

Investigating post-secondary attendance among the Filipino community

Prepared for
Filipinas of HamOnt

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Executive Summary

The Filipinas of HamOnt is a decolonial feminist community group based in Hamilton that aims to build a community of femme-identifying Filipinas through anti-racist, equity-seeking programming in Hamilton, Ontario (Filipinas of HamOnt, n.d.). Based on observations, Filipinos are an underrepresented demographic in post-secondary education. To support this demographic, the Filipinas of HamOnt want to explore ways to better align programming to support youth in achieving their post-secondary educational goals. In recognition of this issue, the Filipinas of HamOnt partnered with the McMaster Research Shop to investigate post-secondary attendance among the Filipino community in Canada and provide secondary research to better understand this issue.

We conducted a literature review that gathered previously studied information on the rates/proportions of post-secondary education attendance among those of Filipino descent and reasons for lower post-secondary attendance. Our data includes quantitative and qualitative studies and reports from 2000 onwards that can be expanded to include comparable migrant and/or Southeast Asian communities (e.g., Vietnamese, Thai, etc.).

Our findings show that Filipinos may have lower post-secondary attendance rates than other minorities. This is especially true for Filipino males, highlighting a gender gap in post-secondary attainment. Interestingly, there is also a trend of lower educational achievement among second-generation Filipinos compared to their immigrant parents. Additional data shows that immigrants who arrived in Canada later in their youth tend to lack Canadian high school diplomas. To discover the reasons behind this data, we adapted Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems model (Bronfenbrenner, 1981) to investigate and categorize the systematic factors influencing post-secondary rates in Filipinos. We use this model to delineate the multiscale effects of educational, financial, social, and cultural pressures exerted on Filipino youth and find that, overall, the postponement of their education, deprofessionalization of their parents, separation from family, and lack of Filipino representation pose significant barriers to their pursuit of post-secondary education.

With these results in mind, to combat low post-secondary attendance in Filipino youth in Canada, we suggest reworking existing policies and implementing novel support systems for Filipino youth. Students require adequate support from their families and peers, which can be supplemented through the creation of community programs that connect Filipino youth. As well, the educational system should reassess procedures used to evaluate newly immigrated youth's academic competencies, particularly in English. Furthermore, greater Filipino representation in higher-level education and career paths should be promoted to foster feelings of inclusion and community. Financial assistance should also be made more accessible to the Filipino youth to avoid monetary barriers to post-secondary education.

We believe that this information will empower the Filipinas of HamOnt, as well as other organizations that aim to promote equitable educational outcomes, to develop evidence-based campaigns that can effectively help Filipino youth overcome barriers to education and achieve their academic goals.

Introduction

Overview and Scope

The Filipinas of HamOnt is a feminist, decolonial community initiative that aims to connect Filipinas in Hamilton, Ontario and reclaim space through exploring identities and understanding histories (Filipinas of HamOnt, n.d.). The organization develops programming in short planning cycles (~6 months) to cultivate relationships and build alliances across diverse communities with funding obtained through micro grants and private donorship.

An issue that the Filipinas of HamOnt would like to examine is post-secondary education attendance among the Filipino population based on observation that this is an underrepresented demographic. The Filipinas of HamOnt approached the Research Shop with an interest in conducting secondary research to better understand this issue and explore how they can align their programming to better support youth in achieving their educational goals.

Research Questions

Our research project will involve a selective review of literature providing answers to the following questions:

1. What does existing literature say about the rate of post-secondary education attendance among those of Filipino descent in Canada, and how does this compare to other visible minorities?
 - a. What do public-facing documents from the Hamilton Wentworth District School Board and local settlement support agencies say about the rate of post-secondary education attendance among those of Filipino descent in Hamilton, and how does this compare to other visible minorities?
2. If Filipinos attend post-secondary education at a rate lower than other visible minorities, what might be the concluded (from literature) and/or observed (from stakeholders) reasons?

Report Organization

The report is organized into four main sections as outlined below:

- **Methods:** Describes the research process and outcome evaluation methods.
- **Results:** Summarizes the literature review results.
- **Discussion:** Presents a consolidated interpretation of the findings and their significance.
- **Conclusion:** Summarizes research objectives and significant findings.

Methods

Institutional Data

We identified key organizations related to the research questions, including Statistics Canada, post-secondary institutions, The Philippine Reporter, Canadian scholarship organizations, Filipino student unions, and the York Centre for Asian Research. We searched their websites for information that can answer the research questions. To obtain documents published from other sites, we conducted Google searches using combinations of different keywords obtained from the research questions. We used private browsing mode to minimize the influence of personalized algorithms on the search results.

Academic Databases

We created search terms using keywords from the research questions and their synonyms (Table 1).

Table 1. Search blocks and search terms used to find relevant literature from academic databases

Search block	Search terms
Filipino	Filipin* OR Philippine* OR South*east*asia*
Post-secondary	Post*secondary OR universit* OR colleg* OR trade* OR apprentice*
Education rates	Education*
Canad*	

We searched for literature in Web of Science (Social Sciences Citation Index), ProQuest (Social Sciences Collection), and Omni (via McMaster Library) for sources published from 2000 onwards. We screened the results according to the inclusion and exclusion criteria (Table 2) to obtain a final list of relevant literature. Of the 560 sources identified through the database search, we extracted information from 23 sources.

Table 2. Inclusion and exclusion criteria used to screen literature obtained from database searches

Characteristic	Included	Excluded
Population	People of Filipino or Southeast Asian descent	International students, people who take gap years, people who completed post-secondary outside Canada
Outcome	Rate of post-secondary education attendance/admission/enrollment/completion/attainment; reasons for low attendance (if applicable) High school students' intentions for post-secondary and high school graduation/dropout rates	
Setting	Post-secondary institutions and communities in Canada	
Year published	Published in 2000 or later	
Study design	Any study design or report	
Language	Published in English	

Results

RQ1: Post-secondary education among those of Filipino descent in Canada and compared to other visible minorities

Overall post-secondary attendance

According to the 2021 Census (most recent), 11.2% of Filipino Canadians over the age of 15 attended post-secondary school. This is lower compared to the total visible minority population, of which 14.2% attended post-secondary school (Statistics Canada, 2022).

Filipinos are underrepresented in universities

Data from the 2021 Census shows that only 4.4% of Filipinos have attended university, which is the lowest percentage among all visible minority groups (Statistics Canada, 2022). Based on the 2016 Census, Filipino-Canadians represented just under 2% of bachelor's degree graduates aged 25 to 34 (Brunet & Galarneau, 2022). Filipinos' relatively lower university graduation rate was also seen in the 2011 National Household Survey (Kelly, 2014a; Kelly et al., 2014) and in the 2002 Ethnic Diversity Survey (Abada et al., 2009).

In case studies and interviews with Filipino Canadian students at the University of British Columbia, participants discussed a noticeable absence of students of Filipino origin at their institution, with most reporting interactions limited to two or three other Filipinos in all their

classes. They also reported a shift from a high school environment full of Filipino peers to a university setting with little to none (Mendoza, 2012).

Additional disparities are seen in professional programs. One study surveyed four Canadian medical schools from 2009 to 2011 and found that only 0.3% of students were Filipinos, which was the lowest percentage compared to other visible minorities (Young et al., 2012). Despite a higher chance of having a bachelor's degree compared to the general population (31% vs. 15% in 2001), Canadians of Filipino origin fall behind in representation in specific disciplines. In 2001, only 3% represented graduates in programs such as engineering, applied science, and health-related professions (Statistics Canada, 2007). Moreover, Filipino-Canadians were found to be more underrepresented in jobs requiring a bachelor's degree or higher compared to any other minority group in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2023a).

Contrary to these findings, we found one source that stated Filipinos were “the most likely to have university education” alongside Koreans, Japanese, West Asians, and Arabs (Saraswati, 2000). However, the data source was unclear and may be outdated.

Post-secondary attendance differs by gender and age of immigration

Several sources highlight that Filipino males have lower post-secondary attendance compared to Filipino females. This was observed in the 2016 Census (Statistics Canada, 2020) and the 2001 Census (Statistics Canada, 2007). This gender gap is also more pronounced when compared to other visible minorities. Based on the 2016 Census (Statistics Canada, 2020), a lower percentage of Filipino males (37.5%) received a post-secondary certificate, diploma, or degree compared to all visible minority males (47.4%). On the other hand, a higher percentage of Filipino females (62.5%) completed post-secondary school compared to all visible minority females (52.6%) (Statistics Canada, 2020). Kelly et al. (2014) also noted from the 2011 National Household Survey that “only 13.2% of Filipino men have graduated from university – a rate that is ... less than a quarter of the Chinese community.” In fact, this rate was the lowest compared to all other visible minorities (Kelly et al., 2014).

However, we found one source that found the reverse. Rotheron et al. (2009) examined 2001 Census data specifically on second generation Filipinos aged 25-44. They found that fewer Filipino men had an incomplete high school education and more Filipino men completed post-secondary school compared to Filipino women (Rotheron et al., 2009).

In Toronto, specific trends can be seen based on the age of immigration. For example, Collymore (2012) indicates that 11% of Filipino males who arrived in Toronto between the ages of 0 to 11, and 19% who arrived between 17 to 24, lack high school diplomas. Conversely, Filipino females in the corresponding age brackets possess rates of 7% and 6%, respectively. Data from research by Pratt (2012), based on the 2001 Canadian census, reveals that among Filipino Vancouverites who immigrated to the city between 12-16, more males obtain university education compared to females (43% vs 35%). However, this pattern shifts when they immigrate as teenagers, where more females than males obtain a bachelor's degree (32% vs 23%).

Low intergenerational educational mobility

There is a disparity in educational levels between Filipino immigrant parents and their Canadian-born children. Researchers have noticed a trend of lower educational achievement among the second generation compared to their immigrant parents (Farrales, 2011; Farrales & Pratt, 2012). Using data from the 2006 Census, Abada and Lin (2014) found a decrease in the percentage of Filipino children with bachelor's degrees compared to their fathers. Pratt (2012) observed downward educational mobility in interviews with Filipino families who came to Canada through the Live-In Caregiver Program. A news report about the Filipino Youth Transitions in Canada project also noted that Filipino-Canadian youth are less likely to attend university and obtain lower salaries than their immigrant parents ("Fil-Can Youths Not Doing as Well as Parents," 2012).

Gender may also play a role. Second-generation Filipino males are less to attain a bachelor's degree compared to their immigrant fathers. In contrast, second-generation Filipina females achieve a university completion rate that surpasses that of their mothers by 10% (Chen & Hou, 2019).

This trend stands out compared to other visible minorities. Typically, children of immigrants are more likely to graduate from university compared to their parents (Kelly, 2014a; Sato & Este, 2017). The Filipino-Youth Transitions in Canada project found that while immigrant Filipino youth find their way into the labor market, they lag in graduating from university compared to national averages and other immigrant groups (Kelly et al., 2014). Notably, Filipino-Canadians are the only major visible minority group experiencing downward mobility in educational outcomes ("Fil-Can Youths Not Doing as Well as Parents," 2012). Filipinos' lower educational mobility was also observed in other studies that analyzed data from the 2006 Census (Abada & Lin, 2014), the 2002 Ethnic Diversity Survey (Abada et al., 2009), and the 2001 Census (Rothon et al., 2009).

High school outcomes of Filipinos

We also explored Filipinos youths' experiences in high school since completing high school is a prerequisite to attending post-secondary school. Based on the 2016 Census (Statistics Canada, 2019), Filipinos completed high school at a higher rate (89.8%) compared to the total visible minority population (82.2%). However, data from Vancouver high schools between the years of 1995 to 2004 show a different picture. Pratt (2012) noted that less than two-thirds of boys who speak Tagalog at home graduate from high school. Children who spoke Tagalog at home had lower grade point averages and were less likely to graduate high school compared to their peers. Filipinos' lower high school completion was also observed in Toronto and Montreal (Pratt, 2012).

Educational attainment of Southeast Asians

We also found comparisons between Southeast Asians and other visible minorities. Depending on the data source, the term "Southeast Asian" may or may not include Filipinos. Regardless, we found similar trends. Southeast Asians had lower post-secondary educational attainment compared to other visible minorities. This was found in the 2021 Census (Statistics Canada, 2023a, 2023b) and the 2011 National Household Survey (Kelly et al., 2014). Though the data source is unclear, Saraswati (2000) also observed this trend more than two decades ago. Robson et al. (2018) compared post-secondary admissions data of Toronto District School Board students between the years of 2006 and 2011. During that time, fewer Southeast Asian

students confirmed a place in university (from 50% to 40%) and more Southeast Asian students confirmed a place in college (an increase of 8%) (Robson et al., 2018). They found a “considerable decline of nearly 10%” of Southeast Asian students who were taking an “academic” course, which is geared towards preparation for university (Robson et al., 2018).

Hamilton-specific outcomes

We did not find public-facing documents from the Hamilton-Wentworth school boards about the rate of post-secondary attendance among people of Filipino descent. However, we found results from McMaster University’s Canadian Graduate and Professional Student Survey in 2016 (Mosaic Research Solutions, 2016). Only 2.2% of respondents identified as Southeast Asian (including Filipino), which was the lowest among all visible minority groups (Mosaic Research Solutions, 2016).

RQ2: Empirical and theoretical reasons for lower post-secondary attendance among Filipinos

In this section, we discuss empirical and theoretical barriers to post-secondary attendance among Filipinos. We divide the thematic reasons in three categories deriving from Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1981): micro-level, meso-level, and macro-level systems. These systems represent environmental systems that influence an individual’s thoughts and behaviours. While Bronfenbrenner’s theory involves different levels beyond our three systems, we have adapted the theory to reflect the data we found while demonstrating the interactions between different levels. See Appendix for our Adapted Ecological Systems model.

Microsystems

The microsystem focuses on the intrapersonal—Filipino youth’s self-perception, feelings, and priorities regarding education and their career—as well as their interpersonal relationships within their primary social groups, such as family and close friends.

Feeling bored and discouraged in school

After moving to Canada, despite previously completing high school in the Philippines, Filipino youth’s academic achievements are often not recognized in the Canadian educational system, making it difficult for youth to persist when returning to high school and repeating course content that they’ve previously learned (Pratt, 2012). As a result, students are unchallenged and experience boredom due to the repetition of course content, pushing some to stop attending classes or to drop out of high school (Farrales, 2011, 2017). Correspondingly, several individuals interviewed by Collymore (2012) referred to schooling as “redundant”, with no apparent relevance to the job that they want to pursue in the future.

Moreover, the students that persist through this disruption to their education face another barrier to graduating with their high school diploma—English as a Second Language (ESL) classes. Newly immigrated Filipino youth who receive an ESL designation often feel “locked out” of the courses that they would like to take since they must complete the ESL program to enroll in regular coursework (Austria, 2015; Farrales, 2017). At the same time, credits obtained from the ESL courses they complete do not count towards the requirements for a high school diploma, delaying the graduation of these students (Farrales, 2011). The additional educational

requirements for Filipino youth make it difficult for them to complete their high school education and progress to post-secondary education, with one Filipino student spending 6 years pursuing “intolerably time-consuming” education in order to enter McGill University despite having obtained a high school diploma in the Philippines prior to immigrating to Canada (Reyes, 2022).

Overall, as a result of intertwining immigration and education policies, Filipino youth feel discouraged about obtaining further education in Canada, since “when [they] come here, whatever [they] accomplished in the Philippines, [they] have to double [their] work here” (Farrales, 2017).

Pressure to support family financial challenges

Filipino youth may decide to discontinue their education due to family financial challenges. Despite being educated in their home countries, immigrants tend to hold low-paying service or manual labour jobs that are outside their area of expertise, especially those who enter Canada through the Live-In Caregiver (LCP) program (Saraswati, 2000; Kelly, 2014b). As a result, some Filipino youth feel greater pressure to work and contribute to their family’s income (Pratt, 2012). In some families, in addition to supporting their household in Canada, Filipino youth may feel responsible for earning money to send to family in the Philippines. In a study of Filipino Canadian life stories conducted by McElhinny et al. (2009), the reason why one individual forwent the chance to become a nurse, despite being subsidized by the government, was because she wouldn’t “get money to send to the Philippines... and [her] goal [in coming to Canada] was to help out [her] family”. Therefore, in order to alleviate their family’s financial pressure, some Filipino youth value working more than their education and take readily available jobs that do not require high educational requirements (Pratt, 2012). Data collected for the Canadian population aged 15 years and older by Statistics Canada (2023c) reveal that Filipino-Canadians have the highest labour force participation rate in Canada (78.6%), which reflects the prioritization of work over education among Filipino youth.

Parents struggling in the workforce despite their educational backgrounds can also cause families to doubt the value of education, resulting in divestment from the idea of post-secondary education and the workforce opportunities it supposedly provides (Collymore, 2012). After interviewing Filipino Canadian youth born in the Philippines, Collymore (2012) found that they do not view education as a necessity for future success, but rather as an opportunity to help people get their “foot in the door”. They express that success is accomplished by “working...based on [their] own terms”, in hopes that they will not experience being deskilled like their parents.

Lack of confidence to pursue some careers

As another consequence of the large proportion of Filipino immigrants entering service and manual labour roles, youth are less confident in pursuing higher-level jobs, in turn decreasing their motivation to pursue higher education. A settlement counselor for high school students has observed that students often express the sentiment that “there’s no reason to try” because “all Filipinos just end up as cleaners anyway” (Kelly, 2014b). A lack of Filipino role models in high-skilled professions may lower expectations Filipino youth have for themselves (Kelly & Mulas, 2014). A second-generation Filipino Canadian explains that she feels “that it’s difficult to advance [in the Canadian career-world]... because [she doesn’t] have the influence of any of [her] family in a power career-path... [They’re] all just blue-collar, lower-middle-class to middle-class people trying to make coin”, resulting in her not having the “confidence and the influence to push [herself] that far along that sort of path” (McElhinny et al., 2009). The significant

influence that family have on their children is emphasized by interviews conducted by Mais (2012) with Filipino youth in Vancouver, which discovered that close social contacts are most influential in their aspirations and access to opportunities; for instance, they often made decisions about post-secondary education based on the advice of their family and peers.

Lack of parental engagement with school

However, despite the importance of these familial relationships for Filipino youth and their aspirations, their family often have little time to engage with their progress in school due to entering time-intensive and demanding jobs, as well as their separation from family after moving to Canada. Pratt (2012) finds that guidance counselors note a lack of parental engagement for Filipino students. Accordingly, Caro (2008) reports that Filipino youth in Montreal have reported struggling with family separation after moving to Canada through the LCP program, including an inability to develop a close parent-child relationship, which has impacted their performance in school. The lack of extended family, who play an important role to Filipino youth as mentors, also contributes to Filipino youth's feelings of insufficient support and stress, negatively influencing their education (Kelly, 2014a).

Mesosystems

Taking inspiration from the Bronfenbrenner's model (Bronfenbrenner, 1981), we understood mesosystems as organizations and systems directly related to Filipino youths' education. Our findings point to one system in particular—the school system—creating barriers for Filipino youth. We discuss these barriers below.

Streaming practices

Newly immigrated Filipino youth sometimes see barriers from educational streaming practices. An example of this is placement into non-academic streams upon high school enrolment. An article by Austria (2015) mentions that newcomers are recommended their stream and grade based on mandated assessments in Math and English. Students who enter the applied stream report feeling unchallenged, but also feel unable to switch to the academic stream due to their parents trusting that the school has made the right decision.

English as a Second Language (ESL) classes

Another cause of stalled education is a “locked out” feeling observed among Filipinos in ESL classes (Austria, 2015). A paper by Farrales (2011) discussed a study on Filipino high school students in Vancouver. Out of the 46 participants, 28 received ESL-designations upon academic enrolment. ESL classes do not contribute to a student's completion of high school, and the interviewed students discussed sentiments of “boredom”, “repetition”, and “dropping out”. This highlights a discrepancy between the English support provided to them and the language skills that they possess. Since students can only take non-ESL full-time courses when deemed appropriate, some students run out of time to become high school graduates before turning 19, pushing them to adult school (Farrales, 2017). Others intentionally defer their post-secondary plans to adult school where they can complete the credits needed to graduate from a Canadian high school (Farrales, 2011). Kelly (2014a) states that the needs of Filipino communities are not being met in academic settings, and that newly immigrated Filipino youth with strong English skills should not be placed with beginner ESL students.

Devaluation of prior academic credentials

Furthermore, high school diplomas obtained in the Philippines are not recognized in Canada. As a result, some youth decide to complete faster certifications requiring 6-8 months of study, while others do not return to high school due to feeling “graduated” (Pratt, 2012). For youth who decided to obtain a Canadian high school diploma, the process is often lengthy. In an article for the McGill International Review, a Filipino university student shared his experience: “Before migrating to Montreal, I obtained a high school diploma in the Philippines and even completed my first year of university. However, my academic credentials were not recognized in the province [...]. I went to an adult education centre where I [...] was fortunate to take higher-level courses [...]. After two years at an adult center, I took a preuniversity program at CÉGEP. In total, it took me six years to enter McGill University. The entire process is intolerably time-consuming” (Reyes, 2022). Another statement in a paper by Farrales (2017) further exemplifies this: “Yah, I became [...] a high school student again. It’s like when you come here, whatever you accomplished in the Philippines, you have to double your work here.”

Cultural absence in education system

There is a lack of cultural representation on the curricular level that impairs a Filipino student’s academic success. Kelly and Mulas (2014) discuss the implementation of cultural materials into the Ontario curriculum, particularly in schools with large Filipino populations, to help the Filipino youth take pride in their heritage. This cultural validation would positively impact the education of Filipino youth (Li, 2000), influencing their attainment of university education (Abada et al., 2009). A paper by Coloma (2012) focuses on the lack of Filipino representation in history texts, which is framed as “a failure to fulfill the official education mandate”. This supports the notion that Filipino material should be implemented, as discussed by Kelly and Mulas (2014). Coloma (2012) brings attention to the lack of Canadian professors of Filipino descent in the humanities and social sciences and recommends supporting more Filipinos to pursue graduate studies and scholarly research so that they can contribute to Filipino information in Canadian history texts.

Macrosystems

For the purposes of our research, we defined macrosystems as cultural influences, ideologies, social norms, government, legislation, economic, and other broader systems that inform an individual’s beliefs, behaviours, and opportunities.

Immigration and labour policies

Understanding macrosystem influences begins with immigration programs and policies that impact Filipinos in Canada. In Hamilton from 1980 to 2009, approximately 40% of Filipino immigrants arrived via the Family Class category, approximately 25% arrived via the Federal Skilled Worker Program, and approximately 30% arrived via the Live-In Caregiver Program (LCP) (Kelly, 2014a). Based on data from the 2021 Census, over one-third of Filipino women immigrated through caregiver programs and nearly half immigrated as caregivers with foreign registered nursing degrees (Statistics Canada, 2023a).

We found several sources that focus on the LCP. Originally functioning as the Foreign Domestic Movement Program in the 1980s, the LCP provided opportunities for immigrants to work as caregivers living in their employer’s home for two years before applying for permanent residency (Goli, 2009). According to a thesis project by Goli (2009), Filipino women were overrepresented in the LCP. However, Filipinos in the LCP were given limited opportunities to pursue education and career aspirations due to their “temporary legal status” (Eric, 2012). Specifically, their status

as temporary workers put them in precarious living and working conditions (Eric, 2012). In an oral history interview, Liza R. Bautista shared her experience within the LCP: “So you have the systemic issue of having a lot of limitations within that immigration program. So you cannot go to school, you are not allowed to access a lot of social services” (Raska, n.d.). Collymore (2012) describes Filipinos immigrating through the LCP as “involuntary minorities”. This is based on Ogbu & Simons’ (1998) categorization of immigrant minority groups, which defines “involuntary migrants” as people who are forced to move for better opportunities, including temporary and domestic workers (Collymore, 2012). Notably, Ogbu & Simons (1998) mention that “they tend to learn only as much of their host’s culture and language as necessary to achieve their temporary goals, which may not include school credentials”.

Immigration and foreign labour programs complicate family separation and reunification which can disrupt Filipino youths working towards high school graduation and postpone their post-secondary education pursuits (Farrales & Pratt, 2012). Filipino women under the LCP were required to separate from their families in the Philippines for years while working towards permanent residency, at which point they could sponsor their family members to come to Canada (Farrales & Pratt, 2012; Statistics Canada, 2023a). Pratt (2012) notes that families were separated for a median number of eight years. One Filipino young adult talked about how his mother left their family in the Philippines as she moved to Vancouver through the LCP when he was a young boy, and she was able to sponsor the family many years later and have them “join her in a city four hours away from Vancouver” (Farrales & Pratt, 2012). Research has suggested that when children of Filipino immigrants face these challenges, their educational and career trajectories develop differently from other children of Canadian-born parents and ethnic groups (Mais, 2012). According to a study by Pratt (2012), Filipino youth at a Vancouver school who are sponsored by parents in the LCP might not have enough time to finish their high school diploma before adulthood because of migration timing. This study found that these circumstances can lead to weaker educational aspirations and lower motivation to complete high school, resulting in Filipino youth potentially dropping out (Pratt, 2012).

Surveys among Filipino students have also found correlations between the LCP and post-secondary outcomes. In a study conducted by Pratt (Pratt, 2010; Pratt et al., 2008), 45 Filipino students enrolled in post-secondary institutions in British Columbia participated in a survey that revealed none of the respondents had a parent who migrated to Canada through the LCP (Farrales, 2011). The HCDSB Pinoy Project surveyed Filipino students attending Catholic high schools in Halton Region (Austria et al., 2016). When asked about their post-secondary aspirations, fewer LCP children (whose mothers immigrated through the LCP) planned to go to university compared to non-LCP children (Austria et al., 2016). More LCP children planned to work full time, go to college, or learn a trade compared to non-LCP children (Austria et al., 2016).

Labour market structures and deprofessionalization

A report by the Filipino Youth Transitions in Canada (FYTIC) project notes that Filipino immigrants who are dealing with low paying jobs and unable to work in the field that they’ve been educated/trained for, also known as “deprofessionalization”, influences the educational pathways for Filipino youth (Kelly, 2014a). A study by Kelly (2014a) shows that parents who obtain human capital (e.g., post-secondary education, training, and skills) outside of Canada often find themselves working low paying jobs which makes it difficult for their children to obtain similar or higher levels of education. However, the same study presents Chinese immigrants as an example of second-generation children doing “exceptionally well” despite their parent’s low educational attainment (Kelly, 2014a). Speaking specifically about Filipinos, coming to Canada

through the LCP for work and experiencing deprofessionalization could be major influences on youth post-secondary attainment; however, Kelly notes that more research on Filipino youths' lower success rates is needed ("Fil-Can Youths Not Doing as Well as Parents", 2012).

Studies find visible minority immigrants more likely to be unemployed or less likely to hold managerial/professional positions despite being more educated than other communities in Canada (Saraswati, 2000). Reports show that Filipinos experience higher overqualification rates because degrees obtained from foreign post-secondary institutions are devalued by employers, resulting in having a post-secondary degree but working jobs that require a high school diploma at most (Statistics Canada, 2023a). Statistics Canada (2023a) reports that Filipino women in the Live-in Caregiver Program are likely to stay in their caregiver roles after completing the required number of years before gaining permanent residency instead of pursuing other jobs related to their educational background. As such, research suggests Filipinos disproportionately enter and stay in jobs that don't require post-secondary education despite their higher credentials, such as clerical work, retail, hospitality, and manufacturing (Abada et al., 2009).

Cost of post-secondary education

Touching upon more systemic obstacles, financial barriers impact the post-secondary plans of Filipino students. This ties into the theme of deprofessionalization of Filipino immigrant parents above. An article by Kelly (2014a) states that unrecognized credentials in Canada results in Filipino parents going into low-paying jobs. The low pay faced by immigrants who cannot work in their area of expertise makes university education unaffordable for many (Kelly, 2014b), making it difficult for children to reproduce the educational attainment of their parents (Kelly, 2014a). There is also a perceived lack of adequate financial support from governmental programming. Kelly and Mulas (2014) state that Filipino parents and students need to be more aware of OSAP, that loans need to be made more accessible, and repayment terms need to be lengthened to ensure that debt is not a deterrent to post-secondary education.

Post-secondary representation

We found that Filipinos are one of the largest groups to immigrate to Canada but are not well represented in post-secondary education. In a study done at the University of British Columbia, Filipino students felt both marginalized and privileged to be attending university because of the underrepresentation of Filipinos in the student population. Students interviewed in this study shared concern for the lack of representation of Filipinos within the student population and reported feeling isolated on campus (Mendoza, 2012).

Researchers have noted the importance of proper representation and increased access to role models. Kelly and Mulas (2014) talk about role models inspiring Filipino youth to pursue educational aspirations and programs providing networking opportunities for youth to learn about diverse career options from their role model's successes. Filipino students at UBC speculated that more Filipinos attend local colleges for "academic standard reasons" but Filipino representation was lacking in universities (Mendoza, 2012). To increase Filipino student representation in higher education and academic positions, Coloma (2012) recommends better mentoring and post-secondary pathway programming to support Filipino students in achieving their educational careers at a post-secondary level. Another study by Kelly (2014b) found that role models and mentoring opportunities are important to Filipino youth. Filipinos currently and historically gravitate towards lower-status occupations in Canada, which influences the way Filipino youth make sense of their identity. Kelly (2014b) notes that if youth are unable to see or

imagine themselves in higher-level jobs, they are more likely to have lowered aspirations and expectations for their own future.

A study done in British Columbia shows that fewer Filipino girls pursued university education compared to Filipino boys if they immigrated at a younger age (Pratt, 2012), which Farrales (Farrales, 2011) interpreted was likely due to normative gender roles. Filipino girls would take on caretaking roles throughout high school and become responsible for the home while their parents went to work. This can result in young girls not having enough time to obtain a high school diploma before adulthood and/or pursuing maternal jobs that do not always require post-secondary education (Farrales, 2011).

Discussion

Existing literature largely suggests that people of Filipino descent attend post-secondary education at a lower rate compared to other visible minorities. Filipinos are underrepresented in universities (Abada et al., 2009; Brunet & Galarneau, 2022; Kelly, 2014a; Kelly et al., 2014; Mendoza, 2012; Statistics Canada, 2007, 2022, 2023c; Young et al., 2012) and experience low intergenerational educational mobility (Abada et al., 2009; Abada & Lin, 2014; Chen & Hou, 2019; Farrales, 2011; Farrales & Pratt, 2012; “Fil-Can Youths Not Doing as Well as Parents,” 2012; Kelly, 2014a; Kelly et al., 2014; Pratt, 2012; Rothon et al., 2009; Sato & Este, 2017). Gender and age of immigration also appear to influence post-secondary outcomes (Collymore, 2012; Kelly et al., 2014; Pratt, 2012; Statistics Canada, 2007, 2020). High school outcomes are mixed; older data suggests poorer outcomes for children who speak Tagalog at home (Pratt, 2012), while newer data shows that Filipinos complete high school at a higher rate compared to the total visible minority population (Statistics Canada, 2019). We also captured studies focusing on Southeast Asians, which revealed similar trends as Filipino-specific studies (Kelly et al., 2014; Robson et al., 2018; Saraswati, 2000; Statistics Canada, 2023b, 2023a). We found limited data about Filipinos in Hamilton (Mosaic Research Solutions, 2016), but we can infer that trends may be similar.

We found discrepancies about post-secondary rates which can largely be attributed to outdated data. We only found one source stating that Filipinos are among the visible minority groups with the highest university attainment (Saraswati, 2000), however the data source was unclear. All other data published since then supports the finding that Filipinos attend post-secondary education at lower rates. In fact, comparing Census data suggests a downward trend. According to the 2001 Census, 31% of Filipinos in Canada aged 15 years and older attended university (Statistics Canada, 2007). This number decreased to 4.4% in the 2021 Census (Statistics Canada, 2022). Similarly, all sources stated that Filipino males have lower post-secondary attainment compared to Filipino females except two studies based on the 2001 Census that examined a narrower age range (Pratt, 2012; Rothon et al., 2009).

A major limitation to our research is that it is difficult to ascertain when data is about Filipinos who studied in Canada or if they studied in another country (e.g., prior to immigrating). We could only ascertain this in studies focusing on students at Canadian schools (Mendoza, 2012; Mosaic Research Solutions, 2016; Pratt, 2012; Young et al., 2012). However, most sources that found rates and trends were based on national statistics (Abada et al., 2009; Abada & Lin, 2014; Brunet & Galarneau, 2022; Kelly, 2014a; Kelly et al., 2014; Pratt, 2012; Rothon et al., 2009; Statistics Canada, 2007, 2019, 2020, 2022, 2023a). These offer a snapshot of all Filipinos living in Canada but do not specify where their credentials were obtained. We did not exclude these

studies because they largely focus on education systems in Canada. When comparing Filipinos to other groups, there is also a similar degree of uncertainty about where they completed post-secondary school. Overall, this highlights the need for more quantitative research about Filipinos' post-secondary attendance in Canada.

We also found that despite Filipinos not always being categorized as Southeast Asian, specifically in national statistics, both groups had similar post-secondary outcomes. During consultations with our community partners, they hypothesized that these groups might have similar experiences due to historical contexts of immigration (A. Ragsag, personal communication, November 24, 2023). Our findings suggest the need to support Filipino youth and the broader Southeast Asian community in Canada.

Reasons for Filipinos' relatively low post-secondary rates were interconnected, which prompted us to conceptualize them into an adapted ecological systems model. At the microsystems level, Filipino youth and their parents are less engaged in school (Austria, 2015; Caro, 2008; Collymore, 2012; Farrales, 2011, 2017; Kelly, 2014a; Pratt, 2012; Reyes, 2022). Filipino youth experience pressures as a result of their parents' deprofessionalization (Collymore, 2012; Kelly, 2014b; McElhinny et al., 2009; Pratt, 2012; Saraswati, 2000; Statistics Canada, 2023c) and lack confidence to pursue careers that would require post-secondary education (Kelly, 2014a; Kelly & Mulas, 2014; Mais, 2012; McElhinny et al., 2009). At the mesosystems level, we identified barriers within the educational system that stalled newly immigrated Filipino youth's educational trajectory, including streaming practices (Austria, 2015; Statistics Canada, 2023a), ESL classes (Austria, 2015; Farrales, 2011, 2017; Kelly, 2014a), and devaluation of prior academic credentials (Farrales, 2017; Pratt, 2012; Reyes, 2022). Filipinos also experience a lack of cultural representation in curriculums (Abada et al., 2009; Coloma, 2012; Kelly & Mulas, 2014; Li, 2000) and face barriers due to the cost of post-secondary education (Austria, 2015; Kelly, 2014a, 2014b; Kelly & Mulas, 2014). At the macrosystems level, we identified immigration and labour policies that impact Filipinos in Canada such as the LCP (Austria et al., 2016; Collymore, 2012; Eric, 2012; Farrales, 2011; Farrales & Pratt, 2012; Goli, 2009; Kelly, 2014a; Mais, 2012; Ogbu & Simons, 1998; Pratt, 2010, 2012; Pratt et al., 2008; Raska, n.d.; Statistics Canada, 2023a). Labour market structures and deprofessionalization (Abada et al., 2009; "Fil-Can Youths Not Doing as Well as Parents," 2012; Kelly, 2014a; Saraswati, 2000; Statistics Canada, 2023a), as well as lack of representation in broader societal roles (Coloma, 2012; Farrales, 2011; Kelly, 2014b; Kelly & Mulas, 2014; Mendoza, 2012), were also barriers.

Regarding immigration and labour policies, there have been significant policy changes since many of our sources were published. The LCP was the focus of many studies, but it was closed to new applicants in 2014 when the live-in requirements for caregivers were removed (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2017; Statistics Canada, 2023a). Other programs have since been implemented that still allow immigrants to enter Canada as caregivers (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2024), which may involve different experiences than what we learned about the LCP. Regardless, the caregiver program continues to be a major immigration pathway for Filipinos (Statistics Canada, 2023a) and may still influence Filipino youths' post-secondary outcomes. Another major policy change was in 2019 when caregivers who are not permanent residents can gain entry for their spouse and children via work and study permits (Statistics Canada, 2023a). The ongoing Home Child Care Provider Pilot and Home Support Worker Pilot programs also mention that they "let qualified caregivers and their family members come to Canada with the goal of becoming permanent residents" (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2023). These suggest that caregivers may no longer need to be separated from family members as described in our findings. It is unclear how

these policies address the issues of family separation and migration timing, as well as their impact on post-secondary attainment.

Though we separated factors affecting post-secondary education into different levels (microsystem, mesosystem, and macrosystem) in our model, we emphasize that these tiers are not mutually exclusive. In fact, we found that different levels influence one another. Post-secondary representation is impacted by cultural influences and policies so while underrepresentation is seen in school settings, it is largely caused by macrosystem influences. Therefore, we categorized it as a macrosystem factor. We identified lack of representation in curriculums as a separate mesosystem factor because it is more directly influenced by the educational system. These higher levels link to our microsystem finding that youth who do not see Filipinos in a greater range of professions lack confidence to pursue these careers and are then less motivated to pursue post-secondary education (Kelly, 2014b; Kelly & Mulas, 2014; McElhinny et al., 2009). During discussions with our community partners, we explored remittances as a microlevel barrier relating to family relationships and the expectation to financially support family members in the Philippines. Our community partners hypothesized that this barrier is likely to be informed by structural healthcare policies at a macrolevel. They suggested that remittances are connected to structural expectations that highlight the lack of social protection in the Philippines, resulting in family members working abroad taking on a financial support role through remittance (A. Ragsag, personal communication, November 24, 2023).

Finally, we want to locate ourselves in the context of this research to make transparent how our perspectives and identities may have influenced our interpretations. Throughout the research process, we drew upon our personal experiences to relate to and make sense of our findings. KC, MC, and DM are Filipino-Canadians (KC is first-generation, MC and DM are second-generation). SK is second-generation Sri Lankan-Canadian and JC is second-generation Chinese-Canadian. All authors are currently pursuing or have completed post-secondary education.

Conclusion

Overall, our findings suggest that Filipino youth in Canada, as well as the greater Southeast Asian population, must be supported and encouraged in their pursuit to post-secondary education. This must be done at all levels of our adapted ecological systems model; for instance, including increasing motivation to complete academic work, improved recognition of foreign high school education and English knowledge, providing financial assistance for post-secondary education, and overall increasing Filipino representation at the post-secondary level. This could include establishing those of Filipino descent as an equity-deserving group in terms of academics, such as for specific scholarships and other opportunities.

Filipino-Canadians are marginally underrepresented in post-secondary institutions. As such, it is imperative to take appropriate action to increase their attendance rates no matter their sex, age of immigration, or family income level. Fortunately, the establishment of several organizations and groups, such as the Filipinas of HamOnt, are actively working towards improving the lives of Filipino youth in their community, such as in the region of Hamilton, and can contribute towards increasing Filipino youth post-secondary attendance rates.

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Appendix

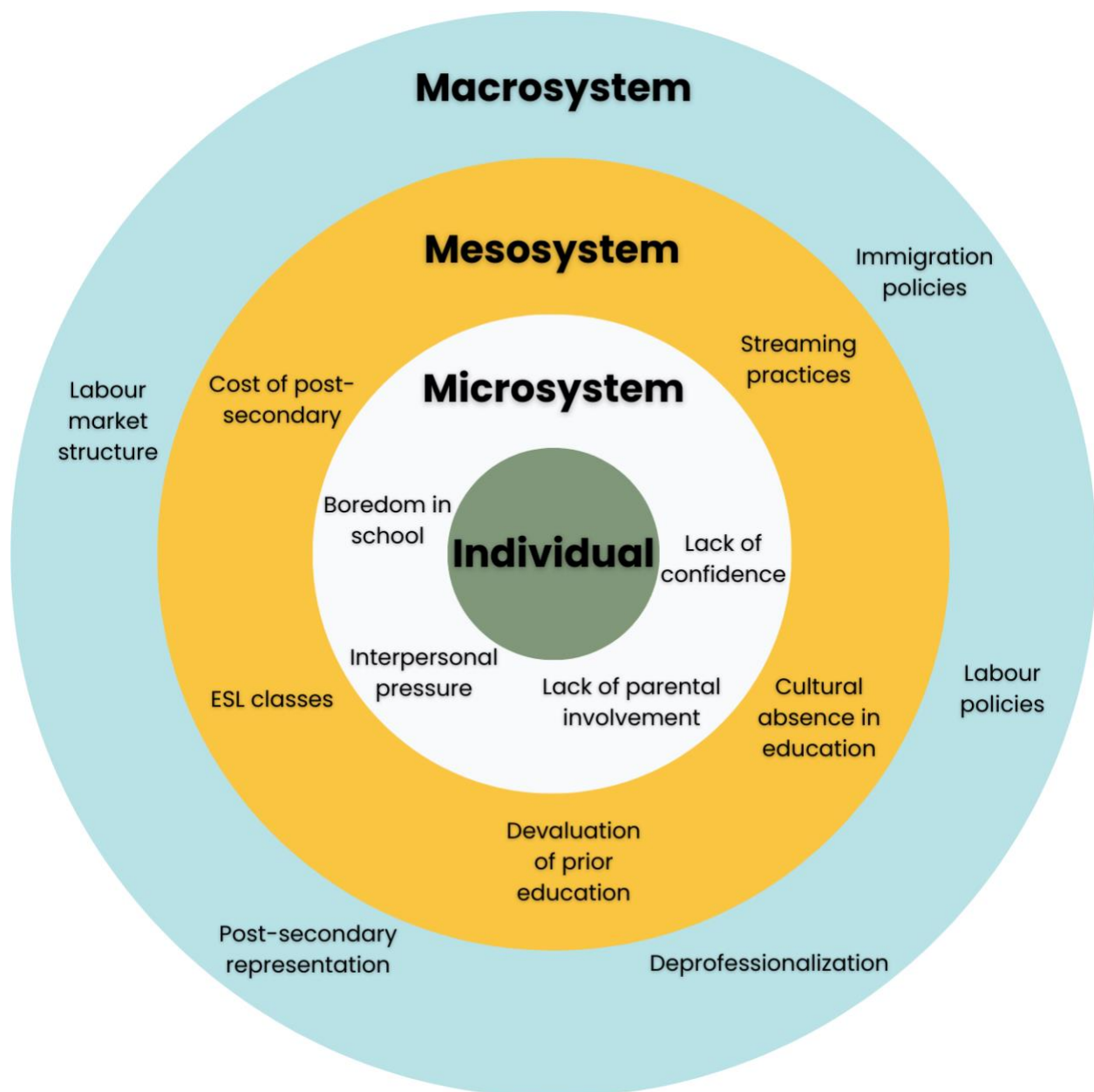


Figure 1. Adapted Ecological Systems model discussing empirical and theoretical barriers to post-secondary attendance among Filipinos. Each system represents the environmental influences on an individual's thoughts and behaviours. **Microsystem:** interpersonal relationships, self-perception, feelings, and priorities regarding educational and career pathways. **Meso-systems:** organizations and environments, specifically the educational system. **Macro-systems:** cultural influences, ideologies, social norms, government, legislation, economy.