

Narratives of Choice: Second-Generation Filipino Americans

Modernity¹ is often applauded for its accomplishments: longer life expectancies, technological advancement, and an interconnectivity so vast and instant it is almost unfathomable. However, these immense benefits are not without an abject of disproportionately allocated costs: inhumane working conditions, displacement of indigenous populations, and human rights abuses hidden in the plain sight of sensationalism, sold to a removed audience. Conditions of modernity are simultaneously our resolve and demise.

This unequal distribution of inequality is only increasing. According to the World Social Report, between 1990 and 2015, the richest one percent of the population has increased their share of income, while the bottom 40 percent earned less than a quarter of income in all countries surveyed.² The structural violence that systemically stratifies populations on a global scale creates the individual inequalities that shape lived experience as a whole. Its unequal distribution of material resources affects how agency is constrained and experienced, influencing our experience of the self and the ways in which we make meaning in the world.

However, with an increasing popularization of neoliberal narratives of individualism that accompany policies that deregulate labor laws, cut government budgets, and privatize state companies, is agency realized as its promised sphere of freedom and choice? Those from historically disempowered backgrounds are vulnerable to the internalization of structural constraint³ as personal wrongdoings, reaffirmed by and legitimized through material reality and constructed frames of meaning including that of success, identity, and worth that inherently serve and sustain power dynamics.

This study explores the historical and structural dimensions that influence one's psychosocial development; how socially contrived identities including country of descent and

gender, as well as income, along with systemic conditions, influence experiences of reality and affect sense of self. The purpose of this study is to contribute to a growing inquiry of social suffering, deepening our understanding of how structural dimensions shape and influence subjectivities. The audience for this research project is academic, participating in the larger dialogue of social suffering, exploring how one's personal history with structural violence, present and intergenerational, shapes one's sense of agency. This research hopes to support an intersectional approach to address social suffering and individual mental health services, understanding the societal factors and historical conditions that influence one's decision-making processes beyond the isolations of a patient's inner world. This is further explored in context through the lens of five second-generation Filipino Americans' experience of agentic projects analyzed through the narration of choice.

Theoretical/Empirical Framing

The body is not only a vessel in which people interact with and construct meaning, but has become a medium of meaning in itself. Through a phenomenological approach, this paper seeks to understand how structural conditions constrain the projects an agent pursues, and how these are recognized societally and reflected in one's subjective experiences.

Contributing to a sociology of the self, W.E.B Dubois coined the term "double consciousness"⁴ to articulate how racism influences identity and self-development of Black Americans prior to, during, and after the Civil Rights Era. In navigating structural racism in a Black body, Dubois argues that racial discrimination and inequality have created a split consciousness in the psyche of Black Americans policed by an internalized white gaze.⁵ Constantly aware of oneself through the eyes of a demeaning and subjugating Other, results in an incomplete self-development, and diminished sense of identity.

Frantz Fanon reconfigures this theory as it relates to a post-colonial world. He suggests that not only is the white man an Other, but a “master,”⁶ acknowledging the racial hierarchies at play in a configuration of a double consciousness. In racial-power dynamics, understanding oneself is not just a negotiation between a self and an “Other,” but rather, an impositional process with the potential to co-author one’s selfhood. The social myths that attribute a racial dimension to the subjective experience, is a significant factor in self-development, however, in his work, *Wretched of the Earth* (1968)⁷ Fanon outlines how specific contexts, ethnic histories, and cultural beliefs are also important in one’s experience of reality and sense of agency. To delve deeper into the specificities of experience, this paper analyzed the experience of descendants from low-income and high-income countries, to determine whether histories of oppression and colonialism continue to be indicators of limited agency today.

Hypothesis 1: Respondents with ancestors from low-income countries will have less sense of agency than those with ancestors from high-income countries.

Another dimension to consider in the contexts of structural violence is gender. Gender as a social institution has influenced the construction of women as the Other. Through a phenomenological lens, women experience a double consciousness through the internalization of structural oppression⁸ and the “Male Gaze.” Therefore, the cultural significance attached to gender embodiment is significant in the study of self perception and agency under structural conditions.

Hypothesis 2: Men will have more sense of agency than women.

In *Black Feminist Thought*, (1990)⁹ Patricia Hill Collins outlines the intersectional experience of constraint by poor black women, “The employment vulnerability of working-class African-Americans in the post–World War II political economy, the relative employment

equality of poor Black women and men, and the gender-specific patterns of dependence on the informal economy all have substantial implications for U.S. Black women who find themselves among the working poor”¹⁰ having particularly aggravated consequences for working Black mothers. Therefore, this paper hypothesizes that income as well as its interaction with descent will contribute to different experiences of agency.

Hypothesis 3: Low-income respondents will have less sense of agency than those of higher income.

Hypothesis 4: Low-income respondents with ancestors from low-income countries will have less sense of agency than higher-income respondents with ancestors from low-income countries.

Research Methods

This paper analyzed the variables of descent, income, gender and their relationship with sense of agency. Using the 2004 GSS dataset collected by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago, secondary data analysis was conducted on a sample collected using stratified multistage sampling generalizable to the United States population of English and Spanish speaking adults who live in community dwellings. The sample excludes those who do not speak these languages and those that live in non-institutional housing at the time of interviewing. This data was collected by trained interviewers who conducted face-to-face interviews, or with the assistance of CAPI (Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing). The sample from the 2004 GSS dataset excludes personal identifiers, therefore preserving the privacy and security of its participants. For this sample there are 2,349 valid respondents. For further information on how the data was collected, see Smith and colleagues (2019.)¹¹

Dependent Variable

Sense of Agency. Agency is a nominal variable consisting of the item *own doing*. The response categories include ‘I have little influence over things that happen to me’ = 1 and ‘What happens to me is largely my own doing’ = 2

Independent Variables

Country of Descent. Ethnicity is a nominal variable consisting of the item *ethnic*. Respondents were asked, “From what countries or part of the world did your ancestors come?” Responses included 94 individual countries/geographical regions. Response categories that do not distinguish a specific country have been excluded and have been collapsed variables into low-income countries = 1 and high-income countries = 2 as distinguished by the World Bank.

Gender: Gender is a nominal variable consisting of the item *sex* (Note: The conflation of gender and sex limits the scope of this analysis to a cisgender population). The response categories include Male = 1 and Female = 2.

Income: Income is an ordinal variable measured by the variable *income98* in the 2004 GSS Dataset. The question and phrasing includes, “In which of these groups did your total family income, from all sources, fall last year before taxes, that is? Just tell me the letter.” The response categories ranged from: Under \$1000 to \$110000 or over. These categories have been collapsed into \$9,999 or less; 10k to 59,999; 60k to 89,999; and 90k and above.

Using SPSS, a univariate analysis was run on all variables getting details on frequencies and percents as well as bivariate analyses to analyze the relationships between income and agency, country of descent and agency, and gender and agency. These bivariate analyses include crosstabulation, chi-squares, and measures of association. Next, a multivariate analysis was run using a Chi Square with a secondary independent variable testing the impact of income on the

relationship between ethnicity and agency; and the impact of ethnicity on the relationship between gender and agency.

Results

The demographic characteristics of the sample are presented in Table 1 (see Appendix B). The sample contains slightly more female than male respondents, with percentages of 54.5 and 45, respectively. The proportion of respondents that descend from low- and high-income countries differed vastly; 2.6 percent of the sample stated they descend from countries categorized as low-income by the World Bank versus a majority (97.4 percent) who had descendants from high-income countries. A little more than half of the sample (65 percent) have total family income below \$59,999, whereas 19 percent of respondents in the sample have total family income of \$90,000 or above, and 17 percent have an income between \$60,000 and \$89,999 (see frequency distribution in (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Distribution of Total Family Income

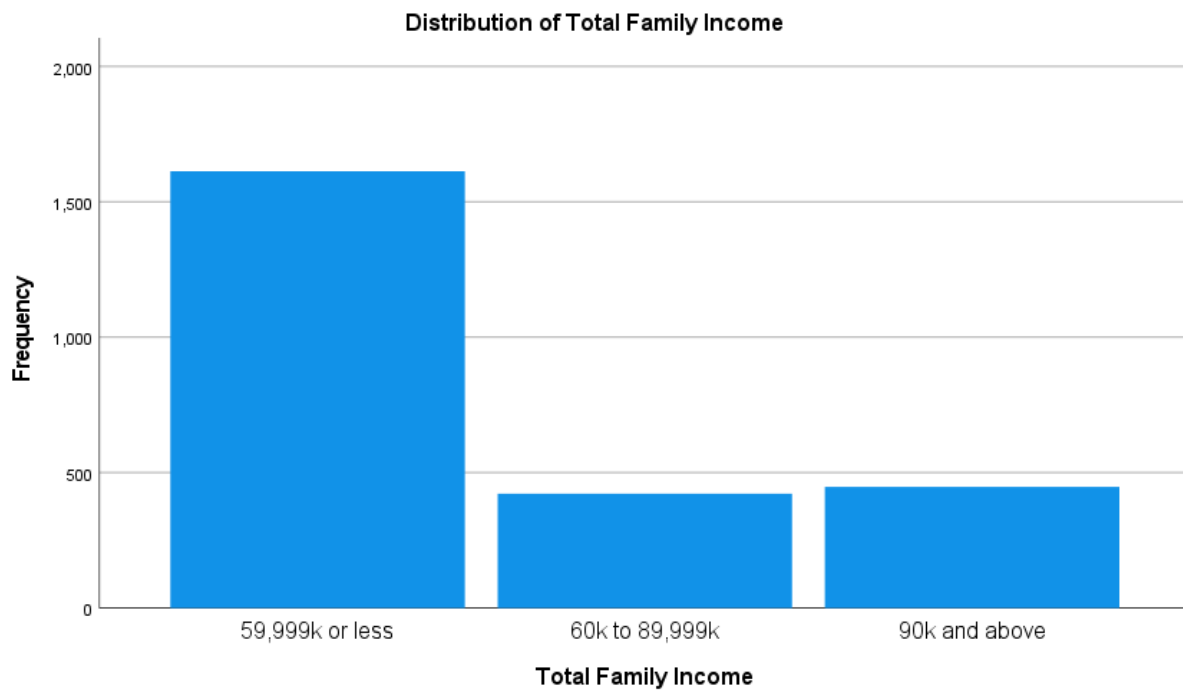


Table 2 displays the distribution of sense of agency by country of descent. According to the sample data, respondents who had a lack of agency varied according to their country of descent. 18.2 percent of those who lacked agency come from low-income countries compared to 11.0 percent who descend from high-income countries. When comparing respondents with a stronger sense of agency across country of descent, these findings support the inverse relationship between sense of agency and country of descent. However, neither relationship was significant ($p=0.195$) and were weak (Phi and Cramer's $V = 0.034$). This is likely due to the small proportion of sample from low-income countries. (See Figure 2)

Table 2: Agency by Descent (percent)

Variables	High-Income Country	Low-Income Country
Agency		
<i>I have little influence over what happens to me</i>	11.0	18.2
<i>What happens to me is largely my own doing</i>	89.0	81.8

Figure 2: Distribution of Low-Income and High-Income Countries

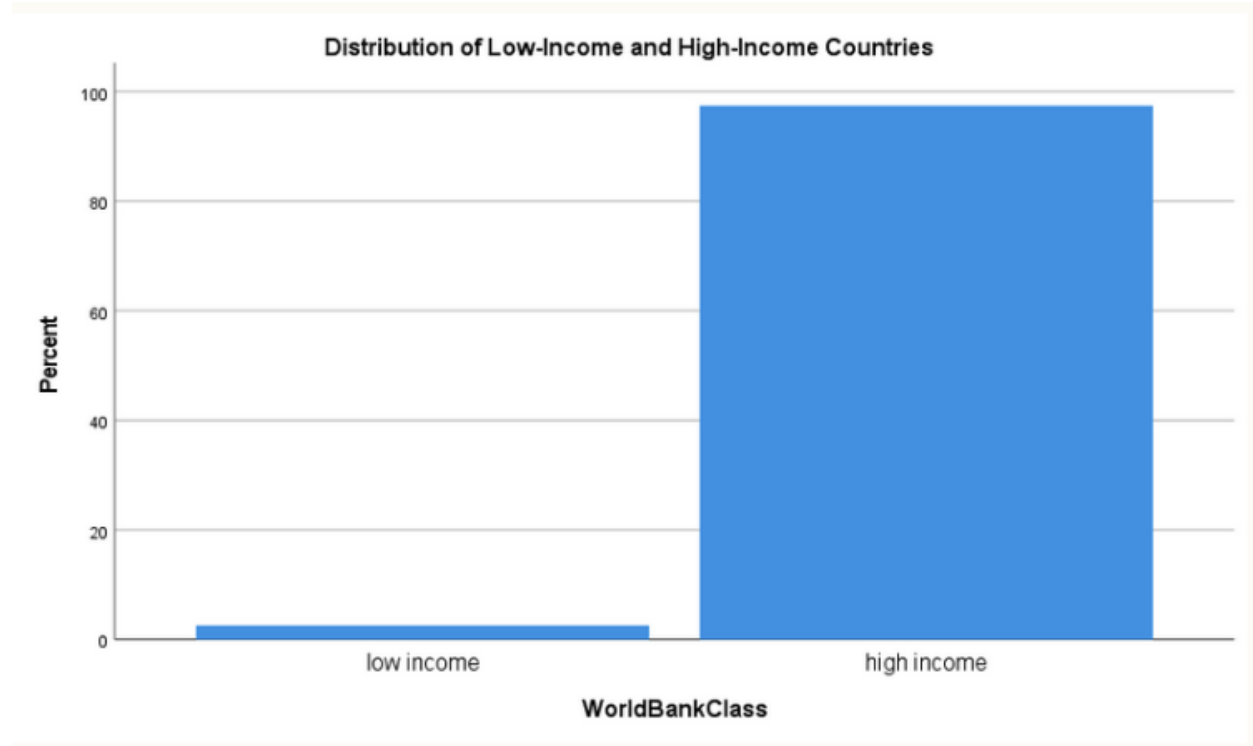


Table 3: Agency by Sex (percent)

Variables	Female	Male
Agency		
<i>I have little influence over what happens to me</i>	17.2	11.3
<i>What happens to me is largely my own doing</i>	82.8	88.7

Table 3 displays the distribution of perceived agency by sex. According to the sample data, women reported less sense of agency than men (17.2 percent, 11.3 percent) respectively. Respondents who have a stronger sense of agency were more likely to be men (88.7 percent vs. 82.8 percent). This relationship between agency and sex was statistically significant ($p = <0.001$). However, this relationship is weak (Phi and Cramer's $V <0.001$)

Table 4: Agency by Total Family Income (percent)

Variables		\$59,999 and below	\$60,000 to \$89,999	\$90,000 and above
Agency	<i>I have little influence over what happens to me</i>	17.5	9.6	7.5
	<i>What happens to me is largely my own doing</i>	82.5	90.4	92.5

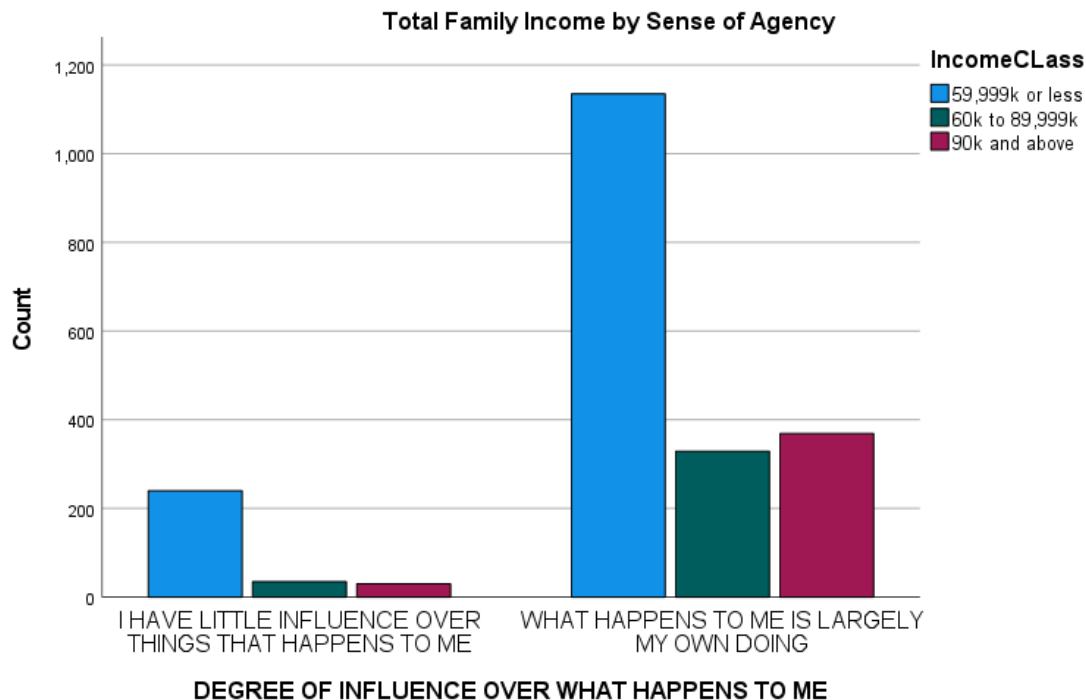
Figure 3: Total Family Income by Sense of Agency

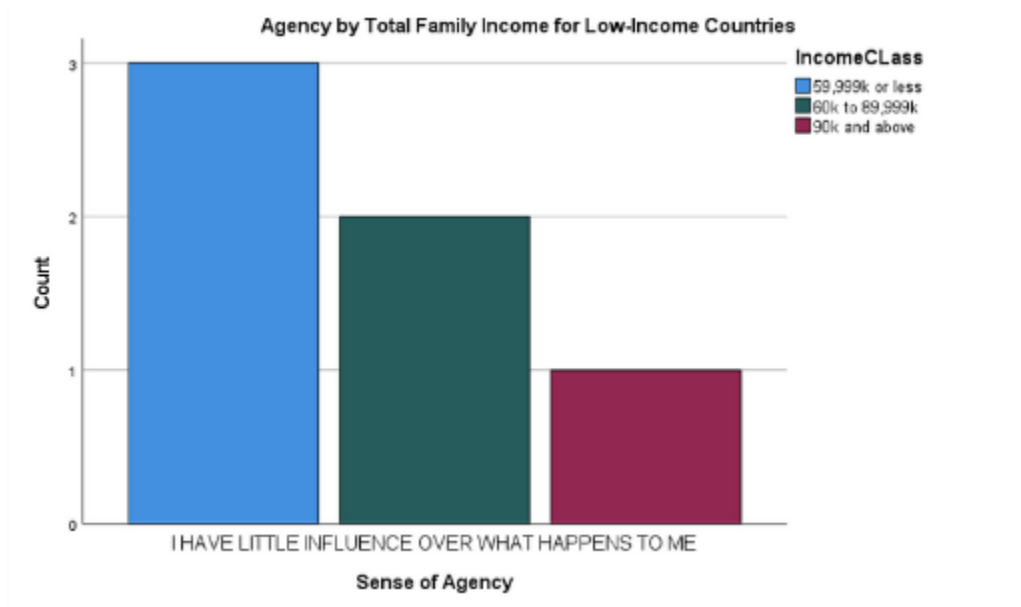
Table 4 displays sense of agency by total family income. According to the sample data (See Figure 3) those with the lowest sense of agency are more likely to be in the lowest income bracket (17.5 percent) compared to those in the highest income bracket (7.5 percent) This relationship between sense of agency and income works both ways. Respondents with a stronger sense of agency were more likely to have an income of \$90,000 and above (92.5 percent) compared to 82.5 percent of those with an income \$59,999 and below. This relationship was statistically significant ($p < 0.001$) and moderate/strong (Phi and Cramer's $V = .124$)

Table 5 displays the distribution of sense of agency by total family income grouped by country of descent. According to the sample data, respondents who had less sense of agency varied by both income and country of descent. Amongst those with low agency, they are more likely to be from low-income countries at every income bracket (See Figure 4). Amongst those with a low sense of agency 20 percent of respondents were in the lowest income bracket and from low-income countries. In comparison, the proportion of respondents with a low sense of agency in the same income bracket, but from high-income countries was 13.4 percent. Likewise, those who have high agency are more likely to be from high income countries at every income bracket. However, this relationship was found to be non-significant ($p = 0.195$) and weak (Phi and Cramer's $V = 0.034$).

Table 5: Agency by Income and Descent (percent)

Variables	\$59,999 and below		\$60,000 - \$89,999		\$90,000 and above	
	Low-Income Country	High-Income Country	Low-Income Country	High-Income Country	Low-Income Country	High-Income Country
Agency						
<i>I have little control over what happens to me</i>	20.0 percent	13.4 percent	40.0 percent	7.5 percent	9.1 percent	6.6 percent
<i>What happens to me is largely my own doing</i>	80.0 percent	86.6 percent	60.0 percent	92.5 percent	90.9 percent	93.4 percent

Figure 4: Agency by Total Family Income for Low-Income Countries



Discussion

Structural violence not only influences power dynamics on a global scale, but shapes individual experience of the world around them and themselves.¹² Historically marginalized groups have been found to have less sense of efficacy and overall sense of control over their lives,¹³ and the present study analyzing sense of agency across various dimensions and intersections of oppression support these findings in previous literature. Through a bivariate and multivariate analysis of the GSS 2004 data, this study has sought to distinguish the variations of perceived agency across gender, country of descent, and income to determine the relationship between one's sense of agency and position under structural violence.

The first hypothesis, stating a significant relationship between a lack of agency and descent from low-income countries, was not supported. While this study finds that 18.2 percent of respondents who lacked a sense of agency came from low-income countries compared to 11.0 percent who come from high-income countries, this relationship was not statistically significant.

This counters previous literature and qualitative analyses of the experience of agency by those who descend from countries categorized as low-income as put forth by Frantz Fanon's work *The Wretched of the Earth*.¹⁴ This could be a problem with representation of respondents from low-income countries from the 2004 GSS sample. The exclusion of those that do not speak English or Spanish limits the scope of our analyses. Along with this, preset responses in the GSS dataset that presented broad geographic regions rather than specific countries (i.e. Africa, West Indies, Asia, etc.) were excluded from this analysis, most countries specified and therefore included were high-income. Only 42 cases were in the low-income category.

The second hypothesis supposed a relationship between the category of women and lack of agency. According to the data, there is a significant, albeit weak, relationship, between sense of agency and sex, with women being significantly more likely to report lack of agency when compared to men. This finding that women have less sense of agency is supported by previous literature on the influence of structural subordination on the psyche of women.¹⁵ This could be due to both the material limitations women experience as well as the internalization of these structural constraints. This requires further qualitative analysis to understand the ways women experience agency.

This research also found a significant relationship between agency and income, with low income respondents having significantly lower agency. This supports both the study hypothesis and prior research. For example, Patricia Hill Collins' work on low-income Black mothers in *Black Feminist Thought*¹⁶ also highlighted the way low income is linked to low agency. The smaller ecologies of choice due to financial limitations constrain opportunities, impacting one's sense of agency, particularly in neoliberal societies where many spaces to exercise choice are privatized and financialized.

Through multivariate analysis of the independent variables income and country of descent, those from low-income countries had lower sense of agency at all income brackets. However, this relationship was not significant and thus we reject our fourth hypothesis. This counters previous literature on the effects of structural violence on individual experience as presented by the work of Patricia Hill Collins¹⁷ and Frantz Fanon,¹⁸ who cite the influence of income level and country of descent on one's sense of agency. As mentioned above, this is most likely an issue of representation in the present study's sample of respondents from low-income countries.

Overall, there was a significant relationship between positionality to dimensions of structural oppression and sense of agency. The relationship between gender, income, and country of descent influence lack of agency as supported by previous literature. There are several limitations to the secondary data-analysis presented here. First, the sample gathered is representative only of the United States population that are English and Spanish speaking, and from those living in community dwellings, this does not represent the population of the United States population who may come from countries that are non-English speaking and those with low-incomes that do not live in community dwellings, such as the United States homeless population. Second, the GSS 2004 country of descent variable is limited to a small number of preset answers, including generalized geographic regions. This limits our analysis of countries of descent to the specific countries available as answers presented by the GSS, of which, are majority high-income countries.

Additionally, though relationships between income and agency and gender and agency were significant, they were weak. Moreover, across income, country of descent, and gender, a majority of the sample had a strong sense of agency as operationalized by the GSS 2004

variable, “Degree of Influence over What Happens to Me.” This presents a limitation in reliability and validity because it does not measure different dimensions of agency. In further research, a more representational quantitative study of the interactions between country of descent and sense of agency as well as a qualitative analysis to explore the meaning making structures as they relate to perceived agency would be useful. Specifically, exploring the influence of values of individualism and the ideology of choice¹⁹ under neoliberalism.

Statement of the Problem

Positionality under structural violence, defined by the Center for Health Equity Research Chicago as, “the multiple ways in which social, economic, and political systems expose particular populations to risks and vulnerabilities,”²⁰ influences the experience of oneself as an autonomous agent.²¹ The ongoing exploration of the ways structural violence is embodied have taken on new global contexts under modernity.²² Ideologies of non-intervention and individualism in a post-colonial world²³ contradict the empirical evidence that cite structural inequalities as a barrier to self-realization and as a constraint of choice as dictated by the ‘luxury’ of privacy and the private sphere.²⁴ Ascribed as preference, decision-making seemingly becomes a reflection of one’s morality, rather than structural constraint. In reality, the induction of choice is not merely a reflection of preference, but rather the dialogic manifestation of structural condition and cultural environment. In the tradition of feminist thought how choice is constrained, influenced, and shaped by, social structure uproot the distinction between the public and private sphere.²⁵ This intimate sphere of choice is thus illusory, not only by the ways in which choices are limited and coerced²⁶ under structural violence, but also how a society of normalization²⁷ shapes the intelligibility of choice itself.

In neoliberal ideology, moral frameworks and valuations of choice are upheld as highly individual²⁸. However, normative valuations of choice persist and influence how choices are produced, which choices are acted upon, and how they are socially perceived. This produces an anomalous²⁹ condition to current ecologies and architectures of choice³⁰ as a sphere of freedom.

Promises of a post-colonial world and a global free-market economy uphold choice as a medium of self-realization, neglecting the “invisible” forces that constrain them. With a longstanding history of colonial occupation and within the context of a dominating neoliberalism, the Philippines continues to be a large outsource of a global care chain³¹ that serves as an individual solution to conditions of poverty, “with only 14 percent being shared by the bottom 50 percent. With an income Gini coefficient of 42.3 percent in 2018, the Philippines had one of the highest rates of income inequality in East Asia.”³²

Culturally, the Philippines continues to be a conglomeration of and heavily influenced by American values and hegemonic ideals. This is evident in the prevalence of colonial mentality³³ as a topic of study, shedding light on the intergenerational consequences of colonialism on the psyche. Contradicting the ideals of choice and its foundational underpinnings of hyper individualism, traditional Filipino values of clan kinship³⁴ and responsibilities to immediate and extending family are compromised. As one of the top five remittance receiving countries as of 2020, and contributing to 10 percent of the total Philippine GDP in 2022 according to the World Bank, familial responsibility continues transnationally. The individualistic values of neoliberalism may have long term consequences not only to the Philippine economy, but also in creating clashing agentic projects of Philippine families abroad.

This qualitative study explored how second-generation Filipino Americans value choice, but also how this influences their perception of structural constraint. To what extent do

hegemonic ideologies of choice influence those of second-generation Filipino Americans and their attitudes towards choice? How does this influence the experience of structural barriers? Addressing these questions will help us understand the factors that shape the agency of second-generation Filipino Americans and how agentic projects are actualized under structural constraint.

Theoretical Framework

Historically disempowered groups under structural violence experience a smaller *ecology of choice*³⁵ resulting in a diminished sense of agency, as a psychological component best elicited in an ‘environment of opportunities.’³⁶ In the previous quantitative study, respondents who were low-income and those who were women, had less sense of agency than their higher income and male counterparts, respectively. *Ecology of choice* refers to the social environment that influences and inhibits one to make certain choices.³⁷ With a smaller environment of possibility and the limitations of coercion, often through economic constraint,³⁸ choices are often not experienced as a vehicle of freedom for those from historically oppressed countries and those affected by generational income inequality. From the literature, one could expect second generation Filipino Americans to experience choice as a constraint and limitation rather than as a sphere of freedom.

How we value and devalue the choices we are able to pursue in our *ecology of choice*, are a result of what is called the *Architecture of Choice*.³⁹ These refer to the internal mechanisms that operate in decision-making or choice valuation that are shaped by culture. Second-generation Filipino Americans navigate contradicting ancestral and dominant cultures pertaining to choice. While clan kinship is a predominant value in Filipino culture, previous studies have found that familial relations are the main factor in socializing second-generation immigrants to

the traditional Filipino values of familial loyalty.⁴⁰ Another consideration in the potential valuation of choice of second-generation Filipino Americans is the placed value on assimilation into American culture. Previous literature has found second generation Asian American women to distance themselves from their ethnicity and ancestral culture, instead, seeking empowerment through dominant valuations of ‘femininity.’⁴¹ Considering the influence of socialization on choice and its valuations, one could expect second-generation Filipino Americans to positively value choices that are an expression of a conceived essential identity and devalue choices that are influenced by traditional Filipino notions of familial responsibility.

Research Methods

To answer this research question, transcripts from five in-depth semi-structured interviews were analyzed. The sample of second-generation Filipino Americans was collected using convenience sampling through personal networks. After receiving written consent from all respondents, all interviews were recorded and transcribed. These recordings were stored on a password protected computer only accessible to the researcher. To maintain confidentiality, respondent names were replaced with pseudonyms and any identifying information and locations will not be included. After transcription, original recordings were deleted.

Interviews began with general education/occupation questions, thoughts and feelings on work history, and future goals pertaining to work. Then, exploring broader life aspirations, ‘dreams,’ and how they have changed over time. How normative life courses were described, their current and past academic/work choices, parent expectations, and their ‘ideal’ futures were analyzed in dialogue with each other. While Foucault describes the conception of dreams as a condition of freedom and as an expressional act,⁴² Foucault describes that of the subconscious. However, the narrative of dreams in waking life remained useful in analyzing the experience of

agency as a concept free from the linguistic bounds of present constraints and more resilient to environmental factors than the inherently social nature and tangibility of choice.

Findings

All respondents were working and/or middle class second-generation Filipino Americans between the ages of 21 and 24. The educational attainment of the respondents' parents range from: some high school (3), finished high school (3), associate's degree (1), and bachelor's degrees (1). The educational attainment of the respondents' range from: high school graduate (2), associate's degrees in progress (1), bachelor's degree in progress (1), and doctorate degree in progress (1). One respondent identifies as non-binary (1) and the remaining three identify as cisgender women (3) and men (1).

Exploring how Filipino Americans value choice, several themes that emerged include: (1) choice valued as individual fulfillment and (2) constraints of choice including: parents, feeling the need to adhere to tradition/familial responsibility, and finances. From the analysis of interview data, young Filipino Americans ascribed choice as a vehicle of self-realization and are largely in conflict with older generations pushing for communal responsibility. Interview findings also gave insight into the social environment shaping their subjectivities and the tensions that arise when confronted with the communal culture shaping that of their parents, resulting in conflicting agentic projects pursued by parents and expected of their kids. In addition, respondents provided insight into how structural barriers obstruct the experience of choice as an ideal sphere of agency.

Young Filipino Americans ascribed to the hegemonic ideologies of choice as a vehicle of self-actualization. They noted that choices were 'good' when they fulfilled them and when they were about individual 'flow' (happiness/fulfillment/personal desire).

Anne: I think a good choice is when you are in flow and it's instinctual, almost, and intuitive.”

Sam: I think what makes a good choice is whatever fulfills you.

When they made important choices, they were for themselves and not for others.

Jasmin: So I went into college as a nursing major and then my first week, I was like, No, I'm not doing nursing. So, I switched to exercise science after my first week of college and I told my mom, I'm not doing nursing. So, I guess I changed my mind because I'm like, *I'm doing it for me*. Not for, you know, the approval of them.

Choices for my respondents were valued by personal desire.

A key way respondents' choices were constrained were by parents' direct wishes, particularly in career choices. Respondents noted their parents wanting them to select specific careers, either similar careers as them or grand careers such as doctors, for status.

Sam, pursuing a BA in Sociology rather than continuing her pre-med track, said: I think it was *more of a success and a status thing for them*. Which I guess, is because they're immigrants from a developing country. So it's like, yeah we moved to America and now our daughter's a doctor. Obviously, it's like their version of the American dream because they couldn't pursue a degree when they came here. So they want me to do it.

Even though Sam has made the choice to not follow her parents' career choice, she is expecting to be a hospital social worker, to please her parents by being medical-field adjacent. Parental wishes were seen by all respondents as constraining factors in their own individual choices.

Another key choice constraint that Filipino American young adults experienced was tradition. Above and beyond parent's explicit wishes, respondents lived within traditional cultures and had constraints based on cultural and traditional factors.

Robin shared with me the frustration they faced daily in identifying outside of the gender binary: I don't know if it's even bad, but the difference in their eyes is...as long as it's not traditional, *it's just not good traditionally*.

Robin: They just hold such a high standard for the firstborn daughter in Filipino culture where it's like I don't know....And I feel like sometimes if I did leave if I just up and left it would be I just think too much...it would be so much of a burden on them. And then I get into thinking of like, that would make me such a bad child... but it's also like how am I being a bad child *if I just want to live my own life*?

Robin: I was doing the same thing for five years. Taking care of my nephews, and then only caring about other people's needs for five years just giving, giving, giving myself only because I knew it's what the other people needed at the time. Not thinking about my own health. *Not thinking about my needs.* My wants. Just standing still and being of service, and overextending, and over giving until I was left with nothing.

Here Robin is constrained by family responsibility though what they really want is to make a choice for personal fulfillment to “live [their] own life.” Respondents clearly articulated that tradition and family responsibility limited their ability to seek personal fulfillment, the true mark of what they see as a ‘good choice.’ Jasmin feels pressure because of the prestige Filipino culture holds for the medical field, and being the first generation in her family able to attain that:

Jasmin: In terms of the Filipino culture in the medical field, I feel like they have such high expectations for you to finish and not get married or not have kids. I feel like they would probably be really disappointed if you don't finish school because they have such stereotypes that you need to go to school...I feel like I have so much pressure on me right now because I'm going to be the first doctor in the family. So they always say like "oh, first doctor first doctor." I feel like I would be...not disowned, but I feel like they would be really disappointed in me. Because I have all this pressure on myself with being the first doctor in our family.

Other significant choice constraints related to financial limitations. Here respondents felt that financial limitations often left them feeling stuck, unable to make the choices they really wanted.

Jo: I mean yeah, but I'm trying. I don't know how to explain it. I give up on it, then I get super motivated again, and I just never get anywhere.. its so complicated. And it's expensive. That's the thing. I feel like, once you're in a hole, it's kind of harder to get out. I feel like I'm stuck somewhere I don't want to be....

Jasmin: I feel like in terms of a dream life, it would be a healthy family, stable income, not worrying about paying for what we're going to eat that day. ...You know, being able to afford everything, I feel like that's enough for me.

Discussion

The goals of this research were to explore how second-generation Filipino Americans experience choice, who's architecture⁴³ is molded by conflicting subjectivities, the communal

kinship ties of Filipino culture and the individualism that predominates American culture, and constrained by structural barriers. I explore this qualitatively through semi-structured interviews with 5 respondents. The research question I address is: To what extent do hegemonic ideologies of choice influence those of second-generation Filipino Americans' and their attitudes towards choice? How does this influence perception of structural constraints?

In answering my research question several themes emerged including choice as valued for individual fulfillment and constraints of choice including: parents, tradition/responsibility, and finances. Without the ability to pursue choices in the ways in which they were socialized to pursue them, structural constraints empty choice from the emotional fulfillment, to work just to work, and result in the suffering of its subjects. In prior literature, being held to normative values, with the expectation of failure, resulted in feelings of endlessness,⁴⁴ here articulated as a sensation of being stuck; structural constraints create a feeling of total immobility. This supports other literature on the psychic consequences of universal norms without the capacity to attain them.⁴⁵ Financial limitations meant limited personal fulfillment and limited ability to make good choices. Structural constraints co-opt dreams and agentic projects, becoming that of stability and comfort rather than the full expressions of flow as promised by the ideology of choice. These findings are in support of my first hypothesis: Second-generation Filipino Americans will experience choice as a constraint and limitation rather than as a sphere of freedom.

Along with constraint due to material resources, the social conditions that shape agencies of immigrant children and their parents differ to the extent that it creates conflict and a dissonance, creates the tensions presented in this work. This aligns with the predominating value placed on choice as a sphere of individual freedom and emotional fulfillment, rather than a reflection of external cultural values⁴⁶ or communal responsibility⁴⁷. In pursuit of agentic

projects, all respondents experienced a confrontation with parents and their expectations, reflecting tension in agentic/cultural projects. These findings support my second hypothesis: Second-generation Filipino Americans will positively value choices that are an expression of an essential identity and devalue choices that are influenced by traditional Filipino notions of familial responsibility.

Due to the limitations of the scope of this study, direct connections with the children's responses with that of their parents were unable to be drawn, enabling more accurate connections and comparisons between the desires, subjectivities of their parents with that of their children. Contributing to literature on the lived experience of second-generation Asian Americans, I hope to support the ongoing emphasis on a phenomenological approach to care, wary of universal assumptions. Questions that remain revolve around welfare policy, how do we better support attainment of the agentic projects that are upheld and shaped by a society of individualism? In addition, how can care professions better provide culturally competent support for second-generation Filipino Americans facing tensions of "double consciousness"⁴⁸?

ENDNOTES

¹ Wilkinson and Kleinman (2016) *A passion for society: How we think about human suffering*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

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