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# Racial Minority Immigrant Acculturation: Examining Filipino Settlement Experiences in Canada Utilizing a Community-Focused Acculturation Framework

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## **RACIAL MINORITY IMMIGRANT ACCULTURATION: EXAMINING FILIPINO SETTLEMENT EXPERIENCES IN CANADA UTILIZING A COMMUNITY-FOCUSED ACCULTURATION FRAMEWORK**

Renato M. Liboro

*By incorporating perspectives from Community Psychology into Berry's (1997) acculturation framework from Cross-cultural Psychology, a more community-focused acculturation framework was developed and proposed in this essay. Elements from Community Psychology that focus on group-specific settings, community-level analysis, sociocultural resources, sociopolitical forces, and roles of grassroots organizations and host societies in challenging institutional power were consolidated into Berry's acculturation framework to establish a new framework with a stronger community focus. In a theoretical application utilizing the new community-focused framework, socio-historical accounts of and discourse on Filipino experiences prior to the beginnings of the Filipino diaspora to Canada in the mid-1990s and more recent Filipino immigrant settlement experiences in Canada were used to examine and gain greater understanding of racial minority immigrant acculturation. The theoretical application of the new framework was presented not only to demonstrate the synthesis of elements derived from Cross-cultural and Community Psychology, as well as the methodological difference between Berry's acculturation framework and the community-focused version proposed by the author, but also to underscore the value of community-level analysis in the study of racial minority immigrant acculturation. Implications for Psychology theory, research, and practice were subsequently presented.*

**Keywords:** *acculturation framework, community, Filipino-Canadian, racial minority, immigrant*

### **1. Introduction**

Apart from being a major driving force for population growth, immigration is considered by many countries to be a significant stimulus for innovation and economic progress. In North America, both Canada and the United States (US) have consistently remained among the top 10 nations in the world that accept the highest number of immigrants per year in the last 25 years

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(United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Population Division [UNDESAPD], 2015). Canada alone has maintained an average of a quarter of a million immigrants (permanent residents) as a proportion of its entire population over the last 15 years (Citizenship and Immigration Canada [CIC], 2014). The majority of immigrants to Canada come from China, India, and the Philippines, with the Philippines as the top country of birth of immigrants in the most recent years (Statistics Canada, 2016). It is evident that more than ever, people are immigrating and living abroad. In 2013, 232 million people were international migrants, compared with 175 million in 2000, and 154 million in 1990 (UNDESAPD, 2015). Not surprisingly, immigration and the acculturation of immigrants have become popular topics of interest for discourse in various academic fields. Studies on the psychology of acculturation have been intensively expanding (Chirkov, 2009), and in particular, acculturation research work with and for communities is thriving (Ward & Kagitcibasi, 2010).

In this essay, I will first briefly review theories, perspectives, and frameworks on immigrant acculturation derived from Cross-cultural Psychology (CcP) and Community Psychology (CP). Accordingly, when I use the term “culture” in this essay, I refer to it as how Kral and his colleagues (2011) define it, as “the understanding of shared subjective meaning” that encompasses “ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, class, age cohort, nationality, organizations, and others”. Additionally, when I use the term “community” in this essay, I refer to it as how Seitz (2003) describes it, as “a shared culture or body politic with a common set of values, norms, preferences, and aims; a collective history; and a set of defining beliefs and practices that individuals share”.

Next, I will synthesize appropriate elements from each of the Psychology sub-disciplines, CcP and CP, to generate and propose a new acculturation framework – a general acculturation model with a stronger community focus. In his paper on critical psychology of acculturation, Chirkov (2009) pointed out that acculturation researchers are in need of more working models that could help guide their work in this area. The new framework I propose in this essay will highlight to acculturation researchers and scholars the merits of focusing on both culture *and* community.

Then, I will utilize the new *community-focused acculturation framework* I introduce to present socio-historical accounts of and discourse on Filipino experiences prior to the beginnings of the Filipino diaspora to Canada in the mid-1990s (Su, 2007), and recent Filipino immigrant settlement experiences in Canada (Friesen, 2011), in order to examine and gain greater understanding of racial minority immigrant acculturation. I believe that this *theoretical application* of the new framework will not only demonstrate the methodological difference between earlier CcP acculturation frameworks and my proposed community-focused acculturation framework, but also underscore the value of community-level analysis in the study of racial minority immigrant acculturation, which takes into account the impact of the cultural characteristics and active engagement of both migrant and host communities.

By accomplishing these tasks, I aim to achieve my two important goals for writing this essay. My first and overarching goal is to contribute to the discourse on the struggles of racial minority immigrants and the vital role communities play in supporting their acculturation in CcP, CP, and Canadian Psychology academic literature. My second and more specific goal is to emphasize both the value of utilizing a community-focused acculturation framework in understanding racial minority immigrant acculturation, and the future implications for Psychology theory, research, and practice that can be derived from the new framework’s value.

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## 2. Berry's Fundamental Concepts, Acculturation Theories, and Framework

In order to develop a new acculturation framework, I will first identify fundamental concepts that can be adopted from CcP and acculturation theory. Among the many contributions to research that have investigated on the fate of people who developed in one culture and attempt to re-establish their lives in another, it is probably the body of work of psychologist John W. Berry, Professor Emeritus of Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, Canada, that has proven to be one of the most influential in CcP within the last few decades. Together with his colleagues, Berry has monitored multicultural attitudes in Canada for over 20 years (Berry, 1997).

According to Berry (1997), the concept of "acculturation" is employed to refer to the cultural changes resulting from the encounter of two or more groups with different cultures, while the concept of "adaptation" refers to the eventual outcome that occurs as a result of experiencing acculturation. Although he acknowledged that changes might take place in one or both groups, Berry believed that acculturation tends to induce more change in one of the groups compared to the other, and came up with the term "acculturating group" to indicate the former. In his subsequent publications, Berry (2005) was more conscious to clarify that it is equally important to acknowledge the reciprocal nature of acculturation, especially when immigration is involved. This was likely in response to definitions of acculturation that other authors explicitly presented in their own writings or implicitly assumed in their work. The definitions of other scholars not only described acculturation as a result of a contact of two or more cultures, but also specified the occurrence of changes or mutual influences that take place in the interacting parties over time, which may occur either at an individual or group level, or both (Chirkov, 2009). Berry later claimed that mutual adaptations take place and that accommodations between groups are necessary to promote positive acculturation for all. No cultural group remains unchanged following intercultural contact and acculturation is a two-way interaction (Sam & Berry, 2010).

In order for other researchers to understand the acculturation framework he reformulated over the years, Berry elaborated on theoretical concepts, which were the foundational basis of his framework. For Berry, a framework on acculturation needs to take into consideration key features affecting the original groups prior to coming into contact with each other. Not only is it important to ascertain the compatibility in the cultural norms of the two groups, it is just as valuable to discern the nature of their contact relationships. Some contacts are welcomed, while others are not (Sam & Berry, 2010).

The long-term psychological consequences of the process of immigrant acculturation depend on variables that reside in the immigrants' "society of origin" and "society of settlement". In the society of origin, it is relevant to know the cultural characteristics that accompany the group of individuals into the acculturation process to obtain a better grasp of where the immigrants are coming from, both literally and figuratively. Knowing these cultural features will assist in establishing the "cultural distance" between the society of origin and the society of settlement; the more dissimilar the cultures from the two societies are, the greater the challenges are to be expected during the process of acculturation. It is also necessary to be aware of the political and economic conditions faced by the immigrants in their society of origin since this awareness will help in comprehending the degree of voluntariness in the migration motivation of the acculturating group (Berry, 1997).

In the society of settlement, a number of factors are also important. The general orientation of the society in which immigrants settle is the first thing to consider. Some societies have been

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built by immigration over time and this may be an ongoing process supported by a deliberate immigration policy. As a result of long-standing immigration, these countries have become culturally plural societies, which have positions representing a positive multicultural ideology (Berry, 1997). However, even with cultural pluralism present, variations in the relative acceptance of new cultures coming into a society of settlement can still be expected. The significance of *group-level settings* underscores the powerful role played by the attitudes of the dominant group that heavily influence the acculturation process (Berry, 2005). With regards to group-level acculturation, migrants usually change substantially as a result of living with two sets of cultural influences. Physical changes are often profound as a result of urbanization, social changes may involve disrupted communities or new alliances, and economic changes could mean loss of status or taking on different employment opportunities. Related to the general orientation of the society of settlement, Sam and Berry (2010) also encouraged researchers to consider the nature of the society where immigrants relocate. Some can be considered “settler societies” where immigration is encouraged to generate population and economic growth, while others can be deemed “non-settler societies” where immigration is regarded to be a necessity aimed at assisting less privileged people from other countries. In their studies, they found that there was better immigrant acculturation experiences documented in settler societies.

Moderating factors or inherent individual qualities existing prior to and arising during the process of acculturation are elements for a clearer understanding of Berry’s (2005) acculturation framework. Migrants’ age, gender, race, level of education, work experience, economic status, motivations, and expectations prior to immigration are the most salient mediating factors based on research in Acculturation Studies (Berry, 1997). The “phase of acculturation”, that is, how long the migrants have been acculturating or experiencing the process, should be taken into account because it influences the motivation of migrants in their new communities. Along with experiences of negative attitudes such as prejudice and discrimination, prolonged phases of acculturation can lead to cultural conflicts and acculturative stress (Sam & Berry, 2010). Responses to these sources of stress and resolutions to these conflicts would usually require acculturating groups to devise some applicable, but not necessarily always effective, form of coping strategy. According to Berry, there are various ways groups seek to overcome the challenges brought about by cultural conflicts. He developed the concept of “acculturation strategies”, referring to the different ways groups deal with the need to acculturate (Berry, 1997). Based on his framework, groups would pursue strategies with respect to two major factors they encounter during acculturation: “cultural maintenance” (the extent to which they will maintain their original cultural identity), and “contact and participation” (the extent to which they will have contact and participate in the larger society along with other ethnocultural groups) (Berry, 2005). When acculturating groups consider these two underlying factors simultaneously, four acculturation strategies (i.e., *assimilation*, *separation*, *integration*, and *marginalization*) can be derived from the paradigm.

When Sam and Berry (2010) explored the relationship between how immigrants acculturate and how well they adapt, discrimination based on race played a very important role. Evidence showed that acculturation strategies are linked to discrimination, with migrants exposed to a lot of discrimination more likely to experience *marginalization* and prefer *separation*, whereas those exposed to less discrimination preferred and experienced *assimilation* or *integration*. When immigrants encounter rejection from the society of settlement, they are more likely to reject that society in return (Berry, 2005). The most common finding among the studies based on this

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framework revealed that the integration strategy is the most adaptive in several settings and is associated with better sociocultural adaptation (Sam & Berry, 2010).

In one of the three theses he described in his article, Chirkov (2009) indicated that among the acculturation studies he analyzed, the majority were simply studies of the psychological aspects of immigration and the adaptation of migrants. In order to conduct better acculturation research in the future, he asserted that a cultural analysis of both home and host societies regarding various domains of the immigrants' lives need to be emphasized. These domains included but were not limited to: family roles and responsibilities, work and work ethic, and relationships with authority and other members of the community (Chirkov, 2009).

### **3. Community Psychology Theories and Perspectives on Immigrant Acculturation**

One of the things that Berry's (2005) acculturation theories and framework has in common with the principles and theories of CP is the value it bestows on conducting research analyses at group-level settings (Sonn & Fisher, 2010). In their article reviewing models that characterize group responses to intercultural contact, Sonn and Fisher (1998) emphasized the need for going beyond considering individual- and group-level settings, and moving toward a more expanded *community-level analysis*. By conducting analyses at a community-level, traditional societal practices such as using cultural benchmarks to distinguish positive adaptations from maladaptations that are based solely on the cultural norms of the dominant, usually White middle class groups are brought to light. In reality, although some racial minority immigrant groups may give the appearance of capitulation in certain contexts, they sometimes provide different responses to marginalization in other settings. As a distinct example of the benefits of utilizing community-level analyses, the positive ways in which these groups respond to stressful experiences from discrimination represent *community resilience* that is often times unrecognized in individual- and even group-level analyses (Sonn & Fisher, 1998).

Sonn and Fisher (2010) cautioned colleagues in CP to be mindful in their work of a number of issues that prevent a fuller understanding of the complex ways in which communities negotiate the challenges associated with intercultural contact. They recognized the tendency of researchers to oversimplify community responses to conflicts and present them in a deterministic manner. They found that in many studies there is often a focus only on the most prominent or dominant group-specific setting and a failure to explore other relevant group-specific settings. They also found that many researchers neglect to examine the *sociocultural and material resources* available in the negotiation of community relationships. Finally, they noted that there was inadequate attention paid to the diverse *sociopolitical and economic forces* that influence the acculturation and settlement experiences of immigrants.

Garcia-Ramirez, de la Mata, Paloma, and Hernandez-Plaza (2011) from the University of Seville described the acculturation integration approach in their research. Like Sonn and Fisher, Garcia-Ramirez and colleagues placed great emphasis on harmony between acquisitions of new culture while maintaining own cultural heritage and creating opportunities for community relationships. A large part of their work encouraged the promotion of *grassroots organizations* in communities to advocate for the rights and needs of racial minority immigrants. Through interactive engagement with grassroots organizations, they believed allies from the host

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community can provide much welcomed support in programs that lead to faster social and economic integration of struggling immigrants. They also emphasized that it is important for acculturation research not only to focus on the effects of negative attitudes of the dominant communities on the integration efforts of immigrants, but also to explore how host societies adapt to accommodate newcomer cultures in order to improve racial minority immigrant settlement experiences.

More recently, Salo and Birman (2015) recommended the use of an *ecological systems theory* (Bronfenbrenner, 1977) approach to conducting studies done on the acculturation of immigrants to the culture of host societies, building on the conceptualization of human development as occurring within varied levels of systems. The largest system within which the more proximal systems (e.g., microsystem, mesosystem) are embedded is the macrosystem, which represents the cultural context that influences other systems at play. According to Salo and Birman, the macrosystem of the host society is not the only culture that influences adaptation in specific contexts. Rather, the macrosystem of the society of origin also continues to be culture that influences immigrants. Also, the microsystems and mesosystems immigrants participate in or are affected by vary by culture, with some settings being oriented to the host culture, such as the school or workplace, and others to the heritage culture, such as the home. It is therefore critical to note when conducting research on acculturation of immigrants the specific culture (e.g., macrosystem: host vs. heritage) that influences immigrants' participation and behaviours for each particular setting they are involved (e.g., microsystem, mesosystem: work vs. home).

#### **4. Constructing a Community-Focused Acculturation Framework**

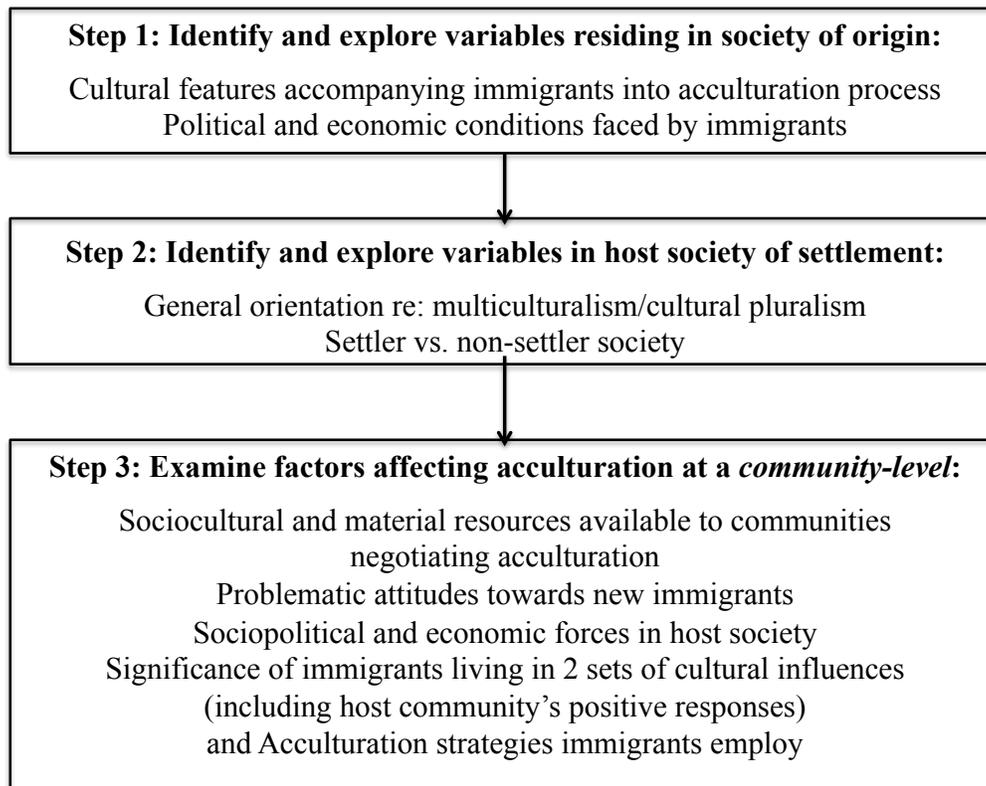
In order to develop a new acculturation framework that would have a stronger community focus, I believe it is important to be able to strategically incorporate or apply certain appropriate theories and perspectives from CP to the fundamental concepts that constitute and substantiate Berry's acculturation framework in CcP. As an initial step that would make their integration more efficient, I will first separately enumerate and summarize the fundamental concepts from Berry's acculturation framework and the CP critical theories and perspectives on conducting acculturation research that I have just presented in this essay. Next, I will merge the concepts, theories, and perspectives from both sub-disciplines and construct the new community-focused acculturation framework that I believe will allow for a more critical examination of racial minority immigrant acculturation beyond the depth and level of analysis that examines at individual- or group-level settings. Once constructed, I will then utilize the new framework (i.e., as a *theoretical application*) to examine pre-diasporic Filipino factors and experiences, and post-diasporic settlement experiences of Filipinos in Canada, in order to gain a greater understanding of racial minority immigrant acculturation. This theoretical application of the new community-focused acculturation framework will also demonstrate the methodological difference between Berry's acculturation framework and the new community-focused acculturation framework, as well as emphasize the value of conducting community-level analyses in addition to individual- and group-level analyses.

Based on Berry's framework, the following fundamental concepts need to be taken into serious consideration when studying immigrant acculturation:

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- The long-term psychological consequences of the process of acculturation depend on variables that reside in the immigrants' society of origin and society of settlement.
  - In the society of origin, it is relevant to learn the cultural features and inherent qualities that accompany immigrants into the acculturation process. It is necessary to be aware of the political and economic conditions faced by immigrants since this awareness will help in comprehending their degree of voluntariness in their migration motivation.
  - In the society of settlement, it is important to determine the general orientation of the society with regards to cultural pluralism and multiculturalism, and whether the society is considered a settler or non-settler one. It is also important to explore group-level settings involved, particularly whether the dominant communities in the society has negative attitudes toward new immigrants (i.e., discrimination based on race).
  - While exploring group-level settings within the society of settlement, it is vital to remember that immigrants significantly change as a result of living with two sets of cultural influences. Immigrants use at least one of four acculturation strategies to respond to sources of stress and these strategies will differ according to how much they are willing to maintain elements from their heritage culture or embrace and practice elements from the culture of their host society.

According to CP critical theories and perspectives, scholars conducting research on inter-cultural contact need to be especially cognizant of the following concerns and issues:

- Many studies would focus on one prominent group-level setting but overlook or fail to examine other relevant group-level settings. From an ecological systems theory perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1977), the macrosystem of the host society is not the only culture that influences acculturation of immigrants; the heritage society continues to be influential. Other group-level settings (i.e., microsystem, mesosystem) immigrants participate in or are affected by vary by cultural influence, with some settings being oriented to the host culture (e.g., school, workplace) and others to the heritage culture (e.g., home).
- It is important to go beyond individual- and group-level settings by conducting community- level analysis. Researchers have a tendency to oversimplify community responses to conflicts associated with acculturation, particularly overlooking the positive ways immigrant communities respond to stressful experiences from discrimination. As an example, phenomenon such as community resilience is often times unrecognized in studies employing individual- and group-level analyses (Sonn & Fisher, 1998).
- Many studies fail to consider the sociocultural and material resources available in the negotiation of intergroup relations, particularly neglecting the imbalance in availability of resources between communities. There is also inadequate attention paid to different sociopolitical and economic forces in the host society that impact immigrants' acculturation.
- Acculturation research should not only focus on the effects of the negative attitudes of the dominant communities on immigrants' settlement experiences but also on how host societies adapt to accommodate newcomer cultures to improve immigrant acculturation. In particular, the significant role of immigrant grassroots organizations in supporting newcomers and rallying allies from the host society needs to be explored.



**Figure 1 – Community Focused Acculturation Framework**

By incorporating the most salient elements from appropriate CP theories and perspectives on how to critically conduct acculturation research into Berry’s acculturation framework, I construct and propose a new community-focused acculturation framework (Figure 1) that focuses on:

Step 1: Identifying and exploring variables residing in the society of origin

- a. Cultural features accompanying immigrants into the acculturation process
- b. Political and economic conditions faced by immigrants in their society of origin

Step 2: Identifying and exploring variables residing in the host society of settlement

- a. The general orientation of the host society with regards to multiculturalism
- b. The status of the host society as a settler or non-settler society

Step 3: Examining factors affecting acculturation at a community-level (beyond group-level)

- a. Sociocultural and material resources available to communities negotiating acculturation
- b. Problematic attitudes towards new immigrants and racial discrimination in host society
- c. Sociopolitical and economic forces present in the host society
- d. The significance of immigrants living with two sets of cultural (macrosystem) influences and the acculturation strategies immigrants employ in microsystem/mesosystem settings; elements that need to be considered include:
  - Positive ways immigrants respond to stressful experiences or discrimination
  - The significant role of immigrant grassroots organizations in promoting acculturation
  - Positive ways dominant communities respond to accommodate new migrant cultures

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## 5. Utilizing the Community-Focused Acculturation Framework: A Theoretical Application

In 2003, the Philippines ranked 4<sup>th</sup> as a source country of immigrants to Canada following China, India, and Pakistan. Since then, the number of Filipinos immigrating to Canada steadily increased, and from 2010 to 2012, the Philippines became Canada's number one source country of immigrants for three consecutive years (CIC, 2014). In 2014, Canada welcomed more than 40,000 permanent residents from the Philippines – up over 30 percent from 2013, making the Philippines Canada's top source country for permanent residents based on the most recent available statistics (Government of Canada, 2015). Because Filipinos represent the largest racial minority population that has chosen Canada as their primary destination for immigration in the last several years, I believe that an examination of socio-historical accounts of and discourse on Filipino experiences prior to the beginnings of the Filipino diaspora to Canada in the mid-1990s (Su, 2007) and recent Filipino post-immigration settlement experiences in Canada (Friesen, 2011) utilizing the new community-focused framework I proposed in this essay will provide a greater understanding of racial minority immigrant acculturation. In this theoretical application of my proposed community-focused acculturation framework, I will utilize the elements I synthesized and summarized from Berry's original CcP framework and the recommendations proposed by CP acculturation researchers to elaborate on and examine the factors that impact the settlement experiences and racial minority acculturation of Filipino-Canadian immigrants.

### 5.1. *Identifying and Exploring Variables Residing in the Society of Origin: the Philippines*

***Cultural features and inherent qualities accompanying Filipino immigrants into the acculturation process.*** As a *group* of racial minorities in Canada emigrating from a country that was colonized by Spain and the US for prolonged periods of time, Filipinos epitomize an archetype of immigrants who have been significantly influenced by western colonization and imperialism (David & Nadal, 2013). Because the Philippines was ruled by Spain for over three centuries, and later colonized by the US for nearly 50 years, the evolving cultural identity of its people was influenced by western culture in many profound ways. When the Spanish conquistadors first settled in the Philippines in the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century, one of the first things they did after subduing the Philippine natives' resistance was to ensure the gradual but widespread proselytization of its indigenous people (Constantino, 2010). Under the Spanish rule, Filipinos were believed to have experienced exploitation and tyranny. As part of their "civilization" process, their indigenous culture was systematically replaced by Spanish culture. With the subsequent conversion of the masses to Catholicism, and the inculcation of new mores and rituals over centuries, the rudimentary cultural identity of the Philippine natives was changed and was never to be the same again (Constantino, 2010). The ways of the indigenous people of the Philippines began to erode and were soon replaced by a hybrid of Spanish and native cultural features and traditions (Liporada, 2010). Filipinos developed a sense of "colonial debt", characterized by a deferential attitude toward Western culture and their colonizers, and the tendency to accept maltreatments by Spanish rulers as the natural cost for civilization.

It was not until the takeover of the Philippines by the US after the Spanish-American war at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that a new wave of cultural changes occurred. Spain sold the

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Philippines to the US for \$20 million during the Treaty of Paris in 1898, which ushered in another long period of colonization for the Filipinos (David & Okazaki, 2006). Despite unimproved agricultural reforms that continued to suppress the socioeconomic status of most Filipinos, one change that seemed to have brought improvement to their lives with the takeover of the US was the provision of free education. The US was convinced that education, instead of military suppression, was the more effective means of winning over the Filipinos.

In addition to teaching Filipinos the English language, the Americans inculcated them with more western values and shaped their worldviews with American political ideas in the establishment of the US tutelary regime. Over decades, Americans convinced the Filipinos that the US was the nation of endless opportunities. Whereas the Spanish conquerors used the Catholic Church to keep the Philippine natives in line for hundreds of years, the American colonizers introduced the US school system as their own means to promote western ways of thinking and maintain control over their colony with notions of American superiority (David & Nadal, 2013). These historical events led certain researchers to speculate that the US public school system was likely the reason why Filipinos developed grandiose pictures of anything North American (David & Okazaki, 2006). For some researchers, the US endowed the Philippines with what was perhaps the most insidious psychological legacy of colonization – colonial mentality – a specific form of internalized oppression characterized by a perception of one's ethnic and cultural inferiority (David & Nadal, 2013).

***Political and economic conditions faced by Filipinos in the Philippines.*** Even after the Philippines was granted its independence from the US in 1946, the Americans were still able to maintain an imperialistic hold over Filipino mentality well beyond the 1970s. Significant US political and military involvement that persisted for decades after the Philippines gained independence likely continued to reinforce the Filipino belief in American superiority. The maintenance of US military bases and projects on Philippine soil in the early 1990's arguably continued to send the message that Filipinos could not adequately protect their country, and thus, were still dependent on the US for political and military protection (David & Nadal, 2013).

Legacies of American colonialism persisted even after the US relinquished their sovereignty over the Philippines. Although English was first made an official language during US rule, it continued to be the primary language used for school instruction, government transactions, and business and legal communications in the Philippines for more than 30 years (David & Okazaki, 2006). Although the Philippines was no longer a US colony, the Filipino-American ties continued to stay strong well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Because of its growing agricultural industry, the Philippines became a reliable resource for sought-after products worthy of attracting American trade (Liporada, 2010). The US remained the largest source of foreign investment in the Philippines, and the Philippines continued to be one of the world's largest US aid recipients.

Conversely, the 1970s was also a time when the first signs of resistance to American domination began to appear. Because Filipino scholars went to universities that were inspired and initially supported by US educational system, the first tide of sociopolitical awareness emerged from edifying post-secondary education (Joaquin, 1999). From within the walls of the local universities, Filipino youth learned about American definitions of colonialism and imperialism, and gained ideas of liberation and social consciousness. Student leaders from different Philippine universities led protests against the American-supported government to expose pervasive graft and corruption. What was later dubbed as the "First Quarter Storm", the period of radical leftist unrest that began in the universities, provided then President Ferdinand

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Marcos false justification for declaring Martial Law in 1972 (Joaquin, 1999). A new generation of Filipinos with a different cultural identity started to emerge with convictions that germinated from the American-modeled academic institutions. This period marked the start of nearly a decade and a half of political strife marred with economic recessions, fraudulent government election results, and cronyism that culminated in the phenomenal non-violent civil resistance against the Marcos regime known to the rest of the world as the Philippines' People Power Revolution of 1986 (Thornton, 2008).

The road to sociopolitical and economic recovery after the toppling of a long-standing corrupt Marcos government and recurring financial recessions was an arduous journey for the Filipino people over the next two decades (Thornton, 2008). As the Philippines struggled to transition from an economy based on agriculture to one of services and manufacturing, Filipinos were able to adapt by finding sources of employment outside their country. By the mid-1990s, many Filipinos became the new breed of sojourners called Overseas Contract Workers [OCWs] (later more appropriately referred to as Overseas Filipino Workers [OFWs]) (Su, 2007), who were known for remitting hard earned salaries to their families in the Philippines. Many of them taking on blue-collar jobs they were overqualified for in distant countries, OFWs were deemed by their countrymen as modern day heroes. The increase in the interest for jobs overseas led to the increase in Filipinos desiring to immigrate to greener pastures for a better future (Su, 2007). At the turn of the new century, the idea of working abroad permanently no longer just enticed Filipinos who could not find jobs in their own country; the lure of greater financial security attracted Filipino skilled workers as well. Overseas work and immigration were no longer options only domestic helpers, caregivers, and personal support workers entertained, but were also alternatives highly skilled workers considered as well (Lowell & Findlay, 2001). For many, the desire to obtain temporary contract work in non-settler societies like Singapore, Saudi Arabia, Germany, and France evolved into plans of applying for permanent residence in known settler societies such as the US, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada.

## ***5.2. Identifying and Exploring Variables Residing in the Host Society of Settlement: Canada***

***The general orientation of Canada with regards to multiculturalism.*** Among known settler societies, Canada became one of the most enticing prospects for many Filipino would-be immigrants for several reasons. Apart from its publicly-funded universal healthcare and educational systems, government pension plans, and employment benefits, Canada had a reputation for presenting itself as a nation that embraced multicultural ideologies and established progressive human rights policies. It was an added incentive for many Filipinos to know that Canadians (as a host *group* to migrants) valued immigration applicants who were proficient in the English language and had large Catholic communities in most of its provinces (Fisher, 2013). It was likely that Filipino skilled workers who were looking to immigrate also perceived Canada as a country with cultural features that would be compatible to their westernized cultural identities. For many reasons, there was a high degree of voluntariness in Filipinos' migration motivations to move to Canada.

Canada had always taken pride in being a nation that embraces cultural pluralism, and is in fact, known as the poster country for multiculturalism (Chapin, 2012). However, over recent years, researchers have been quick to point out that there are certain blatant social issues, such as lack of acceptance of religious diversity, for example, which still need to be addressed in order

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for Canada to achieve true multiculturalism (Banting & Kymlicka, 2010). Scholars have discussed in academic discourse related to Canada's multiculturalism the persistence of racial segregation, ethnic enclaves, and ghettoization, especially in the country's most urban areas, which have been linked to the marginalization and concentration of poverty in racial minority immigrant communities. In his article in the Prairie Centre of Excellence for Research on Immigration and Integration Working Paper Series, Li (2003) noted that immigration and integration discourse in Canada regularly endorses a conformity model in assessing immigrants and a monolithic cultural framework that preaches tolerance in the abstract but remains intolerant towards cultural specificities deemed outside the mainstream. He explained that the discourse commonly contains unequivocal subtext implying that becoming similar to Canadians (i.e., those Canadian-born) is integration, and maintaining cultural difference is opposite to integration – a message that essentially contradicts the idea of Canada fully embracing multiculturalism.

***Canada's status as a settler society.*** In her book, "Race, Space, and the Law: Unmapping a White Settler Society", Razack (2002) introduced the premise that Canada is a *white settler society*. She defined a white settler society as a society that, despite possessing and maintaining a national mythology of equality and fairness, was initially established by Europeans on non-European soil, and continues to be shaped by a racial hierarchy in which white Euro-Canadians are dominant.

However, despite these criticisms of Canada as a settler society, it had remained one of the top three countries in the world with the broadest range of multicultural policies, highest rates of immigrant citizenship and newcomer naturalization, and strongest ethnic identities among immigrants in the last decade (Bloemraad & Wright, 2014). According to cross-national surveys, along with other western democratic countries that promote pluralism, Canada's multicultural policies have successfully fostered social inclusion and political engagement among its immigrants (Wright & Bloemraad, 2012).

Interestingly, Statistics Canada predicts that in 20 years, about a quarter of Canadian population will be foreign-born (Chapin, 2012). This would mean that there will be even more influences entering the cultural mainstream and affecting the choices of racial minority immigrants and the dominant community in Canadian society. While many Canadians now enjoy being able to choose between samosas and spring rolls, they continue to conveniently ignore a dark reality: though Canada excels at actively recruiting professionals from other countries and adopting them as Federal Skilled Worker immigrants as a settler society, it often fails at effectively integrating them into the Canadian workforce (Chapin, 2012).

### ***5.3. Examining Factors Affecting Immigrant Acculturation at a Community-level***

***Sociocultural and material resources of Filipino immigrant communities in Canada.*** For many Filipino immigrants in the last decade, the integration process after emigration to Canada seemed relatively easy (Friesen, 2011). Many Canadians found most Filipino immigrants to be modest and hardworking, and appreciated the fact that the majority of them were able to effectively converse in English. Perhaps the most prominent characteristic feature most Filipinos exhibited that Canadians admired is their strong devotion to their family (Fisher, 2013). Canadians found most Filipino immigrant communities to be very family oriented, not to mention, openly and unapologetically religious. It was apparent that the source of many Filipino

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immigrants' resolve and determination to succeed in Canada came from both their fealty to their families and their Catholic faith. Although the bulk of Filipino immigrants who came to Canada worked as nurses and caregivers in the Philippines, many of them were also highly educated and skilled professionals from other fields who took on employment at lower occupational levels than they were in prior to immigrating, consciously sacrificing their own careers in order to provide better opportunities for their own children to succeed in life, as well as care and security for their aging parents (Chapin, 2012).

***Problematic attitudes towards Filipino immigrant communities in Canada.*** Although Filipino immigrant communities seemingly found integration into Canadian society comparatively easier than other newcomer communities less familiar with western culture, their settlement experiences were not void of periods of discrimination from their host society. Canada's immigration laws have historically been racially biased, but in the wake of Sept 11, as in the US and other countries, there had been moves to step up the repressive elements of public policy, particularly targeting Arabs and Muslims, but fundamentally affecting all people of colour (Guy, 2012). Apparently, racism in Canada has existed not only in its selection process for immigrants and refugees over decades, but has also persisted in the settlement experiences of different members of racialized newcomer communities.

This has been particularly true for the children of Filipino immigrants. Many sons and daughters of Filipino migrant workers spent years in the Philippines before joining their parents in Canada (Guy, 2012). This separation from their parents procured a high cost. When the families eventually got back together through Canada's immigrant family reunification process, it was like strangers reuniting. Often, there was much tension in reunited families of Filipino immigrant communities, as the children could not understand why their parents abandoned them in the first place. There was also high expectations among Filipino children: after reunification, they were surprised to find out that their parents, who used to send them money in the Philippines, still worked long hours and could not be at home all the time. These experiences caused stress, which was compounded by problems of integrating into new schools and learning to live with a new challenge that they did not face at home — that of racism (Guy, 2012). Left on their own with difficulties adapting, many young Filipinos formed and joined gangs for company, but also to be with people their age who spoke their native language and who understood what they were going through.

At the height of Filipino immigrant diaspora to Canada, there were alarming reports in the 1990s that Montreal local police targeted young Filipinos hanging around Metro stations. Filipino youth were hassled, rounded up, and sometimes arrested, often violently. In British Columbia, 25 youths at the Vancouver Technical School were attacked with rocks in September 1999. Anti-Filipino graffiti such as "All Flips must die!" were seen all around campus. Most of these targeted Filipino youths were recently arrived sons and daughters of domestic workers (Guy, 2012). There have been other reports of Filipino immigrant youth being targeted due to purported racism. There was the banning of Filipino youth at the Scarborough Town Center in 1993, and the deaths of two young Filipino men, both sons of nannies who entered Canada under the Live-in Caregiver Program. Mao Jomar Lanot was a victim of school bullies at Vancouver's Sir Charles Tupper Elementary in 2003, and Jeffrey Reodica was shot to death in the back by two Toronto police officers in 2004. Filipino youth have been targets of police brutality and racial profiling, as they were often suspected as law-breaking gang members (Gray, 2012).

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***Sociopolitical and economic forces affecting Filipino immigrant community settlement experiences in Canada.*** Examples of difficult Filipino immigrant settlement experiences in Canada due to discrimination were not all attributable to overt racism. There were extreme challenges many Filipino immigrants encountered that were due to a covert yet systemic form of bias that Foster (2006) labeled as “credentialism”. Filipino immigrants shared many of the challenges that most racial minority newcomers to Canada encountered, particularly those pertaining to the task of obtaining employment and economic integration. Many Filipino immigrants were able to adjust to most aspects of their new lives, but like other skilled immigrants, struggled with acquiring jobs that were a right match to their professional skills (Friesen, 2011). According to a study conducted by Aycan and Berry (1996), the difficulties of attaining economic integration in Canada during the acculturation process were linked to negative effects on the psychological wellbeing of immigrants. Despite having high educational attainments, marketable skills sets, and previous work experience from their own countries, many immigrants were unemployed or remained underemployed for long periods of time. Inability to fully integrate to the labour force in the first six months of relocating to Canada was attributed to lack of competence in both official languages, lack of Canadian work experience, and most importantly, difficulty in getting credentials recognized (Aycan & Berry, 1996). Upon arrival, immigrants often encountered credentialism in the form of barriers that led to their underemployment or unemployment – from exorbitantly expensive credential assessments and qualifying exams, to the various rules of the provincial bodies that regulate access to professions and trades through licensing and registration requirements, to the requirements of education institutions and the hiring and promotion rules of employers, to the Catch-22 demand for that unobtainable Canadian experience (Foster, 2006). These findings described the early experiences most Filipinos had when they first immigrated to Canada (Friesen, 2011).

Many of the earliest Filipino immigrants to Canada were political and economic refugees during the Marcos dictatorship. They were educated and included many nurses and doctors (part of the ongoing pattern in the Philippines) where young well-trained professionals leave the country in huge numbers only to be too often de-skilled and de-professionalized in Canada — that is, forced into jobs well below their education and training. This process is facilitated because Canada refuses to recognize the professional and academic degrees of racial minority immigrants. This de-skilling includes Filipinas who have more recently made the latest wave of immigration to Canada. Nurses, teachers, even engineers, enter Canada under the Live-in Caregiver Program, and as mail order brides, and sex workers. The waves of Filipino immigration to Canada in the last three decades have corresponded to the economic, political, and ideological needs of the capitalist system in Canada (Guy, 2012). Not surprisingly, once they have uprooted their lives to move to Canada, many Filipino immigrants become content to take on employment that relegate them into wage employees and middle management despite their high level of education and skills because the security of monetary compensation has become more important to them than attaining job satisfaction or optimal working conditions.

***The significance of immigrants living with two sets of cultural (macrosystem) influences and Filipino immigrant communities’ acculturation strategy in different microsystem or mesosystem settings.*** Cognizant that their settlement experiences were significantly impacted by both their heritage and host cultures, Filipino immigrants chose to adapt to their circumstances by developing the most appropriate acculturation strategy that would allow them to thrive in different settings. Implementing the integration acculturation strategy as Berry (1997) originally

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described, the majority of Filipino immigrants in Canada actively adopted the host culture in more social settings in order to successfully interact with other Canadians, while at the same time consciously maintained many aspects of their heritage culture in more personal settings. Recognizing that they had two sets of cultural influences affecting their settlement experiences, many Filipino immigrants realized that the best way to acculturate and achieve long-term adaptation in Canada was to embrace the host culture while they were at school or work, and enjoy their heritage culture at more intimate settings, such as in their homes and within predominantly Filipino communities (Berry, 2005). Despite hurdles to attain economic integration, many Filipino immigrants made great strides and succeeded in overcoming negative attitudes towards new immigrants and challenges in Canadian society by remaining hardworking and relying on the sources of their strength and resolve – their families and faith. Most Filipino immigrants who were separated from their families made it their priority and worked hard to sponsor and bring in their families from the Philippines to Canada through available reunification programs. Despite not having equal access to physical resources from the community, they also established solid sociocultural and material resources from within their own communities by actively engaging in extended family networks, Filipino professional associations, and Catholic Church and lay community activities (Magkaisa Centre, 2010). These were just some of the many ways Filipino immigrants in Canada exhibited community resilience in the face of settlement struggles.

In the last two decades, Filipino immigrant communities engaged in sociopolitical action, as well as installed sociopolitical spaces and grassroots organizations to advocate for their rights and needs. Many Filipino communities took part and led political rallies joined by other visible minorities and their Canadian-born allies to protest against racialized violence (Gray, 2012), and gathered together to develop community position papers to demand for widespread change to federal programs that would lead to fairer and more just requirements for recognition of credentials and permanent residence status (Foster, 2006). Over the years, they also elected Filipino-Canadian officials to represent their interests. In 2012, Tobias Enverga Jr. became Canada's first senator of Filipino descent. Another Filipino-Canadian, Rey Pagtakhan, was elected to Parliament in 1998, and served as the Secretary of State for Asia and the Pacific from 2001 to 2004 (CICN, 2014). The spaces and organizations they created attracted the attention and gradually gained the support of non-Filipino communities in different provinces all over the country. Sociopolitical spaces such as the Magkaisa Centre in Toronto, Ontario; the Kapit Bisig Centre in Montreal, Quebec; and the Kalayaan Centre in Vancouver, British Columbia, along with grassroots organizations like the Philippines-Canada Task Force on Human Rights and the Filipino Canadian Youth Alliance, are just a few of the many examples of empowering communities created by Filipino immigrants that were subsequently supported by non-Filipino Canadians in their communities (Magkaisa Centre, 2010). The sociopolitical spaces not only actively addressed racism against Filipino communities, but also socioeconomic issues such as the struggle of Filipino migrant workers to overcome the effects of austerity and globalization, widespread contractualization, and worker insecurity established by neoliberal policies. The grassroots organizations raised social awareness and critical consciousness among Filipino immigrants and the larger communities they were part of, but more importantly, promoted social inclusion, employment equity, and economic integration, which were essential to improving the settlement experiences and acculturation of Filipino immigrants to Canada.

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## 6. Implications for Psychology Theory, Research and Practice

Although the socio-historical accounts of and discourse on Filipino experiences prior to the beginnings of the Filipino diaspora to Canada in the 1990s and recent Filipino post-immigration settlement experiences for the last few decades were not exhaustive in this essay, I am certain that they were able to provide a practical glimpse of how an acculturation framework with a stronger community focus can enhance a greater understanding of racial minority immigrant acculturation. Beyond the obvious benefit of having derived more details to gain greater comprehension of the acculturation process that racial minority immigrants undergo while settling in Canada, the use of a community-focused acculturation framework provided richer context with regards to the experiences of Filipino migrants, not only as individuals, families, or groups, but as communities facing and addressing common challenges to economic integration and long-term adaptation. By exploring the sociocultural and material resources available to Filipino immigrant communities, the racism and discrimination they experienced in their day-to-day existence, the sociopolitical and economic forces that prevented them from achieving economic integration, the acculturation strategy and actions they took to address and overcome their challenges, and the role of the sociopolitical spaces and grassroots organizations they developed to enlist and generate support from other racial minority immigrants and Canadian-born allies, I was able to examine factors and aspects of the Filipino immigrant settlement experiences in Canada that helped explain their relative success in adapting and thriving in Canada as racial minority newcomers.

While examining the Filipino immigrant settlement experiences in Canada utilizing the new community-focused acculturation framework, it was important to recognize that the struggles the Filipino immigrants encountered were not difficulties that they experienced only as individuals but challenges they shared as racial minority immigrant communities. With this recognition comes the realization that appropriate responses to determine and address such challenges to acculturation and adaptation were better cultivated and carried out as communities rather than as individuals. With a community-focused acculturation framework, the success derived from a community-forged response to sources of acculturation challenges and stress is less likely to be overlooked and unexamined, and more likely to be identified and appreciated by acculturation researchers.

The new model I introduced in this essay is a general theoretical framework for scholars to consider that calls attention to the value of focusing on both culture *and* community in acculturation research (Kral et al., 2011); research which over the years has gradually increased in relevance among policymakers as well as organizations working with immigrant communities (Chirkov, 2009). This new community-focused acculturation framework promotes characteristics and components of good acculturation research that have been identified in previous academic literature (Chirkov, 2009; Kral et al., 2011). It promotes the use of the immigrants' home culture as a starting point to monitor transformations migrants undergo, the cultural analysis of both home and host cultures using prominent domains in immigrants' lives (i.e., family relations, work and employment, interactions with authorities and other community members), and the examination of the shared understanding of the meanings that immigrants assign to their actions, how they navigate between two (or more) cultural realities, as well as how they construct their meaningful realities during acculturation (Chirkov, 2009).

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The new framework also allows for a greater appreciation of the nature of acculturation research that prioritizes working with and for specific immigrant communities. With the new framework, scholars can appreciate that relational themes are at the core of such acculturation research (Ward & Kagitcibasi, 2010). Family, extra-familial sources of social capital, peers, co-ethnics, and other members of their growing community are key sources of support in the acculturation process of immigrants, particularly among racial minority immigrants. Acculturation research conducted collaboratively with communities will also show that “cultural” issues are not always the most critical challenges facing immigrants, and that practical issues such as securing appropriate employment, obtaining adequate housing, managing the stress of family separation, coping with grief and trauma, replacing social ties, and addressing economic disadvantage may be more debilitating than intercultural encounters and changes (Ward & Kagitcibasi, 2010). The new framework, therefore, helps focus on psychosocial and political power realities that are always present within and between communities (Kral et al., 2011).

Finally, the community-focused acculturation framework is a conceptual model which links theory to practice in acculturation research. It can be adopted and used to interpret community needs assessments, implement action-oriented studies, and even structure interventions. As a new framework with a stronger community focus, it can be utilized in acculturation research that aims to be responsive to community needs, working towards positive social change and the transformation of unjust structures (Ward & Kagitcibasi, 2010).

I believe that the community-focused acculturation framework that I developed and proposed could prove useful not only to CcP and CP work, but also to Canadian Psychology theory, qualitative and mixed methods research, and practice because it is reasonable to anticipate that Canada will continue to be a country and a society that will attract more racial minority immigrants in the future. The community-focused acculturation framework could potentially be applied in the development of new theory, conduct of progressive immigration and acculturation research, and establishment of best practices in Canadian Psychology, particularly in relevant work that focuses on the settlement experiences, acculturation, integration, and wellbeing of racial minority immigrants.

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