Received 02/15/11
Revised 09/09/11
Accepted 11/17/11

Racial Microaggressions and the Filipino American Experience: Recommendations for Counseling and Development

Kevin L. Nadal, Kara Mia Vigilia Escobar, Gail T. Prado, E. J. R. David, and Kristal Haynes

Racial microaggressions are subtle forms of verbal and behavioral discrimination toward people of color. The current qualitative study explores the experiences of Filipino American participants ($N = 12$), who described 13 categories of microaggressions, including being treated as an alien in one's own land or as a 2nd-class citizen, being presumed to have inferior status or intellect, being assumed to uphold Filipino stereotypes, or being mistaken for another identity. Recommendations for counseling and development are discussed.

Keywords: microaggressions, Filipino Americans, discrimination, racism

Las microagresiones raciales son formas sutiles de discriminación verbal y conductiva hacia las personas de color. El estudio actual cualitativo explora las experiencias de participantes Filipinoamericanos ($N = 12$), quienes describieron 13 categorías de microagresiones, incluido el ser tratados como extranjeros o como ciudadanos de segunda clase en su propio país, pertenecer presuntamente a una clase social inferior o tener un nivel intelectual inferior, ser presuntamente representantes de estereotipos Filipinos, o ser confundidos con individuos de otra identidad. Se discuten recomendaciones para la consejería y el desarrollo.

Palabras clave: microagresiones, Filipinoamericanos, discriminación, racismo

When Asian Americans are described in counseling and psychology, they are often lumped as a homogenous group with similar values, family systems, and mental health experiences (David & Okazaki, 2006; Nadal, 2011). This assumption can be problematic because of the heterogeneity of the Asian American community; there are more than 40 distinct Asian American ethnicities, hundreds of languages, and more than 20 major religions (Nadal & Sue, 2009; Sue & Sue, 2008). Asian Americans are also diverse in their physical appearances, with variations in skin color (white to olive to dark brown), hair texture (straight to wavy to curly), and facial features (small, almond-shaped eyes to large, oval eyes; Nadal & Sue, 2009). Accordingly, when counselors assume that Asian Americans are all the same, they fail to recognize the unique experiences that may occur because of ethnicity, phenotype, and religion, as well as other variables such as social class, gender, sexual orientation, and immigration status.

Kevin L. Nadal, Department of Psychology, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, and Kristal Haynes, Graduate Center, City University of New York (CUNY); Kara Mia Vigilia Escobar, Princeton House Behavioral Health, Princeton, New Jersey; Gail T. Prado, Filipino American National Historical Society, New York, New York; E. J. R. David, Department of Psychology, University of Alaska at Anchorage. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Kevin L. Nadal, Department of Psychology, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, CUNY, 524 West 59th Street, New York, NY 10019 (e-mail: knadal@jjay.cuny.edu).

© 2012 American Counseling Association. All rights reserved.

Moreover, research on Asian Americans tends to focus explicitly on East Asian Americans, namely, Chinese and Japanese Americans (Agbayani-Siewert, 2004; David & Okazaki, 2006; Nadal, 2004, 2011), generalizing these two groups' experiences to apply to all Asian American ethnic groups. This may result in the needs of other non–East Asian American groups (e.g., Filipinos, Vietnamese, Asian Indians, and others) to remain unknown, resulting in the lack of culturally competent services for these subgroups. Moreover, these other ethnic groups may feel marginalized in the Asian American community, leading to tensions and conflict within the panethnic group (Espiritu, 1992; Nadal, 2011).

The model minority myth also leads to further misperceptions of the Asian American population. According to this myth, Asian Americans are assumed to be law-abiding, model citizens who can succeed academically and economically (Uba, 1994). The myth purports that Asian Americans are able to achieve the American Dream, whereas other groups of color (namely, Black Americans and Latinos) are viewed as intellectually inferior and prone to crime. This myth can be detrimental in that it stereotypes Asian Americans as quiet, submissive individuals who will not speak out or protest against group norms, while causing tension with other people of color who are taught by White Americans to be like Asian Americans (Nadal & Sue, 2009; Sue & Sue, 2008). Additionally, because of this myth, several Asian American groups that are achieving significantly less educationally and economically (e.g., Hmong and Cambodian Americans) are ignored or made invisible by counselors and psychologists who assume they are doing well. Finally, because of the model minority myth, Asian Americans are often assumed (by White Americans and other people of color) to experience little to no racism in their daily lives, despite research showing that Asian Americans do face discrimination, which causes them significant amounts of psychological distress (e.g., Alvarez & Juang, 2010; Alvarez, Juang, & Liang, 2006; Liang, Li, & Kim, 2004; Sue, Bucceri, Lin, Nadal, & Torino, 2009).

Recent studies have found that racism has become less overt and more covert because of the changing nature of American society. However, several authors have asserted that subtle forms of racism may still exist and label these types of discriminatory acts as racial microaggressions. Although the term *racial microaggressions* was originally coined in the 1970s (Pierce, Carew, Pierce-Gonzalez, & Willis, 1978), Sue et al. (2007) reintroduced the concept and defined racial microaggressions as "brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color" (p. 271). A theoretical taxonomy of the types of racial microaggressions was also introduced, with categories including assumption of criminality (i.e., experiences in which people of color are assumed to be dangerous or deviant), second-class citizen (i.e., experiences in which people

of color receive substandard service compared with their White American counterparts), and alien in one's own land (i.e., experiences in which people of color are assumed to be foreign born and or "not American enough").

Several qualitative studies have validated the themes presented in this microaggression taxonomy. In studies with Black Americans (Sue et al., 2008) and Latinas/Latinos (Rivera, Forquer, & Rangel, 2010), participants described incidents in which they were treated as second-class citizens or assumed to be criminals. For example, one Black American female participant described a scenario in which a White American woman crossed the street to avoid walking past her. Although there may be many interpretations to the event, this participant inferred that the White American woman was scared of her and assumed that she might rob her or be violent (Sue et al., 2008). In a study with Asian Americans, participants affirmed that they were often treated as perpetual foreigners (or aliens in their own land), even when they were American born (Sue et al., 2009). For instance, some participants discussed how they were told "You speak good English" or asked incessantly "Where are you from?" Both of these statements may seem harmless and well-intentioned; however, the message that may be sent to the recipient (who may experience such statements consistently) is that he or she is not American enough (and perhaps never will be).

Through these studies, it is suggested that there are certain microaggressions that some racial groups face that other racial groups may not. For instance, in the aforementioned study involving Asian Americans, participants did not report experiences of being treated as a criminal or as an intellectual inferior (Sue et al., 2009), whereas participants in studies with Black Americans (e.g., Sue et al., 2008) and Latinas/Latinos (Rivera et al., 2010) reported such instances as typical. Moreover, there are no known studies that focus on the microaggressions toward specific Asian American ethnic groups, despite the vast range of phenotypes, cultural values, and experiences that may occur. In fact, previous authors have cited that Filipino Americans (one of the largest Asian American ethnic groups) are often perceived or mistaken as Latinos, Black Americans, Native Americans, multiracial people, and other non-Asian groups, and are often discriminated against accordingly (Nadal, 2004, 2011; Uba, 1994). Thus, it is possible that Filipino Americans may experience the same types of microaggressions that these other groups might face as well.

Furthermore, there is an array of literature that has suggested that Filipino Americans are different from other Asian American groups in a number of ways. First, because of almost 400 years of Spanish colonial rule and almost 50 years of American colonial rule, some Filipino Americans may be influenced by a unique colonial mentality (i.e., viewing the Spanish and American colonizers as being superior) that may have an impact on their psychological processes and mental health (David, 2008, 2010; David & Okazaki, 2006). Second, because of this colonial history and the influence of

Catholicism, Filipino Americans may develop a unique set of cultural values and express emotions differently than other Asian American groups (Kim, Yang, Atkinson, Wolfe, & Hong, 2001; Nadal, 2004; Okamura & Agbayani, 1991). For instance, although many East Asian American groups may value emotional restrictiveness within relationships, Filipino Americans tend to be emotionally expressive and affectionate with loved ones. Finally, despite the model minority myth, Filipino Americans have been found to encounter a vast amount of physical health, mental health, educational, and sociocultural disparities that other Asian American groups tend not to experience, including higher high school dropout rates; lower college admission rates; and higher prevalence of HIV/AIDS, teen pregnancy, substance abuse, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, gout, and depression (see Nadal, 2011, for a review). Despite these findings, Filipino Americans have been labeled as the "forgotten Asian Americans" (Nadal, 2011, p. 10) because they are usually overlooked in most academic literature.

purpose of the study

Given the unique racial and sociocultural realities of Filipino Americans and the lack of Filipino American–focused research, the purpose of the current study was to examine the racial microaggressions that Filipino Americans may experience over the span of their lifetimes. Because there have been no known published studies focusing on microaggressions specifically toward Filipino Americans, we established the following research questions to examine Filipino Americans' experiences with racial and ethnic microaggressions:

Research Question 1: What types of microaggressions do Filipino Americans experience?
Research Question 2: Do Filipino Americans experience microaggressions that are similar to those experienced by other Asian Americans?
Research Question 3: Do Filipino Americans experience microaggressions that are similar to those experienced by other people of color?

method

This exploratory study used audio-recorded focus group discussions for data collection. Focus groups allow participants to build a rich, collective narrative about their shared experiences, while allowing underdeveloped themes to be established (Krueger & Casey, 2008). Because Filipino American experiences have not been largely documented in mental health literature, it is vital to continue to expand this discussion about their unique experiences as a group. Furthermore, because several authors have hypothesized about the distinctive phenomena of Filipino Americans' experiences with

race and racism, it would be necessary to capture the lived experiences of microaggressions through the perspectives and voices of Filipino Americans. Thus, we conducted a phenomenological, qualitative study to empirically understand this concept.

RESEARCHERS

Prior to the collection of data, research team members (the authors of this article) gathered to discuss any potential biases that could have an impact on their work. Qualitative researchers have advocated for the necessity of identifying one's assumptions and expectations to minimize experimenter bias when analyzing data (see Hill et al., 2005). The researchers consisted of one Filipino American male professor (first author), two Filipina American female working professionals (second and third authors), and one Black American female graduate student (fifth author). Researchers openly discussed their own personal experiences with microaggressions, particularly as Filipino Americans and people of color. Researchers also shared their predicted outcomes of the study—that Filipino American participants would be able to identify microaggressions and that they would experience an array of microaggressions that may be similar to or different from those experienced by other Asian American groups. Researchers also discussed their own group dynamics that may have an impact on their analysis and discussion, agreeing to pay attention to how race, age, educational level, and gender may influence power dynamics and to vocalize if they felt that biases or power dynamics surfaced.

PARTICIPANTS

Three 1 hour-long focus groups, with three to five participants each, were held on three separate occasions at a college in the northeastern United States and were facilitated by the principal investigator (first author) and research assistants (second, third, and fifth authors). There were 12 participants in total; all participants were Filipino American adults ages 18 years and older, and each participant attended only one focus group. Eight participants were women, and four participants were men. The majority of participants were born or raised in the United States, and one participant who immigrated had lived in the United States for most of his adult life. Although focus groups took place in the Northeast, four participants reported that they were raised on the West Coast and one reported formerly living in the Southeast. Participants' ages ranged from 20 to 42 years, with a mean age of 29.5 (SD = 5.58). Participants indicated a range of career fields, including cosmetology, art, research, education, nonprofit organizations, law, and business. These participants were recruited via e-mail announcements to Filipino American electronic mailing lists and through the use of snowball sampling.

PROCEDURE

Three researchers were present in the room for each group: two cofacilitators and one observer or one facilitator and two observers; all the researchers were trained on qualitative methods and interviewing techniques. All but one of the facilitators and observers were Filipino American; one observer was Black American. The facilitator(s) led the discussion, while the observer(s) recorded participants' nonverbal behaviors (e.g., laughing, head nodding, body shifting), as well as any group dynamics that may have influenced participants' responses.

A set of 11 open-ended questions was modified by questions used in the Sue et al. (2009) study. Group facilitators asked a standard set of questions pertaining to participants' perceived experiences with subtle racial discrimination. Facilitators probed for further explanation when necessary, asking about participants' feelings and interpretations about particular incidents. At the end of each session, referral services were offered for those who wished to continue the discussion with a professional counselor. After participants left the room, the facilitators and observers gathered to discuss personal reactions, group dynamics, and other pertinent issues. All focus group recordings were transcribed verbatim by the facilitators or observers. Participants' identities were kept confidential, and participants were referred to by the first letter of their first or last name. All recordings were erased after transcription.

Upon completion of all five focus group transcriptions, data were analyzed in accordance with directed content analysis (DCA), in which the goal is "to validate or extend conceptually a theoretical framework or theory" (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1281). In the context of this study, researchers began by using the nine themes from the original microaggression classification system proposed by Sue et al. (2007), as well as an additional three themes that were extracted from studies with Asian Americans (Sue et al., 2009) and Black Americans (Sue et al., 2008). Thus, a total of 12 distinct microaggression themes were used in the initial analyses.

All research team members read each transcript individually and then coded each statement into one of the microaggression themes. Furthermore, each researcher had the task of identifying additional categories or themes that were not included. They highlighted these themes and examples that would be brought back to the larger analysis group for discussion. After these independent efforts, the research team gathered to compare codes and notes. When there were discrepancies, the team discussed the statement(s) in question until they reached consensus. Researchers also consensually agreed upon whether to include new themes.

The researchers submitted their work (i.e., a list of each theme and examples of quotes for each) to an external auditor (fourth author). The auditor (who is unaffiliated with the research team and resides in a different part of the

country) is a Filipino American professor of psychology who has been studying Filipino American issues for more than 10 years; he was used to minimize bias that can occur during group analysis while also imparting new insights. After reviewing the list of themes and chosen quotations, the auditor provided feedback with recommendations to the team, which then reconvened and submitted appropriate revisions. The auditor then approved the team's changes, and the team selected the most fitting quotes to exemplify each theme.

results

Upon the researchers' analyses, participants' responses were categorized into 13 themes that captured the microaggressions that Filipino Americans experience in their everyday lives. Six themes that emerged paralleled those that were found in the previous Asian American microaggression study (Sue et al., 2009). These were (a) alien in one's own land, (b) second-class citizen, (c) invalidation of interethnic differences, (d) exoticization and sexualization of women and demasculinization of men, (e) pathologizing of cultural values and behaviors, and (f) invisibility and lack of knowledge of Filipino Americans. Two themes that emerged matched those found in the previous Black American microaggression study (Sue et al., 2008): (a) assumption of criminality or deviance and (b) assumption of inferior status or intellect. Six new themes emerged; these were similar to themes from microaggression studies with women (Capodilupo et al., 2010) and lesbian, gay, and bisexual people (Nadal et al., 2011) and were renamed to be applicable to Filipino Americans. These themes were (a) use of racist language, (b) assumption of Filipino stereotypes, (c) exclusion from the Asian American community, (d) assumption of universal Filipino experience, and (e) mistaken identity. There was also one underdeveloped theme of denial of racial reality, in which the microaggressors denied the racist implications of their comments; however, it did not receive group consensus and therefore is not included in this section. (*Note.* Names used in the following sections are pseudonyms.)

ALIEN IN ONE'S OWN LAND

This theme, which was identified in the original microaggression taxonomy and the aforementioned study with Asian Americans, explores the assumption that some people of color are foreigners or foreign born. The second-generation participants seemed to be most negatively affected by this microaggression because they identify themselves as American (because they were born in the United States) and Filipino (because their parents immigrated here). Participants reported feeling shocked, angry, or frustrated for being considered an alien, and one participant shared that such an incident was "one traumatic experience that [she could not] forget." One female participant felt agitated in her attempt to explain her identity as "American" but then conceded to

identifying as Filipino when the microaggressor insisted on knowing where she was "really from." Sometimes these experiences were more blatant in nature, as exemplified by a participant who felt afraid when she was told "to go back to where [she] came from."

SECOND-CLASS CITIZEN

This type of microaggression occurs "when a White person is given preferential treatment as a consumer over a person of color" (Sue et al., 2007, p. 276). Participants often described feeling like inferior beings or second-class citizens, partly because of the assumption that they were foreigners and also from observations that other racial groups received preferential treatment on the basis of skin color. For example, one participant received better treatment in restaurants when she dined with her light-skinned Latino fiancé who "[could] pass for a White guy" as opposed to when she dined with a Filipino relative. One male participant described an experience where he was explicitly and angrily told to leave a restaurant. He felt the act was racially motivated, even though there were no overt comments made regarding his race or ethnicity. However, when his White American girlfriend later called the restaurant manager to complain about the incident, she was told, "Oh honey, you know I would never talk to you like that," supporting his feeling of being a second-class citizen and the event being racially motivated.

INVALIDATION OF INTERETHNIC DIFFERENCES

Sue et al. (2009) described these microaggressions as statements that "minimize or deny differences that may exist between interethnic groups or the existence of other Asian American groups" (p. 95). This microaggression may be especially hurtful for Filipino Americans because they are generalized into the larger Asian racial group and assumed to be Chinese or Japanese. Such instances convey that one's ethnicity is unimportant and that it is appropriate to classify Asians as all being the same. Several participants reported being told that "all Asians look alike." Often, the participants' attempts to clarify the distinction of their ethnic group were still met with derision or mockery. For example, when one male participant tried to correct his friend's ignorance, his friend replied with "Oh, that's the same thing."

EXOTICIZATION AND SEXUALIZATION OF WOMEN AND DEMASCULINIZATION OF MEN

As with Sue et al.'s (2009) study, there was a general sense that Filipina women were often viewed as sexual objects that could guarantee a "good time." One female participant described a situation where a male microaggressor described a fetish for Filipinas stemming from his experience in Japan with a group of Filipina women. He continued to tell her that he was "physically

aroused when meeting Filipino women." Another woman described how White American men may date Filipinas temporarily to fulfill a fantasy. She stated,

> [These White guys] started dating White girls immediately after us. [My friend] ran into him a few years later and he goes, "What happened to [Joanne]? You guys were fun." And I know what that kind of meant, like, we were the exotic Filipino girls that [they] like hung out with and got drunk with and whatever. But once they were over us, they were over us and that was it. And I felt really colored again.

So Filipina women were exoticized not only because of stereotypes of Filipinas in the Philippines, but also because of stereotypes about Filipina American women in the United States.

Whereas the Filipina women were hypersexualized, exoticized, and objectified, the Filipino men often felt desexualized and emasculated as men. Male participants shared how there were no Filipino men in mainstream media and that the only Filipino American male actors were usually portrayed as "gay comics." A gay male participant responded, "Can't we just see one really butch Asian male? We are not all feminine." Additionally, the Filipina participants recognized experiences where Filipino men in their lives were demasculinized. One woman shared,

> One my best friends at work, she started dating a Filipino guy. And, you know, I got all excited because "Yeah someone is dating one of us finally." And then I overheard a few coworkers asking who is [Debbie] dating, and I said, "Oh, she is dating this Filipino guy named [Ron]." And the girl goes "Why?" and I knew exactly what that meant. So that really, really hurt. And yeah, you know. That's what I normally deal with at work.

This notion of women being viewed as exotic matched findings in Sue et al.'s (2009) microaggression study with Asian Americans, as well as findings in Rivera et al.'s (2010) study with Latina women. Although the demasculinization of men was an underdeveloped theme in Sue et al. (2009), it was a more prominent theme in this study with Filipinos.

PATHOLOGIZING OF CULTURAL VALUES AND BEHAVIORS

These types of microaggressions are defined as "the notion that the values and communication styles of the dominant/White culture are ideal" (Sue et al., 2007, p. 276). Behaviors such as eating rice for breakfast were regarded as "the oddest, bizarrest thing [one] could do," and when values and behaviors were not understood by the microaggressors, "they would make fun" of the participants. One participant was asked to speak the Filipino language by her classmates; they told her that her language "sounded like a bunch of drunk chicken." Another participant, who calls her brother "Kuya" (a Filipino word signifying "big brother"), stated that she had to explain the term to people consistently throughout her life, to the point where she does not want her own children to use the term with each other.

INVISIBILITY AND LACK OF KNOWLEDGE OF FILIPINO AMERICANS

Sue et al. (2009) described invisibility microaggressions as instances where Asian American experiences were "overlooked without the intention of the aggressor" and where it was commonplace for Asian Americans to be "left out whenever issues of race were discussed or acknowledged" (p. 96). Participants in this study described their negative feelings regarding the lack of visibility of Filipino Americans, specifically, in the mainstream American culture. One participant stated that, in her workplace, she often found herself justifying her ethnicity, saying that "Filipinos are the highest paid Asians in America" because she constantly felt like she had to prove that "we are not dog eaters." This lack of knowledge about Filipinos resulted in another participant saying that, as the only Asian in her elementary school, she would be called other Asian slurs. When she told the other children that she was Filipino, they still did not believe that the Philippines was an actual country and that she just "didn't want to be called 'chink' anymore." Participants even noted how Filipino American actors often played Mexican or Chinese characters or denied their Filipino identities altogether in their public lives. One participant described her frustration because "not only do you feel it in on an individual level, but on a massive scale, [because] you are basically being told your group, your name, your culture is not good enough to be talked about on TV." Perhaps the lack of Filipino role models in the media may be an example of a systemic microaggression against Filipino Americans. Yet the notion of celebrities publicly denying their ethnicity may be an example of the colonial mentality that many Filipinos and Filipino Americans develop (see David, 2008; David & Okazaki, 2006; Nadal, 2011).

ASSUMPTION OF CRIMINALITY OR DEVIANCE

In a study with Black Americans, participants reported experiences where others assumed that they were "potential criminals and prone to antisocial or violent behaviors" (Sue et al., 2008, p. 333). Although this theme was not described in the aforementioned study with Asian Americans, participants in this study identified instances where microaggressors assumed Filipinos to be deviant or criminal. One participant discussed both her and her Filipino ex-boyfriend's aversion to drive into certain towns because of racial profiling by police. She mentioned that Filipinos (in this predominantly Filipino-populated town) were viewed as "trouble makers" and that they were consistently pulled over. She explained,

> We just avoided even having to go to that area. . . . I feel like . . . What? We have to go there again? I don't want to be harassed. That's just unnecessary stress that I don't want to deal with. Because after a while, the first time, fine; the second time, fine. . . . But after numerous times, exact same reason to be pulled over, it is kind of ridiculous.

A male participant described an instance where an older female was about to enter the building where he was working at the front door:

> One Caucasian woman who must be middle/older middle-aged, maybe 50–60s, walked through the door, made eye contact with me, and her instinct was to walk the other direction. And I literally saw her turn around and then realize, wait a second, I am supposed . . . but I am supposed to go in here.

He later described that often "there are moments where . . . once they saw an Asian, there is an instinct to run away." It is interesting that, although he attributed this characteristic as being an "Asian," participants in the previous studies on Asian American microaggressions did not report these assumptions of criminality or deviance.

ASSUMPTION OF INFERIOR STATUS OR INTELLECT

Sue et al. (2008) reported that Black American participants experienced microaggressions where they were "assumed to hold lower paying jobs and to occupy lower status career positions" and how "in social situations, they were assumed to be poor or uncultured" (p. 333). The assumption of inferiority was also reported by Filipino Americans who were often presumed to be less intelligent or of a lower social class. One male participant described an incident in law school in which a fellow student assumed he was an "IT [information technology] guy" rather than a peer. He later described that he was one of a few students of color (and the only Filipino) in his cohort of 100 students. Some participants described the inferiority of Filipinos as portrayed in the media. For example, several talked about the television show *Desperate Housewives*, which showed a major character insinuate that medical diplomas from the Philippines are not legitimate. Participants also discussed how the media portrays Filipinos as "line cooks, delivery boys, and doormen." This finding differs from Sue et al.'s (2009) study with Asian Americans who were almost always assumed to be "bright and smart, especially in math and science" (p. 94).

USE OF RACIST LANGUAGE

One new theme that emerged involved the use of racist language. Although many of these experiences seemed intentionally hurtful in nature, participants also described instances where such words may have been used in unintentionally hurtful ways. Participants overwhelmingly recalled racial insults such as "chink," "gook," or "rice paddy" that were said either directly to them or around them. However, one male participant discussed an instance where a coworker used racist language in a "joking" way while they were on a bus:

> We had just as our first time as the crew got on the bus together for the first time and the guy who helped me get my job, we're friends, but all of a sudden I became the one non-Caucasian on the bus and he says, "This is [Andrew], I like to call him 'rice

> paddy.'" And immediately there was like a chill went through my entire body. And, I kept thinking I cannot believe he just said that!

Participants did not report any Filipino-specific ethnic slurs, but rather slurs that are usually used toward Asian Americans in general or specific Asian ethnic groups.

ASSUMPTION OF FILIPINO STEREOTYPES

Another emerging theme involved situations where strangers made assumptions of the participants on the basis of their ethnicity. These experiences often resulted in the participants questioning the intent of the person, which often would inform their reaction(s). One participant described this uncertainty; when some classmates asked him if he ate dogs, he stated that "[I] don't think their intent . . . [is] that they are racist towards Filipinos. But at the same time, though, it is insensitive and rude." On the other hand, another participant described a situation where she offered her seat on a bus to an older woman who thanked her and stated, "Your people were raised so nicely." Although this participant initially described feeling flattered (in that she was being complimented for being part of a generous culture), she later thought that the statement was degrading and condescending.

EXCLUSION FROM THE ASIAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY

For a variety of reasons, participants experienced microaggressions in which they were excluded from the larger Asian American community as Filipino Americans. Despite identifying herself as an Asian American, one participant was told, "Filipinos aren't Asian," but rather were "like the Indians" or "the others." Another participant discussed how she felt treated as a second-class citizen within the Asian American community:

> I think we tend not to be welcomed in other Asian American circles—within Chinese American circle, Korean American, or Japanese American. I experienced being different and distinctively Filipino American when let's say I am in Chinatown in Flushing or in Chinatown in Lower Manhattan or in Koreatown. Um, right off the bat, they know who I am. They give me poorer service and they kind of write me off as someone who is not going to spend money.

This participant discussed the within-group discrimination toward Filipino Americans that has been discussed in previous Asian American literature (Espiritu, 1992; Nadal, 2011).

ASSUMPTION OF UNIVERSAL FILIPINO EXPERIENCE

Many of the participants stated that, when meeting people of other ethnic groups, there were attempts to search for common ground to form a connec-

tion with them. Although these instances may have seemed innocuous, participants reported these comments to be frustrating or annoying because of the underlying assumptions that all Filipinos can relate to the same experiences. For example, when a female participant met a White American woman, the woman informed the participant that her best friend was Filipino and that her Filipina housekeeper was "gentle and kind." Many of the female participants reported that men tried to relate to their ethnicity in order to make a positive impression on them. One female stated, "When people tell you good things, well especially guys, I feel like they're just doing it to impress you." Again, although the enactor's motivation may not be malicious or derogatory, participants had negative reactions.

MISTAKEN IDENTITY

A final emerging theme that was unique to Filipino Americans involved microaggressions in which one's race or ethnicity was completely mistaken. Participants described being mistaken for other Asian American or Pacific Islander groups (e.g., Thai, Hawaiian, or Chinese). However, unlike other Asian American groups, participants described being mistaken for non–Asian American ethnicities. Many reported being mistaken as Latino. One Filipina participant stated,

> A lot of Latinos come up to me and start speaking Spanish. And that was another weird set of discriminations or assumptions because if I responded back to someone who was Latina that I don't speak Spanish, they kind of gave me a look like, you know "Latinos in America don't speak Spanish anymore." Just that kind of weird vibe, like "I am sorry you are mistaking me for a totally different ethnicity."

Others stated that they had been mistaken for being Black American or of mixed raced with African heritage. One Filipina participant shared,

> Some guy comes up to me outside and I guess he was Black. And I guess his pickup line was, "Do you have a little Asian in you?" And I was like "Yeah, I am Filipina." And he says "Oh" and starts bringing up that he has friends that are Filipina and that I don't look Filipina. And so I was like "So what did you think I was?" and he goes, "I thought that you were Black."

This same participant shared how she was mistaken for being Native American when she was a child. She described,

> I think it was in fourth grade that we did a study of Long Island and it was about Native Americans and we were watching something and an Eskimo came up. And one of the class clowns said, "Look there is [Daisy]." So from now, well from then until high school because we went to the same high school, I was called "Eskimo." Forever. So, even at my 10-year reunion, I saw the guy, and he said "Hey Eskimo how have you been?"

Being mistaken for different racial or ethnic groups was common for other participants, signifying that many Filipino Americans are perceived as being

part of a number of racial groups, thus potentially experiencing a range of discrimination.

discussion

The purpose of this study was to identify the types of racial microaggressions experienced by Filipino Americans and to explore their potential consequences. The majority of the extracted themes were consistent with previous work regarding the typical racial microaggressions that Asian Americans experience (e.g., they are assumed to be foreign born, they are treated as second-class citizens, they are pathologized for their cultural values and behaviors, and they often feel invisible). Four unique themes were extracted from the current data that were not represented in Sue et al.'s (2009) previous work on Asian Americans' experiences with microaggressions: mistaken identity, assumption of inferior status or intellect, assumption of criminality or deviance, and exclusion from the Asian American community. Participants' responses suggest that Filipino Americans experience some microaggressions that are different from those experienced by other Asian Americans and perhaps more similar to ones experienced by other racial minority groups. Perhaps phenotype and colonial history are factors that influence the types of microaggressions one experiences. For instance, the mistaken identity theme may be driven by the fact that many Filipino Americans bear similar physical features, surnames, and cultural practices as those of Latinos, Pacific Islanders, Native Americans, and Black Americans.

Furthermore, examples of the assumption of criminality or deviance and the assumption of inferior status or intellect themes support the notion that Filipino Americans may not be perceived as a model minority. Participants did not report microaggressions in which people assumed them to be smart or knowledgeable of math and sciences; in fact, being viewed as inferior (by White Americans or other Asian Americans) was reported by majority of participants. Thus, their racial and sociocultural realities seem more aligned with those of other people of color. These similarities with other groups may be attributed to Filipinos' long history of colonialism and oppression under Spain (which they share with Latinos) and the United States (which they share with Pacific Islanders, Native Americans, and Black Americans).

Our findings indicate that Filipino Americans are in a distinctive position in that they battle an array of microaggressions and stereotypes at any given moment; thus, it may be important for counselors and other practitioners to understand the impact that such experiences may have on their mental health. Furthermore, participants' responses suggest that Filipino Americans react to racial microaggressions in ways that are similar to those identified by people of color in previous microaggression studies (e.g., having difficulty in identifying microaggressions; experiencing microaggressions from peers, friends,

neighbors, and authority figures; being conflicted about whether and how to respond to experiences of microaggressions; and feeling intense negative emotions such as anger, belittlement, and alienation because of their racial microaggression experiences). However, it is unknown whether frequently experiencing a diverse spectrum of microaggressions (e.g., being assumed to be a foreigner, inferior, exotic, and criminal) might have an impact on mental health. For example, how may a Filipino American who experiences different microaggressions on an everyday basis (e.g., being assumed to be a model minority or good at math and sciences one day and being assumed to be an intellectual inferior the next day) differ from a person of color who is accustomed to the same types of daily microaggressions? Further quantitative research may examine how Filipino Americans' diverse experiences with microaggressions might have an impact on their mental health, as well as their social and emotional development, their identities, and their self-esteem.

implications for counseling

This study has many implications for the field of multicultural counseling and development. First, counselors must comply with the Multicultural Counseling Competencies of the American Counseling Association (see Arredondo et al., 1996; Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992), in which they demonstrate knowledge, awareness, and skills when working with different racial and ethnic populations. Specifically, counselors must be knowledgeable of Filipino American culture, recognizing the influences of colonialism, family values, and experiences of microaggressions on identity development and mental health. Counselors must be aware of their own attitudes, biases, and assumptions about this population; for example, counselors who tend to lump all Asian Americans as a homogenous group must be cognizant of how such biases influence potential microaggressions that may ensue in counseling sessions. Finally, counselors must acquire the necessary skills to be most effective in working with Filipino American clients. For example, previous literature has found that East Asian Americans are more likely to prefer directive counseling (i.e., the clinician provides solid and practical advice), whereas Filipino Americans are more likely to prefer an emotionally close and warm relationship with their clinicians (Okamura & Agbayani, 1991) and are more likely to discuss more personal and emotional problems (Tracey, Leong, & Glidden, 1986). Thus, counselors may benefit most from using a humanistic approach and building a more intimate alliance with Filipino American clients.

The results of this study yield particular considerations that may be specific to school and mental health counselors. School counselors may pay attention to how students' experiences with microaggressions may affect identity development and achievement. For example, Nadal (2004) discussed how discrimination plays a role in how Filipino Americans navigate through

various statuses of identity development; if a Filipino experiences a microaggression from a White American individual, he or she may enter a social/political awakening identity status, but if a Filipino American encounters a microaggression from an East Asian American, then he or she may develop a pro-Filipino ethnocentric identity status. Furthermore, school counselors' biases may have a negative impact on students' academic achievement. Teranishi (2002) found that Filipino American high school students felt that their counselors and teachers did not encourage them to go to college, while stereotyping them as delinquents, failures, or gang members; meanwhile, Chinese American students reported feeling supported and encouraged to attend college. Thus, microaggressions from school counselors themselves may have consequences in students' optimal success. Mental health counselors might be most concerned about how microaggressions have an impact on their clients' mental health. Several studies have found that victims of microaggressions may feel immediate distress, while experiencing potential long-term mental health problems (Sue et al., 2008, 2009). Thus, when clients discuss microaggressions, it is crucial for counselors to ensure that these clients verbalize their reactions thoroughly, instead of repressing or internalizing potentially damaging emotions.

Finally, counselors must also recognize ways that they can help to combat racial microaggressions on systemic and environmental levels. Perhaps school counselors can advocate for the disaggregating of the Asian American community by supporting ethnic-specific celebrations and curricula (e.g., promoting October as Filipino American History Month, as recognized by the U.S. Congress and Senate). Ensuring that ethnic diversity is represented, in addition to racial diversity, can help to decrease the feelings of invisibility that many Filipino Americans participants reported in this study. Furthermore, because Filipino Americans are found to have lower rates of mental health utilization compared with other Asian American groups (David, 2010), mental health counselors and college counselors can aim to provide outreach more to Filipino American clients and students by becoming more visible at Filipino American community events or providing educational programs for Filipino American students. In providing outreach for Filipino Americans (and other ethnic groups), it is hoped that underrepresented groups will be more knowledgeable of counseling services and thus can be better served.

There are a few limitations to this study. First, because of geography (i.e., focus groups took place in the Northeast) and small sample sizes, participants' experiences may not be generalizable to the entire Filipino American community. Group dynamics (e.g., group think, social desirability) may have also influenced participants' answers and behaviors. Finally, one of the critiques of the DCA method is that researchers use participants' responses to fit a theoretical model instead of analyzing data without preconceived categories (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Thus, it is possible that researchers' biases may have

influenced the types of questions asked and how the data were interpreted. Nonetheless, findings support the need for further research on microaggressions with all populations, particularly ethnic groups (such as Filipino Americans) that are often "forgotten" in academic literature.

references

Agbayani-Siewert, P. (2004). Assumptions of Asian American similarity: The case of Filipino and Chinese American students. *Social Work, 49,* 39–51.

Alvarez, A. N., & Juang, L. (2010). Filipino Americans and racism: A multiple mediation model of coping. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 57,* 167–178. doi:10.1037/a0019091

Alvarez, A. N., Juang, L., & Liang, C. T. H. (2006). Asian Americans and racism: When bad things happen to "model minorities." *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 12,* 477–492. doi:10.1037/1099-9809.12.3.477

Arredondo, P., Toporek, R., Brown, S. P., Jones, J., Locke, D. C., Sanchez, J., & Stadler, H. (1996). Operationalization of the Multicultural Counseling Competencies. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development, 24,* 42–78. doi:10.1002/j.2161-1912.1996.tb00288.x

Capodilupo, C. M., Nadal, K. L., Corman, L., Hamit, S., Lyons, O., & Weinberg, A. (2010). The manifestation of gender microaggressions. In D. W. Sue (Ed.), *Microaggressions and marginality: Manifestation, dynamics, and impact* (pp. 193–216). New York, NY: Wiley.

David, E. J. R. (2008). A colonial mentality model of depression for Filipino Americans. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 14,* 118–127. doi:10.1037/1099-9809.14.2.118

David, E. J. R. (2010). Cultural mistrust and mental health help-seeking attitudes among Filipino Americans. *Asian American Journal of Psychology, 1,* 57–66. doi:10.1037/a0018814

David, E. J. R., & Okazaki, S. (2006). Colonial mentality: A review and recommendation for Filipino American psychology. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 12,* 1–16. doi:10.1037/1099-9809.12.1.1

Espiritu, Y. L. (1992). *Asian American panethnicity: Bridging institutions and identities.* Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Hill, C. E., Knox, S., Thompson, B. J., Williams, E. N., Hess, S. A., & Ladany, N. (2005). Consensual qualitative research: An update. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 52,* 196–205. doi:10.1037/0022-0167.52.2.196

Hsieh, H.-F., & Shannon, S. E. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative Health Research, 15,* 1277–1288. doi:10.1177/1049732305276687

Kim, B. S. K., Yang, P. H., Atkinson, D. R., Wolfe, M. M., & Hong, S. (2001). Cultural value similarities and differences among Asian American ethnic groups. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 7,* 343–361. doi:10.1037/1099-9809.7.4.343

Krueger, R. A., & Casey, M. A. (2008). *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Liang, C. T. H., Li, L. C., & Kim, B. S. K. (2004). The Asian American Racism-Related Stress Inventory: Development, factor analysis, reliability, and validity. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 51,* 103–114. doi:10.1037/0022-0167.51.1.103

Nadal, K. L. (2004). Filipino American identity development model. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development, 32,* 45–62. doi:10.1002/j.2161-1912.2004.tb00360.x

Nadal, K. L. (2011). *Filipino American psychology: A handbook of theory, research, and clinical practice.* New York, NY: Wiley.

Nadal, K. L., Issa, M.-A., Leon, J., Meterko, V., Wideman, M., & Wong, Y. (2011). Sexual orientation microaggressions: "Death by a thousand cuts" for lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth. *Journal of LGBT Youth, 8,* 1–26. doi:10.1080/19361653.2011.584204

Nadal, K. L., & Sue, D. W. (2009). Asian American youth. In C. S. Clauss-Ehlers (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of cross-cultural school psychology* (pp. 116–122). New York, NY: Springer.

Okamura, J., & Agbayani, A. (1991). Filipino Americans. In N. Mokuau (Ed.), *Handbook of social services for Asian and Pacific Islanders* (pp. 97–114). Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

Pierce, C., Carew, J., Pierce-Gonzalez, D., & Willis, D. (1978). An experiment in racism: TV commercials. In C. Pierce (Ed.), *Television and education* (pp. 62–88). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Rivera, D. P., Forquer, E. E., & Rangel, R. (2010). Microaggressions and the life experience of Latina/o Americans. In D. W. Sue (Ed.), *Microaggressions and marginality: Manifestation, dynamics, and impact* (pp. 59–83). New York, NY: Wiley.

Sue, D. W., Arredondo, P., & McDavis, R. J. (1992). Multicultural counseling competencies and standards: A call to the profession. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 70,* 477–486. doi:10.1002/j.1556-6676.1992.tb01642.x

Sue, D. W., Bucceri, J. M., Lin, A. I., Nadal, K. L., & Torino, G. C. (2009). Racial microaggressions and the Asian American experience. *Asian American Journal of Psychology, S,* 88–101. doi:10.1037/1948-1985.S.1.88

Sue, D. W., Capodilupo, C. M., Torino, G. C., Bucceri, J. M., Holder, A. M. B., Nadal, K. L., & Esquilin, M. (2007). Racial microaggressions in everyday life: Implications for clinical practice. *The American Psychologist, 62,* 271–286. doi:10.1037/0003-066X.62.4.271

Sue, D. W., Nadal, K. L., Capodilupo, C. M., Lin, A. I., Torino, G. C., & Rivera, D. P. (2008). Racial microaggressions against Black Americans: Implications for counseling. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 86,* 330–338. doi:10.1002/j.1556-6678.2008.tb00517.x

Sue, D. W., & Sue D. (2008). *Counseling the culturally diverse* (5th ed.). New York, NY: Wiley.

Teranishi, R. T. (2002). Asian Pacific Americans and critical race theory: An examination of school racial climate. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 35,* 144–154. doi:10.1080/713845281

Tracey, T. J., Leong, F. T., & Glidden, C. (1986). Help seeking and problem perception among Asian Americans. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 33,* 331–336. doi:10.1037/0022-0167.33.3.331

Uba, L. (1994) *Asian Americans: Personality patterns, identity, and mental health.* New York, NY: Guilford Press.