The Becoming of a Pinay Scholar Warrior of Aloha: A Critical Autoethnography of Teaching, Mentoring, and Researching for Social Change

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Abstract
I am a woman professor of color at a predominantly White institution. As a first generation scholar from a low-income, Filipino immigrant family, I never dreamt of becoming a social worker and professor. Through a critical autoethnography and life course approach, I present key moments in my journey towards becoming a tenure track professor. With special focus on oppressive forces throughout my life, I reflect upon the influences and experiences that have informed my stance as a Pinay scholar warrior of aloha. I reflect on my work in teaching, mentoring, and research in the areas of sociopolitical development, critical pedagogy of place, and social movements. Based on analyzing my pathway in life, I propose and apply the three P’s: people, places, and processes of teaching, mentorship, and research for social change. I hope my critical autoethnography sheds light on the complexity of becoming and being a woman professor of color.

Introduction
It’s been seventeen years since I entered the Bachelor of Social Work program at University of Hawai‘i. Little did I know that the journey of becoming a social change agent in the helping profession would be one like no other. As a Filipina American woman from a low income, immigrant family, I was not privileged to be equipped with the skills nor the resources to enter higher education. Choosing an academic program that focused on helping and empowering others not only changed my life, but the lives of the people in the community I came from and the communities I served. I stand today as an assistant professor, and a woman scholar of color. Being on a tenure track and participating in the academy is a lonely path. It’s a space my people were not historically a part of. I stand on the shoulders of many who came before me, and know that my presence here is not just for personal prestige or gain, but one that is for a collective. I am here because of mentors and people I’ve met along the way. I am here clearly to promote social justice. I am here as a social change agent in the helping profession hoping to inspire future professionals to do the same. Based on my life journey, I conceptualize how the three P’s—people, places, and processes of genuine teaching, mentoring, and research—helped and empowered me in becoming a Pinay scholar warrior of aloha.

A Pinay warrior is a stance that I recently have discovered within myself. In Filipino and other Pacific island cultures, a woman warrior is one that fights for ideals and principles important to the community. Historically, Pinay warriors fought along the sides of Filipino men against the Spanish colonial regime. Their anti-colonial stance perpetuated an identity that I uphold today. It speaks to a social justice framework that embraces Filipino indigenous values of barangay or barrio (small, town community), kaili (township), and pamilia (family). Aloha (love) stems from my roots growing up in Hawai‘i, specifically the island of Molokai. To aloha speaks of a commitment to deeply love and fondly care for one’s community or place that has been injured and oppressed. These values embody a Pinay scholar warrior aloha, one who holds both beauty and fierceness in her work, and fights passionately for justice for the collective body.

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1 Filipina and Pinay are used interchangeable throughout this article. It means Filipino woman.
Through a critical autoethnography and life course approach, I highlight my journey in becoming a *Pinay* scholar warrior of *aloha* in the helping profession and academy. I share key moments in my life and career as a social worker and a social welfare scholar. I focus on examples of *people, places, and processes* of genuine teaching, mentoring, and research that led to transformation and change. Now that I am in a position of influence, I attempt to utilize the three P’s in my work in hopes of instilling social change in the academy and community.

**Literature Review: The Context and Experiences of Women of Color in the Academy**

Three major body of literature inform this study: people of color and their experiences in higher education, women of color in the academy, and women of color in social work education.

**People of Color and Their Experiences in Higher Education**

People of color often face contradictory culture of academia, and experience contentious places and processes in the academy, both as a student and faculty member. The academy is perceived to be a place that,

“…encourages free expression and the search for truth, and prizes the creation of neutral and objective knowledge for the betterment of society—values that are supposed to make race and gender identities irrelevant” (Harris & Gonzales, 2012, p. 1).

Additionally, the academy has been a vital place that serves as a gatekeeper in accessing occupations, careers, and professions.

Higher education is greatly regarded as a venue to achieve socioeconomic mobility (Greenstone, Looney, Patashnik, & Yu, 2013). However, research indicates that higher education, like other systems and institutions, is a place in which people of color experience pervasive structural inequities. For example, research on rates of students of color aged 18-24 years old enrolled in higher education in 2012 indicate that Hispanics (37.5%), Blacks (36.4%), and American Indians/Alaska Natives (27.8%) were lower in comparison to Whites (42.1%). Asians (59.8%) and Pacific Islanders (50.3%) had higher rates of enrollment (National Center for Education Statistics 2013b). Filipino American enrollment in higher education in 2006 was at 30.6% in comparison to the general, national average of 25.8% (U.S. Census, 2006; as cited in Maramba & Bonus, 2013; see National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education, 2010, 2011; National Federal of Filipino American Associations, 2008). Rates of persons age 25 years and over with a bachelor’s or higher degree in 2012 indicate that Hispanics (14.5%), Blacks (21.4%), and American Indians/Alaska Natives (16.7%), and Pacific Islanders (24.5%) were lower in comparison to Whites (34.5%). Asians (51.9%) had a higher rate of bachelor’s or higher degree attainment (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013a). The numbers of those in the Filipino Americans population who earned a bachelor’s degree in 2006 were twice as high as the national average (37.2% for Filipino Americans vs 17.1% for U.S.) (U.S. Census, 2006; as cited in Maramba & Bonus, 2013; see National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education, 2010, 2011; National Federal of Filipino American Associations, 2008). A closer look at these statistics may not necessarily reflect degrees earned overseas and does not equate into U.S. employment (Buenavista, 2013). The research on rates that focus on sex and race also presents disparities. For example, rates of females age 25 years and over with a bachelor’s or higher degree in 2012 indicate that Hispanics (15.8%), Blacks (22.9%), American Indians/Alaska Natives (17.2%), and Pacific Islanders were lower in comparison to Whites (33.5%). Asians (49.7%) had a higher rate of bachelor’s or higher degree attainment (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013a).

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2 This rate should be interpreted with caution. Asians and Pacific Islanders are not homogeneous. The rate does not take into account other demographic variables such as class, nativity or immigrant status, years lived in the United States, etc.

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Additionally, students of color report higher levels of stress and anxiety due to strained economic burdens and an alienating university environment in predominantly White institutions (Schwitzer, Griggs, Ancis, & Thomas, 1999). Students from a working class or low-income background, despite their racial or ethnic background, perceive higher education as a challenging, even hostile place to maneuver with its cultural processes and academic expectations for which they were not effectively prepared for (Terenzini, Cabrera, & Bernal, 2001). Most importantly, students of color experience racism in the form of microaggression (Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solorzano, 2009; Sue, Bucceri, Lin, Nadal, & Torino, 2009) and implicit bias in higher education setting and differential treatment among faculty or peers (Suarez-Balcazar, Orellana-Damacela, Portillo, Rowan, & Andrews-Guillen, 2003), thus creating a hostile environment for them. Research indicates that the fear or anxiety of being judged according to stereotypes imposed on a social group among students of color can threaten a student’s academic performance (Steele & Aronson, 1995). The literature lacks specific findings among women of color in regards to these issues of stress and anxiety due to microaggression, implicit bias, or stereotype threats as they undergo their undergraduate and graduate experiences.

Women of Color in the Academy

Research on full-time, tenure track faculty, including women of color, in colleges and universities in the U.S. is lacking. It may appear that little or no concern exists in regards to the working conditions or professional experiences of women faculty of color. Despite the perception that they have achieved such privilege and status, the academy is under siege with similar economic and social pressures that face many jobs in the U.S. Studies of women of color in the academy provide complex and complicated oppressive dynamics related to race, gender, and class. Although the U.S. is becoming more diverse, women of color in higher education experience deep inequities and painful struggles. The problem first starts with underrepresentation. While the student populations are increasingly becoming more diverse, full-time faculty of color are lacking and are overwhelmingly occupied by Whites. For example, the rate of students of color enrolled in higher education from 1997 to 2007 increased from 25% to 30% whereas the rate of full-time faculty of color increased from 13% to 17% respectively in the same timeframe. Full-time women faculty of color continued to be underrepresented with only 7.5% in 2007, and have declined with higher academic ranks. Women of color consisted of 10.4% of instructors and lectures, 9.9% of assistant professors, and 3.4% of full tenured professors (Ryu, 2010; as cited in Harris & Gonzales, 2012, p. 2-3).

The literature on treatment of women of color in higher education indicates that the academic workplace has been perceived as chilling and alienating as they face ongoing barriers, challenges, and obstacles (Aguirre, 2000; Bradley & Holcomb-McCoy, 2004; Turner, Gonzalez, & Wood, 2008). They are burdened with heavy teaching and service responsibilities that constraint their opportunities to engage in research and publication, which is the most vital criteria in the process of promotion and tenure. They are also expected to assume and take part in positions in higher education institutions that pursue diversity agendas, which are at times ignored or not held in high regard in the promotion and tenure process (Aguirre, 2000). Women faculty of color also experience barriers to professional socialization (Aguirre, 2000). Some women faculty of color have experienced being victims of salary inequities and biased reward systems that discredit the type of research they conduct (Aguirre, 2000). Likewise, they are perceived by others, including faculty in positions of power that influence the promotion and tenure process, as less competent as they face extraordinary scrutiny (Evans, 2007) Studies indicate that the review, promotion, and tenure process has been the source of stress and related to oppression, lack of mentorship and support, dynamics among peers and university climate (Bradley & Holcomb-McCoy, 2004; Turner, Gonzalez, & Wood, 2008; Niemann, 2012a; Wing, 2012; Arriola, 2012; Monforti, 2012; Smith, 2012; Wallace, Moore, Wilson, & Hart, 2012; Ervin, 2012; Niemann, 2012b).

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4 Evans (2007) coins this term to describe how “this scrutiny takes place without critical analysis of the centuries of debilitating oppression that we [women of color] have had to overcome” and how “the gender and racial stereotyping occurs in recognizable patterns” (p. 134).
Women of Color in Social Work Education

Efforts to increase racial/ethnic and gender equity aimed by the Council of Social Work Education. The CSWE (Council of Social Work Education) is the social work’s professional accreditation body, and has played an important role in minority faculty recruitment and curriculum modification. It has since been on its agenda since the 1970s (Trolander, 1997). A historical archival study indicates a major initiative was formed by CSWE to focus on faculty development among Chicanos. The Chicano faculty development project was implemented in 1970-74, and was funded by the Social and Rehabilitation Service of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Its purpose was to increase the number and effectiveness of Chicano social work educators by providing a special training program to transition from social work practice to a teaching position in the university setting. In 1971-72, 25 Puerto Rican faculty members participated in a similar program to the Chicano project.

In 1972, CSWE counted only 5 American Indians on graduate social work faculties and two on undergraduate faculties. Asian Americans were also relatively low in numbers in social work compared to other groups. CSWE was unsuccessful in securing federal funding for faculty development projects for both groups as they did with the Chicano and Puerto Rico projects (Trolander, 1997).

CSWE placed less emphasis on securing outside resources aimed for African American faculty members as they were the most represented among minority social work faculty. African Americans also had their own graduate schools at Howard and Atlanta.

Recruitment of women faculty was also an agenda item for CSWE and universities. Gould and Kim (1976; as cited in Trolander, 1997) conducted a national study of salary inequities between men and women social work faculty. Variables in the study included rank, publications, possession of the doctorate, number of years of teaching experiences, and ethnicity. The study concluded that women were paid less than men.

At the same time this study was published, CSWE, under the leadership of Myrtle Ruel (who was the head for CSWE’s Commission on Women and the Equal Opportunity Office for the University of Georgia), was concerned with social work schools that hired women at lower ranks than men. CSWE indicated in 1978 that continuing problems existed with women’s rank and salary (Trolander, 1997). Tougher accreditation guidelines were imposed by CSWE to counter discrimination again women. Schools had to demonstrate efforts to equally recruit, appoint, retain, promote, and compensate women faculty.

Statistics on women of color in social work schools. Among CSWE-accredited social work education programs in the U.S., 66.2% of the total faculty were women (CSWE, 2005; as cited in Starks & Cashwell, 2007). Of these women, 71% are White (non-Hispanic), whereas 14.5% are African American, representing the largest women of color in social work education. Asian American faculty consist of 2.5% of social work educators, with more than half (56.7%) being females. Pacific Islanders consist of less than 1% of social work educators with majority (71.4%) being male (CSWE, 2005; as cited in Starks & Cashwell, 2007).

Although it may seem that women have made major milestones in social work education, other factors may provide greater understanding of their struggles. For example, 30% of female social work educators are tenured in comparison to 43.6% of male social worker educators (Starks & Cashwell, 2007). In a study conducted by Schiele and Francis (1996) among members of the Council of Social Work Education Minority Fellowship Program, findings indicate significant difference exists in receiving tenure between males and females of color. Among faculty of color, 46.9% of males received tenure in comparison to 25.9% of females. A possible explanation is the expectation that faculty of color be available for service and mentorship (Schiele & Francis, 1996; Simon, Bowles, King, & Roff, 2004).

Salary inequity is an issue. Male full professors make 9% more than female full professors. When race is accounted for, further salary inequity exists. Female full professor of color make 20% less than White women full professors and 30% less than White male full professors (Starks & Cashwell, 2007). At the assistant professor level, these disparities disappear. White female assistant professors earn 2% less than males regardless of race than males and females of color. Males regardless of race and females of color are within less than $1,000 of each other as professors (Starks & Cashwell, 2007).
Research is lacking on the type of faculty appointment in academic programs, such as undergraduate only, graduate only, joint (undergraduate and graduate) programs, or multiple programs. Among all women social work educators, 22.9% were appointed in undergraduate only programs in comparison to 19.7% of men social work educators.

Limited research on female social work educators exists, but a monumental study, *Women of Color as Social Work Educators* (Vakalahi, Starks, & Hendricks, 2007), highlights the stories and reflections of 28 women of color in schools of social work and captures a spectrum of diverse voices of struggles and successes in the field. Participants of the study range in age from late 30s to late 60s, with a majority in their 50s. Majority of the participants were African Americans, have been in academia and social work education between 8-14 years or more than 22 years. Participants included predominantly associate professors or full professors, except for two tenure track assistant professors and one tenure track associate professor. In regards to positions, there were four program directors, four deans, two associate deans, and one who worked at the Council of Social Work Education. Vakalahi, Starks, and Hendricks (2007) utilized grounded theory to analyze 28 stories and reflections. Findings indicate three major themes that emerged from the combined voices of the participants: 1) marginalization, 2) racism, and 3) duality. Many of the women experienced marginalization as reflected in invisibility and color-blinded policies that did not view the unique and diverse positions of women of color. Some were tokenized, and felt isolated. Marginalization also occurred when discrimination came from one’s own racial/ethnic or gender groups. Racism was experienced by participants. Participants spoke about how women of color oppressed each other, and how they were also oppressed by others, which in both instances may impact the tenure process. Duality was also experienced by participants as they negotiate the expectations of their own cultural groups and gender with those of the dominant groups in the academy. The constant tension of not “selling out” and being “true to two [or more] cultures” was a prevailing theme. Confirming previous studies, stereotypes associated with different groups, implicit bias, and microaggression infuse the academy. This autoethnography builds upon this work and hopes to shed further light the complexity of the lived experiences of women of color in the academy.

**Critical Autoethnography as a Method to Reflect and Make the Personal Political**

An autoethnography is a qualitative approach to research and writing that describes and systematically analyzes (graphy) the personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural aspects of the experience (ethno) (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011). The *critical* in critical autoethnography is the analysis of power and structural oppression, specifically focusing on the experiences of racism, sexism, classism, and of being the first generation to access higher education and gain entry to the helping profession. This approach uses the self as a source of data. As the researcher and writer, the act of writing is the way of knowing, and a method of inquiry (Richarson, 2000). The purpose of using critical autoethnography is to expand and open a wider lens of the personal experience or journey, in this case the becoming of a professor, which encompasses meaning and relevance. It also “asks their readers to feel the truth of their stories and become co-participants, engaging the storyline morally, emotionally, aesthetically, and intellectually” (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 725). The involvement of the reader may draw awareness and seek change.

In this article, I utilize the tenets of critical autoethnography to reflect upon the key milestones in my career, and extract themes of *people, places, and processes* which mark my development as a scholar and a tenure track professor. The research questions that guide this analysis are:

- What experiences, influences, decisions, opportunities, and conditions led to my interest in social work and social welfare scholarship?
- What barriers and challenges based on oppression have I encountered in my journey and how did I deal with them?
- What were the processes and the roles of people who provided support and guidance in pursuing this journey towards becoming a *Pinay* scholar warrior of *aloha*?

The purpose of the study is trifold: to provide context for my journey; to encourage the reader to engage in this journey personally; and to inspire the reader to critically reflect on their own knowledge of
women professors of color. The main data of this study include written reflections of my professional and personal trajectory, archival data (e.g., pictures or memorabilia), and students’ work. My analysis consists of my readings through these sources to develop an understanding of my journey and then to develop themes connected with teaching, mentoring, and research. Integrating life course theory, I sequence my analysis in chronological order by life events to spell out the decisions, opportunities, and conditions that affect the roles and outcomes later in life (O’Rand, 1998) leading towards becoming a professor. First, I describe my earlier young adulthood in choosing a major. Next, I share my journey in the Masters of Social Work program, and work after the master’s. Finally, I assess my experience completing a doctorate and my current situation as a tenure track professor.

Findings

My critical autoethnography indicate three major themes: people, places, and processes of social change. As seen in Figure 1, the three P’s were key themes in becoming a Pinay scholar of warrior of aloha in the helping profession and academy, and emerged throughout the course of my life.

![Figure 1: The Three P’s (People, Places, and Processes) of Teaching, Mentorship, and Research for Social Change: The Becoming of a Pinay Scholar Warrior of Aloha](image)

Integrating some principles of life course theory, the use of my reflections of key moments in my life and career in chronological order are highlighted in the following sub-sections. Doing so in this fashion can provide more detailed nuances that shed light in the life stage developmental milestones (Giele & Elder, 1998) of becoming a Pinay scholar of warrior of aloha. The three P’s must be viewed as an integration of my lived experiences in a given human developmental stage. Having gone to college immediately after high school earning my bachelor and master degrees in my early and mid-20s without a break, and earning my PhD in my early 30s spell out life developmental growth that can help the reader

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5 Individual students’ work was solicited as samples. Students provided approval to share their work (e.g., poems) stemming from their eportfolios.
focus on particular dynamics of the three P’s in a given stage.

As seen in Figure 1, the first p, people include family, peers and role models, and community members who played essential roles in molding my thinking and values of a Pinay scholar warrior of aloha. They were people I met in the places, the second p, of influence which guided and supported me. Places, as revealed in the findings, are significant geographic spaces, social networks, and supportive academic or professional development programs that provided resources, structure, and climate conducive for social change. The last p, processes, included four processes: decolonization, Pinayization and Indigenization, sociopolitical development, and aloha-ization.

Decolonization is a process of learning to recognize disruptions and injury and address colonial causes (Trinidad, 2011), and develop an act of resistance that rejects and transforms dominant, mainstream ideas (Bowers, 2001). It is a “process of cultural and historical liberation; act of confrontation with a dominant system of thought” (hooks, 1992, p. 1). Decolonization’s main intent is to take apart the story, reveal underlying texts, and give voice to things that are often known intuitively (Smith, 1999). It is the process of one in “com[ing] to know the past” and to “hold alternative histories” and “knowledges” (Smith, 1999, p. 34). Pinayization is the “process, place, and production that aims to connect the global and local to the personal issues and stories of Pinay struggle, survival, service, sisterhood, and strength;” the “individual and communal process of decolonization, humanization, self-determination, and relationship building, ultimately moving towards liberation” (Tintiangco-Cubales & Sacramento, 2009, p. 179-180). Central to Pinayization is the teaching and learning of Filipina women’s stories, including their history and contemporary experiences, to discover challenges that Pinays face as well as create action that pursue social change. In the same vein, Indigenization “brings out spatial and historical dimensions to reclaim one’s own story or past—local and global, the present, communities, cultures, languages, and social practices (Trinidad, 2011, p. 211), and foregrounds indigenous knowledge, worldviews, and concern at the center (Grande, 2004; Smith, 1999; Trask, 1993). Sociopolitical development refers to “the psychological process that leads to and supports social and political action” (Watts et al., 1999, p. 256). Aloha-ization, a term I will coin here, is the process of caring and loving a place and its people, and the desire to make a difference in making it a better place (Trinidad, 2011). These processes, although parallel and overlapping, emerge in my critical autoethnography.

The general finding is this—reflecting on how I got here, in my current position and role in the academy, brings a sense of pride and vulnerability. I say this because as a woman scholar of color and not yet tenured, I never feel safe, secure, nor completely confident. Nevertheless, the groundings presented in the findings of my autoethnography below, hold honor in my journey and position as I feel like a trailblazer and pioneer. I have a great sense of social responsibility, and that is to live a life in promoting social justice and social change!

Molokaiian and Filipino Upbringing: “No, You Should Be a Doctor, Lawyer, or Nurse. Make Money!”

People. I didn’t know what I wanted to be when I was in high school. As a youth, the common message I received from my parents in whatever career or job I chose to do should be one that would make a lot of money. They sent messages such as, “You should be a doctor, lawyer, or nurse. Something that will help pay the bills and make you rich.” With the only exposure of my parents and other family friends having menial, servitude jobs in the pineapple industry, this limited my vision of how a successful career or job should look. Consequently, I was pushed to consider becoming a doctor, lawyer, or nurse. Although I had some great teachers throughout my public education who conveyed messages that I was a good student who would do something great in the future, none really ingrained the idea that I could be someone who could make a difference in my community, nor one who could change the world.

Places. Growing up poor on the island of Molokai, the value of money often clashed with some of my indigenous Filipino values of barangay, kaili, and pamilia. Although we had very little, the communities we belonged to were close knit and communal in nature. We shared vegetables grown in our gardens, fishes we caught, and animals we hunted. My Molokaian upbringing provided me with a place to practice collectivity.

When I was 13 years old, my parents were laid off from Del Monte, a pineapple company. It shut its
plantation doors on the island of Molokai. I recall how distressful this situation was for my family and the community. Although at that time I could not grasp the impact of Del Monte’s closure on my family and community, I recall how my family scrambled to make a decision to be relocated to another plantation on a different island, Oahu. This was made possible by the help of the labor union in negotiating their severance packages. The move to Oahu was probably the most life changing experience at that point in my life. Everything I ever learned about on my upbringing on Molokai, a rural community, had to be redefined. Oahu was an urban island community with far more diversity in regards to race/ethnicity and class. From rural to urban, to collectivity to pushed individualism, the new geographic place created disarray and disorientation.

Processes. As a youth of color, the miseducation of my people puts me at a disadvantage (Constantino, 1970). As a Pinay, at this point in my life, I did not know my family history, the history of my community, nor Filipino or Hawaiian history in the context of my place in society. I never knew that my mother country, Philippines, was colonized by Spain, Japan, and the United States (Constantino, 1970). I was a perfect product of a colonized mind. My colonized mind was further fed by negative stereotypes of being Filipina in Hawai’i. My internalized oppression, self-hatred and denial of my Filipino culture was driven by negative stereotypes of my ethnicity—eating black dog, being a slut, getting pregnant and needing to drop out of high school for it. Many Filipinos, including my parents, were teased due to their heavy accent and were undermined due to language barriers. Media often portrayed Filipino young men for their sexual crimes, drug and alcohol use, or gang activities. Derogatory songs by famous local artists were written about my ethnic group that degraded my community (Okamura, 1998; see http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d0m_Kw1DAYE). I was ashamed of my identities and social positionalities of being a Pinay, low income, child of immigrant parents, living on a pineapple plantation village, and from Molokai. Nevertheless, I didn’t let that hold me back in pursuing higher education. I did realize then, as a young adult, that I needed a degree to make a difference of some kind. What, I didn’t know yet.

The Beginning of Critical Consciousness: The Multiple Worlds I Lived In

People. As a young adult of color attending the University of Hawai’i, I grappled with the ongoing tension of being educated as a “gift” or a “right.” I was the first in my family to attend college. I did not have access to role models that could teach me how to maneuver through the educational system. With scholarships to cover the cost of tuition for four years of my undergraduate career, I was relieved of the financial stress and burden. With that, I had the opportunity to explore an array of helping professions by volunteering with the state government’s volunteer program. I was matched with a social worker who managed cases that were ward of the state. Many of these cases were elders who were in community nursing, pre-law, family resources, social work, and teaching. I knew I wanted to be in the helping

A year later, my younger sister had attempted suicide by ingesting Tylenol. That family incident was extremely devastating as a young adult. Being the eldest sibling, I had to deal with issues of guilt of not being able to be there for my sister as she dealt with boyfriend-girlfriend issues, school, peer pressure, and all the stress that came from being a minoritized, Filipina female teen in Hawai’i. Simultaneously, my siblings and I had dealt with multiple intergenerational issues that stemmed from clashing value systems between Filipino and American. Strong conflicts led to deeply scared misunderstandings between parent and child. I later learned that this was a common incident among immigrant families. Compounded with the ongoing issues of poverty manifested in living in multiple generational and overcrowded homes, my family dealt with ongoing stress. I was then exposed to a mental health social worker who assessed my sister’s situation as well as my parents’. Interestingly, he never engaged me, just my parents and sister. I never thought anything about it then, but now, what a disservice that was.

Places. Simultaneously, I was juggling the idea of which major to consider. My running list included nursing, pre-law, family resources, social work, and teaching. I knew I wanted to be in the helping
profession, but didn’t know what. Because I was somewhat confused, I applied and got accepted to the Health Career Opportunities Program, which was aimed to assist minoritized students interested in the health allied professions. That program provided me with the opportunity to explore my options. Additionally, it provided me with ways to improve my writing and other areas necessary to help me thrive in the courses that were readily required in the helping field. The most helpful component of the program was the opportunity to shadow people and hear guest speakers from the field who were of minority backgrounds. These role models had similar upbringings—being first generation college students, ethnic minorities, and from Asian Pacific Islander backgrounds. The social network this program provided me was profound! I now had a pool of people who I could tap into! Although I didn’t realize it then, the relationships formed would help in the work I would do in the future. This was social capital in the making.

After talking to people from that program and peers, I eventually applied to the Bachelor of Social Work program. By then, I was heavily involved in student government. I was elected as a senator my first year of being involved. This experience provided me with the social networks as well as the place to practice my leadership skills. I planned student-led initiatives that ranged from service projects (e.g., blood drives) to researching alternative transportation for commuter students. I remained involved in student government throughout my undergraduate career, and held numerous positions such as the student body vice president and student board of regent. I was one of the few females and Filipinos to hold such positions. My involvement in student government provided me with the opportunity to engage with diverse colleagues, faculty, and staff.

By the time I was accepted into the social work program, I had a lot of volunteer work and service projects under my belt. Not only do I thank my involvement in student government, but my work with Sariling Gawa Youth Council, Inc., a youth organization that focused on building leaders among Filipino youth and young adults through its youth leadership conference, cultural events, and networking. As a high school student, I attended its conference. As a college student, I became a youth leader/mentor. That provided me with the experience to work with youth from my own ethnic community, our history, our communal struggles and successes, and Filipino values and language. My passion in working with immigrant and minoritized youth grew through my involvement with this organization. The relationships I formed with the youth as well as my peers in college made me realize how prevalent the issues of systemic discrimination and the impact it had on educational inequities, gang involvement, and mental health issue were in my community. I became aware of how the system was not made for communities like mine to succeed. I felt so passionate that I sincerely felt the pain many of the youth and families faced. Sariling Gawa was a special place for me to thrive as I embarked in the Pinayization of my soul and mind!

I was so thrilled to start the Bachelor of Social Work program! I did my practicum at HK⁶, Inc., a youth organization that provides a range of services for diverse at-risk or high-risk youth through shelter and support, therapy, counseling, and advocacy. My practicum involved working in the homeless or emergency shelters, residential programs, and youth prevention and intervention programs. It was there I learned the wide range of services available for youth. I observed an overrepresentation of youth of color involved in the programs, and often wondered how culture played a role in the issues they faced. I had a fabulous mentor at HK, Inc. who facilitated fruitful discussions around youth development and the role of a youth worker. What was vivid to me was the role of ethics in the helping field. As a young adult, I was green in the field. I had to grapple with issues like dual relationships and the ethic of self-disclosure. My personal struggles and family experiences as a young adult of color paralleled the experiences of the youth at HK. I realized how much more complex and severe their issues were. I became aware of my privilege as a person of color who somewhat overcame and dealt with my stressful family issues as a youth at the time. I felt moved, because these issues of cultural generational clash, miscommunication, and discrimination that played out among the youth who sought help from HK, Inc. were close to home for me. Each time I left HK after a long day of practicum, I had a mixture of inspiration, humility, and

⁶ Organization’s name has been changed to provide anonymity.
deep concern for the youth population of Hawai’i.

I also volunteered my time at the Akai 7 Program, a program focused on first time status offenders. My volunteer work at Akai included outreach to Filipino and other ethnic minority youth and their families. I befriended an African American male who was a former prisoner. I later found out he was a family friend married to a Filipina. He volunteered his time working with Filipino youth and their families by conducting informal counseling and providing moral support. I collaborated with him, and began to realize the severity of the social issues faced by the Filipino community. Although the issues these youth and families faced were similar to mine, many of them did not have the resources and support to overcome them. The system of oppression and how it operated started to become clear to me.

Processes. As I continued to learn more about the sociopolitical climate impacting youth of color and communities of color in Hawai’i, the most amazing experience that provided me with a more complete picture of how social work practice and social welfare research informed each other was my experience as a young scholar. Encouraged by one of my social work professors, I applied and was granted to be one of two young scholars from the bachelor program to participate in the National Institute Mental Health Career Opportunities in Research Honors program. I was 21 years old. This experience provided me with the opportunity to work with a doctoral student and other professors in the social welfare field. I particularly worked on a research project that examined the impact of a school-based substance abuse prevention program with a Native Hawaiian focus aimed toward middle school females. Doing mostly quantitative data analyses, I learned how the program impacted young females, especially around their self-esteem and strategies in preventing substance use. The mentors in this program provided invaluable training on creating datasets, conducting quantitative analyses, and understanding the importance of research in informing practice and vis versa. Despite feeling proud of being a recipient of this fellowship, I experienced internalized oppression. Since the other student in social work who earned this fellowship was a private school graduate (I graduated from a public school and dealt with stereotypes of coming from a rural, not up to par community), I often felt that I was not good enough or quick enough to learn how to run statistical tests. I also felt that I was not good enough to present my research work in front of audience of scholars. I was full of self-doubt, and lacked self-confidence. My circle of friends was not part of a research trajectory. Nevertheless, the biggest asset this program provided me was the invaluable place to practice my public speaking skills as well as my ability to network with others. I overcame my fear of public speaking. Being able to attend professional national social work conferences, I had access to a learning community of emerging scholars as well as scholars already in the profession who perpetuated positive attitudes, behaviors, and critical perspectives that I strived to have. Having traveled to the continental U.S. only twice since turning 18 years old, these national conferences were major eye-openers for me. I remember meeting a Samoan emerging scholar who was a doctoral student at University of Washington at a social work conference. I kept in touch with her through the years, and little did I know that I would follow in a similar path as hers. What was missing though was a critical awareness of how research and service to my community would change my identity as a Pinay, specifically how a woman’s place in the academy versus in my Filipino community and family may be a constant negotiation. This was one area that I continued to explore in the next phase of my professional development. Nevertheless, my experiences through my practicum and volunteer work coupled with my intense research training positioned me well to apply to the top Masters of Social Work (MSW) program in the nation.

The MSW Experience at Michigan: Clinical Social Work to Macro Social Worker

Places. I never dreamt of applying to a top-notch Masters of Social Work program. Unchaining myself from feeling limited to staying at home in Hawai’i, I pushed myself to apply to two schools, University of Michigan and University of South California. To my great surprise, I was accepted to both! What trumped the decision to attend University of Michigan were its financial package, macro social work curriculum, and access to faculty with similar interest areas. I also wanted to experience something

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7 Ibid.
quite different from my comfort level of being in an island community. Wow, did I really push my limits when I got to University of Michigan! My first academic quarter was a cultural shock to me. Not only did I find that I was one of two Pinays accepted to the program that year, only a dozen of us Asian Pacific Islander students existed out of couple hundred admittees. I was lonely, and at times, miserable due to the weather. This place was so foreign to me, often exuding a feeling of “out of place.”

People. I was pleased to find a faculty member who was from Hawai‘i. I ended up doing my practicum with him and his research team. This team was quite diverse with a mix of African American doctoral and master level students as well as two Caucasians and one Indian. Our work was a community-based mental health research project with Detroit Head Start. It was my first experience working with a predominantly Black community. It was a shock to be working in a community where its fast food restaurants (e.g., Subways and Wendy’s) had plexiglas to separate its customer and the cashier, as if it was threatening or dangerous to exchange money. High surveillance existed in the drugstores, and homelessness and boarded up homes were common sights as I drove into the city. It was so different from what I observed in my home island community.

I also experienced some tension within the research team, especially from my practicum instructor who had some preconceived assumptions of me being a young Pinay. She was a Black woman who believed that I didn’t deserve to be in the program, and didn’t think I was producing work up to par to other master level students. In fact, she had talked to a colleague of mine, and shared these exact sentiments. These words that were relayed to my peer and shared with me out of concern provoked feelings of doubt and despair, and thoughts of internalized oppression similar to what I experienced in undergraduate, but only more profoundly hurtful. It was damaging, because it was verbalized by someone of power and authority, someone who could actually create an unsettling situation. What struck me like a bullet was a question my male, Caucasian colleague asked, “Do you have anyone to turn to, to help you deal with this? For me, I often turn to my dad. Do you have anyone you can turn to?” I was dumbfounded and responded with a stream of tears coming down my face, “No. I don’t. Not with something like this.” As a result, the faculty from Hawai‘i who also was part of the research team became my strongest ally. He facilitated an open dialog around the tensions we had which impacted the entire research team. He played a role in mentoring me on how to maneuver through the complex team dynamics. He continued to help me evaluate my role as a researcher and social work practitioner in communities like Detroit. Despite this hurdle, my love for community building and development as they intersect with mental health grew from this experience.

I also had the privilege to work with an Asian woman faculty on another community-based research project that focused on Hmong women in Detroit. The project provided strategic planning and visioning of a community-based program that would meet the needs of Hmong women and their families. Domestic violence was a major issue for the community, and was the focal point in our planning. Although I had some background interacting with refugee communities (my significant other is a Laotian refugee, and his family arrived in Hawai‘i in the late 1970s), this experience provided me with greater depth on the issues refugee women faced. Being mentored by a scholar who utilized critical, feminist perspectives, I was becoming more and more equipped with the skills to understand the global impact of capitalism and other forms of oppression. I began to clearly see the parallel experiences between my own Filipino community and the Hmong community. Critically, I compared and contrasted all the communities I’ve worked with or engaged with—Filipino, Laotian, African American, and Hmong. It was evident that the system of oppression played out in similar ways across communities. The discussions I had with the research team for this particular project touched me in ways I never thought it would. My role and responsibilities as a woman in an Asian American community were refined. My desire to promote social justice was emerging.

Processes. I graduated with my Masters of Social Work degree feeling quite accomplished. I not only felt I survived a rigorous curriculum, but I did it away from the comfort of my home island with some social support to sustain my will to finish. I felt equipped with the skills necessary to conduct community-based efforts both in social work practice or research. Spiritually, my experience in Michigan allowed me to gain the strength to face future oppressive forces I would deal with later in my career as a woman
scholar of color. I got a better handle on how to deal with my own internal oppression as well as skills to deal with covert racism. I returned home to Hawai‘i with not only a set of newfound skills, but a learning community of colleagues and mentors from whom I would continue to seek collegial advice and moral support. This learning community in the long run was an invaluable home base for me as I continued my quest in developing a social justice framework in the work I would do in the near future.

**A Macro Social Work Practitioner: A Stage of Continued Pinayization and Indigenization as a Community Organizer and Researcher**

Molokai, my ‘aina (land): returning to my roots, my people and place. Upon graduating with my master’s degree, I returned home to the rural island of Molokai, my birthplace. The island has a population of 7,000 people, predominantly Native Hawaiians and Filipino. I took a position as a program developer, grant writer, and community organizer at a small non-profit, non-governmental organization. This was my first exposure to non-profit work as an insider. The island was awarded a prestigious grant called the Empowerment Zone/Enterprise community, funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Molokai was to implement its community-based strategic plan with ten years of funding. I was excited to be home to put my degree to good use. I increased the MSW count to 100%+! I found myself working 40+ hours a week, which at the time I didn’t mind as I was not yet a mother nor married. Professionally, I met other MSWs. Three of us lived on the island. Being in a rural community, one’s role as a helping professional came with multiple responsibilities. Due to the limited resources on the island, especially with a notion of having its professionalized community coming from “outside” the community, I quickly learned the sociopolitical climate that impacted how social service was provided. Growing up, I never thought of my home island as having “less than,” but it was an eye opening experience to learn how others, especially those that were not born and raised on Molokai, framed our island needs and issues. My mentors not only included mentors from my schooling as a social worker, but became community members such as the elders and long-time residents. I began to appreciate the wisdom of the people and place of my home island, the beauty of our culture, and the resources from within. People like my Filipino and Hawaiian elders were my teachers during this stage of my life. Because of our resilience as a community, my views on building capacity from within were nurtured from my engagement with the elders as well as others in my home island community. My engagement with the elders led to a profound realization—how the dismissal or lack of cultural knowledge passed on from one generation to the next in the context of vast global change and modernization was hurting our communities. The warrior mentality was emerging as I observed complex sociopolitical dynamics play out. At this time, I went through a spiritual transformation as I processed the devastating impact of capitalism. My commitment to learn more of how the dismissal of indigenous ways of knowing impacted my people fueled my warrior stance as a professional. I was equipped with the professional degree, but the process of becoming a Pinay warrior was taking effect. My critical consciousness included a deep understanding of the history of my home island and how it was a continuous target of disinvestment, and victim of multinational corporations’ corruptive ways (e.g., their lack of accountability and ethics, and severe abuse of our land and natural resources).

**Back to Oahu, its people and places.** After nearly two years working on my home island, I decided to move to Oahu to be closer to my significant other. I took a position on a research project on Multisystem Therapy funded by the National Institute of Mental Health (granted to University of Hawai‘i and the Hawai‘i state Department of Health, Mental Health Division). With the mentorship of my supervisors (all of whom were PhDs in psychology), this position allowed me to refine my research skills as well as my critical thinking around mental health services. I had the opportunity to meet diverse youth and their families with severe mental health issues. I began to obtain a greater grasp of how formal institutions that provided services often did not align with their cultural values or needs, often dismissing the root causes of the problem. The services often clashed with cultural community needs, and often utilized a band-aid approach. Although I had the inside perspective of how mental health services were implemented, as a researcher and a social worker who embraced community-based approaches, I grappled with the tension most of us in the helping profession experience—seeing our work as service to clients versus promoting
social change. During this time, I didn’t have the mentorship to deal with this tension. I continued to seek out the narratives of the youth and their families. Most of my colleagues I kept in touch with had not thought much of this tension and often not questioned its authority.

After two years, funding to this research project discontinued for the Hawai‘i site. I then was employed by KS-PASE\textsuperscript{8} Department as a research assistant. This non-profit organization ran as a quasi-corporation and community-based organization. It served Native Hawaiian youth and their families through education and other community-based initiatives that promote the well-being of the Native Hawaiian communities. Being of non-Hawaiian ancestry but a strong ally of the Native Hawaiian culture, this position provided me with the opportunity to explore the role of culture, specifically Native Hawaiian culture, in closing the gap in education and other social inequalities. I coordinated two major projects that had strong influences on my thinking around oppression and systemic discrimination—the Preschool and Beyond Study (PABS) and the Evaluation Hui. The PABS was a longitudinal study of Native Hawaiian children and their families as they weaved through the educational system starting at preschool. The data collection was intensive. Surveys were administered not only to the parents, but teachers and directors of early childhood education programs such as Head Start. School climate and classroom observations were also conducted. The Evaluation Hui was a project that built a community of scholars of Native Hawaiian and indigenous backgrounds to frame what research and evaluation meant for our communities. Being engaged with all kinds of people through my work at KS-PASE, I received informal mentorship from not only my supervisors (who had PhDs in sociology, educational psychology), but others in the Native community.

\textbf{Processes of Indigenization and sociopolitical development.} I also met strong allies of the Hawaiian community with both research and community work. Our discussions and exchange throughout the two years I worked at KS-PASE were extremely pivotal for me. They ranged from how community-based programs for children, youth, and families with a cultural lens were likely more effective to issues of ethics and accountability in research. I saw indigenous scholars and their allies as mentors for me as they not only shared their journeys of becoming scholars, but their life purpose in embarking in such scholarship and trajectory—all of which were for a greater purpose of promoting social justice, peace, and love! This is was the start of the aloha-ization process. These indigenous scholars perpetuated deep love and appreciation for the beauty and wisdom of indigenous knowledge and practices. They made it their life commitment to embark on these pathways. I was compelled and drawn to live a life as such—creating and building a collective community that aimed for those ideals. Even though I was not quite aware at the time, I realized that I needed to return to graduate school. A PhD, as it was inadvertently conveyed to me, would allow certain kinds of privileges and influence in shaping programs and policies that impacted the communities I grew to care about so deeply.

\textit{Back in the Academy: Toward a PhD and Becoming a Pinay Scholar Warrior}

People and place of training to be part of the professoriate. Soon after I got married and nearly six years post MSW, I embarked on a journey that would forever change my life. I never thought applying and getting accepted into one of the top PhD in social welfare programs, University of Washington, would be possible for me. My newly wedded partner tried to convince me to wait a bit before moving forward, but I explained that the chances of getting in may be low. Besides, we weren’t planning to build a family just yet. I felt it was the opportune time. Never being satisfied with the work I was doing in the field, I strived to become better and aspired to find ways to change the system. I purposely came to grips with myself that this PhD was not for personal gains, but one that would equip me with the skills and clout to teach, mentor, research, and shape the helping profession. I’ve witnessed extreme pain, sufferings, and oppression in the communities I served and been a part of by the time I got accepted to the program. It was difficult for me to think of a PhD simply as a personal gain and individual success.

The first two years of the program was the most grueling in that it stretched and challenged my thinking around the dominant theories used in the helping profession. I kept going back to my past

\footnote{Organization is abbreviated on purpose to blur its identity.}
experiences with the communities I worked with to date. Several faculty members provided great mentorship. Some were Asian Americans or Indigenous, and mostly females. They physically looked like me, had similar backgrounds, identities, and/or social locations like me, and were doing research and community work that I wanted to strive and model after. The only drawback I perceived was that my doctoral program lacked, as a collective body, a team of mentors (faculty of color and non-color alike) to work with students of color. We, students of color, were often competing for the same mentors and research and teaching opportunities! This “divide and conquer” mentality seeped to group dynamics as a cohort. It was compounded by, in my opinion, the inability of faculty to facilitate the learning processes of a predominantly cohort of color. I perceived our situation as this—our program lacked sufficient resources and faculty time to effectively mentor PhD students of color; mentoring PhD students was a delicate issue for tenure track faculty; faculty was not rewarded fairly or adequately to mentor students of color. This was something I would not be able to understand until later in my career, when I actually became a faculty member myself. Reflecting back, my cohort of 12 had unique characteristics. We were the first cohort in the history of that school and university, and perhaps in the nation of Schools of Social Work, to consist of nearly 75% people of color and first generation PhD students. We were mostly females (n=9), and some were members of the LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and question) community. Four were parents, with three being mothers. As a woman and person of color, I felt validated among my colleagues. I was left to ponder the array of problematic issues that stem from structural and organizational processes. I was uncertain of how these issues left some of us in my cohort feeling unsure, sometimes dissatisfied, and seeking effective ways to improve the curriculum to meet our needs. The cohorts after mine may have been better positioned to push for such change.

In the meantime, I was awarded a fellowship by the Council of Social Work Education Minority Fellowship Program (CSWE-MFP) aimed for scholars of color. This fellowship allowed me to further my research on mental health issues among Asian Pacific Islanders. It also provided me with a network of other emerging scholars and alumni (existing scholars of color) across the nation. Like my experience with NIMH-COR in my undergraduate program, this fellowship was life changing. Despite the fact that I was part of a diverse cohort, a pool of informal mentors worked wonders for me as I continued on my path towards a PhD. I didn’t feel that I needed to seek only one mentor for help. Furthermore, even after I had completed my core courses in the program, I still had a learning community I could tap into as I continued towards my dissertation. This was important as it was a lonely process, and self-discipline and motivation were required.

Another research training program, the National Institute of Mental Health Prevention Traineeship, which was housed at my home university, played a key role in molding my trajectory as a scholar. This program provided the opportunity to be exposed to scholars doing interdisciplinary work. The director, a white woman who spent some time in Hawai’i and who shared a common alma mater (University of Michigan), became a strong ally for my work. She helped me tailor my research agenda and teaching philosophy so it could be understood by mainstream scholars. Her honesty and genuine mentorship through constructive feedback allowed me to speak about my work in multiple venues and across disciplines. She was also a mother who understood the scholar-career-family balancing issues I faced. At that particular time, I had given birth to my first child and often felt disarrayed, frustrated, and overwhelmed. She, and other women of color mentors, shared their experiences being a scholar and mother. They were encouraging and empathetic, and pointed out that parenting was a skill set, like being a scholar, I could get better at.

**Processes.** As part of the aloha-ization of my journey, both my dissertation work and other research involved my ethnic communities at home in Hawai’i and Seattle. I continued to engage with youth of color, community-based workers, and grassroots, community-based organizations in my studies. With the strong standing mantra of evidence being developed from top down and implemented by experts in the academy, I started to resist that notion and began to push for practice-based (bottom up, from the community) evidence. I had key mentors on my dissertation committee who supported my stance, and allies who didn’t quite agree, but still challenged me intellectually so I could build a strong case for my
scholarly agenda. During my doctoral program, I underwent a process of decolonizing (Meyer, 2001) my educational journey, and I strive to do the same for my students.

Obtaining a PhD was one of the most challenging endeavors I undertook. Along the way, I almost felt I sold my soul to the academy and was gobbled up by the system of oppression in higher education. Other Asian Pacific Islander, Indigenous, African American, and other scholars of color and allies who I continued to meet along the way, helped me to stay grounded. Many who shared a similar stance in teaching, researching, and serving for a greater cause—social justice for the communities—have provided great support and guidance. Overall, my dissertation committee which consisted of two Asian American men, a Korean woman, and an African American woman was quite a group! They were the best in the field, and I purposely utilized their mentorship as they were diverse in perspectives as well as approach. One was a mother, and a guiding star in my journey as a PhD mama. She was not only rigid in her feedback, but gentle and loving in helping me define other roles I had (e.g. mother, partner, wife, and community member in an Asian American community) in my life. What mattered though was their constant investment in me obtaining a PhD. They provided feedback that was both constructive and brutal, but they harnessed a strength and discipline I never knew I had within me. They were a team that molded me to be the scholar I am today.

The Becoming of a Pinay Scholar Warrior of Aloha: My Current Life Path in the Academy

People and Places. I currently am in my fifth year as an assistant professor at a predominantly white university in the Pacific Northwest. Reflecting how I got here brings both a sense of pride and vulnerability. I say that, because as a scholar of color and not tenured (yet), you never feel safe, secure, nor confident. Nevertheless, I take pride and honor in my position as I feel like a trailblazer and pioneer. I could not have gotten here alone. I stand on the shoulders of many. The work I currently do is informed by an integration of the people, places, and processes of social change in all aspects of my life as a Pinay scholar warrior of aloha.

My position is a shared one with the School of Social Work and University Studies, the general education program. I teach primarily in the undergraduate world. Specifically, I touch the lives of students prior to deciding a major. I teach four courses – a yearlong freshmen inquiry course on race and social justice, a quarter long sophomore inquiry course on family studies, and child and family studies professional development courses. They first serve as recruitment strategies into the helping professions, primarily child and family studies and social work. I see my role as a mentor to those who are in a position of negotiating which major best suits their values, passions, and talents. I have had the privilege to teach and mentor many first generation college students as well as students from diverse communities in regards to class, race, and gender. I strive to emulate what I always wanted as an undergraduate. I attempt to not only link students to other mentors in higher education, but those in the communities both professionally and personally.

Processes. My teaching philosophy, pedagogy, and mentorship utilize a community-based approach that range from simple community engagement to complex community-based service learning projects. I push my students to obtain a collective social consciousness to make our society more socially just. I build in processes that encourage students to explore and validate their individual and communal needs, histories, genealogies, traditions, and values in the context of systemic oppression.

Discussion on Critical Praxis: The Three P’s of People, Places, and Processes of Teaching, Mentoring, and Research for Social Change

Looking back on my entire career as a macro social work practitioner and now a scholar, I propose the three P’s of genuine teaching, mentorship, and research for social change: people, places, and processes. As demonstrated throughout this critical autoethnography, I use a life course approach to spell out how these three P’s have played out in my life. The three P’s have led me to becoming a Pinay scholar warrior of aloha. I am still changing, learning, engaging, and growing. The people, informal and formal mentors and role models, throughout my journey genuinely cared for me and played instrumental roles in building my talents, strengths, and passions. They also modeled behaviors, attitudes, and
lifestyles that I was interested in. Places existed that helped me embrace all of my identities, harness a sense of belonging and appreciating all of me, and acknowledge spaces, both geographically and spiritually, I came from that mattered and counted. It is also in these places that love and inspiration have been perpetuated, performed, and practiced. Processes of critical learning, empowerment, and transformation were embedded throughout my journey. The process of making a difference in the communities I serve was paramount. Some facilitated by the people, and some took place in learning communities. In this section, I present a synopsis of how I apply the three P’s in my current work in areas of teaching, mentoring, and research. Returning to Figure 1, the proposed framework of the three P’s is promising for creating social change in the academy.

**Teaching and Mentoring**

I often return to the memories of myself as an undergraduate. I think about these three P’s and integrate them in my work with my growing pool of students, mentees, and community partners. My current work in analyzing data on the impact of my yearlong freshmen inquiry (FRINQ) course, Race and Social Justice, by using students’ eportfolio (Trinidad, 2012) has provided me with more insights on young adults and the framing of justice. Having had my youth community organizing background, I brought examples and techniques I learned through practice back into the classroom. These guiding questions keep me grounded, “Thinking back on my freshmen year in undergraduate, what kind of assignments or in class exercises stuck out for me? What helped me learn about identity as a Filipina American/Pinay from a low-income community? What helped me as a youth and young adult understand the oppressive forces that I, my family, and community faced? Most importantly, how was I empowered and inspired to be a social change in my own right?”

With deep reflection, I remember my participation with Sariling Gawa Youth Council, Inc. I learned that the use of experiential, hands on, creative activities, such as singing, dancing, socio-drama, role-playing, and free writing, were helpful. So I deployed such activities in my course on race and social justice. To my surprise, it took a life of its own, especially when a student-led and student-run framework was infused.

As I’ve implemented this course, five years running, the introduction of theories and conceptual framework were made accessible when applied to human experiences. Through the use of youtube, social media, and people’s narratives, these human experiences were within reach. I’ve utilized poetry writing, role playing or ethno-drama, drawing, and photovoice as part of gathering information on the human experience, especially the experiences my students’ faced. I engaged community members (artists, community leaders, and scholars alike) in our work through service learning projects. I utilized poetry writing, role playing or drama, drawing, and photovoice as part of learning about one’s place, people, and history.

As an instructor, I observed how amazing the impact of my students’ participation in critical praxis. They co-created these spaces of critical praxis. The assignments for the course served as a vessel to build relationships in a learning community that focused on social justice work. Critical praxis (Trinidad, 2011) brewed multiple voices, and these voices were represented in our learning community, no matter how painful they were to hear. The students were empowered to use the arts to express their human experiences of oppression and social change. Writing *Where I’m From* poems was an effective way to ground place. These poems spoke about the places they come from and the processes of identity development that they hold close to their hearts. Below is a sample by a Filipino young adult male:

*Where I’m From*
By Jeremy Posadas

I am from brown skin and mango
From rice for breakfast and chicken tocino
I am from “hoy ano ba?” and mahal kita
I am from my parents who came from overseas
I am from tchinilas [slippers] and white trees
From the land where people represent their pride
From the party that always has Pac-man’s side
I am from red, white, and blue plus gold sun and stars
From where I walk instead of taking cars.
From Lapu-Lapu, you know yo?
I am from the bataan death march when our nation cried.
From where Tagalog and Spanish coincide.
I am from where I ponder what the language means
Kumusta na my name’s Jeremy. I represent the Philippines.

These poems sparked an ongoing discussion on racial and ethnic identity, and proclaimed the importance of knowing one’s roots. Jeremy’s poem stemmed from processes of Pinayization and Indigenization, the learning of his Filipino roots and history. Place was denoted in the context of “overseas” and “where I walk instead of taking cars.” Parents and Lapu-Lapu were key people included in his process of becoming a change agent. Constructed as an individual and shared in a collective, these poems solicited transparency and authenticity in peoples’ social locations and places. It was a powerful way to highlight the voices of collectivity and communal struggles, even though differences existed. It was also a process of healing and transformation, especially for the students who performed their poems at our service learning event. When students are encouraged to become holders and creators of the knowledge that stems from their lived experiences that intersect with racism, sexism, classism, and other forces of subordination, marginalization, and minoritization, individual and collective voices can promote social change (Bernal, 2002).

In addition to academic writing, students were encouraged to do something creative as their final presentations each quarter. With the focus in the first quarter on identity related to race and other characteristics, a Latino male shared what he learned through the rap, Racism Equals No, he wrote and composed (see http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EMQHyX1pAGA). Themes in this student’s work include the process of critical awareness, wanting to be free, struggles of being a Hispanic man, relating to privilege, and reaching self-actualization. In the second quarter which focused on understanding the systemic oppression that occurs, a group of Asian Pacific Islander males wrote and composed a rap, Eliminate the ghetto state of mind (see http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rPRkYgY_B9I). Demonstrated in this piece is the understanding of gentrification and a sense of respect among members of a learning community. Similarly, a pair of men of color wrote a similar rap, Race and Social Justice (see http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pTY2indLRqY). Images embedded in their rap videos demonstrate a keen talent to interweave words and images with deep meaning of the human transformation. These three examples of students’ work indicate their journeys of becoming social change agents. They demonstrate the impact of processes of decolonization, indigenization, and sociopolitical development.

At the end of the academic year, students reflected on their journey in this course. Again, they were given the opportunity do something creative that embodies the three P’s of people, places and processes, reaching a point in their journey of aloha-ization. This first piece is by Brianne Turner, an African American young adult woman:

Sample #1: A Home, A Community
By: Brianne Turner
I smelled of new people everywhere
I didn’t want to talk,
I didn’t want to speak.
I wanted to sit there
Just sit there hoping class would end soon

9 Lapu-Lapu was a historical Filipino ruler who resisted Spanish colonization.
The more I came the more I wanted to know
The more I came the more I was broken down
The more knowledge that hit me, the more I wanted to know
I even made friends, met new people,
Funny ones, quiet ones, and the [ones] that talked way too much
And I wished would shut up
I was growing to like even love this place,
This place that held stories of triumph, peace, redemption
This place that holds secrets, anger, frustration,
This place was becoming my home, my new community

That place a small room filled with tables and chairs
Chairs occupied by people,
People that occupied the space,
And space pushed out by hope, change, peace
Two Hundred fifty five thousand six hundred minutes
The time spent in this class learning
Learning from the best professor
A professor feeding us all she had to create a future, our future, this country’s future
I haven’t meet a professor like her and doubt that I ever will
Race and Social Justice is a course that I will never forget, a course that I will take with me
Wherever I go
U-N-I, United is what I’ll always live by
U-N-I united is what I’ll always stand on.

This piece demonstrates a process of growing to love (aloha) a place and the relationships fostered among the people met in this place, our learning community. From feelings of hesitant to growing “to love this place,” her account acknowledges how her experiences, in connection with our community, were validated and mattered, thus influencing her to “live by” and “stand on” aloha. This last and final piece below was written and sung by my students at the end of the year. It highlights their collective journey in this course, and draws out the process of aloha-ization:

Sample #2: Seasons of Love Parody
Written and sung by: Students of FRINQ 2010-11 on the last day of class.
Two hundred fifty-five thousand six hundred minutes
Two hundred fifty-five thousand minutes in class.
Two hundred fifty-five thousand six hundred readings
In due dates, in papers
In small groups, and mentor sessions
In theories, round robins
Pres-en-ta-tions
Two hundred fifty-five thousand, six hundred minutes,
How-do you measure a year in the class?
UNI love, UNI love, UNI love.
Three terms of LOVE; Three terms of LOVE.
Two hundred fifty five thousand points to remember.
Two hundred fifty five thousand papers to grade.
Two hundred fifty five thousand, that’s not your paycheck.

10 Round robins was a technique I used in the beginning or the ending of a class session. Done in a circle, each person shared insights, thoughts, and/or feelings about the topic discussed or covered that week or day.
The Becoming of a Pinay Scholar Warrior of Aloha

So why not just watch tv and give us all an “A”? 
Alma has given us so much of her time. 
For her I will make sure 
That this next line rhymes. 
It’s time now, to sing out. 
Though the story never ends. 
Let’s celebrate 
Remember a year in a life of friends. 
UNI love, UNI love, UNI love. 
Three terms of LOVE; Three terms of LOVE.

As an instructor and researcher, I reflect on this course, specifically 2010-11’s cohort of freshmen. The impact of their learning went beyond my expectations. Two recurring themes stemmed from the students’ work: 1) the ability for each student to truly hear, feel, and witness the impact of oppression through the rawness of human emotions and experiences; and 2) the use of the arts as a tool to build community and empower themselves and others. I attempted to create a learning community. It was achieved, and through the relationships built in this place, a long-term community of resistance (hooks, 1990) was forming. The relationships fostered in these places helped me utilize a strategy to resist the marginalization of women of color in the academy and validate my own ideals, values, and identities (Thomas & Hollenshed, 2001) in my teaching and research. It also helped me reject the dichotomy of private and public selves in my work (Hurtado, 1989), and resist the temptation of thinking that I was presumed as incompetent by the system. My becoming of a Pinay Scholar Warrior of Aloha is a working identity (Carbado & Gutali, 2000; Onwuachi-Willig, 2006; Yoshino, 2002) that is “not static but [emergent] in the context of interaction” and “in the field of everyday interaction, identity performances [that] may clash with stereotypes and expectations held by others” (Harris & Gonzales, 2012, p. 3).

Community-based Research and Partnerships

My community-based research with partnerships in Oregon includes a similar path of utilizing the three P’s. A community-based partnership includes utilizing hip hop pedagogy in youth empowerment and engagement to address youth violence and educational inequity. Another community partner working with Asian Pacific Islanders has a promising approach that uses the creation of cartoon or comic scripting. Part of the process used by the youth organizers is to solicit situations and storylines from the youth as they observe, witness, or experience discrimination. The cartoon or comic scripting positions the youth to be the role or storyteller and interrupter of oppression. What I am amazed about is how this process intrigues the youth to come together to develop, modify, and re-define their storylines. The interweaving of stories and experiences creates a sense of community. Something happens when stories are exchanged. The taboo of sharing something painful, emotional, or shameful and often framed as untold stories become spoken work for all to hear and experience. The denied or ignored stories are acknowledged; the invisible becomes visible in words and print. These processes influence social change through individual and collective empowerment. Research on such community-based initiatives is necessary, and I understand my role is to elevate these voices.

PhD Mama: The Personal Infused With the Professional

I have two young children, age six and three and a half. My eldest is a girl, and she’s enrolled in a hula\textsuperscript{11} halau (school). As a mother, I did so for her to learn the Hawaiian culture, the culture that I grew up with alongside my Filipino culture. Through dance, I have grown to appreciate the pedagogy that her kumu (teachers) hula utilize. Three processes stood out and can be transferable to practice in the academy: 1) the process of multi-tiered mentoring where older hula sisters serve as role models for the younger hula sisters; 2) the process of language development in song or chant embedded in the storyline;

\textsuperscript{11} \textit{Hula} is Hawaiian dance accompanied by chant or song.
history is also integrated; 3) spirituality development through chant or prayer takes place as one prepares for a competition or performance. These rituals, often done in a circle, are purposeful and matter in validating people, places, and processes of social change. They have promise of holding deep meaning, a sense of community, and transformation for children and families.

As a mother, I ponder the roles I play in my family and community to create a place for my children to not only survive but thrive, and to be in community with others towards a quest of social change. They are far more privileged than I, with two working, career oriented parents equipped with degrees honored in the U.S. and lived experiences that may shield them from certain struggles my partner (as a 1.5 generation of refugee background) and I faced as young people. Living in contradiction as a scholar, I attempt to reshape and redefine all parts of my life—individual self-care, family, home, work in the academy, and community. I strive to align them to advocate, illuminate issues of access and equity among minoritized groups in higher education (Turner, 2002). This alignment, connection, and tightening of all areas of life among woman of color in the Academy is necessary to energize, revitalize, and add deep meaning to our stances.

Forthcoming: My Continued Stance of a Pinay Scholar Warrior of Aloha

I am honored to be a teacher, mentor, and scholar to the next generation of helping professional. In my position as a woman scholar of color, I perpetuate the ideals of a Pinay Scholar Warrior of Aloha. I began my journey towards becoming a scholar from a place of struggle, pain, and shame. Along the way, I gained the strength, skills, and support from people, places, and processes of social change. As I perpetuate and practice these three P’s in my work, I find a sense of community, sources of continued strength and inspiration, but most importantly, I embrace my authentic self in a collective of social change agents. With the help of S. Renee Mitchell, a creative writing consultant, I wrote a poem that embodies my stance as a Pinay Scholar Warrior of Aloha. When one reads this piece, I hope we, as scholars and practitioners, are able to cast out fear of being presumed incompetent, and perpetuate boldness, fierceness, beauty, and strength. Most importantly, I hope we, collectively, can promote inclusivity and social change in the academy and the helping profession:

I am a Pinay Scholar Warrior of Aloha

By: Alma M.O. Trinidad, PhD, MSW, BSW

I am a Pinay scholar warrior of aloha.
I wonder how our world would look like if we all didn’t need to fight for social justice anymore
and if peace and aloha (love) prevailed.
I hear the people’s cries of despair and laughter of joy, simultaneously.
I see the shining light in heavens above as the trees with strong roots grow taller up to the sky.
I want everyone to feel what love is and to feel free, together as one.
I am a Pinay scholar warrior of aloha.
I pretend that I can make White privilege disappear with my magic wand.
I feel like I’m speaking, but no one in power totally listen as they are muffled with greed.
I touch the beauty of life.
I worry that capitalism has already taken over and instilled hatred and control.
I cry when people suffer in pain and oppression.
I am a Pinay scholar warrior of aloha.
I understand that I stand on many who came before me and made this possible for me to be here.
I say that I can’t do this alone as we are a collective.
I dream of inspiring masses of social change agents.
I try to remain strong, but that’s not possible for I experience fatigue. I try my best.
I hope the next generation can take the torch and continue to carry the fight for social justice.
I am a Pinay scholar warrior of aloha.

12 The 1.5 generation entered the U.S. as young children. My partner came to the U.S. at the age of five.
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Polymath: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Arts & Sciences


