

*Interdisciplinary Journal of
Research on Religion*

Volume 14

2018

Article 6

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(PAECUSA-UCC) in Detroit, Michigan

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Abstract

This research study explores a Filipino-American community that is “mostly Catholic,”³ meaning that Filipino members of the Philippine-American Ecumenical Church of the United Church of Christ (PAECUSA-UCC) in Detroit, Michigan, formally affiliate as Catholic, attend Catholic parish on Sunday mornings, but then also actively participate in PAECUSA-UCC, a Protestant congregation, on Sunday afternoons and throughout the week. Drawing from fieldwork completed in Detroit, Michigan, at PAECUSA-UCC, this paper explores the intergenerational impact of religion on second-generation immigrants, Filipino-Americans in this case, and investigates the following questions: What does it mean when a group of people officially affiliate as Catholic but then actively engage in a non-Catholic religious community? What are the implications for official religious affiliation, belief, and belonging? Moreover, what role does religion play on intergenerational immigrant identity? To that end, this paper advances current social scientific understandings of the complex relationship between religious affiliation, culture, and identity in the 21st century.

² Special gratitude to Drs. Rhys Williams, Tricia Bruce, Jerry Park, Sridevi Menon, Donald McQuarie, Deirdre de La Cruz, and Jason Luna Gavilan for their constructive feedback on this research. Also, special thank you to colleagues for their constructive feedback to the presentation of this paper at the 2017 meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion (SSSR) in Washington, DC.

³ Special gratitude to Father Tony Pogorele at the 2017 meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion (SSSR) for this relevant phrase.

In 2010, the researcher engaged in participant-observation and fifteen in-depth interviews of church leaders and second generation (ages sixteen to twenty-six at time of study) Filipino-American members of the Philippine-American Ecumenical Church of the United Church of Christ (PAECUSA-UCC) congregation in Detroit, Michigan. This congregation consists of about 100 members, 80 to 90 percent Filipino-Americans across generations. Uniquely, members of this congregation formally affiliate as Catholic and attend Catholic parish in addition to participating actively at the Protestant PAECUSA-UCC.

Delineating this social phenomenon will shed light on the role that religion plays on immigrants' lives. This research also explores religion and its intergenerational impact on the lives of immigrant second generation Filipino-Americans. Moreover, this paper investigates formal religious affiliation and congregations at large.

LITERATURE REVIEW

With respect to religious affiliation, scholars have developed ongoing research on organizational structure and congregations with an interest on the relationship between social change and congregational life (Ammerman 1996; Zech et al. 2017). In her seminal work *Congregation and Community*, distinguished sociologist of religion Nancy T. Ammerman found that the organizational structure of congregations largely determined the lifespan of respective churches (1996). With regard to church survival and structure, “congregations that do not try new programs and new forms of outreach when faced with environmental change are not likely to survive past the lifespan of their current members” (Ammerman, 1996: 323). Ultimately, churches must adapt their social structure to the needs of new constituencies like immigrants in order to ensure their long-term survival (Ammerman 1996).

Moreover, current research on religion and religious affiliation explores the range of religiosity from a loosening of attachments to unbelief. For instance, scholars have investigated notions of “believing without belonging” (Davie 1994; cf. Bruce 2017; Smith, Faris, and Denton 2004). Most recently, in her cutting-edge work, sociologist Tricia Bruce advanced the concept of “personal parishes” or an “organizational alternative” to respond to “particular needs of the market” (2017: 7). In other words, Bruce concludes that the loosening of attachments of Catholics to neighborhood and place will result in the continued rise of personal parishes that will increasingly co-exist with geographically bound parishes (Bruce 2017). This intellectual vein of thought is especially relevant since Zech et al. corroborate Bruce’s observation in their Emerging Models project: Slightly more than one out of three parishioners (35 percent) attend mass

outside of their territorial parish (2017).

This paper will apply Bruce's insights on "personal parishes" and show how culture may play a role in the "loosening of attachments" to neighborhood parish. This research indicates that Filipino-American Catholics possess a loose attachment to neighborhood and place. For instance, Filipino-Americans commute for as long as one hour from their local Catholic parish to Detroit, Michigan, in order to participate at PAECUSA-UCC, a Protestant religious community, on Sundays and throughout the week. Essentially, while they personalize their worship style, it is not actually in a "personal parish" but in a Protestant congregation. Filipino-Americans report that they attend their neighborhood parish for "social structure" and participate in the Protestant religious community for "culture."

Scholars have increasingly explored the role of religion on race/ethnicity (Frederick 2003; McRoberts 2005; Park 2009) as well as immigrant communities (Cadge and Ecklund 2007; Ebaugh & Chafetz 2000; Galvez 2009; Leal, Patterson, and Tafoya 2016; Manalang 2016a, 2016b; Mora 2013; Numrich and Kniss 2007; Orsi 2003; Stepick, Rey, and Mahler 2009; Yang and Ebaugh 2001). Most recently, in the National Study of Asian Pacific Islander Catholics, a ground-breaking nationally representative and comprehensive multi-lingual mixed-methods study on Asian and Pacific Islander Catholics in the United States, research revealed that nearly eight out of ten self-identified Catholics in the survey were born outside the United States (Bruce, Park, and Cherry 2015). Moreover, one out of every five Asian and Pacific Islanders in the United States are Catholic (Bruce, Park, and Cherry 2015). This finding is compelling since Asian immigrants, with the exception of Filipinos, are disproportionately Catholic compared to the dominant religion in their respective countries of origin. For example, over 30 percent of Vietnamese immigrants identify as Catholic, while only 7 percent of Vietnam is Catholic (Park et al. 2015). Overall, Asian Pacific Islanders dominate as the second largest ethnic group who identify as Catholic (Park et al. 2015).

Studies of individual congregations on the topic of immigration and religion in major cities like Chicago, Miami, New York City, San Francisco, Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, and Houston have revealed that the organizational structure of immigrant religious communities is vital to the adaptation of immigrants to the host country (Barron and Williams 2017; Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000; Warner and Wittner 1998). Organizational structure may differ within and across religious communities (Ecklund 2005b). Structure, therefore, matters for immigrant assimilation. Both "old" and "new" immigrants adapt their religions to social conditions of the host country through voluntary membership, lay leadership, and professionalized clergy, rather than simply creating religious structures as they

existed in their home countries. For example, immigrant religious communities influence the organizational structure by changing worship styles and rituals compared to traditions found in immigrants' nations of origin (Yang and Ebaugh 2001).

These organizational and logistical aspects help shape how immigrants may use religion to construct different categories of ethnicity and race and how their understanding of race and ethnicity may impact their roles as American citizens (Ecklund 2005a). Moreover, the "extent and forms of transnational activism vary with contexts of exit and reception" (Portes, 2003: 879). For instance, a growing body of research has focused on Filipino-American community and faith across the United States. Such studies have explored how Filipino-Americans have incorporated their faith into their daily lives in shaping everyday American community (Cherry 2014).

Research has also explored intergenerational relationships among immigrants in the United States as well as the children of immigrants (Byng 2017; Foner 2009; Kim 2004; Kurien 2005, 2013; Min and Kim 2005; Park 2008; Park and Ecklund 2007; Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Portes and Zhou 1993; Rumbaut and Portes 2001; Yang 1999). With respect to religion and immigration, sociologists of religion also argue that the "intergenerational transmission of religion depends in part on *intergenerational experience*," or the diverse ways in which families actively transmit their faith across generations (Warner and Williams, 2010: 163).

Intergenerational dynamics are demographically significant. For instance, about 71 percent of Asian Pacific Islander Catholics are first-generation, and overall, about 70 percent of Asian Pacific Islanders are foreign-born immigrants (Park et al. 2015). Moreover, about 26 percent, or the second largest share, of Asian Pacific Islander Catholics comprise the second generation, or those born in the U.S. to immigrant parents (Park et al. 2015). For instance, the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study, conducted by scholars Alejandro Portes and Rubén Rumbaut from 1991 to 1996, explored the adult children of immigrants in Miami and found that religion plays a key role in respect to immigrant children's identity formation. Religiousness positively correlated with transnational involvement like traveling back to the homeland, sending remittances, and "feeling equally at home" in both the host and the home country (Haller and Landolt, 2005: 1204). In addition, previous work on Asian Indian Americans has explored the dynamics, tensions, and negotiations between first- and second-generation immigrants and how that difference is negotiated within religious communities (Kurien 2013). Moreover, second-generation Korean American evangelicals have focused their civic participation and responsibilities outside the Korean ethnic community and their church. While Korean evangelical congregations may disaggregate the relationship between race/ethnicity and the

preservation of cultural ties, their religious affiliation and membership to evangelical congregations like Grace and Manna Church help Korean Americans relate to people outside of their ethnic group in the local community, foster a value of ethnic diversity, and strongly encourage civic engagement in the greater community, like youth shelter outreach (Ecklund 2005b).

While there are a number of rich, robust research studies and ethnographic fieldwork that have explored religious affiliation, organizational structure, and congregations, and while a growing body of research has advanced in the area of race/ethnicity and religion, less is known about the loosening of attachments. In other words, this paper investigates the liminal space between “believing without belonging” and official religious affiliation. Within this specific immigrant community, this paper finds that Filipino-Americans attend their respective neighborhood parishes and affiliate as Catholic, *and* they also actively participate on a weekly basis in a Protestant congregation throughout the week.

More research is needed to explore the role of religion on intergenerational identity. Moreover, though churches must adapt to the needs of immigrants in order to ensure their long-term survival, less is known about how the relationship between social structure and intergenerational dynamics may come to bear on immigrants and the children of immigrants. Essentially, this research will address this gap in the literature, as well as its implications for official religious affiliation and intergenerational identity.

Religion and Filipino-American Youth

Overall, Filipino-Americans constitute the second largest Asian-American group (19.7 percent or 3,416,840) after Chinese-Americans (Hoeffel et al. 2012). Moreover, one out of every twenty children in the United States are Filipino-American. With respect to their religiosity, about 85 percent of Filipino-Americans are Roman Catholic (Angeles 1999). Overall, the largest share of Catholics among Asian Pacific Islanders are Filipino (Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life 2012).

According to the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, Asian American adolescents appear to exhibit higher subjective religiosity as compared with white adolescents (Smith and Denton 2009; Smith et al. 2002). Among ethnic Asian groups, Filipino and Korean immigrants tend to possess higher levels of religiosity (Zhai and Stokes 2009). Specifically, Filipino adolescents and Korean adolescents attend church much more often compared with their Chinese counterparts (Zhai and Stokes 2009). Since parents’ religious background most significantly shapes youth religiosity, it is not surprising to find that Filipino and Korean parents are more likely to be religious as compared with Chinese parents

(Zhai and Stokes 2009).

Moreover, current research on Filipino-American family has explored transnational and intergenerational connections, fragmentations, and challenges, including economic, psychological, and sociological. For instance, recent work on Filipino-American family explores overseas contract workers (e.g., nurses and service workers, maids, construction workers, etc.), transnational identity, and its challenges among their respective families (Espiritu 2003; Nadal and Sue 2011; Parrenas 2000, 2001; Root 1997).

Specifically, current research on Filipino-Americans focuses on the transnational domestic labor market in the global context since the Philippines is the second largest labor exporter in the world, next only to Mexico (Martin 1993; Parrenas 2001, 2002; Rodriguez 2010). These overseas contract workers, for instance, have been documented to assert their rights strategically and engage in transnational labor activism via organizations like Migrante International (Rodriguez 2011). This transnational labor activism is especially of global concern in many areas of the world, including the Middle East, specifically, Saudi Arabia (Rodriguez 2011). Coined as the Philippine labor diaspora, almost 10 percent of the Filipino population live and work abroad (Parrenas 2001).

Most recently, in his landmark work *The Latinos of Asia*, sociologist Anthony Ocampo explores racial and ethnic identity among second-generation Filipino-Americans and illustrates that the construction of race is partly associated with the historical and cultural context and respective communities in which they navigate (Ocampo 2016).

Although there is burgeoning research on Filipino-Americans on the areas of religion, family, and immigrant communities, the paucity of analyses on second-generation immigrants, namely Filipino-American youth, persists. Moreover, with respect to religion, we know relatively little about how Filipino-American youths' religious practices shape their ethnic identity. This paper focuses on second-generation Filipino Protestants, a religious minority within their respective ethnic/cultural community. Finally, less is known about the "loosening of attachments" from the Catholic Church and what its implications may be on religious affiliation at-large.

METHODS

Through an initial email and the snowball method approach, the researcher contacted Reverend Joe Malayang, affiliated with the United Church of Christ (UCC), and he expressed an interest in the research study. He stated he wanted to participate as an opportunity to develop an understanding of his own religiosity, ruminate on the history of his involvement, and possibly learn more about himself

through the interview and survey.

He also believed that his participation could help shed light on Filipino-American Protestant community. He recommended investigating PAECUSA, an 80 to 90 percent Filipino UCC church in Detroit, Michigan. He facilitated a connection with Reverend Abraham Labiano, who interviewed for an hour and extended an invitation to attend his church on Easter morning. He requested a brief biography and purpose of the research and noted that he would insert this submission into the church bulletin in order to inform his congregants of the researcher's presence and bolster interest and participation.

The researcher conducted semi-structured face-to-face interviews based on an interview guide from the Alfred P. Sloan Study of Youth and Social Development that explored the following themes: Family and Personal Background, History of Religious Involvement, A Typical Day at Church, and Personal Thoughts on Religious Involvement.

This study attempted to detect themes across religious participation, across generations, and between respective Filipino youth in how they may perceive, interpret, and construct their experiences. Prior to the service, questions were submitted to Reverend Malayang, who was kind enough to offer feedback on the interview guides and recommended the questions be tailored to a "Filipino audience." With an interest in interviewees' religious histories, questions were included such as, What was your religious affiliation in the Philippines? How has your faith changed since you moved to the United States? Do your religious services incorporate aspects of your culture?

Interviews ranged from one to two hours. This open-ended approach had several advantages. First, Filipinos seemed more comfortable and willing to talk, diminishing the social distance between the researcher and the respondent. Second, in this more relaxed setting, Filipinos could talk with each other about their religiosity, reflexively engaging on their own religious practices and beliefs.

Fieldwork

The researcher arrived at the PAECUSA-UCC, and Reverend Labiano immediately recognized and greeted her. He encouraged the researcher to walk around the church, meet other members, and make herself comfortable. At the beginning of the service, Henry Oliver, a worship leader, shared the church announcements and formally introduced the researcher to the church. At that point he requested that she share with the congregation some of her personal background as well as information about the research project. Anticipating that this request might happen (as is normal protocol in Protestant churches to introduce guests), the researcher briefly introduced herself as a Filipina-American

interested in investigating Filipino religiosity and cultural identity. She also promoted participation in the interviews.

After the service, Monina, an epidemiologist at Wayne State University and UCC member, escorted the researcher to the basement and invited her to eat, sit, and talk with the worship leaders. Over lunch, Reverend Labiano and Reverend Henrietta Andrews, a retired UCC area minister, were jointly interviewed, inquiring on their perspectives of the Filipino youth at this specific church. After lunch and completing the joint interview, Reverend Labiano asked whom the researcher was most interested in interviewing. She requested to interview the second-generation Filipinos, who sat together eating in the back row of the reception hall. Reverend Labiano summoned Henry Oliver, a youth pastor in his forties who served as an intermediary between the adults and youth, and shared with him the interest to interview the second-generation Filipino youth. He then headed to their table and encouraged them to participate in the research study. Due to the noise level, after initial greetings, the researcher and a group of six Filipino-Americans, ranging in age between sixteen and twenty-six, relocated to the upstairs conference room, where a group interview was conducted.

It should be noted that while the analysis focuses on second-generation Filipino-American youth, the researcher also observed, interviewed, and wrote copious field notes on interactions, tensions, and dynamics between first- and second-generation Filipino-Americans. The remainder of this paper focuses on the interviews, interactions, and observations with the second-generation Filipino youth, exploring intergenerational dynamics and religious affiliation.

RESULTS

Religious Affiliation or a Loosening of Attachments?

This research study complicates current social scientific understandings of religious affiliation, belief, and belonging because rather than Filipino-Americans leaving the church per se, they are syncretistically crafting community across two churches *and* across different faiths. Moreover, Filipino-Americans are utilizing each church for distinct reasons: While they attend their neighborhood parishes on Sunday mornings, Filipino-Americans actively participate at UCC throughout the week in order to engage in a culturally-specific Filipino style of worship, where they exert more control, from the leadership-down, over the social structure and organization of their congregation.

Religion is a counterpublic sphere where Filipino-Americans (and other ethnic/minority groups, especially African-Americans, who have historically mobilized in the church since the largely racist dominant public sphere excluded

them from full participation) are able to develop, construct, and reinforce their identities. Since religious communities play an integral role in the social integration of immigrants, this counterpublic sphere helps immigrants navigate and maneuver the challenges of integration in a pluralistic society (Habermas 2006; Ong 2003). Specifically, with respect to the counterpublic sphere, Filipinos syncretistically craft a sense of cultural and religious community in order to cope, survive, and figure out the rules of American life.

For some Filipinos, religion is a resource that has affirmed and helped them cope with the experience of being an immigrant, namely, a sense of disconnectedness and uprootedness (Burgonio-Watson 1997). For almost all interviewees, both men and women, religion most of all provides a community that is missing or often missed that gives them a sense of belonging and ethnic identity.

Most strikingly, second-generation Filipino-American youth are in the precarious position to play Janus as they straddle the present, reflecting the past and looking ahead to the future (Bundang 1996). Despite the fragile sense of community that Filipino-Americans have crafted at the UCC, they have melded a strong sense of ethnic cohesiveness into the worship service itself. In other words, across generations, Filipinos were incorporated in various religious rituals throughout the worship service that served the following three functions: 1) these religious performances incorporated Filipino artifacts and symbols, 2) religious ritual and practice is a form of counterpublic sphere where citizenship is negotiated and contested, and 3) performance informs identity and ethnicity. The UCC allows Filipinos to disidentify with and reject protocols of (white) normativity, or in this instance, historically Eurocentric forms of religious worship, and thus they envision citizenship on their cultural terms, reappropriating these cultural symbols and theological constructs (Muñoz 1999; Ong 2003).

To elaborate, during the Easter worship service, a candlelight commemoration of Jesus Christ's birth, death, and resurrection took place. At each dedication, each generation of Filipinos went to the altar to dedicate a religious artifact (Bible, candle, etc.), starting with the eldest generation. This dedication ceremony ended with the youngest members of this church, or the third generation of Filipino youth, roughly aged between five and eight years old. This syncretistic process significantly departed from traditional liturgy and melded distinct Filipino Protestant religious practices, namely the strong value and deference for elders. Moreover, during tithes and offering, the second-generation youth distributed and collected the offering plates, symbolically representing that the future of the church lies in the hands of the youth since possible future projects, or the life of the church, depend on its ability to financially sustain itself. Working on and

against dominant ideology, Filipinos crafted this church to cater to their cultural community.

Interestingly, Reverend Labiano and Malayang stressed the UCC is “multicultural” and “inclusive.” This finding supports current discourse on the role of religion in the public sphere; the UCC demonstrates how religious institutions have dealt with the “multiple modernities” (Habermas, 2006:1) that have emerged in the United States and the world over. Thus, a Filipino-American Protestant community will practice their religion in a culturally unique way as compared to a Korean or Black Protestant community, bringing in their historical legacies, cultural and transnational ties, and sociocultural supplies (Coleman 1988) like financial resources and education to their respective church communities. This idea was made evident while walking around the church and observing religious artifacts. The Filipino flag stood on the back-left wall of the pulpit, while the American flag rested on the opposing side. The communion wafer is replaced with *pan de sal*, native Filipino bread. A flyer on the wall featured a large photo of a delicious and colorful coconut dessert, or *ube*. Upon closer inspection, this flyer also encouraged Filipinos to participate in U.S. national discourse: a 2010 U.S. Census Bureau campaign encouraged Filipinos to fill out their respective census and suggested that being counted signified official recognition of the nation-state (U.S. government) and society at-large. Missionary projects are specifically funded for and to the Philippines (with photos of missionary trips adorning the right-hand entrance of the church), thus fostering transnational ties between diasporic citizens (like Filipinos) and their homeland. For example, Reverend Labiano proudly noted that one of their young members, at age fourteen, conducted missionary work in Mindanao, the southernmost part of the Philippines, with her mother.

What does it mean when a group of people officially affiliate as Catholic but then actively engage in a non-Catholic religious community? What are the implications for official religious affiliation, belief, and belonging? Based on these findings, this paper argues for a more nuanced approach to theorizing upon religious affiliation, belief, and belonging. Immigrants, and in this case Filipinos, do not necessarily categorize neatly by religious affiliation, at least in the traditional sense of belonging to only one religious community. On the other hand, this research does not necessarily see a loosening of attachments per se. With respect to this study, this paper posits that when a group of people, in this case Filipinos, officially affiliate as Catholic but then actively engage in a non-Catholic religious community, it means that there are certain cultural and familial needs that are being met outside the parish and crafted by and within their respective cultural community. A sense of belonging is deeply important, and it is evident that the current religious structure of the Catholic Church and local

parishes to which these respective Filipinos belong is not enough to sustain a deeper sense of community for which they seek. This study also illustrates the unique ways in which belief and belonging interact. In other words, although this Filipino community belongs to *both* a Catholic and a Protestant community, it appears that this denominational difference does not serve as an abiding issue. Overriding this denominational difference is a need to disseminate cultural values and preserve community across generations.

Intergenerational Relationships among Immigrants

Religious practice and belief are deeply interrelated to notions of citizenship, providing conceptual, spiritual, and emotional epistemologies that Filipinos negotiate in order essentially to develop their understanding of ways of being in the world, or the largely white, majoritarian public sphere (Muñoz 2000, 2007; Ong 2003). In this case, religion informs how Filipinos may negotiate their collective identity based on their ethnic/racial and religious difference. Through the UCC, second-generation Filipinos are able to preserve intergenerational relations with their respective families and communities.

For instance, almost all UCC members noted that they attend Catholic mass in the morning but then commute as far as an hour to attend UCC at 11 AM. When asked about why they attend UCC, they noted that they attend Catholic mass for “religious structure” but that they attend UCC in order to preserve their Filipino culture. One Filipina specifically stated that “UCC is family. This is the place where we can be Filipino.” The congregants felt a sense of “home” because they could speak in *Tagalog*, or Filipino language, and enjoy their native food. For instance, after the service, Filipinos gathered in the basement with the worship leaders and in a hospitable and warm environment, gathered, socialized, and ate around Filipino food: *Pancit* (Filipino noodles), *lecheflan* (caramel flan), *menudo* (chopped liver, raisins, and carrots over a meaty sauce), *ube* (coconut cake), and *lechon*, or slow-roasted pig. In this case, this cultural aspect, the freedom to share their native food, is especially important as a means by which to craft community. When probed about her religious commitment and social devotion to the UCC, the interviewee noted that many members also attend Bible studies at least three times a week with their fellow UCC members.

Moreover, Reverend Labiano prided himself on the church’s ability to preserve Filipino cultural practices in ways that Filipinos would not be able to do outside the UCC church setting. He noted that most of the youth who have grown up as adults still “bless,” or place their foreheads on the hands of elders out of deference and respect. He emphasized this point by adding that some Filipinos even left the church to attend college, but then when they returned, they did not

forget what the church taught them. He also noted that he encouraged parents to resist complete assimilation into American society, discouraging them from accepting that their children engage in highly Western practices that undermine traditional Filipino values, like cohabitation (or partners who live together before marriage). Reverend Labiano also encouraged Filipino youth to develop friendships with their co-religious peers (not necessarily ethnic per se). In this instance, UCC serves as the glue between intergenerational family and community members, advising parents on how to rear their children and navigate the seemingly oppositional cultural values between East and West. Thus, religion in the modern (as opposed to traditional) sense functions to shape the trajectories and contours of individual lives in a community-based setting outside of the family.

Furthermore, second-generation UCC Filipinos cope with challenges related to assimilation through this religious community (Muñoz 2000; Ong 2003). Sustaining a sense of community is especially important with respect to intergenerational familial relations since young Filipino American men and women strongly value the family (*sa pamilya*) as a tremendous source of cultural pride. Thus, religious communities are fragile as they cohere and negotiate their identity across generations. This challenge presents itself with questions like how do Filipinos construct a cohesive identity across generations? On one hand, second-generation Filipinos struggle to respect their parents, elders, and their more traditional cultural and religious beliefs about ways of being in this world. On the other hand, they face the challenge to assimilate into a modern, westernized society that socially and culturally marginalizes them.

Specifically, slippages of communication between first- and second-generation Filipino-Americans emerged as a major theme in group interviews. For example, the church experienced a mass exodus. UCC members reported that the church was founded in the 1970s by a handful of Catholic converts who appreciated attending Catholic mass but needed a more cohesive religious and cultural community. Membership swelled to 200 in the early 1990s, but then a mass exit occurred, wherein numbers dropped to eighty and have not recovered since. When asked about why this schism happened, one respondent noted that there was a breakdown in communication between the first- and second-generation members. Specifically, in constructing their identity, first-generation Filipinos had strong notions about how they should preserve and transmit the Filipino culture to the second-generation youth, who sharply disagreed, which ultimately led to the schism. Second-generation Filipino youth melancholically reflected on this mass exodus.

Moreover, the first-generation also believed that the second-generation did not have their own voice. Interestingly, Reverend Labiano had initially asserted that

Filipinas would remain largely passive and silent about their religiosity and identity, but the reality was very different: When conducting the group interview, it was actually the Filipinas who were most open and vocal about their religiosity. Among the respondents, it was the Filipinas, specifically Janice (name changed to protect anonymity), who opened up and shared the most as compared to her male peers.

For example, Janice shared how the breakdown in communication between elders and second-generation Filipinos led to the permanent rupture within the church. When asked to relate what events led to this break, she emphatically shared that she would attend the church meetings and expressed that second-generation Filipinos would want to change certain aspects of worship, like developing a separate youth organization and worship service that would cater to the needs and concerns of the second-generation youth or catering the homily to be less theological and more practical to address relevant social needs, challenges, and struggles of Filipino-Americans today. In agreement with Janice, another interviewee noted about current sermons, “The messages do not really apply...they do not have a life application.” As a result, Janice attempted to represent the second-generation youth, voicing strong dissension. Janice continued to note that elders dismissed her (and more broadly, the voice of the youth), adhering to the strongly hierarchical, patriarchal Filipino value of authority. This slippage in communication is striking because Reverend Labiano forewarned that the Filipinas are “shy” and would most likely “not share much,” and in contradistinction, Janice and another interviewee shared a very different account; the second generation clearly voiced their need for a different style of worship that would speak to the second-generation youth, more practical and less theological in its nature. Janice did not feel that the current worship style and services conducted had “life application,” and therefore the “messages” did “not really apply.”

With respect to the Filipino youths’ complaints, the elders had responded that they were too “young” and “inexperienced” to have any understanding about the spiritual and social needs of the church. As a result, frustration mounted among second-generation church members, and this fragile, cohesive bond ruptured. Those who left felt “suffocated” and found other churches, primarily Catholic. Janice said that it was at this point that the elders realized that something needed to be done and thus appointed Oliver to serve as an intermediary between the youth and adults. A 1.5 generation Filipino in his forties who was born in the Philippines and emigrated to the United States at an early age, he could understand and empathize with the Filipino and Filipino-American perspective. Janice went on to say that church relations have improved as a result, and they feel that the second-generation youths’ voices are now being recognized and

“heard.” Thus, ethnicity collides with religion; this example illustrates the ambivalent aspects of intergenerationally cohering cultural identity through religious communities like the UCC. Or more precisely, although being religiously involved in the UCC presents distinct advantages like the opportunity to interact with other Filipinos and to preserve a sense of cultural community, nonetheless, religion presents with it unique obstacles as Filipinos across generations struggle to develop and sustain a coherent cultural identity.

Moreover, since parent-child conflict is the strongest predictor for self-esteem and depression, it is especially important to investigate notions of citizenship through second-generation youths’ religious practices and beliefs. Through this insightful lens, scholars will be in a better position to understand the emotional lives of Filipinos. In other words, through exploring Filipino youths’ religiosity, practitioners and scholars will be able to explore tactics or strategies that Filipino-Americans employ in order to construct and meld distinct new cultures and subcultures as they rework dominant ideologies and notions of citizenship in American society. With that said, in respect to the parent-child or community elder-youth intergenerational conflict, the response from the elders is not completely surprising. Filipinos strongly value respect and deference to community elders who are seen as wiser and more knowledgeable of the world. The fact that this young lady had the “nerve” even to challenge the elders must have been distressing from their cultural perspective and point of view.

The findings show that intergenerational relationships among immigrants matter because the paucity of research persists on how intergenerational dynamics impact official religious affiliation, belief, and belonging. In other words, less is known about how religion plays a role in crafting community across generations, and the challenges that immigrants may face toward that end. Moreover, this paper has advanced analysis on religious structure and the intergenerational tensions and struggles that immigrant communities face as they carve out their own sense of community. Overall, this paper helps address the role that religion plays on intergenerational immigrant identity through the lens of a Filipino-American community in Detroit, Michigan.

CONCLUSION

This paper explores intergenerational dynamics and religious affiliation vis-à-vis culture and identity. The results reveal a strong relationship between religious involvement and ethnic/minority and cultural identity development. Religiosity appears to provide a conceptual and spiritual space for Filipinos to preserve and foster cultural practices and values that are transmitted from their families into major elements of their religious practice.

More research is needed to explore the fragile cohesiveness of Filipino religious communities in order to shed light on the obstacles that second-generation Filipinos face as they straddle between first-generation and dominant westernization discourse and the accompanying melancholia or disjuncture that may occur as a result of this double-bind. In addition, the generalizability of this research study is largely limited. A national comparative research study of Filipino Protestant (and Catholic) churches would illuminate the patterns and perceptions of their involvement, and largely notions of identity and citizenship.

While tensions arise between first- and second-generation Filipino-Americans, more research is needed to explore their implications on formal religious affiliation and congregations at large. Moreover, future research should investigate other groups or religious actors who are “mostly Catholic,” or who attend Catholic parish *and* also participate in another religious community. Through exploring this social phenomenon, we will be able to advance understandings of how belonging, or specifically exclusivity, is measured. The quality of the contact should be more seriously considered as much as formal religious affiliation per se. Practitioners may also find this research of interest as they develop an understanding of how “belonging” may be more elusive than official religious affiliation per se.

In addition, more research should investigate how demography impacts religious affiliation: Filipino-Americans drive at least one hour to Detroit because they would like to spend time with their co-ethnic peers and more freely express their culture. Therefore, it would be of interest to scholars to investigate if other ethnic groups practice this social phenomenon in cases where there is a large presence of their co-ethnic peers within their own respective community parish or religious community. This question leads the researcher also to recommend future research on how social structure and power dynamics may play a role in these “looser attachments.” For example, in what instances or contexts might scholars observe similar behavior across race/ethnicity and religion? Will immigrants who have more authority over the social structure of their respective religious community in which they navigate be less likely to engage in this respective behavior? Will churches that do not adapt their social structures to the needs of immigrants experience this loosening of attachments? Finally, more research should also investigate how the social structure of religious communities impacts the intergenerational transmission of religion among those who are “mostly Catholic.”

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