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### Title

Dancing a Shared History: The Lasting Implications of Spanish Colonization for Contemporary Mexican and Filipino Dance

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### Author

Montoya, Marisa

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Dr.  
Department of

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Dr. Richard Cardullo, Howard H Hays Chair and Faculty Director, University Honors  
Interim Vice Provost, Undergraduate Education

## **Abstract**

## Acknowledgments



## Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgments.....	iii

## Introduction

When I was a high school student deciding on where I wanted to spend the next four years in college, I decided on the University of California, Riverside because of its recognized status as being the most culturally diverse UC campus. I knew I wanted to be in an environment with people from various backgrounds and I was eager to learn about the ways in which others' lives differed from mine. But unbeknownst to myself at the time, I would ultimately learn about *myself* through the ways in which others' lives were *similar* to mine as opposed to being *different* from mine as I initially imagined.

I identify as a fourth generation Mexican-American. I grew up in a predominately Mexican and White population. The town in which I was raised was made up of people who either looked like me or were White. Therefore, aside from my Mexican culture, I was never fully immersed in other cultures and had little knowledge about the various traditional practices of different cultures, although I was always interested in learning more. Sadly, I never had a full grasp on the history of my own culture, either. However, upon entering college, I joined a cultural organization that pushed me to question my origins and learn about not only my own cultural history, but that of others as well. A question I commonly received as part of the cultural organization was, "Are you Filipino?" For I did not join a Chicax or Latinx organization, but rather a Filipinx cultural organization called Katipunan.

In addition to the general meetings and social events that are common within cultural organizations, another important aspect of Katipunan is known as PCN, or Pilipino Culture Night. This event serves as a way for college students to perform the Filipino culture on stage through a theater performance that intertwines various dance performances with an original play. College students from all over California partake in this production, despite the huge time

commitment and months of preparation that PCN participants must endure. The earliest work ever presented that resembled a PCN was organized by Bruna P. Seril in 1943 in New York. By the mid-1980s, PCN had become a well-known show and had solidified into an important tradition that showcased the Filipino culture. (Gonzalves 89).

By the time I was in my first year of college, the production of PCN was an event that all Katipunan members were encouraged to partake in. Although I had neither heard of such a performance nor knew of anything to compare it to within my own culture, I knew I would enjoy performing on stage. So I decided to give it a try. The dance I was assigned to was called the *Pasodoble Caviteña*, which is a dance from the Maria Clara suite. When I put on the dance costume, a dress with a large petticoat, shawl, and heels, I could not help but feel as if I was performing a Spanish style dance. As I embodied the attitude and performed the movements of the dance, I felt a connection to my own culture. I would later learn that the dances within the Maria Clara suite are embedded with dance movements and style from Spain as a result of Spanish colonization. This fact and the feeling I had when performing the *Pasodoble Caviteña*, pushed me to dive further into the history of Spain, which eventually led me to unearth the overlapping histories of two cultures.

## Evolution of Mexican and Filipino Dance as a Result of Spanish Colonization

With a simple search online, I was connected to a plethora of information about the history of Mexico and the Philippines under Spanish rule and how Spain was able to make these peoples succumb. First, I found that Spain's colonization of Mexico began in 1521 when Hernan Cortés led Spanish armies into the Aztec capital city of Tenochtitlán and easily took hostage of the Aztec ruler, Moctezuma II. Mexico City was then built on the ruins of the Aztec capital. All other indigenous tribes in Mexico, from the Pacific coast to inland regions, were defeated by Cortés's army as well (Mexico, 1400–1600 A.D.). In the Philippines, on the other hand, two expeditions to the islands were completed before the actual beginning of Spanish colonization. Historically, colonialism began in the Philippines in 1564 when Miguel López de Legaspi founded a Spanish settlement at Manila Bay and established Spanish leadership (Slack). Under the Spanish, both the Aztec and Filipino populations were subjected to the *encomienda* system, which forced the colonized populations into slave labor (Slack; Mexico, 1400–1600 A.D.). For the Aztecs, a drastic decline in their population occurred as a result of being forced to work under this system as well as facing diseases brought over from Europe with Cortés's invasion. Eventually, the imposition of colonial rule on the Aztec civilization led to its complete collapse under Spain's subjugation as a colonizing power (Mexico, 1400–1600 A.D.).

After doing general research on the colonization of Mexico and the Philippines, I sought to connect these histories to the dances I was performing for PCN. This led me to focus on the evolution of dance within the two cultures as a result of Spanish colonization, as Spanish influence on Aztec and Filipino dances is still evident today. Before Spanish colonization, the Aztecs of present day Mexico were highly fond of dance and used it as a brilliantly expressive art form (Scolieri 24; Mooney 1). Letters from the early Spanish conquerors and missionaries

documented the Aztec dances they witnessed and described them as depicting events such as the birth of the sun, the harvest, fishing, hunting, combat, victory, marriage, fertility, wealth, the offering of human sacrifices, death, burial, home building, and religious functions (Mooney 1; Scolieri 27). The Spaniards described the massive participation of the Aztec people in the dances, marveled at the agility of the performers, and described the colorful displays throughout the dances such as costumes adorned with flowers, gold, jade, jewels, and obsidian, and the use of masks and rattles. The music accompanying the dances was often produced by drums, rasps, seashells, pipes, various primitive wind instruments, songs, and a wooden percussion instrument called the *mayohabao* (Mooney 1; Scolieri 31). The Spaniards also described their horror upon observing the dances that occurred before and after human sacrificial rituals. In addition to dances such as these, the Aztecs also partook in dances for fun and entertainment, often occurring after feasts such as when Moctezuma wished to relax (Mooney 1). Furthermore, dancing took place in schools, as it was obligatory for children to participate. People from all social classes, men and women, participated in the dances. But most ritual dances were performed by men. When women were participants in a dance, the male and female dancers were never allowed to touch (1).

When Spanish soldiers entered and eventually conquered the Aztec Empire, they brought with them a rich form of folk dance and music that incorporated Greco-Roman, Byzantine, Moslem, Basque, and Gypsy elements (Mooney 2). Dances that accompanied religious festivals such as the pre-Lenten Carnival, Christmas, Corpus Christi, Holy Week, and various saints' days were brought over as well, soon replacing Aztec religious dances, including human sacrificial dances (Mooney 2; Scolieri 130). Furthermore, dances such as the *jotas*, *fandangos*, *seguidillas*, *zapateados*, *boleros*, *zambras*, and other dances from various Spanish provinces, which were

frequently danced during parties or galas, were introduced to the Aztecs. In addition, the Spaniards brought their guitars and viols with them and performed songs in meters such as 2/4, 3/4, 3/8, 6/8, 9/8, and 5/8, which were unknown to the Aztecs, for their dances did not traditionally follow a regularized meter (Mooney 2). Eventually, early Europeans sought to replace native music and dance with European forms, which took place through the teaching of hymns in the native Indian language and through the teaching of how to play and construct European instruments (Scolieri 130; Mooney 2). As a result, indigenous music was almost entirely supplanted by European forms of music. A new form of music was subsequently created. From example, the Mexican corrido was created out of Spanish ballads. (Mooney 2).

Over time, the Aztecs mimicked the movements of the Spanish dances they observed and became fond of some of these dances (Mooney 4). As a result, steps and patterns from Spanish style dances were adopted by the Aztecs and changes were made to the Spanish dances to make them more their own. These changes included aligning the movements more with the Indian postures, dancing in ways that would accommodate the Indian sandal rather than the Spanish high heel, altering the names of dances, and using different music (4). Purely Spanish dance forms and purely Aztec dance forms eventually intermingled to such a great extent that the origins of mestizaje thus began (Moreman 1). Mestizaje, or the blending of two cultures, was not only displayed in the dance forms of the people, but also through the literal mixing of Aztec and Spanish blood through intermarriage. This led to a new cultural identity being formed and perpetuated: that of the Mexican national. With a new cultural identity and a new form of dance, what is known as present-day Mexican folk dances began to form.

The creation of a mestizaje identity occurred much differently for Filipinos than it did for Mexicans. The mixing of Spanish and Aztec blood led to the formation of the Mexican people,

who became an entirely new cultural group with an intermixed, yet unique, identity. Alternatively for Filipinos, interaction with the Spaniards during the time of Spanish colonization did not create a new cultural being as it did for Mexicans. Instead, the Filipino Mestizo was formed out of Spanish influences that simply altered the Filipino culture rather than combining with the Filipino culture to establish an entirely new identity. The Spaniards influenced the Filipino culture by imposing Spanish traditions onto the Filipinos, but Filipinos maintained their heritage and cultural outlook. In the book *Queering Mestizaje: Transculturation and Performance*, Alicia Arrizón explains the process of creating a mestizaje identity without changing the entire culture. She says, “Mestizo cultures represent more than the synthesis of indigenous traditions with those of Europeans and/or Africans. It epitomizes the in-betweenness of identities produced by the impact of colonial/cultural encounters and their intimate relation to social processes” (Arrizón 1). Although influences from the Spaniards during colonization led to a mestizaje identity for both Filipinos and Mexicans, Filipinos did not re-label their culture as did the Mexican people. The mestizo Filipino that was created from the hispanization of the Filipino culture is exemplified by Maria Clara, a prominent character in the novel *Noli Me Tangere* by José Rizal. Maria Clara embodies the mestiza Filipina identity by displaying aspects of her original Filipino culture as well as influences from the Spaniards. Over time, Maria Clara evolved into a symbol representing Filipinas, within dance as well as within Filipino society. As testament to this, an entire suite of Filipino cultural dances expressing the creation of the mestizaje identity was named after her.

Sources that document the creation and transformation of Filipino folk dances after Spanish colonization are, unfortunately, quite limited, especially when compared to the primary source information available on Aztec dances. Research on and the documentation of Filipino

folk dances did not take place until the American colonization of the Philippines in the 1920s. Francisca Reyes Aquino, who was at the time the Physical Director of Women Students at the University of the Philippines, undertook the task of documenting Filipino dances (Patrick 402). With the support of the President of the University, Dr. Jorge Bocobo, Aquino served as the pioneer for preserving Philippine folk dances that were on the verge of disappearing as the influx of Western thought began pushing aside traditional dance forms in favor of Western dance forms. As a result, folk dances began to be viewed as an art form practiced solely by older people or “backward country folk” (Alejandro 2). But through her ethnographic research, Aquino was able to document more than 200 Filipino folk dances in a series of books entitled *Philippine National Dances* (Alejandro 2; Patrick 403). Aquino collected the dances through field research, visiting the sites where the dances took place and often physically partaking in the dance rituals herself. The dances were then collected and organized into suites, which were made up of dances with a similar theme or from a distinct region. The suites include *The Maria Clara Suite*, *The Tribal Suite* or *The Mountain Suite*, *The Muslim Suite* or *The Moro Suite*, *The Rural Suite*, and *The Cordillera Suite* or *The Ethnic Suite* (Patrick 401).

Despite Aquino’s extensive work documenting Philippine folk dances, the dances collected are sometimes regarded as inauthentic because the method by which the dances were recorded could change the original form of the dances. As an example, Aquino adapted the dances she collected so that they would be best suited for viewing on a stage as opposed to simply performing the dances in everyday life. This involved shortening many of the dances for the sake of the audience as well as time restraints imposed by theaters. The dances collected by Aquino would then be adopted by Philippine dance companies who would perform them for the public. (Patrick 4). Although her attempts to preserve these folk dances using her own methods



could be controversial to some, the present-day extant knowledge about Philippine folk dancing, whether it is considered authentic or influenced by the documentation process, can be attributed to Aquino's efforts.

## The Problem of Authenticity

When considering the traditional aspect of folk dances, it can be problematic to distinguish between what is truly authentic and what has been added to or changed about folk dances over time. However, I believe that changes to a folk dance do not always compromise its authenticity. Folk dances are often popular dances that are traditional or ritualistic among a particular country or group of people. These dances evolve naturally alongside patterns of daily living and frequently represent significant events in a culture's history or serve to display the experiences of the people who created the dance. Folk dances serve as defining characteristics of the people performing them and are customarily transmitted from generation to generation. This passing on of dances through generations preserves the past whence the dances originated, and a cultural tradition or heritage of the people is thus formed (Friese). Therefore, to perform a folk dance that is specific to a country or a particular group of people is to perform a representation of their culture and traditions. Furthermore, folk dances are a method for understanding the cultural background and history of a nation or group of people (Friese).

I am of the opinion that it is inevitable that folk dances change just as ways of living change within a cultural group and that those changes go on to become representative of the culture, because those changes come from within the culture itself. As a culture naturally transforms itself, changes to the folk dances within that culture can be expected to occur as well. The people within a culture will knowingly or unknowingly update the ways in which they perform a particular folk dance as their culture evolves. Alterations to folk dances as a result of a changing culture can thus be anticipated. Additionally, when change to a culture does occur, it continues to accurately characterize the culture. This is made possible because the changes imposed onto the culture were created by the culture itself.

However, a point of contention could be whether a folk dance can still be considered an authentic folk dance when it includes outside influences from another culture. Furthermore, with the acceptance of foreign elements, the cultural traditions representing a single group of people through folk dances could be diminished and the authenticity of the dance may be compromised. Thus, a downward spiral is thought to begin, as the dances being passed on to future generations become less and less recognizable as the original dance. As a result, authentic dances may no longer be taught and can lead to the ultimate disappearance of the original form of the folk dance. As a way to revitalize the dances that were lost to outside influences, an analysis of the past is required to determine what is truly authentic for the culture so that the dance can continue its second life (Dzadzevic). However, despite any claim that there is a problem with the authenticity of dances that exhibit foreign influences, I argue that a dance does not lose its authentic value by embracing an historical past containing foreign influences. I have found it rather difficult to uncover primary source information that solely references the truly authentic form of a folk dance, especially when minimal documentation of a dance's history exists in the first place. In other words, most documentation of folk dances is not done so without some regard to outside influences. In many cultures, the meanings and movements behind a particular dance are solely known through oral traditions. With no written documentation, it is difficult to ascertain whether the movement in a dance was created by the culture itself, changed due to foreign rule, or added based on one's personal style. Considering these factors, one can only speculate on the original form of the dance. However, I believe that accepting and incorporating these changes into a dance's structure does not compromise its authenticity. All changes to a dance, whether from outside influence or from within the culture itself, are now a part of the

dance's history and these changes deserve acknowledgement without insinuations about the authenticity of the dance being compromised.

## From Acceptance to Acknowledgment as a Form of Resistance

During the time of Spanish colonization of the Philippines and Mexico, Spanish influences were incorporated into many aspects of civilian life, resulting in a transference of culture. These influences appeared in the food, religion, and most especially, the dances. Many dance forms that were traditional to Spain, such as the Waltz, Fandango, Polka, and Jota, were introduced to the two cultures. As Spanish colonizers increased their influence over the two cultures, the native populations came to accept Spanish dance styles and incorporated them into their traditional dances in an effort to make the dances their own. This integration of Spanish influences and traditional dances created an entirely new style of dance containing both native and foreign influences. However, as I discussed previously, creation of this dance was accompanied by the rise of the problem of authenticity because it was nearly impossible to separate the native and foreign components of the dance in the effort to uncover its traditional and original form. Again, as I argued earlier, a traditional dance can be regarded as a symbol of the past, as it contains a culture's customs and serves as a method of depicting history through the movements of the body. These kinds of assumptions underpin many attempts to uncover and preserve traditional dance forms. But I instead propose that colonization and the influences left by the colonizer are now a part of history and make the dances containing foreign influences authentic, especially when considering traditional dances as a symbol of the past. Spanish colonization is now embedded in the history of both the Philippines and Mexico. I further propose that, in comparison with the past when influences from Spanish colonizers were merely accepted, today an *acknowledgment* of those influences can and does occur, because they should be seen and treated as a part of those cultures themselves. I believe that, when the Filipino and Mexican people acknowledge their history of colonization and embrace it as a part of their

culture, they are partaking in a form of resistance against colonization as well as against the search for “authentic” native dance forms. Performing dances containing foreign and native elements, I believe, does not further perpetuate the influences of the colonizer. Rather, by recognizing their history of colonization through the continued performance of dances with colonial influences, both the Philippines and Mexico display their survival through their colonization. Owning these influences and presenting them through dance signifies that these cultures have withstood and overcome colonization. This displays the incredible endurance of these two cultures. Furthermore, with no indication of colonial influences in the dances, a comparison between the Mexican and Filipino cultures may never have come to fruition. When immersed in both cultures as I have been, the presence of foreign influences in Mexican and Filipino dances allows for the shared history of surviving and resisting colonization to be felt. Without foreign influences, Mexican and Filipino dances may not have led me to the connections I made between both cultures.

*When did it become a history?*

I have established thus far that colonization created a blending of colonial and indigenous dance elements so much so that colonial influences on dance became a part of the indigenous culture’s history. An attempt must be made, at this point, to determine *when* these blended dances became an integral part of the historical identity of the population. Perhaps this identity occurred over time as the older generation taught the dances to the younger, possibly distinguishing colonial influence from native traditional dance movements, possibly not. What is important is that each generation, learning from the one that came before, continued to teach the younger generation and to pass on knowledge of the dances as they were remembered. Finally, when every primary source of information was no longer living, subsequent generations

considered their dances a part of their traditional culture due to their repeated performance through many generations. In this way, I consider these dances a part of the culture's historical past and purport that dance can be seen as a living history as well as a living example of mestizaje.

*How is it a form of resistance?*

In my experience, members of the Filipino and Mexican cultures today proudly claim their historical roots, including the influence of colonization on their people. They do so, however, not to demonstrate their acceptance of the subservience they were forced to give their colonizers. Instead, embracing the effects of colonization on their cultures is an indication that these people deem colonization as a part of their *own* history, *not* the history of their oppressors. For example, when students in PCN continue to perform dances that display combined cultural aspects, they are, in a sense, partaking in a form of resistance to the colonizing culture. I strongly believe that when a culture perpetuates colonial influences in its dances, the culture is purposefully acknowledging the colonization that occurred in its past which, in turn, indicates a lack of fear that the culture possesses towards its colonizers. This acknowledgment of the past through dance serves as a way for the previously suppressed Filipino and Mexican peoples to reclaim their cultural identities. In today's performances, Filipino and Mexican cultural dances embrace the Spanish influence by utilizing musical arrangements, footwork, arm movements, and styles of dress from Spain but still proclaim the dance their own. As each generation performs these dances, all dance modifications choreographed into the dance, whether from decades ago or from the present day, can be considered authentic. For in the moment, each generation owns the dance that it has created, as it is a reflection of authenticity as it relates to the generation at hand.

## *Transculturation*

I have argued thus far that, when people from a particular culture allow their dances to accede to change, regardless of the change's origins, the authenticity of the dances is not undermined but instead continues to have the ability to accurately represent the culture. When a culture purposefully allows change into their traditions, we can use the term transculturation to describe this occurrence. Transculturation is the process by which a subordinate culture selects aspects of the dominant culture they wish to be transmitted or altered to become a permanent part of their culture. This term was first used in the 1940s by Fernando Ortiz, a Cuban sociologist. Mary Louise Pratt explains its usage as a way to “replace overly reductive concepts of acculturation and assimilation used to characterize culture under conquest.” She further argues that, “while subordinate peoples do not usually control what emanates from the dominant culture, they do determine to varying extents what gets absorbed into their own and what it gets used for” (Pratt 36). The ways in which the Filipino people and the Mexican people chose to accept influences from their Spanish colonizers is important to consider in and of itself. With regards to dance, the peoples at the time of colonization adopted specific aspects of dance from the Spaniards that were then reinvented to better fit into their traditions. Although Filipinos and Mexicans could not prevent Spanish colonialism from occurring, they *were* able to actively choose *what* parts of the imposed Spanish culture they would allow to become a part of their culture. Essentially, Mexicans and Filipinos were unable to stop the Spaniards from imposing on their traditions, however, they were able to sort through which changes to their culture they would accept. Although it led to the transformation of many dances, this selection process deserves recognition. Therefore, the dances that evolved from colonization remain authentic as a result of the process of transculturation.



### *PCN as a Contact Zone*

The method of transculturation also plays a part in the phenomenon of what is known as the contact zone. The contact zone is defined as “social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today” (Pratt 34). In hindsight, I was unknowingly, at the time, in a contact zone as I partook in PCN. This participation served as a way for me to become an active agent in learning about another culture. The dance portion of PCN gave me a space to actively perform the shared elements within a dance as a result of Spanish colonization. Being provided a space such as this is referred to by scholar Mary Louise Pratt as a contact zone. My Mexican culture and the Filipino culture in which I was becoming immersed met as a result of my participation in PCN and brought to light the shared colonial experience between the two cultures. The aftermath of colonization, evident in the dances still containing Spanish influence, played out on stage as I performed. However, actively choosing to perform the Filipino dances containing Spanish influences during PCN serves as a form of acknowledgement, a nod, to a people that survived colonization. As a result, the existence of colonial influences in the dances allows a common ground between the Filipino and Mexican cultures to be discovered, which is how my shared experience with the Filipino culture came to fruition. The possibility of discovering colonial similarities across cultures is, in my viewpoint, justification for dance performances to include foreign influence instead of omitting it. Additionally, to omit this influence shows a lack of acknowledgment for a culture’s historical past and the part the past plays in forming the present-day manifestation of the culture. Conversely, to include the dance’s outside influence is to validate its authenticity as historically inclusive and sound. In the following section, I will discuss in depth two dances that

have maintained cultural originality while simultaneously exhibiting influences of the Spanish as they are performed.

## Sharing Influences – An Analysis of Dance

The performance of a cultural dance can be made accurate through teaching the technical aspects of the dance. But to focus solely on the mechanics of a dance without understanding the traditions of the people performing the dance does not fully capture the historical significance of the dance. The book by Gertrude Mooney entitled *Mexican Folk Dances for American Schools* explains the technicalities of various Mexican folk dances, such as specific foot placements and costumes, as a way to help students and teachers learn the dances. However, she also provides an extensive historical background of each dance form as a way to help students fully embody the dance they are learning and performing. By uncovering a dance's past, the ways in which it is currently being performed can be understood with much more clarity, leading to a more holistic dance experience. With the dancer's understanding of the history behind a dance, the modified elements of a dance can be unveiled, such as influences from colonizers. Exposing these alterations by understanding the history can ultimately lead to participation in a contact zone with other cultures who share similar modifications to their dances. With this in mind, I will analyze two dances, the Jarabe Tapatío and the Cariñosa, which were created during Spanish colonization.

### *The Jarabe*

When the Spanish colonists introduced the Jarabe to the Mexican people, they performed it without changing its original execution (Mooney 19). Typically, the Mexican people performed the Jarabe for festive occasions (Covarrubias 29). The original footwork had its origins in various Spanish dances. This included the Seguidilla, which reached its height of popularity in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Fandango, also popular in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and the Zambra, a Moorish dance (Mooney 19). In addition to these influences, the Jarabe often contained a

hopping step that resembled the flamenco dances from Spain, which imitated the movements of a courting bird. This pattern of movement is thought to have origins in a Huichol dance called The Turkey (Covarrubias 29). Furthermore, most of the music that accompanied the Jarabe came from the fifteenth century gypsy Spanish. (Mooney 19). The Jarabe, however, was soon modified and adjusted to the circumstances and temperament of the Mexican people. At this point, the Jarabe contained the steps found in the zapateados from the Spaniards as well as the movements, temperament, and themes relevant to the Indian and Mestizo. The word 'Jarabe' is translated into English as "syrup," which reflects how the Jarabe is a sweet mixture of a dance containing many influences. Additionally, the word 'sweet' serves as a term of endearment and further represents the dance, for the Jarabe is a dance of courtship (19).

Over time, as a result of the intermingling of peoples during the war of the French intervention, various dance steps and folk tunes from different Mexican dances across many regions combined to form a single dance called the Jarabe Tapatío (Covarrubias 29; Mooney 21). Although several forms of the Jarabe exist, as different provinces in Mexico have their own version of the dance, the Jarabe Tapatío has become the prototype for all Mexican dances. The Jarabe Tapatío received the official title as the national dance of Mexico in 1920 by proclamation of the federal government, for it is symbolic of the integration of Mexico (Mooney 19). I believe that the Jarabe Tapatío is an appropriate dance to analyze in depth because of its popularity and frequent performance by people outside of the region of origin and because it globally represents the essence of Mexican folk dancing. Analyzing well-known dances is necessary because they are the dances most exposed to influences throughout the country and can truly capture and serve as a symbol for the culture of the people from all regions. Despite the fact that the Jarabe Tapatío is a dance heavily influenced by foreign cultures, it is still embraced by the people of Mexico and

performed as a display of the culture. In my opinion, the various influences from outside cultures is not being denied but rather flaunted through the wide acceptance and continued performance of the dance.

### *The Jarabe Tapatío*

The Jarabe Tapatío is a Mexican folk dance commonly referred to by Americans as the “Mexican Hat Dance” due to the dance step in which the female dancer rhythmically steps in and out of the rim of her partner’s *sombrero*. According to Guillermina Dickins, the Jarabe Tapatío is said to have first been danced at the Coliseo in Mexico City on July 9th, 1790. The dance was then performed by a Spanish clown dressed in woman’s clothing and included the singing of lyrics considered indecent at the time. These two performances made the dance widely popular with the public and consequently, the dance was banned in 1802 by the Viceroy, Don Felix Berenguer. The Jarabe Tapatío was later revived by the French court of Maximilian and Carlota and became a dance frequently performed by the Guadajalajaran high society (30). In publications that do not reference this story of the dance’s origins, the Jarabe Tapatío is only said to have originated just outside the region of Guadajalajara, the capital of the state of Jalisco (Mooney 21; Kendrick 48; Segovia 87). The dance received its name because the people who lived in Jalisco were called Tapatíos and because the adjective “tapatío” referred to anything that came from the state of Jalisco (Kendrick 48; Segovia 87).

In the dance, the male dancer is referred to as the *charro* and the female dancer is called the *china* (Mooney 21). The steps of the dance consist of the *charro* persistently trying to woo his *china*, who acts coquettishly to his advances throughout the dance (Kendrick 48). Near the end of the dance, the *charro* throws his *sombrero* at his *china*’s feet for her to step in and out of the brim of the hat. When the *china* picks up the hat and puts it on her head, the *charro* knows he

has won his lady's love and they finish the dance with the last step called the *Diana*, which serves as a figurative congratulations to the couple and a hope for a happily ever after (Mooney 21; Kendrick 48).

The costumes of this dance are viewed as the national costumes of Mexico (Mooney 21). The *charro* wears the traditional costume of the Mexican horseman, which is often viewed as a glorified version of the Mexican cowboy. The same type of *charro* costume is also worn in another dance from Jalisco called *Las Espuelas de Amozoc* (Segovia 28). The costume consists of a two-piece suit with a waist-length jacket and tight-fitting trousers, both typically made of a brown or black cloth, wool, or chamois leather (Dickins 30; Mooney 21; Segovia 28). The jacket and sleeves are often decorated with embroidery or have elaborate designs with gold or silver braids or silver buttons (Segovia 28; Mooney 21). The pants of the costume are also embroidered or have gold or silver braiding down the outside seam of the leg along with gold or silver buttons or gold leaves (Dickins 31; Mooney 21). The *charro* wears a silk necktie fashioned into a bow that is typically red but is sometimes green or a blend of green, red, and white. Under the jacket the male dancer most often wears a white shirt, however a pink, red, or tan shirt can be worn as well (Segovia 28; Dickins 31; Mooney 21). A *sarape*, which is a woven blanket made of bright colors, is usually folded and draped over one shoulder (Dickins 31; Segovia 28). However, sometimes the *sarape* is only worn for a greater costume effect (Mooney 21). Occasionally, a sash tied around the waist or a leather belt holding a pistol is worn as well (Segovia 28; Dickins 31). Black boots are worn outside the trousers and a wide-brimmed hat, or *sombrero*, is worn on the head. The *sombrero* is made of heavy felt and can either be black, brown, white, or grey. The *sombrero* is embroidered with silver or gold thread to match the *charro*'s suit and is decorated as elaborately as the *charro* prefers or can afford (Dickins 31; Segovia 28; Mooney 21). Spurs can

be worn as well but they are not commonly used. If the jacket is not worn, a tan long-sleeved over-shirt called a *guayabera* is worn instead. The *guayabera* falls a little below waist length, buttons down the front and ties below the buttons with two tails, and is embroidered elaborately on the back, sometimes with the Mexican eagle (Segovia 28; Mooney 21).

The female dancer, or the *china*, wears the costume of the *China Poblana*, which is the nationally recognized feminine costume (Segovia 87). The origin of the costume is possibly derived from a delightful legend that centers on a girl referred to as the *China Poblana*. The time of the legend varies between sources, but it is suggested to have occurred at some time between the 1620s and the 1690s (Mooney 22; Segovia 87). During this time, pirates infested the Mexican seas and took control of a Chinese boat that was traveling from Manila to Acapulco (Segovia 87). On the boat was the young, little, and beautiful Princess Mina who is referenced as being either of Mongolian or Chinese descent (Segovia 87; Dickins 31; Mooney 22). Princess Mina was taken hostage by a nobleman who was chief of the pirates, but he was more interested in the value of her luggage and sold her as a slave to a merchant once back in Manila. The merchant then traveled to Acapulco where he sold her to Captain Miguel Sosa, a wealthy and honorable captain who resided in the city of Puebla in Mexico. The captain then traveled back home to his distinguished family with the princess (Segovia 87; Dickins 31). What happened to the princess next varies according to who is telling the story. In one version, the captain and his family adopted the princess as a daughter. Throughout the city, she was much admired for her kindness and virtue and the heavily embroidered costume she wore was imitated frequently by the people in the city. After she died, the costume she wore was named after her to honor the memory of her kind-heartedness. Therefore, *china* referred to her Chinese background and *poblana* referred to her living the rest of her life in Puebla (Dickins 31).

In another version of the story, after the captain took the princess to his home, she became a servant to him and his wife in their home. As a slave, she did many good deeds for the poor and when she got homesick, she sewed herself a costume to wear that had tones of red and green and was embroidered in patterns similar to her ancient Chinese shawls. When she died, her ashes were buried in the Church of the Campana and a collection of her clothes were preserved at the Puebla State Museum. Although her clothes do not resemble the current *China Poblana* costume, this legend is regarded as a sweet story depicting a princess who made the clothes that became the national festival costume of her adopted nation (Mooney 22). However, the data surrounding the origins of the clothes found in the museum state that the clothes belonged to a troupe of actors and were found in an old warehouse (Segovia 88).

In the most detailed version of the story, after returning home to the city of Puebla, Captain Sosa gave Princess Mina her freedom. He then bought her costly jewels, such as pearls, and materials for her to create a new wardrobe as an apology for her misfortune. Afterwards, the captain insisted she be baptized and gave her the new name of Catarina de San Juan, which was the name of a young nun who had just died and was the daughter of friends of the Captain and his wife. Catarina was then given an education by a Mother Superior and Father Confessor. Rather than wearing the jewels given to her by Captain Sosa, Catarina sold the pearls and used the money to buy dresses for poor children. As for the rest of the jewels, she gave them to the Virgin of the Sorrows, another name for the Virgin Mary. Catarina chose to never again wear elegant clothes. Instead, she wore a simple full skirt of red flannel with a white shirt and a *rebozo*, or shawl. During the winter months, she wore a goatskin suit. Throughout the city, her beauty and kindness were so admired that the maid servants of the convents asked their superiors if they could imitate her style of dress by making skirts out of red cloth. They were granted



permission and later this costume was worn in many other places as well. In 1688, when Catarina died, high members of the church carried her coffin and she was buried with great honor as a way to recognize her virtuous life. All the clergy, sisterhoods, and townspeople were present to mourn her loss. Afterwards, they tenderly referred to her as “*La China*” (Segovia 88).

The blouse of the *china* costume is typically made of a white linen or cotton material (Dickins 31; Mooney 22). However, sometimes the blouse is made of a printed cotton (Segovia 28). It has a square neckline and short sleeves and contains embroidery down the front of the blouse that is made with brightly colored silk thread or tiny glass beads (Dickins; Mooney 22). Sometimes the front of the blouse is instead decorated with ruffles that are adorned with ribbons and lace, and the sleeves of the blouse contain ruffles as well (Segovia 28). A long skirt of the *ranchera*, or ranch woman, is worn and is referred to as a *zagalejo* (Segovia 28; Dickins 31). The material is either cotton or a material called *castor* (Segovia 28; Dickins 31). The skirt is printed with a flannel pattern and is red and green, with the top of the skirt being red and the lower part of the skirt being green (Mooney 22). Other times the skirt is of a solid color and contains ruffles that are decorated with ribbons and lace (Segovia 28). The skirt can also be covered in embroidery, but more often it is covered in sequins (Dickins 31; Mooney 22). Additionally, the hem of the dress is covered by a band of green or red satin (Dickins 31). Underneath the dress, a white petticoat and bloomers are worn, which are both decorated with ribbons and lace on the bottom (Segovia 28; Dickins 31). Over her shoulders, the *china* wears a *rebozo*, a shawl that is long, wide, fringed, made of cotton or silk, and is brightly colored or a blend of two or three darkly shaded colors (Mooney 22; Dickins 31). The *rebozo* is first tied around the waist, crossed in the back and the ends carried back up over the shoulders. Then, the ends are brought straight down and tucked into the part that goes around the waist (Mooney 22). The shoes that are worn

are either boots that button up along the side or bright red or green high heels (Segovia 28; Dickins 31). The hair is parted down the center and put into two braids right behind the ears. Interwoven into the braids are red, green, and white ribbons, which make up the national colors of Mexico. At the ends of the braids, the ribbons are tied into large bows (Segovia 28; Dickins 31). Lastly, the *china* often wears several necklaces and large gold earrings (Segovia 28).



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### *The Maria Clara Suite*

First created by Francisca Reyes Aquino as part of her journey documenting traditional Filipino dances, the Maria Clara suite was designed as a collection of dances that represent the urbanized and Christian Filipino of the nineteenth century (Patrick 410). During the period of Spanish colonization, Western European ways of life spread throughout the Philippine Islands. Various dances such as the waltz, fandango, mazurka, polka, and the jota were brought by the Europeans and taught to the Filipino people (Dowd 8). Therefore, many of the dances within the Maria Clara suite have strong colonial overtones, as they originated in Europe (Patrick 410). When they were taught these dances, the Filipino people added a native flare and style to the dances to make them their own (Dowd 8). Essentially, the dances within the suite were an imported cultural artifact that were developed in the Philippines, underwent an historical and cultural change once in the Philippines, and later came to serve as a representation of the country (Patrick 410). The Maria Clara suite is named in the honor of the heroine in the seminal 1887 novel *Noli Me Tangere* (Touch Me Not) by Dr. José Rizal. The Maria Clara suite embodies the grace and charm of the mestiza Filipina and the chivalry and bravery of the mestizo Filipino (Dowd 8). The dances within the Maria Clara suite are famous for depicting idealized gender-based virtues, specifically within courtship practices, and themes of love, flirtation, and courtship are found in several dances within this suite (Patrick 410; Dowd 8).

### *The Cariñosa*

The *Cariñosa* is a well-known dance in the Maria Clara suite. Until the 1970's, this dance was considered the unofficial national dance of the Philippines (Patrick 410). *Cariñosa*, which means affectionate, amiable, or lovable, is a courting dance that uses the waltz step and depicts a mating ritual from a time of colonial rule. Although the dance has clear Spanish references, it has

been altered by the Filipino people to better reflect the cultural traditions of the time (Patrick 7). In the dance, the dancers partake in a courtship and dance in a coquettish way, doing several hide-and-peek movements, demonstrating the Filipina modesty and the Filipino gallantry (The Spanish Colonial Tradition in Philippine Dance 4). The dance highly characterizes the institution of marriage as well as the social construction of courtship by distinctly placing the dancers in very traditional gender roles (Patrick 412). This dance is appropriate to analyze in depth because of its previous consideration as a national dance and because it captures the traditional courtship roles of the Filipino people. The dance's recognition as the unofficial national dance suggests that it was widely accepted and well-known throughout the nation.

The female dancer wears the costume of the *Maria Clara*, an upper-class female costume of the 1880's. The skirt is a floor-length panel skirt made of silk or satin. The colors of the skirt are traditionally black and white or the skirt can be various other colors as well. On the skirt there is typically embroidery or some type of arrangement of floral prints (The Spanish Colonial Tradition in Philippine Dance 3). Underneath the skirt, a large petticoat is sometimes worn. The blouse, or *camisa*, is made of handwoven *piña* and usually matches the color of the skirt. The blouse has flowing bell sleeves that are wrist-length and are often heavily embroidered. A scarf, or *pañuelo*, is worn over the blouse, which is a piece of square cloth that is folded into a triangle and worn over the shoulders and covering the back. For the shoes, embroidered or beaded slippers are worn as well as black heels. A fan and handkerchief are frequently used as props within the dance. Although this dance is performed in many different ways, the fan and handkerchief are parts of the costume utilized in the hide-and-peek movements of the dance and are used for all versions of the dance (The Spanish Colonial Tradition in Philippine Dance 3).

The male dancers wear a *barong tagalog*, which is a loose fitting shirt usually made of the same material as the *piña* worn by the female dancer. The shirt is most often a white or an off-white color and is embroidered in a floral pattern on the front of the shirt. Additionally, the shirt has a collar that is buttoned up to the neck and has long, cuffed sleeves (The Spanish Colonial Tradition in Philippine Dance 3). It is worn untucked and is typically long enough to cover the hips of the pants. The pants are any type of black dress pant and the shoes are any type of black formal footwear (The Spanish Colonial Tradition in Philippine Dance 3).





De La Cruz, El John. 2018



De La Cruz, El John. 2018

## Finding My Culture Within Another Culture

The history of the Philippines was not a history that was taught to me throughout my K-12 education, nor was the Filipino culture one I encountered often. No mention of the vast connections Mexicans and Filipinos shared throughout history occurred in my schooling nor was it ever a topic of family discussions about our Mexican heritage. However, this lack of historical knowledge began to change when I decided to participate in PCN during my first year of college. Prior to PCN, I had never before heard of an event such as this one. Initially, I thought that the PCN was a production unique to my organization at UC Riverside. I quickly realized, however, that the PCN is a production that is presented by college students from all over California. Students just like me were sacrificing valuable study time to contribute to a successful theatrical and dance production. In his book *The Day the Dancers Stayed*, the American studies scholar Theodore S. Gonzalves explains how grand a PCN production can be when he says, “There is no such thing as a “small” PCN. Nearly all productions are planned months in advance, are elaborately staged, and enlist hundreds of cast and crew members. Traditionally, the PCN is the largest event mounted by a campus’s Filipino student organization” (Gonzalves 11). The only performance of folk dances I was familiar with were the Mexican folk dances that had been performed at my Quinceañera. Other than this, I had never seen an event that showcased the dances of an entire culture and wrapped them into a play. Therefore, when I committed to performing in PCN, I was intrigued and excited to learn more about what it was like to perform in an event that radiated such cultural pride.

I first started to feel hints of similarity as I was introduced to the names of the dances I was assigned to learn and perform for PCN. It was explained to me that my assigned dances were a part of the Maria Clara suite and that the dances contained a heavy Spanish influence. As I said

the names of the dances aloud to myself, such as, “Jota de Paraguay, Cariñosa, Valse Vieja,” I felt the accents of Spanish roll off of my tongue and an instant connection between this culture and my own was formed. There is nothing more unifying between people, I have experienced, than a common language. And although Spanish and Tagalog are two different languages, the similarities between them became increasingly evident to me as I worked with my fellow PCN performers who were Filipino. I found myself at times understanding snippets of Tagalog conversation due to the sameness of certain words in Spanish. For example, *niña* in Spanish and *ninong* in Tagalog both mean godmother. The word for family in Spanish is *familia*, while in Tagalog it is *pamilya*. I was able to understand when the word for school, *eskuela* was said in Tagalog as in Spanish, the word for school is *escuela*, which is pronounced almost the same in both languages. When I heard someone say *ora mismo* in Tagalog, I immediately could hear the resemblance to *ahora mismo* in Spanish and knew that it meant “right now.”

A personal connection between my Mexican culture and the Filipino culture I had immersed myself in began to grow further, compelling me to want to discover more commonalities that I could relate to, which, I found, was easy to do. For example, many Filipinos, just like many Mexicans, are of the Catholic faith. Spanish conquerors brought this religion to their colonized lands and consequently, the colonized peoples adopted the religion as their own, whether out of forced submission or true acceptance. Nevertheless, religion is a vital component of both cultures today, and traditional practices are passed down through familial generations and perpetuated with reverence and pride. My own family is devoutly Catholic and as I made more Filipino friends, I learned that their upbringing was centered on Catholic teachings and beliefs, as was mine. Tied to Catholicism, I found that religious holidays, for both cultures, are associated with large family gatherings in which traditional foods play an important

part in defining the culture. A traditional Mexican Christmas is not complete without tamales, made by many hands, young and old. Beans and rice, both staples of most traditionally Mexican families, are always served and always made by hand. Sorting pinto beans into heaps of the “good ones” and the “bad ones” was a favorite activity for the children as I grew up. In talking with my fellow PCN performers, I learned about the types of foods served in Filipino families for holiday celebrations. Many times, in fact, I was asked to share a bite or two of someone’s dinner, thus becoming familiarized with some of these much loved holiday dishes which were, similarly, always made from scratch. Christmas dishes such as *pancit*, chicken *adobo*, *arroz caldo*, *sinigang*, and for something sweet, *champorado*, are all traditional favorites no holiday is without. Dishes are served family style to accommodate the large number of immediate and extended family members that are present at holiday celebrations. Food, for both cultures, is thus a “large indicator” of how Mexicans and Filipinos identify with their perspective cultures (Guevarra). Family gatherings, whether large or small, always center around *comida*, or food, as what is served, whether it be *enchiladas* or *pancit*, proclaims a proud heritage passed down through the generations from one cook in the kitchen to the next. Food is also an occasion unto itself as food alone can bring family into contact with each other so that stories can be told and memories can be created around the dinner table.

PCN preparation involves late night practices known to last until 4:00 in the morning. Members become acquainted with each other by virtue of spending so much time together. As a result, I also found profound differences between my culture and the Filipino culture. As I got to know more people, I was inevitably asked, “Are you Filipino?” As I am short of stature, dark of skin and hair and have a Spanish surname, the distinction was hard to make because my Mexican features are similar to Filipino features and my last name, like many Filipino last names, has a

Spanish sound to it. I discovered, in addition, that most Filipinos do not especially like having surnames that look and sound like they are from the Spanish language. A last name such as Alberto, or Flores, or Reyes usually signifies to others that the name belongs to someone from the Mexican culture and Filipinos would rather not be confused with another culture. Being Mexican, I had never experienced confusion with my ethnicity based on my last name, but my sister, who has much lighter skin than I do, has dealt with this in her life. She does not “look” Mexican, thus seeing her Spanish surname often provokes others to ask her about her ethnicity.

I also learned that there is a stigma within the Filipino culture about dark skin. In the past, being lighter skinned was preferred and efforts would be made to stay out of the sun so as not to get darker. However, that stigma is constantly being fought by those who have darker skin within the Filipino community. Being brown-skinned myself, I was always told that my skin color was a beautiful asset to my appearance. Thus, I could not grasp the existence of a stigma that regards brown skin as a detriment to one’s appearance. This knowledge subsequently caused me to embrace my Mexican identity more vehemently.

The topic of skin color became a jumping-off point for discussions about prejudice against people of color, as Filipinos have been discriminated against because of their brown skin and Spanish-sounding surnames just as Mexicans have. Both cultures, through many generations, have experienced the social pressures of racial segregation and discrimination and have fought for their civil rights (Guevarra 11). Both cultures have been marginalized by the predominant society and both have been racialized and given sub-par status in society. In addition, each culture’s influence and contribution to U.S. history has been neglected, if not excluded, from mainstream narratives of American history written predominately by White Americans (Guevarra 12). Although I have never truly experienced blatant discrimination, these discussions

led me to a deeper understanding of the exclusionary tactics directed at the Mexican people, then as well as now, and how Filipinos experienced similar struggles in their historical past as colonial subjects of the United States. Both ethnic groups, as a result of Spanish colonialism, are thus bound together by similarities in their culture, language, and religion. The shared historical experiences as Spanish subjects contributed to the forming of each group's cultural identity. Today, the similarities continue to be evident between Mexicans and Filipinos and are carried forward as evidence of two cultures having overlapping and connected histories (Guevarra 2012). The ultimate connection, in my opinion, however, is that both cultures survived the colonial oppression forced upon them. Although their cultures were altered as the Spanish attempted to make the indigenous people of their conquests more like themselves, these groups remain proud. Their cultural identities have been reshaped, but it was the people themselves, in an act of self-actualization, who ultimately decided which Spanish influences would be thrown off and which would be kept.

A strong impetus for me to uncover more about my own culture began when others posed questions to me regarding the origins of various Mexican traditions. Sadly, on many occasions I would have no answer to these questions, causing me to feel slightly embarrassed. What generation am I? What part of Mexico do my ancestors come from? Why don't I celebrate *Día de los Muertos*? and, the ultimate question to myself was, "Why don't I know all this?" Consequently, I looked to my mother and my grandparents to fill in this missing information for me, which they were able to do, and which increased my sense of identity and connectedness with my culture. If not for these inquiries from my PCN friends, the desire to know about my ancestral origins and cultural traditions would have remained unknown to me. Throughout my entire experience with the PCN production, I learned about another culture's traditions, beliefs,

fears, and dances but alongside becoming familiarized with the Filipino culture, I learned about my own as well.

The dances I learned to perform were ultimately, however, the strongest source of connection with my own culture. Wearing the Maria Clara dance costume, with its full lace skirt and colorful sash, made me feel as if I were dancing to the rhythms of the Mexican music my grandfather plays on his old, scratchy-sounding records on Sunday afternoons. My grandfather even told me, after he watched me perform a solo dance from the Maria Clara suite at my final PCN, that my partner and I reminded him of his mother and father, who were Mexican immigrants, as they danced a jarabe or a waltz at social functions when he was a nine-year-old boy. Without knowing that dances in the Maria Clara suite and the Jarabe both have Spanish influences, my grandfather knew, from his memories, that the Filipino dance he watched me perform was similar, in dance style and costume, to dances he grew up watching his parents dance together. For me, performing the footwork of the Maria Clara dances also brought back memories of the time I watched the *Folklorico* dancers at my *Quinceañera* who danced the *Jarabe Tapatio*, with quick, complicated footwork and shoes that seemed to scrape the floor, reminiscent of the Spanish fandango. As I waved my skirt and moved my feet, I was captivated by a sense of belonging to not only my own culture, but to that of another that had, historically, been created out of the influences of a colonizing country. Despite these influences or, more strongly, *because* of these influences, Mexican and Filipino dances performed today thrive as their own entities and radiate magnificent cultural pride. In hindsight, I believe that I unconsciously experienced the beginnings of a transnational identification within myself as I participated in PCN. It was through dance that my connection to Mexico and the Philippines was solidified.



## Conclusion

It had become apparent to me that I had begun viewing the dances I performed with two sets of cultural eyes. One set saw the dance as a sole manifestation of the Filipino culture, while the other focused on the Spanish influences on the dance that similarly impacted Mexican dance performances also. An inner connectedness with these two nations evolved within me and created a transnational bond between the Mexican and Filipino cultures and myself. To identify transnationally means to simultaneously embody systems or relationships from two or more nations within one's daily life (Sanchez 2007). Transnationalism is also an internal, personal connection one feels as a result of exposure or immersion over time into the nationalistic practices of two or more nations. Being immersed in PCN as a contact zone between my Mexican culture and the Filipino culture evoked in me a sense of transnationality. Furthermore, this transnationalism drove me to reconnect and strengthen the ties between my culture and the happenings within the country of my ancestors. Lastly, feelings of transnationalism compelled in me a desire to connect with Philippine history as well so as to become more in tune with their cultural practices, politics, current events that affect the Filipino population, and familial and societal norms.

Becoming more knowledgeable about the past led me to be more aware of the ways in which past practices, such as colonization, continue to occur presently. The reasons behind my lack of immersion into my Mexican heritage initially began with my mother's assimilation into American schools. Her first language was Spanish but, upon entering an American school, she was forced to learn English. Educational theories surrounding the ability to speak multiple languages or having a non-English first language have changed over the years in the public education system. These views have ranged from classifying Spanish speaking students as

mentally retarded, which occurred in the 1920s, to believing Spanish speaking students are “at risk” of failing, which occurred in the 2000s (Flores 92). Essentially, my mother needed to learn English in order to succeed and in order to communicate with others, which subsequently resulted in her loss of proficiency in the Spanish language. Additionally, traditional Mexican customs such as *Día de los Muertos* were left behind by my family after my great grandparents immigrated to America. When I asked why my family does not celebrate the holiday, my mother explained that it is typically not celebrated by Mexican Americans, but more so by Mexicans still living in Mexico. More and more, small bits of my Mexican culture were forgotten with the Americanization of my family so by the time I became fourth generation Mexican-American, cultural erasure was underway and sensed by members of my family as well as myself.

Similarly, my peers who identify as Filipino experience these feelings of cultural erasure due to Americanization also and often discuss the same sense of loss as I feel about my own culture. The creation of Filipino organizations, such as Katipunan, frequently serves as a way to rediscover one’s roots. Through the elaborate and lengthy performance of PCN, for instance, one night is entirely focused on showcasing all possible aspects of the Filipino culture. Although the pasts of both the Mexican and Filipino cultures reveals a Spanish colonization period, which brought many changes to the two cultures, the present also reveals an ongoing American colonization that results in further changes within the makeup of the two cultures. When I learned about both my Mexican culture and the Filipino culture, I was focused on the history of the two groups and the influences each experienced at the hands of their Spanish conquerors. However, being immersed in the American culture brings about an additional alteration to the two cultures: that of the Mexican *American* and Filipino *American* identity created as a result of colonization from two nations, Spain and America. Essentially, being both Mexican and

American, I myself am faced with a double consciousness as I make my way through society. Double consciousness is a concept explored by W.E.B. Du Bois as he discusses his identity as an African American, in which he says, “It is a peculiar sensation, this double consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others... one ever feels his twoness, - an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings...” (Du Bois). I, as well, feel “twoness” at times. I feel pride in being both Mexican and American and claim the cultural and societal practices of each as my own. The duality in my consciousness is always present as my personal identity continues to evolve from the many influences that exist in my life: Mexican, American, Spanish, and, most recently, Filipino effects, that all intertwine to create the transnational being I believe that I am.

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