of the house following the move. While, in comparison to the Philippines, in Toronto he witnessed both of his parents working over twelve hour shifts and in turn, he was frequently left with no one home, or extended family members (common practice back home) around to monitor him. When Carlos discussed the process he experienced in dropping out of school he acknowledged that his parents were upset with him, they yelled, and they told him to go to school, go to his classes and do his work. He explained “like they got mad at me but like they didn’t beat me or anything.” “They didn’t threaten to kick you out?” I asked. “Not with my mother, no,” he replied. Carlos clearly illustrates how, based on this impersonal relationship that had been created and fostered by external circumstances, he was not scared of any consequences and heeded his parent’s warnings like a safety net, instead of actually taking it seriously to boost his work ethic and make good on his obligation to be as successful as he could (given that they had migrated for his benefit).

In addition to his view of an impersonal relationship with his parents, Carlos alluded to his parent’s unconditional love when he explained how his decisions and life were okay because it was what he knew as “culturally acceptable.” He first explained that he had an older brother with whom he shared a room and a lot of behavioural habits, and had also dropped out of school like him. He recalled that his parents were upset when he was behind in school and did talk to him about it, but what could they say? His sibling had not necessarily done any better. When specifically asked about living at home and future plans to move out, he lamented
“Like what my parents have done for me especially my mother like she’s taken care of me, and I wanna do the same thing, it’s not cuz oh im not tryin to rely on them or have my mother like cook food for me or do my laundry I would just wanna take care of them the way my mother takes care of me, my mother still packs my lunch, still does my laundry and you know I don’t hear that from any of my other friends, but see that’s why I want to return that favour, I told my mother cuz every morning she wakes up early morning to make me breakfast and every morning I leave and I don’t even eat it but she still makes me breakfast everyday and she knows that I don’t eat the breakfast”

When asked what his parents thought about him moving out or if they had ever spoken about it and in what capacity, he explained

“No not with my parents, well actually my father probably like, well he hasn’t really said anything like oh are you planning to move out or anything, cause were more probably that family that’ll probably stay with each other for a really long time cause I guess that’s just how Filipinos are, like some of the families I’ve known, like my cousins they’re old and they have families but they’re still with like you know with their parents and stuff and you know that’s just how it is, I don’t see anything wrong with it, I don’t see why you have to move out if you don’t really have to, like if your parents want you to be there I guess that’s fine with me.”

Although Carlos explained his choice to stay at home and “take care of [his] mother…the way she’s taken care of me…that’s just how Filipinos are, like some of the families I’ve known,” he failed to make good on his parents’ sacrifice to provide him with better opportunities in Canada. He also exemplifies the way in which his parents’ diasporic epistemology has been transferred to him in that he now believes staying home as a grown young man is a norm and acceptable. He believes this because this is what his family thinks is right, this is what they knew, now it is what he knows and since it is what he has been exposed to since the time of birth, it is his reality.

In returning to the issue of educational success and failure for these young men, from the perspective of an educator, Carlos’s revelation is problematic. Here, Carlos explicitly reveals that school was never his priority. He never needed it because he wasn’t viewing its purpose the same way as one would view it- an opportunity to move ahead. School for Carlos does not have the same meaning for him as it does for most people. He always knew he was going to live at home, that is all he has ever known, and although he has learned otherwise (growing up in Canada), education cannot override his perspective.
In his narrative, Carlos exemplifies the on/off switching between what he knows back home and what he knows here. He knows that he has another identity back home; he has a family there, other responsibilities, a different role where he’s not struggling to make a living or find a good job. On the other hand, in Canada one needs money, and a good job to secure a certain lifestyle and some form of success. A constant scan of cultural and structural factors informs his every move, his thoughts entangled in both his own and his parents’ diasporic epistemology, through which he defines and filters all of his life choices. His story confirms for me that I cannot change this, I can work with it, but I cannot change it, and even in working with it, he might never aspire towards more that he is capable of academically because he knows he never had to.

Now that he is older, he realizes that they only wanted what was best for him and because they felt they were at fault for his happiness in school, they didn’t want to scare him away from home after the family had already been through so much separation. Carlos’s situation reveals the fragile emotional state of these families, and they way in which children come to think of their parents childrearing habits as “open-parenting” and the norm. Yet, what these young men do not see are the conditions in which their parents are forced to meet their demands, keep the family together, and justify their decision to move to Canada in the first place. As participants revealed that they only saw their parents at the end of their work day and most often one parent at a time, they are only capable of seeing as much as they have learned in those few moments. Their diasporic epistemology and that of their parents constrains their seeing because it causes them to see what they want to see, what they have been taught and have learned to see as normal. Looking beyond this normalcy at things (goals, decisions, and events) is not a habit that they have seen or learned. In other words, one cannot want what they never had to begin with.

This impersonal yet unconditional care is key to the persistence of the Diasporic epistemology for these young men because it simultaneously reveals the painful emotional histories of immigrant parents and the impasse that immigrant parents find themselves in when they are unable to grant their reason for coming to Canada the things that they want. Like every parent, immigrant parents want the very best for their kids. However, unlike other parents, failing to acquiesce to the requests and needs of their
children enables the sacrifices past made to surface in feelings of worry, doubt, and most of all guilt of being blamed for those very same sacrifices. When families immigrate, family members can be separated for a number of years. This is what creates the impersonal care or the “tall tower” between children and their parents, the time and years lost which can never be redeemed.

Similarly to Briar and Carlos, Jole described how his father remained at home with him in the afternoons and the way in which this affected his relationship with each parent. Jole reflected on the fact that his Father always knew what was going on with him in school but never talked to him about it, and justified that he still had just as strong a relationship because his father cared for him. He explained that “like um my mother worked in Mississauga so she wasn’t home in the afternoon after school, so it was always my father that was there, umm he’d come home from work, cook dinner... like in every other aspect he was there you know.” Jole provided a glimpse into what his home life looked like and what a typical afternoon for himself as a student (the time when usually school work is completed, dinner conversations occur) would have been like. In both cases, a trend is made apparent in that Jole, like Briar and Carlos grew up mostly in the absence of one parent. What then (if any) are the consequences of such circumstances? As made evident in Jole’s defence of the role his father played in his life, he showed some embarrassment in acknowledging that his father’s behavior being home after school and making dinner for the family is quite unusual as it is typically considered the role of a mother in the family.

Jole credited his position in the family (as the middle child) for his understanding of ‘open parenting’ methods. He remembered himself as “sort of under the radar so they didn’t really bother me…and that…if my parents weren’t controlling my brother they were back to pushing my sister into doing well so I was kind of left to my own devices.” He felt that his parents were occupied with his other siblings and attributed their slackness towards him for this reason. However, he also described himself as a quiet child that often retreated into himself (particularly after experiencing failure) and perhaps misunderstood his parent’s involvement. Alike to other participants, he also explained that it was his mother (as in all of the cases) that pushed him harder to pursue his education.
When asked which parent was involved most, he stated that “my father was sort of just ahh there, like he’d encourage me but I think, I dunno I think this is just speculation but he didn’t really say anything cause he didn’t really finish university himself so I think he felt that it would be sort of a hypocrite to say that.” He quickly followed in justifying his father’s involvement with “like those education, schooling, they weren’t even tertiary to my interests during high school, I was doing other shit so umm I dunno I don’t think so.” Other participants agreed with him and stated that they knew their fathers were informed about their behavior and marks in school (from their mothers) but that it was mostly their mothers pushing the issue. Thus, two important matters are brought to the forefront here: 1. Participants are revealing that mother is generally the parent more concerned about school, and 2. As a result of migration and labour integration, participants have come to envision the role of each parent in different ways. It is essential to inquire then, why is it that mother is perceived as more concerned about school then father? And, would any changes in behavior have come from father being more involved? This particular participant considered this possibility during our interview, he concluded that he didn’t know if it would have made a difference because he recalled being stubborn at the time. Jole’s family provides a clear example of the way in which parental roles have come to be reversed in Canada. In the Philippines, his father was seen as head of the house, the provider, and yet here it is his mother taking on this role. This is a negative consequence, as these young men have come to understand their gendered role in family and work as not the breadwinner, not head of the household but secondary to the role of the mother in a household. This image also renders fathers as less academically capable than that of mothers, particularly as they are seen executing household duties and babysitting while mother makes the decisions and pays the bills.

In the same way as Jole, Junior referenced the same ‘open parenting’ and thought of his parents as not really involved either, especially through considering himself in relation to his sibling as well. He recalled from his elementary school years that

“I didn’t really do too good in school, so when they realized I don’t really care about school they just left it alone they didn’t really talk about it well unless college, they wanted me to go to college but I didn’t really care for it, so they didn’t like harp on it, like they didn’t talk about the purpose of getting in over here [in Canada] they did but they just know that like I don’t really care for it…they stayed on my sister because I guess they felt like it was too late.”
Junior understood open parenting, or his parents unconditional yet impersonal care as not “harping” and the appropriate response when you have a child that’s not interested in school. Yet, the ambivalence about his understanding is materialized through his assumption, the “I guess” that it was too late for him. He also revealed that they never found out about his poor progress and behavior either in school until it was too late and the school wanted to suspend him. He thought that it was clever that he had “accidentally” filled out school forms with his cell number instead of his parents as a contact. Every time that the school was calling his ‘parents’ to report an absence, they were going to his cellular voicemail. Identifying once again with the idea of parenting working through a positive feedback mechanism, Junior also demonstrates that he did not feel a consequence for his actions, and was reassured by his parents “lack of involvement” (as understood by him). Junior’s actions reveal just of the many modes in which these young men navigate through both school and family. In methods of avoidance, both entities are left untroubled, making less hassle and worry for all parties involved. Quite a few participants shared this same belief (even going as far as making the same sentence) that their parents “thought I knew what I was doing so they just leave me alone type of thing.” Most of them followed up with the same idea of being reassured that they could do no wrong. For Carlos, even after being asked about failure (as this participant had been at risk of failing high school at one point), he responded

“oh yeah definitely even if I didn’t end up passing I think they’d be ok, they’d be mad at me for a very long time but they’d still support me in whatever I’d become and it’s still a learning experience for you, instead of trying to force me into anything.”

I consider “open-parenting” as an unconditional yet impersonal form of care that has both positive and negative consequences for these Filipino Canadian young men. On the one hand, they interpret this form of care as a safety net; they know that their parents will always support them- even in times of disappointment. On the other hand, this form of care negatively impacts the educational success of these young men as it makes them feel as though they do not need to pursue or rush to pursue higher education or professional careers because they’ll always have their parents. Furthermore, the realities of these young men challenge the mainstream research findings that family’s socio-
economic status and parental education are predictors of students’ academic success (Willis, 1977). For Jole, he believed that his father did not push him harder in school because that would have made him a hypocrite as he did not finish his own education. For both Jole and Junior coming from middle class families, they should have the resources available to them to pursue school, there should be no excuse for them to be behind in school, both of their mothers are working professionals with competitive salaries, but the fact is, they are not. In addition, for many immigrant parents who didn’t have education, their hope is that coming to Canada will allow that opportunity for their children (Li, 2001). Pratt (2012) has found that particularly for immigrant youth

Immigrant success stories are typically tied to children because migration is so often done in their name, for their future. In this sense, children often bear the responsibility for redeeming, or making good on, and in the face of, their own and their family trauma. (p. 70)

This is precisely why Jole’s father should be pushing him further in school and talking to him about the importance of education, so that he will have the opportunities that his father did not have, but these discussions are not happening. So what’s going on here? In stark opposition to the literature, despite having highly educated parents or great socio-economic status, these young Filipino-Canadian males are not following in the footsteps of their parents, they are failing. Despite having money and role models, it is simply not enough, it is their psyche holding them back. Haunted by a history of immigration, family separation, and emotion, it is their very own affect, their very own mental capability and inner conflict between what they want to do and what they have come to believe they are not capable of given their circumstances.

**An Indirect Communication System**

Of course, structural factors are not solely contributory to the seemingly free ride that these young men believe themselves to be in, there are also certain cultural factors that share responsibility in their understanding of the family dynamic. In support of their construction of an unconditional yet impersonal care, Maggay (n.d) writes about a Filipino indirect communication system which has been known to strongly influence Filipino family dynamic. This can be understood in *pahiwatig* (seeing life together) “ways of expressing the need or want of something” which is very much founded upon the value of *pakikipagkapwa* (your feelings), that encompasses a “keen sensitivity to a
complex of verbal and nonverbal cues interacting within a given communication context” (p.14). Thus, in support of Junior’s sentiments of not “harping” and accepting children not interested in school, Maggay (n.d.) shows that Filipino-Canadian parents may not need to resort to constant verbal or physical punishment in their childrearing methods like other cultures, if they are relying upon verbal and non-verbal cues previously established from a younger age, passed on traditionally through childrearing methods. This would again be another aspect, a cultural factor helping to formulate and sustain the Diasporic epistemology of Filipino youth through the continuation of a historical habit which other individuals do not possess.

When participants were asked about their poor performance in school, and ultimately, their understanding of educational failure, they constantly referred back to their home dynamic. When students point to their home as the cause of their educational failure instead of the institutional racism that exists at school, they initiate the ‘blame game’ reinforcing the stereotype that student behavior is a reflection of parent childrearing and status. The ‘blame game’ is successful as it detracts attention away from real issues that exist, such as school busses passing students by each morning to multiple choice vocabulary tests for English as a second language (ESL) students. In addition, participants also overlooked structural factors including migration, labour issues, and gender imbalance in terms of parental involvement and conversation about school in their homes via the reversal of parental roles, and sometimes the reinstatement of grandparents as fully responsible parents for a second time in life. Aside from pahiwatig and pakikipagkapwa, another cultural factor preserving family structure and dynamic which emerged in participant statements around the idea of sibling dependency was: respeto. This was the idea that one must always give respect to older family members (Valenzuela, 1999, p. 6). Thus, not only did separation rearrange family structure and dynamic, but it also interrupted the natural bond experienced between siblings and also seemed to result in greater expectations of sibling dependency as well as pressure experienced (whether acknowledged or not) by siblings to fulfill greater roles in place of missing or working central family members. These roles are sustained and irreversible through loyalty to the cultural belief in respeto. Cultural values are interwoven into the family dynamic that results from immigration and family separation. For example, in
specific cases like Jole and Briar, these cultural values help to sustain family structure the way that it is. For example, in Briar case, he answers to his brother and his grandparents, he cannot question them because they were left in charge of him. For Jole, he understands his father’s way of parenting in agreement with Maggay’s (n.d.) notions of a silent communication system whereby anticipated behaviours are implied not directly or repeatedly demanded. This cultural aspect is significant to the maintenance of a Diasporic epistemology as it is part of what these young men know as normal. At home, Filipino Canadian young men learn not to question the authority, these cultural norms ensure that. However, at school, one is expected to ask questions, questions are invited, which is a very independent and much more self-directed approach in dealing with authority then these young men are used to. In regards to the notion of respeto then, teachers need to develop solid trusting relationships with Filipino Canadian students so that upon giving advice and feedback, students can see purpose and importance, confiding in someone other than a family member.

Conclusion

In this chapter of my thesis, I have demonstrated the ways in which young Filipino-Canadian men come to identify themselves through a Diasporic epistemology in relation to their family and the structural and cultural factors which construct that meaning for them. Their experiences of immigration and their integration into the Canadian social and school system creates a unique and often times confusing family arrangement where young men physically see their parents exchange parental roles with extended family members and siblings in the transition from back home to here. After immigration, original anticipation of opportunity and increased financial stability are soon shunted by the reality that parents are away at work all day, leaving youth heavily reliant upon grandparents and other siblings to maintain the family. This is the reality of transnational families (Parrenas, 2001). The reality of a transnational family distinguishes young Filipino Canadian males from outcomes alike to other non-immigrant youth. It results in a unique transnational mind, a Diasporic epistemology (primarily for immigrant families and children) preventing these youth from moving forward in school. The effects of separation are made further apparent through the way in which these young men refer to their childrearing as “open parenting” where parents are seen to lack involvement and
disciplinary measures by these young men. However, given the ramifications and emotional hardship endured both culturally and historically, the reality for these young men (except for Samuel) is a form of impersonal yet unconditional love which parents are forced to develop in coping with conditions beyond their control. Because of the circumstances in which these families are placed, these young men are forced to attend school, having not discussed their courses with their parents, their goals in school, and barely any family time for daily check-in’s for concerns and expectations; hence, they appear only half interested. The lack of interest demonstrated by these young men is an illustration of the way in which the diasporic epistemology of parents has travelled to their children as these young men struggle to fulfill their parents’ expectations. As parents that are diaspora have endured limited success in their own integration to the educational and career institution in Canada, a belief in capability becomes quite dismal. Consequently, for children, motivation and initiative in school are controlled by a belief in capability. However, these young men are attending school already with knowledge of limited capability established by the belief system rampant at home. For children knowing that their behavior will not be noticed until it is absolutely their last opportunity to redeem themselves, and that they’re parents will be mad but they won’t “do anything” about it – because they are not home and they’re not really the main caregiver, these children continue to be disinterested in school, viewing it as merely an option, rather than an opportunity. Yet, the reality is there is no one they feel that can discuss it with them, who really understands their perspective and where they’re coming from- in other words, their Diasporic epistemology. Based on observation alone, I suspect that for Filipino diaspora whose diasporic epistemologies seem to travel from parents to their children, can continue forth to second and third generation Canadian-born Filipinos as they are still products of a “transnational family”. However, I suppose that a change in socio-economic status, varying degrees of assimilation, and the use of historical/ traditional childrearing methods would dictate the extent to which individual epistemology is influenced. Further studies would be needed over a much longer period of time in order to support this notion.
Chapter 6: *I go to school, I don’t go to class*” - Education as “optional” and Diasporic Epistemology

**Introduction**

It is generally believed that one’s success in school has a positive correlation with one’s success in life. This belief is underpinned by the assumption that higher education and good work ethic will be an asset in obtaining a highly esteemed occupation (Macleod, 2009). However, in this research inquiry when participants were asked whether success in school was a predictor of success in life, this was not the consensus among research participants. This finding is particularly diasporic for two reasons: firstly, structural barriers in the job market create an uneven playing field for diaspora communities preventing them from achieving the definition of success considered to be the norm in that particular society. Secondly, some diasporic communities have their own definition of success. As an educator, I believe that success in school means becoming a young responsible citizen, conscientious of the impact of self action on others, and having a desire to contribute to the greater good of society using one’s talents and interests. My position on success converges with the mainstream definition of success in that educational institutions are designed in a way that promotes specific stages of progression in one’s life towards an ultimate (positive) end such as an occupation, or higher education, or worse, incarceration or death. Society supports a schooling model of pre-school, kindergarten, primary school, high school, and more recently, higher education opportunities. However, participants’ meaning and enactment of success contradicts my definition and the school’s definition of success in that they do not believe the current model of schooling will guarantee them an ‘ultimate’ end. Rather, they prefer to choose specific aspects of schooling which promote one’s emotional success (happiness with one’s development and decisions) and personal growth. At the same time, this practice shields them from the possibility of job uncertainty in the long run and therefore, a lack of success in the eyes of the institution and those who believe in it.

When asked whether they felt success in school guarantees success in life, Junior and Carlos revealed uncertainty about the correlation between school and life. Junior plainly stated that he speculated this to be the case, but didn’t know for sure, and Carlos
explained that it may have something to do with it because if he had finished his school
maybe he would have gotten the job that he had originally wanted in high school, but like
Junior, he didn’t sound too convinced by his response. In contrast, the other four
participants all described the correlation between life and success as dependent on the
individual and their personal notions of happiness or what they wanted for themselves
that would make them happy. In a statement, Samuel explains “success is what you want.
It’s what you define it to be…And school is not 100% correlated to success in terms of
what you want, so it can be whatever you make of it, everyone is different.” Unlike
Junior and Carlos’s ambivalence, Samuel’s response provides a very individualistic and
independent concept of success that may not agree with the same expectation upheld in
Canadian educational institutions where students choose courses according to particular
pathways. In addition, it was also agreed upon by participants that through academic
growth one would gain or experience personal growth and that was primarily the only
real benefit of going to school. Thus, correspondingly with other concepts discussed
including independence and time, participants once again demonstrate the possession of a
lens lending vision to a combination of factors through which they come to understand
their socially lived contexts. This reversal idea that lack of success in school could
guarantee success in life is plausible, but as the young men have denoted, it would
depend on the eye of the beholder and their personal notion of success.

I contend that participants’ ambivalence and lack of consensus regarding success
and school and success in life is conditioned by the reality of having transnational
families and consequently a transnational perspective. Participant realities reflect
Valenzuela’s (1999) definition of educación as “the family’s role of inculcating in
children a sense of moral, social, and personal responsibility, and serves as the foundation
for all other learning” (p. 23). Furthermore, Valenzuela (1999) writes that “schooling is a
subtractive process. It divests [these] youth of important social and cultural resources
and, leaving them progressively vulnerable to academic failure” (p. 3). Overall, in
despite their differing teaching and learning formats, I found that San Lorenzo and St.
Beatrice participants had similar notions of success in school. In the end, I believe that
the San Lorenzo model of schooling had more flexibility and resources in
accommodating individual student needs. This model seemed to allow students to keep
their own definition of success and consider future options simply because of the amount of help and support available (teachers, high academic morale of the school, primarily Filipino population, and an independent schooling model enabling students to spend their time how and where they want to). In comparison, St. Beatrice students were part of a regular model of schooling which seemed to have less flexibility, support, and options for them.

In Chapters 4 and 5, I looked at how young Filipino-Canadian males define themselves in relation to their families and how they come to perceive themselves through self-observation and self-exposure. In this particular chapter, I look at what meanings individuals have come to recognize and regard throughout their lives about education, success, and failure. Using their statements, I examine how a Diasporic epistemology in addition to forms of Valenzuela’s (1999) subtractive schooling while attending Toronto schools, informs their thoughts about the educational success and failure that they have or have not experienced in school. Based on their experiences, I explore the structural factors present, such as the context, expectations, and teachers of the schools they attended, as well as cultural factors, such as their seemingly detached attitude towards education as optional and potential reasons for this understanding. In relation to my participants and their ambivalence about school, their dual frame of reference between both Canada and the Philippines as a result of immigration consequences, has already shown them that success in education does not exactly guarantee success in life.

**Education**

The idea of education as an opportunity, particularly for young minorities that are first generation or second generation Canadian is a prominent finding in most scholarly research to date. Moreover, it is generally believed by many immigrants that their children need to do better academically and professionally than that of the white majority in a new country of residence not only for survival in a highly competitive job market, but more importantly as a form of social capital to cover the color of their skin or physical differences from the majority population (Li, 2001). Currently, there are several structural factors in Ontario that constitute this belief as the number one reality for minority immigrant populations. To begin with, immigrants are ranked based on a points
system with extra points for having an education, added points for higher education, and for being a self employed or highly skilled professional (Kelly, 2009). Secondly, in regards to the Canadian school system, (like immigration), has a very distinct structure of schooling that citizens are expected to follow. In total, students are required to attend school from the age of four to eighteen, completing kindergarten to grade twelve. In Ontario, at the elementary level it is impossible for a student today to “fail” a grade. This means that even if the student did not do well academically or was considered “not functioning at grade level” alternate measures such as a change in school, or psychological testing and assessment resulting in the development of an individual education plan (IEP) is usually the preferred method of correction. In this way, the student is “saved” from underachieving, particularly under the education initiatives of “success for all students” and “no student left behind” which are both highly regarded by all schools in Ontario. Students are guaranteed to move on to the next grade level and continue on in pursuit of their career aspirations. In high school, students are expected to obtain a total of thirty credits (in addition to 40 hours of community service for Catholic students) in order to graduate. Although students must decide on a specific stream in high school (either academic or applied courses) starting in grade nine, the overall goal is to obtain their Ontario Secondary School diploma (OSSD). When students are failed, or drop out of high school, the province’s success rates or “pass rates” fall and this is frowned upon. When this happens, citizens are quick to blame the system, its educators, and the entire design of the school system. Therefore, in Ontario, education is regarded as a requirement and a free privilege to learn and obtain the necessary knowledge and skills that one needs to secure a profession of their choice. In support of this reality and the idea of subtractive schooling, Valenzuela (1999) writes that, “schools are structured around an aesthetic caring whose essence lies in an attention to things and ideas,” (p.22) as opposed to the individual needs of students.

In addition to these requirements, in 1995, a document of the Ontario Royal Commission on Education entitled, “For the Love of Learning,” stipulated that specific graduate outcomes be landmarked for students. As a result, the Institute of Catholic Education developed a list of Catholic Graduate Expectations that students in Catholic boards must meet and exceed (Catholic Education, 2011). The most significant of these
being that upon graduation students are expected to be self-directed, responsible, life-long learners, collaborative contributors, and responsible citizens. For Catholic students, (which applies to all of the participants in this study), education is not only intended for scholarly knowledge but also spiritual and humanitarian purposes. Structurally, education is a major priority in Canadian society, and for most people a predictor of job success and attainment. However, this meaning of education was very different to the meaning held by participants’ who viewed education as optional rather than obligatory. Therefore, structural factors in schools have both positive and negative consequences for the educational success and failure of these young men. On the one hand, individual education plans and pathways are helpful in ensuring that students obtain the correct number of credits and do not fall too far behind their peers. On the other hand, the individual education plans might not be followed consistently between schools, pathways may leave them lacking particular prerequisite course should they change their postgraduate plans, and knowing that they will most likely be passed than failed creates a lack of motivation, disinterest, and disengagement from the possibilities of education.

In order to access participants’ thoughts about educational success and failure, I first had to investigate their beliefs on education. At the very beginning of each interview, I asked what they thought the purpose of education was and whether they thought it was valuable, or beneficial to have. I noticed that it usually took them a really long time to explain their basic understanding of education and most of them didn’t seem too confident in their answers. Most appeared vague in their responses, stating either a yes or no and particularly, Samuel distinguished himself from the others by providing a very cliché textbook response of

“It’s a mindset where people can learn anything they want based on a certain curriculum at a certain age given by the government or like whatever is around them…[or]...the culture or whatever it may be and it’s a process of learning new things outside of the home that can be applied to the world.”

At first put off by this response, as I was not looking for such a formal definition, I did not have to wait long for Samuel to reveal a similar sentiment of education to that of other participants. Even though he initially gave me a very basic definition of education, he later explained that he viewed education as beneficial depending on what job you aspired to do. He reasoned that not everything in life requires an education and used jobs
in agriculture as one example of this. This is how his understanding of education as beneficial in some ways and not others emerged. In agreement with Samuel, Junior elaborated on his response explaining that, “I don’t think it’s a waste of time if you need to go back to school, for example if I wanna be a teacher- like if I need the paperwork to say whatever.” For Junior, like Samuel, education is seen as optional, something you may need to do based on the requirements for the profession that you want, but the meaning of the term did not appear to hold much significance otherwise for these young men.

Aside from viewing education as merely one option, Jole and Briar explained how they viewed education as a symbol of mobility. Some of the terms they used provided description of education as a “symbol of stability,” a foundation for “opportunity and success,” “something extra on paper,” and a “foot in the door.”

Differing ideals about the purpose of education in one’s life from participants indicated that they also had very different definitions of educational success and failure than what is maintained as the norm in the Canadian school system. In discussions about the meaning of success for these young men, all provided a similar description. Based on their responses, success looked like: Being happy and being financially debt free with no worries and no stress. Only two (more affluent) participants, Jole and Samuel defined success as “living out your life the way you want it to be.” In contrast to the other young men, these participants were less concerned with debt and more concerned about having things the way that you wanted them. This definition of success, happiness as what you make it, being somewhat closer to that of mainstream society. Yet, in neither response did they incorporate the significance of obtaining a good occupation or an occupation of choice in their conceptualization of what it means to have success. Furthermore, all of the young men agreed that success could only be accomplished by, “working for something based on your own terms” and not because you were told to or forced by someone else. In this way, being their own boss, participants hope that they will not end up deskilled and deprofessionalized like their parents. According to Kelly and his colleagues (2009) “despite their high levels of human capital, Filipinos as a group tend to occupy marginal socio-economic positions after arrival in Canada” (p.9). Clearly a discrepancy can be seen between the ideals of these young men about education and
success and conventional ideals of both terms today. However, one of these factors could be the school system itself; maybe if it were designed differently participants would have been more successful? This is precisely what half of the participants expressed in describing the configuration of schooling in Ontario as one of the structural barriers that impeded on their educational success and experience.

School Structure

San Lorenzo is a “founding member of the Canadian Coalition of Self-Directed Learning Schools” (CCSDL) (Teacher Handbook, 2009, p. 3). A self-directed learning center, “believes that student formation is best facilitated through a program of self-directed learning which calls upon every student to be a leader in an achievement oriented environment that promotes decision making, communication, collaboration, and faith development (Teacher Handbook, 2009, p. 3). San Lorenzo functions much like a university. Out of all of the participants, Briar, Marlon, and Samuel all attended the self-directed learning centre. In high schools that follow a regular schedule, students are assigned a timetable consisting of four periods throughout the day for a total of 75 minute classes. In a self-directed high school, although students are given a formal timetable at the beginning of the year, they essentially create their own timetable by choosing which areas and subjects they will work on each day. In order to ensure that students stay on task and complete their credits (30) in the expected amount of time, there are strict deadlines for their work to be handed in and department and event schedules that students must abide by in order to maintain their success in school (Teacher Handbook, 2009). Moreover, one of the most unique features of the self-directed centre is the role of a teacher advisor (TA) assigned to each student at the beginning of grade nine. The assigned TA will follow about 17 teacher advisees (TAs) until the end of their high school career in grade 12. A TA is responsible for taking attendance, monitoring their progress in all of their courses and communicating their progress to parents at home (Teacher Handbook, 2009). School structure combined with structural factors affecting conditions at home results in both negative and positive consequences for these young males.

In talking to participants, both advantages and disadvantages of attending certain schools became clear. Furthermore, participant experiences also reveal the impact of a
transnational perspective on their academic achievement, despite having successful parents or being schooled entirely in Canada. For example, Samuel felt that San Lorenzo prepared him for his life in university. He was able to handle making his own schedule, balance his extra curriculars and manage his personal life while keeping up with his studies. Keep in mind that Samuel’s parents are both highly skilled professionals and retained the same occupations they had back home. However, for Briar and Marlon who attended the same school as Samuel, the self-directed system was not viewed in the same regard. Also, in comparison to Samuel and Briar, Marlon was educated back home for a period of time like Carter, and frequently compared his school experiences here to his experiences there. Both Briar and Marlon required a victory lap to obtain their OSSD and felt that their high school experiences would have been different elsewhere besides the self-directed learning centre they attended. It is important to note here that in the Canadian education system, a victory lap can be required when one does not obtain the required amount of credits necessary for graduation or if their courses do not match the university program they intend to pursue. If the prerequisite courses for a university program of choice are not taken, the option of going to university is then foreclosed. For both Briar and Marlon, not only they did not have the appropriate number of credits in their fourth year, but they also had not decided what they wanted to do. When they did finally decide at the beginning of their fifth year, they had to make sure they chose all the write courses to get into English university programs. Briar expressed regret that he didn’t go to a more “structured” school, and in agreement, Marlon recalled his schooling at the self directed school as “horrible…but a really good experience because it does prepare you for university…whereas the Philippines, schools were all of the same structure,” and so it didn’t really make any difference. For Marlon, in order to complete his fifth year he had to rely on an external program that would allow him to obtain his credits via coop. This option allowed him to help his father who had become ill at home. Although both young men reveal regret in attending a self-directed learning centre, Marlon speaks from two frames of reference, whereas Briar was never educated in the Philippines and can only speak from one. Marlon, however, having been educated in the Philippines illustrates not only a tendency to think about his experiences here in comparison to there, but also the significance of moving and discrepancies in societal
institutions as social agents which affected his productivity. Yet, like Samuel, both Briar and Marlon’s parents are highly skilled professionals.

Similar to participants from San Lorenzo, commonalities could also be seen between participants that attended a regular-structured high school and participants that attended the self-directed learning centre. In agreement with Marlon and Briar, Carlos also expressed regret when looking back on his high school experience, but he attended a regular-structure high school. When asked about attending school back home he voiced that “it’s just totally different Tawnee, really different from like school here…like it’s just more strict and you know you can’t really get away with the same behavior that kids have here.” Yet, in contrast to Marlon and Briar, Carlos recalled that even after attending another high school following expulsion it didn’t help him anymore than the other school as he explained “I did go back but I guess I got comfortable on like not being in class and just kept skipping.” His experience is another reminder of the importance of not attributing blame or accountability to one agent alone and to remember the combination of both structural and cultural elements. Although Carlos attended school back home, he does not solely attribute his success in school here as a result of his displacement from the Philippines, nor does he blame the structure of the school for his behavior (like Marlon).

Most important in these conversations is the fact that both young men found it hard to think about school without referring to their experiences in another country. Their statements show that the type of high school that one attends may in fact play a role in the success experienced by students despite having highly educated parents and the money to pursue school. In agreement with this notion, all three of the participants that went to San Lorenzo, Marlon, Briar, and Samuel are currently in the process of completing a post-secondary degree. While the students that attended a regular structured high school, Junior, Jole, and Carlos remain in relatively the same positions they were in following high school. Given what Junior and Carlos had become used to in the Philippines, perhaps they would have benefitted more from structured schooling in Canada (similar to the rigid school regimes they experienced back home). Particularly with regards to Samuel, Briar, and Marlon, a self-directed learning centre allows for greater accommodation of individual and personal circumstances, especially as students...
and families are paired with an advisor from the time they begin their high school career. It is also highly evident from their continued pursuit of education that this school structure offers increased flexibility and resources for self-negotiations that they may need to make between what they have learned at school and what they have learned at home.

**Teacher Role**

In extension of school structure, some scholars argue that student-teacher relationship plays an equally important role to school structure in regards to student school experiences. Kennedy et al. (2010) have found that students that are closer to their teachers seem to like attending school more, interact more socially with their peers, and experience higher academic achievement than students lacking those relationships. However, in opposition to this theory, the individuals that I interviewed did not place a lot of emphasis on teacher involvement. Thus, perhaps teacher involvement is only effective with certain students, or at a certain age. Or, in agreement with my theory of a diasporic epistemology, perhaps Jole did not see the benefit in going to teachers for help or support because of the Filipino family ideology discovered by Wolf (1997) whereby disclosure to others brings on “shame and embarrassment” for the family. They did identify some qualities in teachers that they liked to see but more than anything felt that they were responsible for how they did overall in school. In discussing the role of teachers, based on participant attitudes, I believe that participants enact the learned mode of independence (part of their Diasporic epistemology) which helps them to cope as part of a transnational family. In doing this, participants can avoid upsetting their parents via disclosure, and are spared verbally asking for help, an action that would be mortifying as it would require a personal relationship of “authentic care” from teachers and out of character considering the impersonal relationships established at home.

For example, Briar felt that there was sometimes a “power struggle” between teachers and students in that he found it really hard or challenging to oppose teachers in high school and also that some teachers played favorites. However, he went on to say that there were teachers that gave more “options” and “flexibility” and he preferred those teachers. When I asked why he didn’t ask his Teacher Advisor (TA) for help in certain courses, he explained “I feel like he’s really old-fashioned, I was never really close with
him… he was like grown up with privilege as opposed to I wasn’t.” Briar’s relationship with his TA, assigned to him for help in school, further alludes to another example of *subtractive schooling* when teachers see the differences in culture and language between themselves and their students from a culturally chauvinistic perspective that permits them to dismiss the possibility of a more culturally relevant approach in dealing with [this] population (Valenzuela, 1999, p.66).

As made evident by Briar’s experience with his TA, this was the disconnect he felt with his TA and as a result felt discouraged in asking his TA for help. Like Briar, Carlos agreed that, “some teachers were great and really helpful about work and some were just there, you know, and concentrated on other students.” Yet, when asked about the teachers in classes he had done poorly in, he recalled that, “the teacher wasn’t too bad I guess, it was really my fault you know.” Samuel’s only thoughts were “in general, they were all fine” and similarly to Briar and Carlos, Marlon also felt that it, “depends on the teacher…teachers that keep reminding you…and teachers that who are like well if you’re not really doing it on your own then I shouldn’t really bother.”

However, Marlon did say that he felt that this pushed him to summer school and without some teachers pushing he would never have been offered the coop option. In support of Valenzuela’s (1999) definition of *educación*, Marlon’s feelings about certain teachers reflect the importance of Nodding’s (1988) concept of authentic caring described by Valenzuela (1999) as the outcome when “teachers’ ultimate goal of apprehending their students’ subjective reality is best achieved through engrossment in their students’ welfare and emotional displacement” (p. 61). Therefore, for Marlon, had certain teachers not provided this authentic care, he most likely would not have finished high school.

In the case of Marlon, had he not had the support of administration and his teacher advisor, he would have been forced to forego graduation and attend an alternative school the following year. Although troubling (as students are encouraged to ask for help at school), participant attitudes towards teachers is merely a reflection of the “don’t ask, don’t tell” relationships that they have established at home. It is not a reflection of the schools efforts necessarily, but a visible sign of their Diasporic epistemology present at school.
Even though participants attended two different schools, it’s interesting and noteworthy that they all appear to have shared attitudes about their teachers and behavior, again reinforcing the acknowledgement and consideration of a multitude of factors influencing their success in school. Despite differences between schools, for both groups, their Diasporic epistemology is still very much active in their decision and relationships in school. In summary of most responses, Jole explained “for the most part my teachers were all nice.” When I directly asked him whether he felt that teachers owed him respect he replied “no I just went, it wasn’t really about respect, it was about teachers are teachers, regardless they’re still the authority figures as soon as you walk into that class so if anything the ownice is on you.” This sentiment, seemingly mutual among all of the participants contradicts studies of other ethnic minorities, particularly Black students from Dei’s (1997) study in Toronto of the process of dropping out for Black students. In contrast to these participants, Black students from Dei’s study showed a qualitative difference and reversal as they “held firmly to the belief that authority figures must respect them in order to wield authority over them” (p. 106). This reversal in response illustrates the discrepancy in epistemologies between both Diaspora communities and begs for further investigation. Is it a question of differences in methods of socialization? Or is the difference a product of structural and historical contexts? One thing that is clear is that youth of Diaspora communities attend school under precarious circumstances of lasting immigration effects, language barriers, and atypical family structures, of which very few people are empathetic to, informed of, nor equipped to entertain. Jole’s mutual idea of respect between teachers and students, agrees with Valenzuela’s (1999) extension of educación in that “it additionally refers to competence in the social world, wherein one respects the dignity and individuality of others” (p.23). In Jole’s case, this is how he has been taught to understand his role in the classroom in relation to his teacher, and the way in which he makes sense of this serves as a reminder that this is his interpretation of educación, his understanding of his duty in the class, and that must be respected.

As participants never seemed too concerned with timelines and deadlines, almost all of the participants talked about the structure and the rules of the school and remarked that at times it was too “redundant.” Nash (1990) explains how Bourdieu “teaches that
the school reproduces the structures that prove to be beneficial to the dominant culture” (p. 435) and in this case, over time these redundant practices are meant to create an obedient and keen pupil. I found it ironic at the time because based on their interview responses they did not seem to be doing too much else with their time other than hanging out with “friends and stuff.” Discussions about school structure were also often linked to schooling experiences in the Philippines and participants would conscientiously make comparisons between here and there frequently. Junior explained that in comparison to his schooling experience back home, he much preferred Toronto schools because they were less strict and there was no possible way of failing a grade. In contrast, in the Philippines if you failed a grade you had to repeat it and you would be with a younger class the next year and so most people tried to avoid it. Marlon agreed with this participant and recalled that when he had come to Canada he had been learning stuff in grade eight that he had already learned in grade six.

All three participants who attended elementary school in the Philippines (Marlon, Junior, and Carlos) also remembered physical discipline as punishment for bad behavior and felt that that was the biggest turn off from school and attending class. It seemed as though they wanted more structure in their schooling in Canada because of the freedom they felt they had at home. They also laughed at the fact that they were spared that after coming to Canada and remarked that maybe that’s why they never took school too seriously here because they had experienced a much stricter school system. In support of this theory, Briar (who had never attended school in the Philippines) disagreed with the structure of Canadian schools and argued that there were too many rules and a power struggle between students and teachers and he just wasn’t “cool with it.” This young man felt the strongest about school work being too redundant in that too many tasks were repetitive and he didn’t see why he had to take so many unrelated courses that had nothing to do with the profession that he aspired to have. In looking at student responses in relation to school structure and the purpose of education, I believe that their perspective on time, coupled with limited resources to set long term goals and delicate relationship with parents results in their optional outlook on education and success. There reflections on the differences between schooling here and back home also has enormous implications for Canadian educators in the sense that the Canadian curriculum is both
behind (other countries that are supposedly third-world), poorly structured, and lacks the ability to instill discipline in most students. In light of Briar’s remarks, it is not enough to simply say that these young men are underachieving or disengaged, but it is important to recognize in agreement with Valenzuela’s (1999) findings that “they oppose a schooling process that disrespects them; they oppose not education, but schooling,” (p. 5) and it is the process of schooling in Canada which is taking away or subtracting from their success.

Cultural Capital

As a plausible cultural factor affecting ideas of future for these young men, Parreñas (2001) describes a bahala na attitude for Filipinos. This is a belief that “whatever may be, will be,” (p.29) and choosing to accept things the way they are, hoping for the best possible outcome. If utilized, one could imagine then how this intriguing conception of time has dire repercussions for major life decisions and this is precisely what emerged in from many of the subsequent discussions about future career aspirations.

For instance, both Briar and Jole recently started a degree program in university after spending time in limbo post high school. Briar had to complete a fifth year of high school and Jole had dropped out of a college program from boredom and similarly they explained feeling forced to apply to university as a result of their family’s educational background. Briar’s grandparents had been teachers, and his mother had been educated back home as a nurse. On the other hand, Jole had a mother who worked as an accountant, an overachieving sibling and the insistence of extended family members that he was short changing himself, so he reluctantly returned to school to pursue studies in psychology. Everyone except Junior and Carlos are currently attending university. These young men affirm the plausibility of a diasporic epistemology- the plague of a transnational perspective harnessed in belonging to a transnational family. Despite having family support and greater socio-economic status, they still did not pursue their education.

In opposition to the theory of bahala na, further evidence of school and immigration as imposing structural factors were revealed as participants described their experiences of high school course selection and what they perceived as “no
consequences” for their decisions. When asked about choosing courses for the following year in terms of who was involved with helping them in that process, four out of the six participants explained that they took the obligatory courses, and then for the remaining courses, chose what they enjoyed. Junior shared that he chose his courses according to timetable and where he would be at what time of day, for example gym first thing in the morning or English class before lunch, ensuring that his friends would be in the same class. However, most of the young men vehemently expressed that they didn’t need help with selection because they knew for themselves what they wanted to do, although they also mentioned that no one really asked as well, another example of the lack of “authentic care” that these young men felt they received at school.

In referring back to the key themes explored in chapter five, when recalling his high school experiences, Jole revealed yet another angle of the shared notion of independence in his response to the process of course selection. In agreement with other participants he did not believe in asking for help either with his course selection, however, he followed up in stating that

“they sort of just tried to usher me into taking these courses or into taking this school seriously it really wasn’t like it’s either like you take school seriously or I dunno some negative, so there’s no consequence just like suggestions.”

In this statement, more than the other participants and in agreement with the way in which these young men come to ascertain the notion of independence, Jole finally hints at what could be a major deterrent in disclosure of problems or difficulty to others. Now, I cannot say that it is the exact same reason shared by all of the other participants, but it is something to be considered. In the latter part of the statement, when he states that there is “no consequence,” he reveals his true reasoning behind not asking for help. The “no consequence” reality for Jole is a product of a diasporic epistemology as this is the way in which he has come to make sense of the process of self-disclosure. However, Jole’s diasporic epistemology has many implications. In the interim, as long as Jole avoids self-disclosure he can momentarily postpone immediate consequences and carry on in school keeping relatively low profile. In the long-term, Jole’s diasporic epistemology will have many consequences as it may cause him to graduate late, not have enough credits, and not fully explore all of his options and interests at the high
school level, ultimately costing him a career trajectory. Although he does not believe there’s any point in revealing his dilemma as he knows there will be no “real” follow up for his actions, his parents are occupied trying to provide a living. They don’t understand or know the education system here; they cannot possibly realize the severity of his actions nor can they do anything about it as most of their extended family members remain in the Philippines. Overcome with guilt, they cave in to allowing Jole what he wants to avoid his unhappiness. Whether he chooses the courses he wants or the school wants, finishes them on time, or finishes them in order, he does not see the worth in any course of action because he cannot see the long term return coupled by the fact that nothing (well what he sees as major anyways) can be done about it.

Jole’s expression and honesty illustrate the importance of having an intersectional framework when considering academic success and education. On the one hand, he expresses that the school staff is not fulfilling his needs, yet simultaneously he himself has acknowledged that he’s not all that interested in school, and at home he is aware that his father never attended school, and his older brother failed out. Jole’s sentiment reminds us that there is a lot more to consider in assessment of his academic success as there are several structural and cultural factors at play. Why should he show an interest or continue to pursue education when the very same people that have raised him, seem to be getting by without it? Having experienced an impersonal, yet unconditional form of care, a different sense of time and independence and parents and siblings lacking success in education, Jole’s decision-making process is haunted by what he has learned in his life. His decisions must be filtered through his Diasporic epistemology.

Briar and Jole highlight one of the main structural factors to be contemplated in the likelihood of immigrant youth pursuing higher education, and that is cultural capital. Bourdieu defines cultural capital as the acquired cognitive schemata and behavioural dispositions, and family attitudes [class values]” passed down from one generation to another (Nash, 1990). He further denotes that, “children of upper class origins inherit different cultural capital than do working class children” (Nash, 1990, p. 436). In essence then, perhaps the idea of no consequences is not simply a result of subtractive schooling in school structure, but also a product of what these young men are seeing around them in their own lives at home. Consider the criteria they use to convey their sense-making
about school: references to high school in the Philippines versus here in Canada, input from fathers (some of which never completed high school) or came to Canada and experienced a deskilling of their job qualifications. Perhaps then it is not only school that renders high school as just one option but also the realization that even though their parents were highly educated “employment and wage discrimination as well as other barriers to making it in a white-controlled economy for many generations…is more or less institutionalized and permanent, and…individual effort, education, and hard work are important but not enough” (Ogbu, 1998, p. 172) to guarantee a good job.

Structurally, the Canadian education system is built in a foolproof frame: elementary, secondary, job, happiness, nevertheless these young men unintentionally seemed to go against the grain. For Filipino Canadian young males, navigation through this framework and assimilation with other immigrant youth in following it is not that easy because it is not the norm for them. It is not what they have witnessed in their own families, so how can they believe in it? For most people, not succeeding at a task means failure. Even if the task is preferred or not, human nature results in displeasure when the physical accomplishment of something expected cannot be done. So why is it that these young men did not see it as a failure when they did not meet the expected “criteria” for success?

In contrast to the ordinary interpretation of failure as just generally not succeeding at something, or not being able to do something, these young men considered effort as a determining factor in the outcome. Their working definition of failure was that it was only the result if they tried their hardest at something and did not achieve it. If they did not try their hardest, (as in they did not give any effort in obtaining their goal- whatever it was) and did not achieve it that was not a failure. Because they did not lose anything and they accepted that they did not try, failure did not occur. This was best explained by Jole who said “like if I didn’t apply myself and I did fail than it wouldn’t burn as much as if I did try” or put differently by Junior while talking about his future “I want it but I guess I’m not pushing for it…I didn’t say I’m trying to achieve that at that age but I’m just saying that it would be nice… it’s just that it’s not like I’m putting any work towards getting there,” two different participants, but shared sentiment on the interpretation of failure. Alike to participant understanding of education and success, this sense of failing
based on perception of effort again illustrates how participants appear to place different emphasis on certain aspects of a concept, in this case, the event of failure. Conversely, it is also important to question here, why the emphasis on effort in relation to understanding failure, and the potential reasons why they don’t want to try – or that it appears that way. This is where cultural factors began to emerge from the data, in terms of the decision making and goal setting tendencies for these young men.

**Failure**

In looking at cultural factors which influence views on educational success and failure, I assert that it is these which are responsible for the way that Filipino Canadian young males decide which goal or task is worth their effort. As much as a rigid routine and expectations are in place at school, educators must still compete with the knowledge system that students bring from home. Often overlooked at school, is the truth that students are told by figures that they believe to be the authority at home (Dillard, 2000), the knowledge or cultural base already in place and sustained long after their days in school. The interplay of cultural factors on participant definitions became apparent after explanations of the correlation between failure and effort. Jole stated “I dunno it was probably the fear of failing actually I mean if you think of it now…sort of that fear of failure, like the reason that you didn’t take it [the risk] cuz you didn’t care about it but caring about it so much.” His statement reveals the amount of ambivalence and weight or a “crossroad moment” of having to balance his experiences with what he knows in relation to making major decisions and being motivated to begin with. Jole sees it not so much as a failure but as denoted by Maggay (n.d.) to him it’s just a learning experience. This clash between a crossroad moment and indigenous Filipino consciousness prevents Jole from accepting failure in order to become a man in and take responsibility for the decisions that will affect his life. His confession is consistent with the theory that these young men may in fact maintain the bahala na attitude in which they wait for things to fall in place, hoping to not disturb those around them or cause too much trouble in the process. In essence then, this cultural factor elucidates the way in which participant thought processes filter through their very affect, a dual frame of reference between truth/the way things are/would be in their native country versus that in their new country of residence. More than just historical and family experience, their knowledge, which can
be seen through their statements about self as lazy, stubborn, laid back, and their consequent independence is once again partly based on their self identification straddling two lived realities. One side is rooted in history, migration, and what they know from their home country, the Philippines. The other side rooted in what they have learned in Canada, what they see, and what they try to be here, especially as they know that they are staying here.

When discussing the importance of schooling, most talked about this idea of getting by without it at all costs if they could, I think with reassurance of the bahala na attitude. In reflection of graduating high school, Jole, Junior, and Carlos never planned to go back to school. Jole even went so far in stating that at the time he did not really see what all the stress was about, he thought that it was just something that everyone had to do, as in the natural step forward after high school and he blamed his laziness for lack of want in doing it. Similarly, Junior, like Samuel said that if he wanted to be a doctor or a teacher, some occupation that required it than he would have to do it, but defined himself as comfortable in where he was at, and explained that if he could avoid going back then he would. Some would argue that their loathe for attending school could be an exhibit of their identification with a “set of ‘macho’ male values that rejects the values of education” (Myhill & Jones, 2004, p. 553) and that this could really just be their understanding or response to the dominant male culture at school in which they find themselves. While on the other hand, there was also a belief in meritocracy that a few of the young men mentioned. In support of their belief in education as optional, the belief in meritocracy meant that there was always the possibility of working your way up to the top of a company (a current approach of one participant) but this was mostly viewed as a lengthy process with the possibility of disappointment and less money earned in the interim. In support of this, the young man currently working his way to the top in his company conceded that he does at times question his approach and wonder if he should just stop what he’s doing and go back to school full time, but then how would he make money, and will he be guaranteed a job upon completion of a program to pay off the newly accumulated student loan?

Once again, both young men bring to the forefront the significance of class in their decisions to return to school, as they both were financially able to continue with
their education and their parents were not reliant on their help financially at home. However, they also still make reference to the same shared view towards education as only one option when they reveal their ‘plan Bs.’ Briar elucidates that in the event that school does not work out for him, he would consider a job in trades. While Jole ambivalently states, “well I’ve just started school again, at this moment its sort of up in the air, well I mean I do plan on graduating but ahh after that I dunno, masters, just go back into the work force.” It appears that both men have back up plans, whether reliable or not in case education does not promise prosperity, but are these plans realistic? I believe that participant Plan Bs coincide with the attitude of bahala na because even though they put forth these ideas doesn’t mean they ever intend on seriously considering or acting on them, they could just be saying what they think people concerned about their futures want to here, hence why they may be realistic. A bahala na attitude means not worrying about tomorrow, leaving things in the hand of God (Maggay, n.d.), and that is precisely what these men do when they dismiss the possibility of their Plan Bs so quickly.

**Conclusion**

As half of the participants identified as working class, their narratives seemingly fit in accordance with Bourdieu’s contention that the systems of meaning produced by working class people as they live within the framework of opportunities and constraints that structure their life chances, is internalized and lived in such a way that “naturally” shapes the perceptions of those socialized within it. We can recognize that a culture is produced in which ‘settling for what you have got’, ‘not pushing your luck’ becomes the common sense means to break with the culture, to part company with family and friends for an unknown destination, the opportunity costs of which are pressingly apparent while the benefits are vague and indeterminable (Nash, 1990, p. 439).

In discussing their plans in education and what education in itself means for these young men, it is clear that education has come to be viewed as something that is optional, although somewhat tied to the conception of future for these young men. Their responses provide yet another illustration of how an invisible barrier interrupts their full integration to mainstream society and the ways in which they have learned to cope and make decisions on their own as a consequence of their historical and emotional displacement. Upon closer scrutiny of their responses, I found that structural factors such as socioeconomic status, consequent family structure, and elements of Valenzuela’s (1999)
subtractive schooling, in addition to cultural factors including a bahala na attitude and cultural capital are major determinants in their decision and sense making of the value and worth of both pursuing and having an education. Most often the young men emphasized self accountability and responsibility for their success. It is no wonder then that their educational success and failure is not their first priority.
Chapter 7: Conclusion

The original intent of my study was to provide insights into the meaning of educational success and failure to young Filipino-Canadian men as they are an understudied racialized minority group in Toronto. The data collected suggests that young Filipino-Canadian males experience tremendous difficulty and uncertainty in both their integration and advancement within the Canadian school system. In navigating through their Canadian school experiences and their lives in Canada, the statements of these young men imply witness to their education in Canada through a dual lens – partly grounded in their native country of birth, the Philippines, and partly situated in Canada, their country of residence. My research reveals that most of them rely more on the former than that of the latter as their main frame of reference.

In response to the central research questions outlined in chapter one, I have determined that young Filipino Canadian men make sense of educational success and failure through the dual lens acquired from their lived experiences in two countries. Through their statements, a theory has emerged whereby this dual lens seems to be part of a diasporic epistemology, configured upon a combination of structural and cultural factors like immigration, language, identity, family structure, and school. Lastly, participant responses show that a diasporic epistemology has had several effects on how they view themselves, their decisions, and their actions, as participants are informed by this epistemology in all aspects of their life including definitions of independence, time, parenting, family, success, education, and failure as well as all of their experiences associated with each entity.

A reliance on knowledge systems derived from the infrastructure and economy of a different community altogether can have serious ramifications for progress and prosperity in another location, and in this case it has. My findings reveal that a Diasporic epistemology plays a tremendous role in shaping the educational trajectories of racialized minorities and Diasporic young men. With regards to Filipino Diaspora, my participants demonstrate that their hybrid lens in combination with structural factors such as migration, employment, and family prevent them from fully considering themselves as legitimate Canadian citizens. On the other hand, cultural factors such as beliefs in
pahiwatig, pakikipagkapwa, respeto, and bahala na, strengthen and perpetuate the dispositions of these young men by reinforcing their family arrangement and self identity in the manner of a positive feedback system. This theory of a Diasporic epistemology is a significant contribution to the scholarly literature available in research areas of epistemology, intersectionality, student achievement, and schooling, as it can be extended to other Diaspora communities with vigilance in acknowledgement that their priorities may differ, as well as the order of ranking of the identified priorities for these students. Although, I would like to point out at this time, that one of my participants, Samuel, did not exactly match my findings in regards to the other five participants, nor did his experience completely adhere to the conditions of my theory.

In contrast to the other young men, when asked about identity, Samuel claimed he didn’t know what that meant and stated that he was ‘white-washed’. In support of this claim he said he loved winter and described all of the winter activities that he enjoys taking part in. He very defensively stated that “if people want to get rid of race they shouldn’t say the word race” I am not exactly sure why the participant responded in this way. I had thought originally that perhaps he was purposely trying to go against what the question was asking, but upon reflection after the interview he and I sat down together for quite some time and he revealed that “family always comes first, that’s what I’ve been taught.” He explained that lately he had been having a hard time balancing the value of family and spending time together at home and keeping up with his school work. It was almost at the point where he was considering dropping out of school because he did not see the value in pursuing a degree if he could help his father with the family business via completion of a diploma program. In hindsight, even though his initial reaction to the question was volatile, he revealed that his household still maintained some of the same criteria that the other participants identified as Filipino signifiers, with the importance of family being the most central value. I reason that given his current circumstance, trying to situate himself between his family needs and ambivalence about school, he reacted sensitively to the question and was in the midst of trying to consciously disassociate from his Filipino identity for the sake of maintaining his individual efforts and reasons for pursuing higher education. Maintaining a distinction between being Filipino and being Canadian in relation to surrounding environments revealed how participants situate
themselves in relation to Canadian school contexts. Like the other participants, Samuel is now experiencing the interference (or so he feels) of family expectations from home. However, in contrast to other participants, academically he is still further ahead and in a better position than them because of his family’s expectations and he does not place too much emphasis on identifying as Filipino.

In addition, whereas the other participants expressed difficulty in talking to their fathers about school, Samuel revealed confiding in his father more than his mother about school (especially because he planned on taking over his father’s business) did far better than the others in school and was pursuing his university degree during the interview. However, he still alluded to the same idea of open-parenting referenced by other participants, but he saw it as simply relief that he already knew his path in school, as in his parents did not feel the need to ask questions as communication about his career goals was frequent. However, both of Samuel’s parents had well established careers to begin with in addition to financial means to support his school studies, two very important structural factors contributing to Samuel’s success. Moreover, in contrast to the other participants, Samuel frequently remarked that he spent a lot of time with his father, knowing that his father’s business was going to be passed on to him.

In relation to the other young men, Samuel is sort of an outlier case. I have deemed Samuel as an outlier to the emergent theory because he is different from the other young men and poses a challenge to the theory of a diasporic epistemology because he appears unaffected by a diasporic epistemology. In his responses, he appears oblivious to a dual frame of reference, and structural and cultural barriers and seems to have more fully assimilated into Canadian school expectations while the others still do not seem to be fully integrated. When interviewing Samuel, he attributed his situated geographical location with playing a role in his decision to pursue education. He explained that residing in North America, the majority of citizens are driven to be consumers and are mostly concerned with knowing everything they can in order to accumulate capital. This told me two things: 1 – that he still spoke first out of his historical context as an immigrant coming from the Philippines originally as he acknowledged his current position living in Canada (like other participants), and 2 – the importance of social class in student decision to pursue education. However, Samuel knew what he wanted to do; he
always planned on taking over his father’s business. He knows the education system is not perfect and he doesn’t agree with all of it, but he has figured out how to work with it to accomplish his goal – he also acknowledges his privilege in having the resources to obtain it. Having a goal lent him perspective, for the other participants it’s finding a goal that proves to be challenging, and Samuel’s story is a clear indication that structural factors play a major role in that. Samuel is significant in this study as he reminds the reader that a theory of Diasporic epistemology does not apply to every Filipino Canadian male in the exact same way. It may affect certain aspects of their life, and not affect others. Samuel’s story also illustrates the weight of intersectionality as a predictor of student academic achievement as a variety of factors seemed to inform his worldview, and more than just that, his ability to achieve his goals. Samuel demonstrates that class matters in transnational migrations, diasporic belonging, and success, as his family (despite being diaspora) was self-sustaining and therefore less subject to structural barriers in the job market and economy. As a result, not only is Samuel different from the other participants in that he will inherit his parents’ success, he also has never and will never see the uncertainty that comes with the institutional model of success that lower to middle class immigrants have grown skeptical of.

The theory of a Diasporic epistemology has grave implications for the institution of education and teacher-student/teacher-family relations. After reading the work of prominent scholars included in this inquiry, when I first entered into this project, I was originally thinking what could be done to accommodate this lens? As an educator, my job is after all to educate, to create critical thinkers, to trouble previously established meanings, to produce responsible, sensible, collaborative members of society- but of course, this is my lens born and raised in Canada, one country. How could I then, balance this ideology with those of my students, and which one would take prevalence? I mean, which one should take prevalence?

Given the intersection of the entities which emerged from their statements, in addition to a dual frame of reference, I have come to realize that for particular Diaspora communities, expecting Filipino Canadian young men to grasp and aspire to Western ideals of educational success and academic achievement, as well as the ‘traditional’ male
role within the institution of the family are unrealistic. If I did that, it would essentially be the re-colonization of these communities, their ideologies, and their identities.

In further support of this, according to Kutcher (2011), a psychologist and advocate of teen mental health, true self knowledge is founded in upbringing and experience. For the adolescent teen, development of the brain occurs during teen years, which entails a constant process of pruning and recycling information – more specifically, knowledge information. In other words, an individual’s knowledge base is somewhat already genetically made, but sculpted over time by both individual experiences and interactions. Therefore, I am not implying that there is no room for change, but what needs to be explored further are means of recognition and accommodations for the hybrid lens of these young men, the halfway space between what they know and understand back home, and what they know and understand here. In recent years, the focus in education has very much turned attention to the academic achievement of male students, and in particular male students of specific ethnicities. While the Filipino community is the central focus of this study, my data elucidates ways in which the education system is failing the needs of minority students in a growing and diverse society.

In addition to the scholarly research already existent, my findings debunk the myth of cultural capital as a fitting construct for all Diaspora communities. As made evident by the participants’ circumstances, having highly educated and professionally successful parents does not necessarily result in highly educated and successful offsprings, regardless of socio-economic status. Thus, an alternative method of schooling needs to be developed in schools which can help bridge the gap between school and the importance of education with home and parental expectations.

In terms of future implications for practicing teachers, teachers in faculty of education, and Filipino parents and families, I have a story to tell. While writing, one of the readers on my thesis committee asked me what I thought about a future cross cultural comparison between different adolescent ethnic groups – such as Black vs. Brown or Black vs. Filipino. He asked me, what would be the point? And, how would a study as such be beneficial? I reflected. Shortly after, while attending a student success workshop, a video clip of the island of Mauritius was shown. In the video, an older man describes
the mixed citizenship of the island. He explains how some Mauritians are Chinese, some are Indian, some are Creole, some British, and some a combination of either/or. He quotes one of Mauritius’s elder leaders in describing each ethnicity as a different type of fruit: an apple, banana, mango, or pear. He explains how one approach might be to blend all of the fruits together into a marmalade of one flavor, but instead he argues that Mauritius encourages all of its ethnicities, like a fruit salad. This ensures that everyone’s differences and rights are acknowledged and respected by others, and it results in a stronger, diverse, and more collaborative community (Covey, 1998). Similarly, a cross-cultural study lends exploration and attention to the differences between two groups illustrating both gains and losses through each perspective. In the community of Mauritius people learn from each other, learn to work together and experience a sense of belonging at the same time, the ultimate goal of all humanity. In this type of environment, the timeless belief that it takes an entire village to raise a child becomes a reality. This is what Canada’s education system should be striving for.

According to Covey (1998), educators should be teaching students a win-win attitude in which students learn to balance their needs with the needs of the community to which they belong. In agreement with his research, in this study young Filipino-Canadian men clearly delineate what it takes for them to feel content and secure. It by no means may match the definition of success aspired to for Western society, but it seems to be enough for them. In other words, using the perspective of Covey, one could say that perhaps these young Filipino-Canadian males have already won. They have balanced their needs in harmony with the society in which they live. They are not concerned with a bigger win or the concept of win that may be defined by society; they already have all they need. Of course, there are limits to this Filipino Diasporic epistemology which prove to be barriers later on in life for these young men.

In evidence of this, some participants frequently acknowledged that their way of thinking interfered with their success. For one young man, Carlos, when reflecting upon his failure to obtain his high school diploma, he describes how he experiences a lot of regret now and really should have put forth more effort at the time but in that moment he just didn’t see it as “too urgent.” Similarly, another participant that recently enrolled in University, Jole, explained that he was “still up in the air” as to what he would do with
his degree afterwards, and expressed uncertainty in either simply returning to the work force or possible pursuit of a graduate degree. He attributes his “laziness as the blockade to [his] success” and his statement serves as example of how one’s mentality can hinder their achievement, resulting in ambiguous job opportunities later on in life. This is the current gap between educators and students categorized as ethnic minorities. Both have different ideologies of what win-win looks like.

In this research process, I learned many things about myself as a researcher. I learned that I do not enjoy having results and analysis outstanding, and was very impatient in terms of getting the exact order of my findings in the way that I wanted them. Through this research process, I have learned that the best research insights and analysis do not appear until the later stages of the research study. This became eminent when writing multiple drafts of the data analysis and deciding on the order in which to place each theme. In the next stages of my research study, based on my findings I have been thinking about three directions of research that could be pursued. The first direction is pursuing the source of a Diasporic epistemology. This would mean interviewing the parents of Filipino-Canadian males in addition to their children over a period of years to observe the connection between parental thought and student achievement. On the other hand, working on this project simultaneously with the research project of Dr. Lance McCready, I am curious now about a comparison between the Diapsoric epistemology of Filipino Canadian students and Black Caribbean Canadian students, and the significance those findings might have for educators in Canadian schools. The third direction of study that I could talk, pertains to the type of schooling that young Diasporic, racialized, and male minority students receive. You see, out of both groups interviewed, I have noted that in despite of shared perspectives, victory laps required, and socio-economic status, the group of students from San Lorenzo still continued on to pursue higher education. In light of this, my recommendation is that the strategies of pedagogical instruction and student success initiatives at San Lorenzo be investigated further at this school and perhaps adopted in a trial experiment at another school in order to observe whether that model of schooling may be more advantageous for the youth belonging to Diaspora communities. I think that in the medium-term, a self-directed learning model enables passivity in school, or the perspective of education as optional. However, in the long
term, I speculate that a self-directed learning centre may have more one-on-one support and stronger parent-teacher relationships than what is available in schools which follow a regular structure. In the end, I believe that it is this strong student-teacher-parent triangle which enabled San Lorenzo students to go further in school than their regular school structure counterparts. A diasporic epistemology plays into the dynamic of the student-teacher-parent triangle because of discrimination, language barriers, and previously existing assumptions about immigrant students in terms of their socio-economic status and already established stereotypes such as that of the model minority. The emergent theory of a diasporic epistemology makes a significant difference to educational research and school/teaching practices because it prompts recognition and acknowledgement of diversity as an entity that cannot be ignored any longer. It calls for critical attention to rethinking the current model of education in consideration of how far the classroom and the needs of the students in it have evolved. I suggest that a trial-experiment whereby other schools adopt the TA model for a temporary period of time may lend great insights to the benefits of different types of schooling and stronger student-teacher-parent relationships in the greater Toronto area.
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# Appendix A: Data Storage

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Appendix B: Preliminary Categories

**Repetition – Re-occurrence of a concept**
3 sets of themes 1- Structural factors, 2- Translation to Education, Success and Failure, 3 – Self Perception/coping/ mental barriers

a) Education as Optional – Worldview of education (Ogbu theory)

b) Independence (Coping) – Self learning & Avoiding disclosure (avoidance), choosing courses,

c) Open Parenting – Flip 1 and 2 articles, Maggay, Parrenas, grandparent involvement

d) Concept of Time – Maggay Flip Consciousness, nothing as urgent

e) Structure – Rules, redundancy, in comparison to back home (narrative)

f) Definition of success – vague, differs between participants, not attainable/attained, no specific idea about greatest accomplishment, or least proud of – almost like they don’t think about it?

g) Motivation – in terms of “moving up”, following role models, and it’s use and meaning – like the guys are only motivated when…perception of failure and trying, I’m comfortable

h) Sibling bond – school trajectories, relationship in absence of parents, living together, respect

I) Filipino identity – food, language, circumstances, references to back home, tradition – looking at the way other Filipinos do things, knee jerk reaction, born there, this is what I know

k) Friends – certain interactions (Ogbu theory), avoiding disclosure, good times

l) Perception of self – lazy, I didn’t care at the time (as if it’s that simple), said because a lot here
Appendix C: Participant Demographic Form

Instructions: Please respond to the questions below by placing an X, value or statement in all spaces that apply to you: eg. __X__

1. Gender
   ______ Male ______ Female ______ Other

2. Age
   ______ 18-22 ______ 23-27

3. Are you a sole parent of child /children under 18 years of age?
   ______ Yes ______ No

4. If born outside of Canada, what is your country of origin? -
   ______________________________________________________

6. At what age did you come to Canada (If applicable)?
   ______________________________________________________

5. Have you ever been educated outside of Canada? If yes, please specify where and length of time?
   __________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________

6. What language(s) do you speak at home?
   (Most often) ________________________________________________________________

7. With your closest group of friends, which language do you prefer to speak?
   __________________________________________________________________________

7. When people ask, what do you identify yourself as? (Background)
   __________________________________________________________________________

8. Who do you live with at home?
   __________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________

9. Who is the disciplinarian in your home?
   __________________________________________________________________________
10. Do you have siblings, if so, please specify how many and age:
   ______ Sister        Age: ______
   ______ Brother       Age: ______
   ______ Only child    Age: ______

11. Which sibling are you closest with?
   ____________________________________________________

12. Do any of your siblings have children?
   ____________________________________________________

12. If you live with both of your parents, which are you closest with?
   ____________________________________________________

13. If you live with one parent, rate on a scale of 1-10 how close you are with them?
    (10 being very close) ___________________________________

14. Education:
    ______ Less than High School
    ______ High School
    ______ Bachelor’s Degree or Higher
    ______ Certificate or diploma after high school

15. Did you attend your high school out of choice or convenience?
    ____________________________________________________

16. What are your interests?
    ____________________________________________________

17. Are you:
    ______ Employed
    ______ Unemployed
    ______ Temporary/ Part-Time Employed/Contract
    ______ Other (please specify)

18. What is your housing situation?
    ______ Renting
    ______ Owner
    ______ Assisted Housing
    ______ Living with Family
    ______ Living with friends
    ______ Living on your own

19. Please identify your place of residence:
    ______ House
20. If you are single, is your total household income:
   _____ Below $ 22 000 or _____ Above $22 000 or

If you are in a family, is your total household income:
   _____ Below $ 34 000 or _____ Above $34 000

21. If living with family, at what age do you see yourself moving out?
   ___________________________________________

22. Did you plan to move out earlier than the age you specified in question # 21?
   ___________________________________________
Appendix D: Interview Protocol

1. What does education mean to you? What future goals do you have about education? Why is it (or why is it not) important or beneficial?

2. How does school in the Philippines compare to school here in Canada? Which do you prefer and why?

3. Do you feel that school is easier for girls than boys? (here vs. there)?

4. How do your parents talk to you about school and the purpose of education? What sorts of things do they say? When do these conversations take place? How are (were) they involved in your schooling?

5. In high school did you identify yourself as being more Filipino or Canadian? Why is that?

6. Describe your relationship with your siblings. Do your siblings get the same or different messages about education from your parents? If so, how?

7. Describe your high school experience. What did you like the most? The least? What was your best high school year? Why? Worst year? What made it difficult? How did you handle these difficulties? Did anything help you through high school, if so what? What did you think about it at the time?

8. What kind of courses did you take in high school and why? Were there courses that you wanted to take but felt you couldn’t? Did anyone talk to you about course selection? Who? What did you think about what they said? If not, why not? You never asked?

9. How did you feel about your teachers? Was there any teacher in particular that helped you or didn’t help you (ie. made things worse)?

10. What did you do when you didn’t understand something? If you didn’t ask for help, why not? What did you struggle with the most? What did you think about that?

11. What was your peer group like in high school? Are you still friends today? Were they helpful with school work? Do you feel that any of them have been successful? Why or why not?

12. If you had to repeat high school what would you do differently? The same? What things are you considering upon answering this question?
13. What do you think your parents would have done if you had failed high school? Or what did they say? What do you think about failing high school?

14. What did you do after high school? When did you decide or realize that this is what you wanted to do or didn’t want to do? What things did you consider at the time that you made the decision?

15. Describe your current occupation. How do you feel about it? Do you see yourself in the same position in 5 years? 10 years? If not, what would you be doing (or want to be doing)? What occupation did you want in high school? Do you think it’s important to like what you do?

16. What are you most proud of in life so far? OR what is your biggest accomplishment in life so far? How did you achieve that?

17. What are you least proud of in your life, so far? How do you feel about that?

18. What does “success” mean to you? When did you feel “successful” in school and in life?

19. Who are your role models? Why do you look up to them?

20. What would you consider as “failure”? What happens to you when you don’t succeed or feel successful?

21. Where do you think “success” and “failure” come from?

22. Do you think/feel that success or failure in school has anything to do with success and failures in life? How so?
Appendix E : Participant Consent Form

Dear Participant,

This consent form has been administered to you in consideration of your decision as to whether you would like to be included in the following proposed research study. Please note that it is whole-heartedly your right to decline participation and/or execute immediate withdrawal from the study at any given moment, without fault in affiliation to the researcher, the other participants in the study, or the University of Toronto.

The purpose of this study is to develop a grounded theory about the conceptualizations of both academic and social success of first-generation Filipino Canadian males between the ages of 18 and 25. The procedure will be a qualitative research inquiry using the grounded theory methodology proposed by Charmaz. In sight of the findings to emerge, the goal at this point is to build some foundational knowledge as to how young Filipino-Canadian males are doing in Toronto, in acknowledgement of the recent Filipino Diaspora population.

Data will be collected through three interview sessions between you and myself, as well as the other participants. Two one-hour one-on-one interview sessions will be held at the Toronto Public library (located at…). One will be held early July of 2011, the other near the end of July of 2011 as a follow up to the first interview. There will also be one, one hour focus-group interview involving you and three other participants that you are familiar with, held in mid-August 2011 as a follow up to the first two interviews with each participant. The interviews will be audio-taped, typed verbatim by me (transcribed) and I will also be keeping a diary of field notes and observations present in each interview. There are a total of 8 participants in this study, four alumni students and four individuals, three of which went to the same high school.

You are encouraged to ask questions and express any concerns you might have at any time during the study. Rest assured that you will be given a pseudo name in the study and your identity will remain known only to myself as the researcher and the other participants in the study. Upon conclusion of the study you will immediately receive a copy of the final paper so that the results can be shared with you and you will be able to see your generous contributions to the inquiry!

This study will not involve any risk or distress to any participant involved. It is anticipated that your participation will help to build the knowledge database of the experiences of young Filipino males in Toronto as well as shed light on the existent Filipino community as currently very little information is available.

Please sign below in authorization of your involvement, with full disclosure of the character and goal of this study. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your own records.

__________________________________  _______________________
Signature of Participant        Date