Transformative Praxis among the Filipina Community in Canada

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Abstract. Existing literature on the Filipino community in Canada usually (re)produce the ongoing colonial and neoliberal harm(s) where their lived experiences are objectified and exploited for the personal, academic, and profitable gains of the social worker practitioner/researcher. Critical ethnography is touted as an advocacy tool for marginalized groups, however, stories of marginalization are often exploited in the name of "helping" and "advocating for the Other", where vulnerability is highlighted rather than the agency, healing, love and strength of communities that are currently dismantling forms of oppression. This article attempts to challenge these harms as it illuminates the humanity of the Filipino community, transforming critical ethnography as anti-oppressive research into meaningful space(s) that centre their dignity and history over the achievements of the 'expert' social worker. I propose that as Filipino communities keep moving toward meaning-making that centres their lives and agency in relation to systemic racism, marginalization, and oppression, it also decentres white supremacy, neoliberalism, and the knowledge of the 'expert' in the field of social work. The particular harms that these experts (re)produce need to be unpacked, highlighted, and made visible in order to transform their work into political praxis beyond performative acts. This transformative praxis would foreground the voices of the Filipino community as the experts of their own lives and relations, where their particular knowledge(s) and emotions become central to their political and community well-being. Engaging in emotions would require immersing oneself in the Filipino community and foregrounding their community knowledge(s), lived experiences, and agency. Their forms of advocacy would hold privilege over the agenda of the researcher.

Keywords: Filipino, Neoliberal, Labour, Colonial, Anti-oppressive Research.

Introduction

> *I encountered migrant workers who were part of Canada's low-skilled Temporary Foreign Workers Program (TFWP) — some undocumented — and witnessed how they seized agency in otherwise debilitating circumstances…this meant that contrary to stereotypes of abject and exploited migrant workers lacking in agency, the people whom I met deliberately envisioned alternative life paths that allowed them to think beyond their everyday circumstances. The ability to dream of what could be was an important part of everyday care activism (Tungohan, 2023, p. 200)*

This paper engages in the existing literature on the Filipino community in Canada and centres their agency within the context of globalization and migration, specifically in transnational migration and labour migration studies (Cortes, 2015; Henderson, 2020; Pratt, 2012). While there has a been a move toward anti-oppressive research, these studies usually (re)produce the ongoing colonial and neoliberal harm(s) that represent the Filipino communities as 'objectified' and 'exploited' for the personal, academic, and profitable gains of the social worker practitioner/researcher, regardless of the intentions of the researcher. This phenomenon speaks to the neoliberalism still embedded within the academic institutions that employ these particular researchers, where individual competition for grants and jobs are still rampant. While these are aspects that a researcher still needs to contend within a colonial institution, it is important now more than ever to challenge these dominant norms, especially in anti-oppressive research in social work. I draw from an AR/AO (anti-racist and anti-oppressive) framework (Ocampo and Pino, 2014) to develop a deeper understanding of how to foreground the voices of the Filipino community in Canada. AR/AO "aim[s] to continually critique, resist, name and unmask systems of domination that shape and constitute oppression, marginalization and forms of violence in order to foreground a social justice perspective…racist ideologies and practices continue to shape [and] constitute" (p. 85) social work research. A social justice approach would provide space to centre and transform the lived experience of the Filipino community into advocacy sites. I examine the role of critical ethnography as it is touted as an advocacy tool for marginalized groups in the interdisciplinary field of the social sciences (Madison, 2012; Thomas, 1993) and has significant implications for anti-oppressive research in social work.

While critical ethnography is 'anti-oppressive' in many ways due to its focus on challenging power relations, such as the Filipino community in Canada, the political agency of these communities are often excluded. Within anti-oppressive research, political agency is conceptualized as a "process of subjectification [and] an ongoing and situated negotiation of

self-naming and being named by others that relies on visible and non-visible markers of difference and is implicated in power relations" (Coloma, 2008, p. 20) of domination and marginalization. Thus, it is important for researchers to acknowledge that the research process is embedded in power relations. Researchers need to ensure that they are not further exploiting marginalized communities in order to just receive accolades for "helping" and "advocating for the Other". Thus, we need to critically examine what the role of anti-oppression research is in relation to the ways in which Filipino communities are currently dismantling forms of oppression, mainly through agency, healing, love, and strength. According to Capous-Desyllas and Morgaine (2018):

> Anti-oppressive research is grounded in attention to the various ways that power circulates within and around the researchers and the research process itself. Navigating complex identities of both the researchers and the community members who are participating in the research can pose challenges and opportunities. While…anti-oppressive research…ha[s] the potential to disrupt entrenched power relations, actualizing this potential requires critical self-refection, self awareness, and a willingness to deeply examine how and why we do the research that we do (p. 1)

This article proposes to mitigate harms of these power relations because it highlights the humanity of the Filipino community. This article proposes that researchers need to centre the lived experiences of the Filipino community into meaningful space(s) over the achievements of the 'expert' social worker in order to advance 'anti-oppressive' research in social work. Neoliberal whiteness in anti-oppressive research exists because "despite the best critical efforts of scholars, power is more than ever vested in the hands of elite finance [and] inequality and precarity are normalised…[,becoming an everyday political force] (Davis, 2023, p. 3). Foregrounding the voices of the Filipino community facilitates the dismantling of neoliberal whiteness in anti-oppressive research as it focuses on the political agency of this particular community, moving toward equitable representation in research through a social justice approach.

Furthermore, I propose that anti-oppressive research in social work and critical ethnography need to illuminate how the Filipino community makes meaning-making of their lived experience through political agency. The researcher needs to look at how the Filipino community already engages in dismantling forms of systemic racism, marginalization, and oppression, neoliberalism, and white supremacy, rather than how they can "rescue" this particular community. For example, Tungohan (2012; 2023) highlights how migrant Filipino women in migrant labour regimes have influenced immigration policy changes despite not having formal citizenship in their host country through collaborative work with Filipino and other activists. Anti-oppressive research, which aims to dismantle

various forms of oppression such as racism and sexism (Ocampo and Pino, 2014), and critical ethnography, which highlights power relations in order to advocate with marginalized communities (Thomas, 1993; Madison, 2012), such as the Filipino community, have an important role in social work. While each approach is distinct, both require the researcher to critically reflect and examine the particular harms that they (re)produce and to work with the Filipino community in order to work toward social justice action beyond academia. Foregrounding the narratives of the Filipino community would facilitate the process of dismantling neoliberal and colonial harm(s). Thus, the ways in which the Filipino community exhibits political agency need to be made visible in order to transform these harms into political praxis. This transformative praxis would foreground the voices of the Filipino community as 'the experts' of their own lives and relations, where their particular knowledge(s) and emotions become central to their political and community well-being. Researchers would represent Filipinos as the experts of their own lives by centring how this particular community navigates and negotiates forms of oppression through political agency and how they are already advocating for themselves, collaborating with or without researchers.

In the next section, I discuss the role of critical ethnography and anti-oppressive research in social work to examine the potential harm(s) and possibilities when working with marginalized communities such as the Filipino community. While the terms 'positionality' and 'social location' are used interchangeably in this article, 'social location' refers to "relations of hierarchy within…[a] broader landscape of power…[and these] locations relate to stratification (at local, national and transnational fields)" (Anthias, 2013, p. 130) and 'positionality' contextualizes our "power positions, choices, and effects…we take ethical responsibility for our own subjectivity and political perspective, resisting the trap of gratuitous self-centredness" (Madison, 2012, p. 9). Acknowledging our privilege as researchers through self-examination (William & Brydon-Miller, 2004) requires attention "to how our subjectivity in relation to others informs and is informed by our engagement and representation of others" (Madison, 2012, p.10).

Critical ethnography and anti-oppressive research in social work

While critical ethnography engages in the politics of positionality, critiques of power relations, and advocacy with marginalized communities (Madison, 2012), Anthropology emerged as a discipline during colonialism in the last quarter of the 19th century and focused on the expertise of the Anthropologist:

> Anthropologists began to use the term *ethnography* for descriptive accounts of the lifeways of particular local sets of people who lived in colonial situations around the world. These accounts, it was claimed, were more accurate and comprehensive than the reports of travelers and colonial administrators

(Erikson, 2011, p. 44).

From this perspective, the ethnographer observed research 'objects' who then produced a report as the expert of these communities (Erikson, 2011). However, many things have shifted within and the "expertise" of the researcher has been challenged with "many researchers allying themselves as advocates…with the people who are studied" (Erikson, 2011, p. 54).

Critical ethnography has significant implications for advocacy and anti-oppressive research in social work with marginalized communities, such as the Filipino community in Canada.   Both anti-oppressive research and critical ethnography in social work address the power relations in society, where these particular research methodologies take "us beneath surface appearances, disrupts the *status quo,* and unsettles both neutrality and taken-for-granted assumptions by bringing to light underlying and obscure operations of power and control (Madison, 2012, p. 5). Unpacking what seems to be "neutral" and "normal" in society is important work for transformative praxis among the Filipino community in Canada. Williams and Brydon-Miller (2004) argue that critical ethnography has the potential to empower and foreground the experiences of the marginalized communities as it allows for collaborative approaches to interrogate societal structures of power and privilege. Thus, it is important for researchers to reflect upon our positionalities "because it forces us to acknowledge our own power, privilege, and biases just as we are denouncing the power structures that surround our subjects" (Madison, 2012, p. 8). This approach would address the power relations embedded within anti-oppressive research while centring the narratives and perspectives of the Filipino community. I argue that anti-oppressive research in social work seeks to dismantle these power relations in ways that could empower the Filipino community in Canada.

Furthermore, critical ethnography applies critical theoretical frameworks such as Critical Race Theory, intersectionality, and transnational feminism(s) to engage in critical analysis and advocacy strategies with research participants (Madison, 2012). It allows researchers to engage in social justice and dismantle "structures of oppression built into the current economic and political world system" (Angrosino & Rosenberg, 2011, p. 474). Moreover, the aim of the researcher is to work *with* the community, rather than *for* the community" (Angrosino & Rosenberg, 2011, p. 474). Furthermore,

> The overall goal of this process is to empower the community to take charge of its own destiny—to use research for its own ends and to assert its own position relative to the power elite. A researcher may well retain a personal agenda…but [their] main aim should be to work with the community to achieve shared goals that move it toward a more just situation (Angrosino & Rosenberg, 2011, p. 474).

While it is important for the Filipino community to remain at the centre, researchers need to be mindful of their roles and responsibilities who hold privilege. Researchers could use their privilege to further the goals of

the Filipino community and spread awareness to academia, policy makers, and the wider local, national, and transnational community through their networks. For social work researchers and critical ethnographers, through an anti-oppressive lens, may then play a crucial role in dismantling oppressive structures that have impacted the lived experiences of the Filipino community in Canada.

Since critical ethnography is an advocacy tool, it provides transformative space through anti-oppressive research and opens possibilities for storytelling, connection, mutual trust, and safety so that marginalized communities can heal from structural oppression (Zusman, 2018). Transformative praxis among the Filipino community would thus entail engaging in 'kwuentos' (talk-story) and healing from colonialism and neoliberalism. Moreover, praxis is the "combination of theory and action...and it is one way in which engaged, committed, advocacy-oriented form[s are]...carried out. Waller et al. (2022) argue that anti-racist and anti-oppressive (AR/AO) research has achieved minimal progress in the field of social work due to its fragmented theories. I argue that critical ethnography can provide space to apply these theories to further strengthen the frameworks that centre marginalized communities such as the Filipino community in Canada. Thus, stories from racialized communities, such as the Filipino community in Canada, could help bridge these gaps in AR/AO research. Waller et al. (2022) maintain the following steps in order to advance AR/AO in social work research: 'Dismantle White Supremacy in Social Work'; 'Understand Researcher Positionality'; and 'Promote Anti-racist and Anti-oppressive Research Methods' (p. 640-641). In the first step, the aim is to uncover the sustenance of white supremacy in research and work toward centring theories that foreground marginalized identities. White supremacy is reproduced in research through neoliberalism, where "this sense of being critical produces…a subject position that remains ignorant of the ways that [researchers] reproduce particular forms of racialized marginalization" (Berg, 2012). White supremacy shows up in how prioritizing the financial well-being that prioritizes whites; taking from marginalized communities; as well as attitudes of racial superiority as whites (Pulido, 2015). Transformative praxis among the Filipino community in Canada foregrounds their voices, thus challenging white supremacy within the research process. The second step is important as "this critical self-reflection is key to co-constructing and co-conducting research that is driven by the needs and vision of the community and researchers' methodological expertise" (p. 641). With the voices of the Filipino community at the centre of transformative praxis, they become co-researchers in collaborating with what they need and want from the critical ethnographer and anti-oppressive researcher. Lastly, the third step is to draw upon community-engaged and driven research "that hono[u]rs community strengths and capacity…it will require institutions…to invest in training, funding, and capacity-building initiatives that advance these practices" (p. 641). To learn about the strengths and capacities of the Filipino community, researchers need to

culturally immerse themselves in the community through building trust and relationships with its members. Moreover, there are particular ways that the Filipino community exhibit care. For example, Filipino migrant care activists and workers demonstrate care as 'Kasamas', "Kasama[s] [bear] witness to your struggles and your successes, helps you meet your challenges, and is…there in ways that even your family members cannot and should not be" (Tungohan, 2023, p. 16). By focusing on the strengths and capacities of the Filipino community in Canada such as finding kasamas despite experiencing oppression and marginalization, researchers can learn how to engage in transformative praxis led by this particular community.

While there have been movements toward anti-oppressive research in social work and in critical ethnography, the impact of neoliberal and colonial harms are still ongoing in academic research (Davis, 2023; Pulido, 2015). Social work researchers need to be cognizant of their positionality and social location (used interchangeably throughout this article) when working with marginalized communities as Alcoff (2009) interrogates the "the dangers of speaking across differences of race, culture, sexuality, and power are becoming increasingly clear to all" (p. 117). Furthermore, Alcoff (2009) argues that: 1) A social worker's social location (identity) "can serve either to authorize or dis-authorize [their] speech" (p. 118); and 2) The oppression of marginalized communities increase when their particular issues are "spoken for" (p. 118) by privileged people because "persons from dominant groups who speak for others are often treated as authenticating presences that confer legitimacy and credibility on the demands of subjugated speakers… [and] does nothing to disrupt the discursive hierarchies that operate in public spaces" (Alcoff, 2009, p. 118). In other words, reflecting on one's social location can better position the researcher to engage in research that benefits the participants and their community. Also, when privileged people, such as researchers, speak for marginalized communities, such as the Filipino community in Canada, the latter become further oppressed. Nevertheless, I argue that the Filipino community still holds political agency, an important part of transformative praxis that will be further explained later on in the article. In the next section, I explore Alcoff's (2009) arguments above further, and where she specifically stresses "that the practice of speaking for others is often born of a desire for mastery, to privilege oneself as the one who more correctly understands the truth about another's situation or as one who can champion a just cause and thus achieve glory and praise" (p. 132).

Social location in anti-oppressive social work research

Alcoff's (2009) argument above is an important consideration in critical ethnography and anti-oppressive research in social work as researchers who fail to engage in their social location/positionality and who 'speak for others' reproduce white supremacy and neoliberal harms in academia and within communities (Alcoff, 2009; Davis, 2023; Pulido, 2015). These two specific actions reproduce colonial and neoliberal harms as the researcher does hold power and privilege within the research context,

even in critical ethnography through an anti-oppressive research lens in social work. 'Speaking for' marginalized communities such as the Filipino community in Canada further exploits their stories through objectification as the Other. Thus, these actions reproduce harmful representations that centre the personal, academic, and profitable gains of the researcher (Alcoff, 2009). While anti-oppressive social work researchers may have the best of intentions to "help" communities, these acts often reenact a "saviour complex", where those in the margins need to be "rescued". These dynamics are harmful because it disregards the ways in which the Filipino community has already been engaging in political agency. Furthermore, this 'saviour complex' may impact the research outcomes that favour the researcher and their profitable gains (Alcoff, 2009). To dismantle colonial legacies, researchers need to engage in 'vulnerability', which:

> Moves beyond the simplified "victimization" of social actors and recognizes instead their potential agency and capacity. Experiences of vulnerability can be both debilitating and meaningful lived experiences for ethnographers and respondents alike. Therefore, embracing and reflecting on the relational and emotive dimensions of vulnerability is not a "problem" which needs to be resolved through recourse to "objective," "scientific" knowledge but rather through meaningful engagement with and reflection upon such "critical moments." This enables ethnographers to revisit and redraw the boundaries of research and contemporary ethnographic field methods (Abdullah, 2019, p. 209).

As an 'insider/outsider' researcher, a Filipina, yet a researcher and thus an outsider, who engages with the Filipino community and anti-oppressive methodologies such as critical ethnography in community-based research using critical feminist research, Alcoff's (2009) critique of research applies to my positionality as well. Moreover, each member of the Filipino community has their own social location and intersectional identities that are not universal (Anthias, 2011; Collins, 1990; Collins and Chep, 2013; Crenshaw, 1991; Yuval-Davis, 2006). We have different classes, abilities, citizenship statuses, genders and sexualities, education levels, and religions and spiritualities. Representing the Filipino community in Canada as having a monolithic identity would be harmful to those who hold intersecting identities (i.e. race, class, gender, sexuality, citizenship, religion, spirituality) within particular contexts. Furthermore, Filipino subjectivities are "also dependent upon the discourses used to make sense of these subject positions that are grounded within particular socio-cultural, historical, and geographical contexts" (Coloma, 2008, p.20). I also need to be aware of my social location in relation to the Filipino community I do research with:

The researcher carries…all of the power and privilege associated with being a member of the academic elite. [They have] a title, business cards, access to a language of theory, and esoteric knowledge that, even when [they choose] not to display it, is available to [them] and recognized by others. Privilege does not disappear; you cannot make it go away or pretend it does not exist" (Williams & Brydon-Miller, 2004, p. 250).

However, Alcoff (2009) argues that "we must ask further questions about its effects, questions that amount to the following: will it enable the empowerment of oppressed peoples?" (pp. 132-133). This is important as we navigate the implications for transformative praxis among the Filipino community in Canada through critical ethnography and anti-oppressive research in social work. Critical ethnography not only engages in social justice and advocacy with marginalized communities, but the politics of positionality "because it forces us to acknowledge our own power, privileges, and biases just as we are denouncing the power structures that denounce our subjects" (Madison, 2012, p. 7). As researchers hold the power and privilege in relation to the participants, they have the ethical responsibility to dismantle white supremacy as well as the colonial and neoliberal harms impacting marginalized communities, such as the Filipino community in Canada.

While I identify as a racialized, Filipina woman, I am a Canadian Citizen by birth and thus a 'settler', and I do not have firsthand experience of immigration. I identify as cisgendered, heterosexual, and I hold a Ph.D. I also hold a lot of privilege as a researcher who has the power to potentially misrepresent the Filipino community in harmful ways, much like those who are 'outsiders'. However, I attempt to mitigate these harms by acknowledging my power and privilege and use it in ways to achieve social justice (Madison, 2012) with the Filipino community in Canada. Instead of 'speaking for' (Alcoff, 2009) the Filipino community as a Filipina researcher, I engage in representing them *as experts in their own lives* and as a collaborator who highlights how they make-meaning of their lived experience. Critical ethnography has implications for anti-oppressive social work research as it looks at the culturally-relevant and the situated ways in which to decentre white supremacy, neoliberalism, and the knowledge of the 'expert' in the field of social work. While Pon (2009) argues that 'cultural competency', or engaging in interventions that are deemed to be an essential part of one's culture, is a new form of racism as it discriminates "without being open to accusations of racism. This is accomplished by theorizing about culture without considering the power relations implicated in colonialism and racism" (p. 61). This article understands cultural-relevant research practices through intersectionality and cultural nuances where the researcher understands the power relations that impact the Filipino community. Thus, the aim of this article would be to *learn* how the Filipino community is *already* engaging in acts of social justice through

their own political agency that are situated in particular contexts. Researchers need to move beyond highlighting the vulnerability and exploitation of the Filipino community in Canada and toward illuminating their resistance, collective care, agency, healing, love and strength.

Furthermore, critical ethnography through anti-oppressive practice requires subjectivity, for both the researchers and the participants:

> Subjectivity requires that we delve more deeply into the desires resonating within the locations of others. It is the move beyond the *acknowledgement* of voice within experience to that of *actual engagement*. Audience and performer must now engage the material and discursive world of others. Because subjectivity is formed through a range of discursive practices—economic, social, aesthetic, and political—and meanings are sites of creation and struggle, subjectivity linked to performance becomes a poetic and polemic admixture of personal experience, cultural politics, social power and resistance (Madison, 2012, p. 192).

Madison's (2012) ideas of subjectivity challenges the notion of the quintessential "neutral" and "objective" researcher in the field and proposes that we become vulnerable and embodied in the research process. Indeed, we may become the "vulnerable observer" (Behar, 1996) filled with emotions. Just as we make-meaning of participants' lives, we also need to make meaning of our role in critical ethnography through an anti-oppressive approach in social work research.

The next section looks at how the Filipino community engages in transformative praxis. First, I will describe what I mean by 'transformative praxis'. Next, I look at the ways in which the Filipino community has been engaging in national and transnational praxis through political agency. Lastly, I discuss the implications for critical ethnography through an anti-oppressive lens in social work.

Transformative praxis and the Filipino community

I define transformative praxis within critical ethnography as anti-oppressive. It is anti-oppressive because transformative praxis goes beyond the theories that are applied in critical ethnography and it challenges the reproduction of colonial and neoliberal harms that could occur within social work research ,"the transformative model focuses…on the historical, cultural contexts…gender, race, sexual orientation, and social class…the transformative paradigm is activist, critical, and constructivist, embedded in social justice and human rights agendas" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 94). While the researcher engages in advocacy with the Filipino community in Canada, the researcher is not the centre of the research. The political agency of the Filipino community in Canada and transnationally are central to the transformative praxis within critical ethnography and anti-oppressive research in social work. Moreover, the application of a transformative praxis among the Filipino community in Canada is situated and contextual.

While some culturally-relevant aspects may apply in different contexts, it is important to note that the researcher understands the context of the participants as well as their social location as a researcher.

Although in the United States of America, Francisco-Menchavez et al. (2018) identify how the Filipino community continually engages in collective care through the use of "*kapwa,* a Filipino cultural value of collectivism" (p. 405), the concept of kapwa may be helpful among the Filipino diaspora in Canada. While different contexts, the Filipino community in Canada has experienced racism and Othering through xenophobia, the fear of foreigners (Francisco-Menchavez et al., 2018). On a global level, experiencing xenophobia occurs due to the "neoliberal trends of ideologies of immigrant merit and individualism" (p. 405). The Filipino community has challenged these dominant cultural norms through their engagement in kapwa, the antithesis of individualism. Moreover, they have resisted structural oppression evident within the immigration in settler colonial nation-states such as Canada and the United States of America in North America. For instance, the Filipino community demonstrated their political agency through "community citizenship…[,] a type of defense of Filipinos…used to gain, collect, and contextualize community power" (--Menchavez et al., 2018). Here, we can see that the Filipino community has constructed their own definition of community power and citizenship rather than having the state define their identities, particular citizenship, on their behalf. The idea of "community citizenship" produces empowerment that has been initiated by the Filipino community themselves. Furthermore:

> Community citizenship offers new possibilities. In what we have presented above, this civic practice takes cultural values of *kapwa* or collectivism as central to encouraging Filipinos to make claims to the rights that should be afforded to them, with or without documentation. Community citizenship prioritizes emotional support and interdependence between organizers and Filipino immigrants (Francisco-Menchavez et al., 2018).

Critical ethnographers and anti-oppressive researchers in social work need to centre community citizenship and kapwa, specifically as it relates to transformative praxis among the Filipino community in Canada.

Within the Canadian context, Filipina migrant care workers of the Live-in/Caregiver Program (L/CP) have engaged in political advocacy through care activism (Tungohan, 2023). Like kapwa, care activism is collective rather than individual acts. Filipina migrant care workers often consist of care workers themselves and their allies, where collective care is at the centre of their political actions. Migrant care activism and "advocacy [are situated] in various spaces—ranging from the national to the transnational and taking place in the realm of the everyday—motivated by a praxis of care…they become *kasamas*" (Tungohan, 2023, p. 197). 'Kasamas' refer to someone "who bears witness to your struggles and your

successes, helps you meet your challenges, and is someone who is there in ways that even your family members cannot and should not be" (Tungohan, 2023, p. 3). Care activism is then seen as a form of transnational praxis among the Filipino community in Canada as migrant Filipinas engage in care through 'kasamas', a culturally-relevant approach that should be centred in critical ethnography and anti-oppressive research in social work.

The transnational Filipino community has been impacted by many migrant labour programs such as the L/CP and other global im/migration programs. In the United States of America, Francisco-Menchavez (2018) argues that despite experiencing family separation, the Filipino community continually makes-meaning of what 'family' means to them:

> Departing from a common conception of families left behind as passive recipients of care from migrant family members, I assert that family members left behind are enacting varying forms of care work in the Philippines, understanding that their labor benefits their immediate needs and also contributes to the well-being of their family members abroad. To this end, I begin from the assumption that care operates in a decentralized manner where kin networks function as both nurturing and social reproduction entities prior to the migration of any family member (p. 31).

This representation has implications for transnational praxis among the Filipino community in Canada because many families have experienced family separation and reunification due to the L/CP and other labour migration programs in Canada. Notwithstanding or minimizing the impact of systemic oppression, Francisco-Menchavez (2018) speaks to the heart of how Filipino transnational families make meaning of care and highlights their political agency. Thus, making a move toward representing the political agency of the transnational Filipino community in Canada is a step toward theorizing transnational praxis with this community.

Additionally, critical ethnography through an anti-oppressive lens in social work research needs to illuminate how Filipina migrant care workers have engaged in political acts despite not having the protections and privileges of citizenship:

> Seeing that the live-in caregivers conveniently disappear from popular consciousness in the absence of sensationalistic scandals, the efforts undertaken by some live-in caregivers to change deleterious work conditions are ignored. Despite being non-citizens, live-in caregivers have the political agency to change the policies set by the LCP... I argue that temporary labour migrants such as Filipina live-in caregivers, far from being the compliant 'slaves,' are full political agents who do not allow non-citizenship status to hinder their political participation in Canada (Tungohan, 2012, pp. 162-163).

This suggests that more researchers need to highlight how Filipina caregivers are indeed engaging in political agency to have their work conditions changed despite not holding official Canadian citizenship. This has implications for critical ethnography and anti-oppressive research as it provides an understanding that representation in research matters. Should the researcher focus on how Filipina caregivers are enslaved, their political agency would not have been acknowledged. Thus, researchers need to focus on how the Filipino community is already engaging in political agency and transformative praxis.

In the next section, I explore the implications of the literature for research. It is important to highlight that the Filipino community has been engaging in political agency in critical ethnography and anti-oppressive research in social work.

Implications for critical ethnography and anti-oppressive research in social work

It is important to be aware of how critical ethnography and anti-oppressive practice can be both politically progressive and reproduce neoliberal and colonial harms. These research methodologies can be harmful, specifically when the researcher mostly gains from collaborations with marginalized communities, such as the Filipino community in Canada, and speaks for the community (Alcoff, 2009), illuminating the vulnerabilities of this particular community at the expense of their political agency, which was exemplified above. On the other hand, critical ethnography and anti-oppressive research in social work presents possibilities for advocacy with the Filipino community in Canada. While it is important to knowledge that power relations exist, taking steps toward social justice action is necessary:

> The fact that we cannot fully escape issues of inequitable power and concerns about representation should not be an excuse for inaction. The goal…is to work with community members to begin a process of knowledge generation and action that can both result in tangible social change and outlive the scope of the initial project, which is the point (Williams & Brydon-Miller, 2004, p. 253).

Social justice actions with marginalized communities include collaboration as co-researchers and ongoing opportunities to reflect on how one's social location/positionality has the potential to harm or benefit participants. Moving toward anti-oppressive practice in social work involves looking at the agency of the Filipino community in relation to the oppressive power structures that impact their lived experiences of marginalization rather than representing them as "victims" and as "vulnerable". While there has been movement in current anti-oppression research in social work, Alcoff's (2009) work presents questions that are still relevant in contemporary research: who speaks for whom, and who benefits? This is where specific Filipino values such as kapwa and

community care activism challenge the very notion that the anti-oppressive researcher and critical ethnographer are the "experts". This has implications for academic and community-based research and future studies in this area as these would help mitigate and eradicate the colonial and neoliberal harms that are continually being reproduced in academic institutions.

Conclusion

Francisco-Menchavez et al. (2018), Francisco-Menchavez (2018), and Tungohan (2012; 2023) showcase how the Filipino diaspora has been engaging in culturally-relevant tools to resist systemic oppression, illuminating their political agency. They challenge the literature that represents them as "passive" and "vulnerable" and dismantle the reproduction of colonial and neoliberal harms. In addition, these authors demonstrate forms of transformative praxis among the Filipino community in North America, which has implications for the diaspora in Canada. Alcoff (2009) provides insight that critical ethnographers and anti-oppressive researchers still need to ask: whom are we speaking for and who benefits? Given that academia is still a colonial and neoliberal institution, the researcher in social work needs guidance, mentorship, and support in how to navigate these entanglements. Madison's (2012) viewpoints are a step toward dismantling white supremacy as well neoliberal and colonial harms through challenging the 'objectivity' of the researcher and moving toward the subjectivity and the embodiment of the researcher in the field. These literature sources have implications for transformative praxis among the Filipino community in Canada, specifically in how researchers engage in embodiment:

> Instead of privileging mind over the body, they insist that the body provides flesh to sterile, distant, cognitive accounts. [Proceeding]...from affective space, often with the desire to provide a more complete picture of human experience...Purely cognitive accounts of human behavio[u]r fail to give rich and nuanced portrayals, erase the individual in the name of generalizability, and lack resonant validity (Pelias, 2011, p. 663).

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