Title

One Foot In, One Foot Out: An Analysis and Reflection of the Non-Filipinx Experience of the Pilipino Cultural Night

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Publication Date

2021

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

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A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction

of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

in Asian American Studies

by

Emily Hyo Min Mun

2021

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

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An Analysis and Reflection of the

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Emily Hyo Min Mun

Master of Arts in Asian American Studies

University of California, Los Angeles, 2021

Professor Victor Bascara, Chair

The Pilipino Cultural Night (PCN) is perhaps most known for its impact on the lives of college-aged Filipinx American students across the United States and especially on the West Coast. However, most studies about the PCN have focused on larger universities where the critical mass of Filipinx Americans is quite high. This paper aims to build off the work of other scholars and take a closer look at the experiences of PCN through the lens of non-Filipinx American identifying students at a smaller, private, and Jesuit college campus. This work discovered how the PCN is a place for community building through the shared experiences of performing. Many respondents claimed that the PCN experience created deep almost familial like bonds that influenced the involvement level of many non-Filipinx American students. I utilize a concept deemed colloquially as "PCN magic" to highlight the unique experience of being a part of the PCN and what draws people into the PCN. The perspective of Filipinx American identifying

students is also used to get a better sense of how the multiethnic PCN cast may impact the PCN experience for Filipinx American students. The various aspects of being a part of a performance such as the build-up of watching performers get better, wearing the costumes, and being on stage also influence non-Filipinx students to join the PCN and are often a large part of the experience itself. The work then veers into the realm of performance studies to look at the ways that the Asian American body is viewed when performing on stage when performing under the banner of the Pilipino Cultural Night both from the insider perspective and the outsider perspective.

The thesis of Emily Mun is approved.

Lucy M. Burns

Lee Ann S. Wang

Victor Bascara, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2021

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As I stand at the finish line of my educational career, I am time and time again blown away by how far I've come and where I stand now. I never thought I would be the first in my family to get a master's degree let alone attend UCLA, but here I am now. But I did not do this work alone and I am forever grateful for all the folks who I have encountered throughout my educational career.

I first must thank my family for all of their support and love. Mom, Dad, Sarah, and Luna, thank you all for letting me come home in the middle of COVID-19 and accommodating my needs as I finished up my last year at UCLA. Mom and Dad, thank you for your gracious financial and emotional support. This work is the culmination of paying for my education at Santa Clara University and letting my education at UCLA literally pay for itself. I am immensely grateful for the opportunities you have pushed me to take and have provided me. Sarah, special thank you to you for being my bestie throughout all of quarantine. I'm grateful we got to play Genshin Impact together and that we actually got to spend time together. Luna, I promise I will go on more walks with you now that I'm done with school! If I could go back and tell my high school self that Mom and Dad were right about SCU, high school me would have a hard time believing in myself.

Speaking of Santa Clara, this work would not be possible without even attending Santa Clara. I have huge love for the Ethnic Studies department and have so much gratitude for the professors and lifelong mentors I met there. Thank you Dr. Jesica Siham Fernandez for being my first Ethnic Studies teacher in ETHN 5 and being the first professor who really cared for me in college. I always tell the story of how you impacted my college career as a professor and how your class further solidified my decision to pursue Ethnic Studies. Thank you Dr. Anthony

Hazard for hearing my questions all my senior year about graduate school and being a great mentor. Seriously, I think I walked into your office at least every day of Winter and Spring quarter to talk about graduate school - how did you not get sick of my literal same three questions?! Your support and your candor from my junior year till today has been immeasurable and I would not be here today without your advice on graduate school. Thank you to Dr. James Lai for being my first Asian American Studies professor. Thank you for also listening to my endless questions about graduate school, believing in me, and being the one to tell me about UCLA's program in the first place! Literally, I would not be here today if you had not told me about your experience and continued to cheer me on. Lastly, I have to say a small thank you to Dr. Chan Thai for all your support and also being one of the first female Asian American professors that I met at Santa Clara. Our happenstance meeting was honestly one of the best things that have happened to me and I cannot thank you for your advice and belief in me throughout my senior year.

I have so many friends to thank and so little space to say it so thank you to Chaewon Tiffany Jeong, Colman Lin, Cory Yamagata, Madison Hokans-Csurilla, Trang Nguyen, Sabine Hrkalovich, Samantha Dalal, William Villamayor, and so many more folks. You've all kept me sane throughout this last year of graduate school and I am so grateful to have you all as a part of my larger support system. Very special thank you to my 2019 PCN Directors Diane Abigail Menardo and Christopher Carpio. Thank you for drawing me into the PCN space, for putting on a great show, and allowing me to write this thesis! Special shout out to Diane, of course. I have so many things to thank you for, but I'll wrap it here by saying thank you for being my roommate, my co-partner, and my forever roommate until we get married.

Thank you's are also to all of my survey respondents and their efforts to spread the word about my survey. Your work to share the survey, your input, and your experiences at SCU mean everything to me and I would not have been able to write without you. Many of you I have crossed paths with, both inside and outside the PCN space, so thank you for allowing me to share the stage and SCU's campus with you.

Thank you to the professors that I had the privilege to study with here at UCLA for helping me in my larger intellectual journey and special thank you to the professors who taught me in the Asian American Studies 200-series: Dr. Valerie Matsumoto, Dr. Kyeyoung Park, and Dr. Tritia Toyota. Thank you to Dr. Natalie Masuoka, Gregory Pancho, Kylin Sakamoto, and Wendy Fujinami for your support as a department. Thank you to Dr. Kelly Fong and Dr. Lily Welty-Tamai for providing guidance when I was your TA and protecting me and my time as a graduate student. Thank you to the Asian American Studies Center for the financial support for this work as well as believing in the initial ideas of my project. Thank you to my cohort mates Andi Min, Carina Lee, Christie Yamasaki, Emiko Kranz, Hannah Joo, and Sharon Lau for all your love and support even when we were all distanced and so far apart. Knowing I had people who were right there alongside me in my thesis journey made the writing process that much smoother.

Lastly, this work would not have come together without the support and feedback of my committee members. Thank you to Dr. Lucy Burns for guiding me through many performance studies readings and supporting us grad students in whatever capacity you could. Thank you for walking me through all the conceptual questions that I had and working with me. Thank you to Dr. Lee Ann Wang for helping me with my lit review and being such a great support system even before I had even started writing my thesis. Thank you for believing in my writing and

being my birthday twin! Lastly, the biggest thank you to Dr. Victor Bascara for all your support over the past two years. From our initial meeting at Admit Day - which I still remember - to teaching me and my cohort during 200C, and throughout my entire thesis writing process, you have been such a great support as both committee chair and advisor. Thank you for always checking in on me at every meeting we have and offering your words of wisdom. I could not have asked for a better chair or a better team to work with. Thank you for believing in me and my work. This is not just my work alone but a collective and collaborative effort that I am proud to share with you all.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

There is always a magical quality about watching a live performance. From Broadway musicals to concerts, live performances were able to whisk their audiences away for two or three hours. I could only focus on the performance itself, not caring about what time it was or how much time had even passed. This, to me, was magic.

But for some performances, I am unsure if there will be a sort of magic, the disappearing act of time. I did not know what to expect or even how to prepare myself. And as a first year at Santa Clara University (SCU), I did not anticipate the magic that would leave me in awe as I sat to watch my first Pilipino Cultural Night. When I sat down in Mayer Theater to watch my first PCN, I was mostly there to support my college roommate Diane. Ticket and program in hand, I had no idea what I should be expecting. After skimming the program and finding pictures of friends and people I knew in different dances whose Tagalog names I did not know the meaning of, I still was not sure what to expect or what level of performance I would see. For starters, cultural shows were a new concept that I had never experienced or even heard of while in high school. What kind of performances even constituted a cultural show? Were there things required of people who participated in cultural shows? Even after sitting through at least a dozen executive board meetings for our university's Korean Student Association (KSA) and discussing cultural shows and planning them, I still had little to no idea what exactly we were going to be planning or why doing something like this was so important.

But all those questions seemed to fade away once the show actually started. Once the lights dimmed and the first act and dances came on, that is when the magic happened, and I was blown away by what I saw. Brilliantly choreographed dances, an emotionally moving skit

focusing on an important moment of Filipinx[1] American (FilAm[2]) history (this one was about the involvement of FilAms in the United Farm Workers Movement), and vividly breathtaking costumes and visuals that gave the show a level of theatricality and professionalism I did not expect to come from a student-run production. As if I was under a trance, my eyes refusing to look away from the stage during the entire performance.

I was in total awe for the whole two-hour performance, feeding off the audience's energy as the performers moved effortlessly from scene to scene and from suite to suite. I could not help but feel compelled and moved by the production in front of me. Maybe it was the fact that I was witnessing a reclamation of Filipinx culture happen right in front of me or maybe it was the theatrics and experience of seeing the PCN in all its glory. But whatever it was, PCN blew me away and made me want to be a part of this production next year. And I was not alone in this either.

When I walked out of Mayer Theater, my friend Trang who had accompanied me to watch Diane and the PCN told me that she wanted to join PCN next year as well. At SCU, we call this "PCN magic."[3] While other schools may have different names for it, this PCN experience, both as an audience member and a cast member, was magical. The performance, the thrill of performing, the theatricality of it all.

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[1] I consciously utilize the term Filipinx rather than the traditional Filipino/a to encompass folks who identify with genders outside of the gender binary. While I may use Filipinx to identify my participants and the larger community, my participants may use Filipino or Filipina to identify themselves and their community instead. Within these Filipinx American spaces, most people will utilize the normative o/a endings and use the Americanized F spelling of Filipino/a rather than a P.

[2] I also consciously shorten Filipinx American and use the term FilAm for conciseness. While my participants may again choose to identify as something else, I utilize this term as a catch-all for the different ways they may choose to identify when writing about them.

[3] The term "PCN magic" is a common phrase within the PCN space at Santa Clara. It often refers to the magic surrounding the actual PCN performances, and many people will reference this as a reason for coming back. The magic can also refer to the bonds that people share when performing together and the "glue" that brings the whole show together. PCN magic is what unites people and is utilized as a term of inspiration on the show days/night of PCN.

Joining a PCN as someone who was non-Filipinx was not uncommon at SCU. In fact, while watching PCN I could recognize quite a few my non-Filipinx friends on stage performing alongside my FilAm friends. The only real prerequisite for joining PCN was being a member of Barkada - the FilAm club on campus - and there were no restrictions on who could join Barkada. During my years as an undergrad, I never really questioned this aspect of the PCN cast and experience. Nor did I even venture to ask myself why people were joining PCN over other cultural shows, including those from clubs of their own specific ethnic heritage. Rather than immediately jumping into a cultural club that was of your own ethnic heritage, joining a cultural club on campus that resonated with your own personal experience seemed like an integrated part of the social community here at SCU, especially for Asian American students.

Looking back now, I realized that this was not something that was specific to just Barkada and PCN. Most, if not all, of the ethnic-specific Asian American heritage cultural clubs had pan-Asian casts in their cultural shows. In my own recruiting for the KSA culture show, we would emphasize that our membership and our cultural show were not simply exclusive to the Korean American and Korean diasporic community. Our club, and most other Asian and Pacific Islander cultural clubs on campus were for people who were also interested in the clubs as well. I make this distinction in specifically pointing out the Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) clubs because most spaces for Black and Brown students on campus were exclusive to them, and for good reason too. With smaller numbers on campus, having a dedicated and safe space away from other communities on campus was incredibly important for them and their missions on campus.

In some ways, it also felt refreshing to see what looked to be a predominantly pan-Asian cast on stage together performing in something that was meaningful to them in each cast

member's own unique and different way. At a predominantly white institution like SCU, having a tight-knit community like this was a breath of fresh air. It felt like reclaiming space for us through a shared experience that we shared with the audience only in its final formation. The production would therefore serve as a kind of moment that almost screamed, "Well, you just had to be here with us" to the audience, making students feel inclined to join in on the fun. Yet PCN seemed to draw the biggest number of non-Filipinx students to perform.

Everyone has a different reason for joining PCN. Leading up to the show, the hashtag #whyIPCN is used by many PCNers[4] at SCU - especially those who are a part of the Production Staff (P-Staff) - to advertise their show and share their reasons for participating in PCNs. For some, PCN is a very personal experience that connects people to their culture. Two Filipina American friends of mine wrote a blog post on their shared blog documenting some of the reasons why they perform in PCN. Their blog post highlights the experience of many FilAm students who see PCN as a way to understand their identities and experiences as FilAms. This is a sentiment that I think resonates with a lot of other FilAms on SCU's campus and campuses across the nation. For others, especially for non-Filipinx students, the joy of performing alongside friends that made people commit and then continue to come back and want to perform repeatedly. I fall into the latter camp.

PCN, for many obvious reasons as a Korean American, did not resonate in the same ways it did for Diane or my other FilAm friends. On the surface, I found a lot of the allure in the theatricality of it all. Stepping onto a stage with lights, a house band, and the Haranistas de Manila - a world renowned band of Filipinx musicians who played "traditional"[5] Filipinx music -

[4] A term used by SCU PCN cast members to refer to themselves and their fellow castmates. The term "PCNers" is often seen as a term of endearment and is used in the plural form instead of the singular "PCNer."
[5] Traditional is used in quotes only to signify that the term traditional, especially in the context of the Philippines and its history of colonization from both Spain and the United States, is a tricky term to use and even define.

made the experience of watching and performing in PCN one that stuck with me even after graduating SCU. The fact that a student-run production could look so professional and so elaborate still leaves me in awe. All of what I saw on stage was based on the work and effort of the cast who took time from their busy schedules to make it to weekly dance practices, three separate run-throughs, and a "Hell Week" of half and full-dress rehearsals leading up to the show nights. But when I took a step back and looked at the bigger picture, I realized that PCN was a unique social bonding experience for both FilAm and non-Filipinx students like myself. Even if I did not connect personally to the culture, I did find solace in connecting with the other cast members in my dances. Seeing the people in my dances weekly for about 15 weeks of the entire school year created friendships that could extend to exchanging small greetings and waves if we saw each other on campus outside of the PCN space. Even run-throughs and Hell Week provided me the time and space to connect with other friends who were also performing in PCN and allow me to catch up with them when I normally may not have done so in the first place. PCN facilitated community building in a unique way for students who decided to take the step and join their university's PCN cast.

While I was an undergrad, I had not really thought about the implications of performing in PCN as a non-Filipinx student. Maybe it was because I was juggling at least 3 or 4 different roles at once or maybe it was because the experience of it all was so normalized and accepted. Whatever it was, my Santa Clara bubble and experience was what kept me from thinking critically about what was going on. It was only when I moved to Los Angeles to start my graduate studies and began to explore potential thesis topics that I started to reflect on PCN.

However, I use this term to define the musical stylings that are signature to the Philippines and therefore seen as traditional despite colonial roots.

Coincidentally, one of my friends, who identified as Chinese American, was taking on the role of one of three PCN directors for the 2020 show - which also happened to be the 30th year performing PCN at Santa Clara. All these events together made me question the experience of the PCN and the visual of Asian Americans performing this Asian culture onstage. Slowly, as I started thinking more and more about my thesis, my eye turned more specifically to my time at Santa Clara and the experiences I, and many others, had gone through. What made us all come together? Was there really a reason *why* we decided to join? Were our reasons different from those of Filipinx students? What did our presence performing a FilAm story and performing these dances mean?

With those questions in mind, I began to work and seek out more. This work aims to look at how PCN shapes the community formation and feelings of social belonging of the Asian American student population at a small, Jesuit university. This unique setting is much different from locations that other scholars have studied PCN, and I believe that the specific institutional and social structures of SCU makes the PCN experience different and a unique place of study in comparison to other larger universities. I look first at what draws people to the PCN and argue that it is both a need and want for a community as well as the theatrics surrounding the PCN that bring people in. I separate the non-Filipinx and FilAm experience to look at any differences before broaching into the similarities. I also argue that community and the "PCN magic" that people experience as a PCN cast member is what draws people to perform again. I look a little more closely at the behind the scenes of PCN to understand how the theatrics effects why people join PCN. Lastly, I turn away from this idea of the paratheatrical[6] to look briefly at the

[6] Paratheatrical is a term used by scholar Daphne Lei and refers to the surrounding elements of the performance. This often includes the behind-the-scenes and backstage work.

perception of a large group of bodies performing under one name - in this case looking at a large Asian American cast performing under the banner of the Pilipino Cultural Night - in order to look more at the performance of these bodies together. Together, all of this aims to look at the experience of the PCN through a different lens than what other scholars have originally discussed when studying PCNs.

CHAPTER 2: Literature Review

To situate my work, it is first important to understand what the Pilipino Cultural Night is before diving into the specifics of how it has influenced community formation for Asian Americans on this campus that my work is situated in. Many other scholars have done work on the PCN that are deeply personal to them as well as the larger FilAm community[7]. Their work has focused on a variety of topics surrounding the very personal relationship of PCNs to the FilAm collegiate community. My work branches off from theirs to look at what Daphne Lei calls the paratheatrical - the behind the scenes work of a performance or theatrical production. Rather than looking at the specifics of choreography, staging, and blocking that more traditional performance studies or even cultural studies scholars may engage with, I am more interested in the social/communal and institutional aspects of PCN that lead people to become a part of the PCN and that are specific to SCU.

Pilipino Cultural Nights

PCN, as it is known today, is a student-run and often student-funded production that culminates in a one or two-night performance in front of hundreds, sometimes thousands, of audience members. The production itself often touts a large cast of upwards of a hundred people who are part of the PCN cast in some way, shape or form. Whether it was as a dancer, an actor, an ensemble member, a stagehand, a member of the production team, or a tech person, the PCN is by no means a small-scale production people-wise or budget-wise. The budgets for PCNs are often in the tens of thousands with a huge portion of that coming from student, alumni, and

[7] I take a moment here to pause and recognize how my work communicates with other Filipinx American scholars such as Lucy Burns, Christine Balance, Sarita See, and Lorenzo Perillo who have, and will continue to, produce works that are a part of the emerging field of FilAm Studies. While I only briefly look at community formation through the work of Martin Manalansan, it would be remiss to not acknowledge the work already being done by these folks.

family contributions. The PCN as it is performed today is often broken up into five traditional dance suites, a modern dance suite that most often featured hip-hop or contemporary choreography and may or may not include an ensemble performance. It is tied together through a skit that touches on issues of Filipinx or FilAm history. The PCN, however, often centers itself on the five traditional suites that make up different regions and histories of the Philippines: the Maria Clara suite which draws upon the influences of Spanish colonization, the Mountain or Cordillera suite modeled from the northern Cordillera region, the Mindanao or Muslim suite featuring dances from Mindanao in the south, the Tribal or Lumad suite representing indigenous tribal dances, and the Rural suite taking dances from the highland rural *barrios*. Each of these suites draws on a different part of "Filipinx culture" and are meant to showcase to both its cast and audience members the rich culture of the Philippines. However, as many scholars have argued, these cultural lessons are often watered down and fail to capture the complexities of each region and their peoples.

Theodore S. Gonzalves is most well-known for his work on PCN and his book, *The Day the Dancers Stayed*, is the first monograph to be written about the PCN. Gonzalves focuses on the history and formation of the PCN and the PCN genre as we know it today. Gonzalves extensively looks at the origins, history, and inspiration of the PCN genre that is used in college campuses across the United States (U.S.). Aspects of the PCN came about in the 1970s while the shows were "fully realized as a genre in the early 1980s"[8] when large numbers of Filipinx and FilAm students were coming of age and starting to attend college.[9] However the roots of the PCN can extend themselves even before that back to the 1950s or even 1930s when Manila elites

[8] Theodore S. Gonzalves, *The Day the Dancers Stayed: Performing in the Filipino/American Diaspora* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2010), 11.
[9] Gonzalves, *The Day the Dancers Stayed*.

"anticipated Philippine independence and the need to create a unique cultural repertoire."[10] This cultural repertoire is seen as a necessary element to a post-colonial Philippines, marking the end of a period of colonization and the beginning of the Philippines as an independent nation that developed its own cultural products. PCN dances took choreography from the famous Bayanihan Philippine Folk Dance Company, a company that first aimed at preserving the culture of the Philippines. From there, they went on to become cultural ambassadors of the Philippines and performed in various countries across the globe. While many other groups like Bayanihan had formed to serve as cultural ambassadors, Bayanihan's lasting impact demonstrates their popularity even decades later.

The PCN first came about as a product of post-colonial anxiety from Manila-based leaders and educators who "anticipated the colony's transition to commonwealth and eventually sovereign nation."[11] The goal was to create new "parameters for cultural production" that would allow the Philippines to claim their own cultural heritage outside of the influences of both Spain and the U.S. In his book, Gonzalves focuses on two main figures: Jorge G. Bocobo, then president of the University of the Philippines, and folk-dance scholar Francisca Reyes Aquino who created these new parameters for cultural production and expression. Bocobo was cautious about the influence of Western popular culture on Filipino social customs[12] and asked Aquino, who was serving as a student assistant at the University of the Philippines's physical education department, to create a program of Philippine folk dances. Bocobo was interested not in imitating Western culture but instead creating a "distinct national contribution to 'world culture'"[13] that came with the premise of sovereignty as an independent nation. The desire of developing a

[10] Gonzalves, *The Day the Dancers Stayed*, 11
[11] Gonzalves, *The Day the Dancers Stayed*, 26.
[12] Gaerlan, 264.
[13] Gonzalves, *The Day the Dancers Stayed*, 40.

specific Filipinx culture was tied to these ideas of political independence and created a specific reason why the Philippines could exist without colonial Spanish or U.S. imperial rule.

Aquino's research on folk dances initially began in the archives where she found little material three years after Bocobo asked her to embark on this long journey of recording folk dances. In the summer of 1927, her research efforts intensified when she was out to the *barrios* by Bocobo. There, she would coax and interview performers and normal townsfolk to collect folk dances and their choreography before they became extinct. It is important to note here that Aquino's research was not only used in the physical education curriculum at the University of the Philippines but also not brought out through authentic conversations. Instead, Gonzalves notes, they were "bribed and cajoled into existence by anxious educators, nervous nationalists, and ambitious political sponsors."[14] I note Gonzalves's point here in order to contrast the current perceptions of PCN choreography as "timeless, unchanging, and authentically delivered from a distant past"[15] with the actual beginnings of PCN's choreography - as a part of a nationalist agenda that would unify the Philippines as a nation and emphasize its identity as a newly sovereign state.

Departing from these humble beginnings that center a nationalist agenda, the PCN genre, as mentioned before, derives most of its choreography from the Bayanihan Philippine Dance Company. Gonzalves notes that "Pilipino Cultural Night organizers, working from the late 1970s to the present, bent the national repertoire to meet the needs and desires of students based in the United States… they also crafted theatrical scenarios that staged their own presence in both U.S. and Philippine histories."[16] These repertoires were not something PCN organizers created but

[14] Gonzalves, *The Day the Dancers Stayed*, 61.
[15] Gonzalves, *The Day the Dancers Stayed*, 61.
[16] Gonzalves, *The Day the Dancers Stayed*, 63-64

instead reinterpreted based on the work of the Bayanihan and often cite their work as being "synonymous for Philippine culture itself."[17] The Bayanihan first debuted at the 1958 World's Fair in Brussels as a representative of the national Philippine culture for the world to see. The Bayanihan had performed a show-stopping performance that concluded with *tinikling*, that led the room to erupt in "thunderous applause as the curtains fell."[18] Soon after their debut, the Bayanihan performed on Broadway as part of an international festival put on by Sol Hurok, a promoter of international acts and manager of singer Marian Anderson. After their initial performances, the Bayanihan met with enormous acclaim and praise from various dance and music critics known for being finicky. The appeal of the Bayanihan, as seen through their widespread approval, stemmed not only from their amazing performances but also from the diversity and breadth of their performances as well; they showcased various ethnic groups and cultures from the Philippines that brought the audience on a spectacular journey across the Philippines.

While initial performances were unsponsored by the Philippine government, after their Brussels performance, the Bayanihan were appointed the Official Cultural Mission to the Americas and Europe.[19] What is important to note here is that the Bayanihan was a nationalist project that was critical to a postwar Philippines and the formation of their own national identity. Jose Lardizabal, artistic director for the Bayanihan, noted that postwar Filipinx artists were not only tasked with the job of being "discerning Filipinos" who went back to their roots but also "invented traditions, asserted national identities through the presentation of the folk, and edited ritual into palatable entertainment forms built for export."[20] The Bayanihan was, in this case, not

[17] Gonzalves, *The Day the Dancers Stayed*, 64.
[18] Gonzalves, *The Day the Dancers Stayed*, 72.
[19] Gonzalves, *The Day the Dancers Stayed*,73.
[20] Gonzalves, *The Day the Dancers Stayed*, 73.

passing on traditional performances but instead reinterpreting the dances of indigenous peoples within the Philippines into a more palpable performance that included modifications to costume and movement in order to create theatrical flair. Gonzalves further details the creative beginnings of the Bayanihan who took inspiration from the indigenous peoples they studied. He cites the research motto of three Philippine Women's University (PWU) students - "Take It From the People" - to emphasize the initial relationships that were taking place between indigenous peoples and their working partners. However, as Gonzalves later addresses, the Bayanihan often took inspiration from the costumes and dances of the tribes and modified these elements for the stage. He notes that while Bayanihan had a variety of consultants ranging from academic scholars, dance teachers, and performers from the various regions these dances hail from, the original material was restructured "into the modern and "sophisticated" spaces within which performances takes place represents the other major consideration, one that stresses adaptation rather than fidelity."[21] By stressing adaptation over fidelity, an element of truth is lost in the performance, a note that many critics note about the Bayanihan.

While Gonzalves's work goes on to discuss other key elements of the history and formation of the PCN, I end my discussion of Gonzalves's work here to shed light around the beginnings of the PCN. I also want to focus on the fact that Gonzalves's work links the PCN as a cultural performance to the making of the Philippine nation state as an independent nation through the lens of cultural performance. Through a unified culture and identity, partly established through the work of Bayanihan and other dance troupes like them, the Philippines was able to establish itself on the world stage as an independent and sovereign nation. Through this, the Philippines was declaring how its various ethnic groups had come together to form one

[21] Gonzalves, *The Day the Dancers Stayed*, 75.

group of people - the Filipinos - and they all shared parts of their different ethnic cultures that were a part of this shared Filipinx identity.

Much has been written about the PCN experience through the lens of Filipinx performers. Works by scholars like Ana Alves, Gonzalves, and others have centered and critiqued the PCN in their work based on the experience of FilAm performers. Gonzalves argues that students perform for each other "in a ceremony that invents community against the backdrop of a culture that expects nation, ethnicity, and identity to be languages of the past."[22] Within these performances, PCN performers are interpreting their own histories in the Philippines and in America, seeing the PCN as static images of the past rather than living, breathing cultural entities. Combining stories from the Philippines with those from the experience of being Filipinx in America, PCNs are constructed and seen as narratives specific to the FilAm experience. As mentioned before, Gonzalves's work is critical to a larger understanding of the PCN as an entity. However, I also understand Gonzalves's work as a critical work for my own understanding of PCNs specifically as a non-Filipinx performer and researcher and in understanding the larger context that members of the Filipinx diaspora are performing in and under.

An important note to make is to emphasize that Bayanihan, and much of the choreography of the dances for the PCN, were made during a post-colonial period filled with much anxiety as the Philippines was coming out as a new nation. Barbara Gaerlan discusses how the post-colonial period and nationalism led to what she describes as the "appropriation of a multiplicity of indigenous dance and music forms and their representation in a folkloric dance troupe as a cultural expression of the Philippine nation state."[23] Gaerlan argues that through the

[22] Gonzalves, *The Day the Dancers Stayed*, 12
[23] Barbara S. Gaerlan, "In the Court of the Sultan: Orientalism, Nationalism, and Modernity in Philippine and Filipino American Dance," *Journal of Asian American Studies* 2, no. 3 (1999): 251–87, https://doi.org/10.1353/jaas.1999.0022, 252.

uprise of a post-colonial nationalist mentality in the Philippines, dances from a variety of indigenous peoples (IPs) in the Philippines were appropriated under the guise of a unified national identity. Melisa Casumbal-Salazar discusses this idea more through the example of Nicanor Tiongson, artistic director for the Cultural Center of the Philippines. Tiongson argued that a post-colonial Philippines needed a distinct national culture and identity that would separate them from their colonial past and the culture of their colonizers. A united culture, in Tiongson's eyes, would emphasize that the Philippines was a unified state despite its multicultural and multilingual people.[24] Tiongson's urge to go ethnic erases indigenous groups by arguing that everyone is indigenous and everyone is ethnic.[25] Claiming indigeneity would help bring about a more unified culture and allow for all Filipinx peoples, even those who were a part of the mainstream "Tagalog" speakers and had no ties to IPs in the Philippines, to claim a right to these indigenous cultures.

Barbara Gaerlan specifically focuses on the Muslim dance suite, inspired by dances from Mindanao and Sulu, two southern provinces in the Philippines. Gaerlan's examination of the Muslim dance suite emphasizes how the PCN and many FilAm students glorify the Mindanao and Sulu regions - and the various IP groups native to those regions - for not conforming to Spanish colonization. Many students glorify the fact that this southern region of the Philippines was never colonized and in fact represented what she calls a "'golden age' of Philippine independence"[26] that will use this under the guise of empowerment for FilAm students. Gaerlan, however, reveals that while the Mindanao and Sulu regions may not have been colonized, the

[24] Casumbal-Salazar, Melisa S.L. "The Indeterminacy of the Philippine Indigenous Subject." *Amerasia Journal* 41, no. 1 (August 1, 2015): 76. https://doi.org/10.17953/aj.41.1.74.
[25] Casumbal-Salazar, 85.
[26] Gaerlan, "In the Court of the Sultan," 254.

Catholic majority would often try to quell any uprisings within these regions due to their identity as non-Catholic IPs.

As Gonzalves and Gaerlan both note, the PCN was created to empower FilAm students and communities. The PCN was aimed at teaching FilAm students about Filipinx identity and cultural heritage and incorporated different styles of folkloric dance from different regions to do so.[27] Gaerlan, however, argued that the inclusion of the Muslim dance suite[28] often subverts the overall progressive agenda of the PCN by self-Orientalizing the Mindanao and Sulu regions through these dances. Gaerlan notes that the Bayanihan "never allows its dancers to smile"[29] throughout the entire Muslim suite and performers are often expected to look regal and proud. However, Gaerlan notes that many of the dances in the Muslim suite are portraying slaves creating a sort of dissonance between the ideas around the Muslim suite and the story often told within these dances. Gaerlan plays close attention to the *Singkil*, noted as the signature piece of Bayanihan's Muslim suite. The Muslim suite rests on the idea that the dances being performed are done in the court of a sultan. The *Singkil* is described as a dance from the Lanao province and portrays a dance that every young lady of

> royal blood in Lanao is expected to learn…. It tells again the tale, brought many years ago from India, of the winning of a princess by a prince. She commences with the Princess Walk, closely attended by her *asik*. Now with proud agility they traverse the field of clashing poles, the labyrinthine perils of life. They chart the path of obstacles that the prince will have to hurdle in pursuit of his chosen one.

[27] Gaerlan, "In the Court of the Sultan," 253
[28] In her work, Gaerlan utilizes the term the Moro suite. However, I refer to this suite as the Muslim dance suite as it was used at SCU. I also refrain from using the term Moro as, in past conversations, SPCN committee members have said that the term "Moro" is a derogatory term.
[29] Gaerlan, "In the Court of the Sultan," 261

Instead, Gaerlan notes how the *Singkil* actually is based on an ancient epic about "the Princess Gundingan in the 'Place of Enchantment' who, frightened by an earthquake, tried to escape by running and leaping on shaking stones, trying not to get her feet caught."[30] Despite this empowering message that falls more in line with the progressive agenda of PCNs that Gaerlan discusses earlier, the *Singkil* is reduced to an Orientalist view about "class and gender subjugation"[31]

The *Singkil*, according to Gaerlan, is not accurate to the region as pieces of the costume are only inspired by the region. Gaerlan cites a Maranao ethnomusicologist, Usopay Cadar, who is especially offended at the way that the *Singkil* is portrayed. Cadar notes that the *Singkil* is purely a "solo female dance"[32] and that unmarried Maranao men and women would not dance in public together let alone show bare skin to one another as seen in the prince's costuming in *Singkil*. Through Cadar, Gaerlan points out the self-Orientalizing and inaccurate aspects of the Muslim suite, and specifically the *Singkil* as seen in the Bayanihan, to highlight the vast differences between the Muslim suite and contrast the Muslim dance suite to the other lowland Christian Filipinx dances. Gaerlan specifically points to themes such as

> Muslims are exotic; they have slaves; they are warlike; their leaders are powerful, autocratic sultans whose entrance is signaled with an ear-splitting gong; and they live in a "sensuous" atmosphere with women waiting to bow before them.

I highlight this part of Gaerlan's argument specifically to help further the ideas of self-Orientalization noted here and how they apply to other traditional dance suites as well -

[30] Gowing, Peter G. *Muslim Filipinos - Heritage and Horizon*, 133.
[31] Gaerlan, "In the Court of the Sultan," 263.
[32] Gaerlan, "In the Court of the Sultan," 262.

specifically those that are not from the lowland Christian Filipinx tradition. I expand more on this idea in a later chapter.

In thinking more specifically about the PCN as it relates to the college experience, I also look at Xavier Hernandez's article "Behind the Curtain: The Cultural Capital of Pilipino Cultural Nights." Hernandez's article examines the performance of PCN within the institution of higher education to showcase the different types of cultural capital that are utilized to create a visible performance like the PCN. Hernandez specifically cites resistant capital, linguistic capital, familial capital, social capital, aspirational capital, and navigational capital. Hernandez furthers his argument by locating the PCN as a formative part of the FilAm college experience as well as a tool for helping Filipinx American students to combat their own invisibility in their educational environments. The PCN is a classroom for Filipinx Americans not only to learn about their culture but also to perform their culture on stage as well. With very few Filipinx professors, administrators, and staff members on these college campuses, PCNs and dedicated Filipinx American spaces are incredibly powerful for realizing one's identity and culture. Hernandez argues that PCN is utilized as resistant capital in the face of numerous negative images "of Filipino Americans on campus or in most mass media outlets"[33] Filipinx Americans create their own stories, representations, and spaces on campus rather than waiting for institutional change. They become their own teachers and learn about themselves in a larger space that was not designed for them – the university campus.

I also look to the concept of familial capital that Hernandez's work emphasizes as well. Hernandez defines familial capital as how

[33] Xavier J Hernandez, "Behind the Curtain: The Cultural Capital of Pilipino Cultural Nights," *Journal of Southeast Asian American Education and Advancement* 15, no. 1 (March 19, 2020), https://doi.org/10.7771/2153-8999.1165, 9.

> marginalized communities develop and sustain familial capital through their expanded networks of family and community members, who connect to one another with the same sense of interdependency and obligation as a nuclear unit.

Familial capital can be seen through the networks that FilAm organizations use through terms like *kuya*, *ate*, or *ading*. While Hernandez argues that familial capital is used through networks and obligations of leadership, I push this idea forward through the experience of familial capital as a positive and empowering experience. As I expand on more in later chapters, strong community, almost familial-like bonds, propel people to give back to their communities and be a part of the PCN process again.

Hernandez's work emphasizes the importance of the larger space that PCNs take place - the university campus - and how the university creates these dichotomies of formal versus informal spaces of learning. This ties in Hernandez's notions of social and navigational capital that emphasize how unique the PCN is to the institution of higher education. While traditional classrooms are oftentimes recognized as the only spaces where learning takes place, Hernandez pushes back to say that informal places of learning like the PCN are incredibly important and are for and by Filipinx American students. Hernandez furthers his point by arguing that the PCN affects the Filipinx American college student and experience greatly especially about learning about oneself. Hernandez's article also emphasizes the power of the university in dictating what is considered a formal and informal space of learning. I look to Hernandez's article to think about how these concepts apply to non-Filipinx performers and whether non-Filipinx performers also see PCN as informal spaces of learning. Hernandez's work is perhaps the closest in line with my own in that he looks at the social and institutional factors that shape the experience of the PCN on a college campus rather than focusing on a "real" or "authentic" representation of Filipinx culture.

While both Gonzalves and Hernandez come to think about PCN from the perspective of a mostly Filipinx American cast, I utilize their works to further the conversation to include other non-Filipinx students in PCNs as well. The history that Gonzalves discusses in *The Day the Dancers Stayed* is critical to understanding the appeal that non-Filipinx students may face when encountering a PCN for the first time while Hernandez's article about the implications of the PCN could help understand what draws folks back into the PCN space. While including non-Filipinx students in the conversations about PCNs may complicate the current narrative surrounding PCNs, the unique situation of having non-Filipinx students feel so involved requires the history and foundations that both Gonzalves and Hernandez lay out in their works.

One thing to note is that both Gonzalves and Hernandez also focus on the PCN when they occur on larger research university campuses such as UCLA. A later chapter will deal with the specifics of SCU's campus however I hope to use both Gonzalves and Hernandez's findings to see whether they will replicate in other smaller campuses. Hernandez's argument around cultural capital and the lasting connections between current students and alum may also prove pertinent to looking more at given the tight-knit communities that form on smaller campuses. While Hernandez's students often looked to mentors to carry the burden of creating and planning the PCN at his place of study, many SCU alumni come back to teach and provide backstage support to the PCN Directors who are, most often, currently enrolled students. The burdens and desire to put on a cultural show are more concentrated in the SCU community while for the community Hernandez is examining, it seems to lack the cohesive community support needed on campus.

(Cultural) Performance

Because of the nature of PCN as a performance, I draw upon scholars who work at the intersections of performance studies and Asian American Studies/Ethnic Studies to understand

the complicated dynamics of racialized performances. Most scholars look at the nature of simply performing race, however I would like to focus on both performance and performing culture and race to fully encapsulate the PCN as simply a production and a cultural production.

As a production, the PCN emphasizes the ways that theater performances can move people through the interactions "between audience and performers."[34] The theater, according to Dorinne Kondo in her book *Worldmaking*, is a unique stage where the audience can influence and inform the performance of the performers in ways that television or film viewers cannot.[35] Audience members, and their reactions, feed the performers and, unlike television and film, not every performance of the same production will be the same. Kondo goes on to emphasize how the theater space allows for constructions of race to be unmade and remade. The theater, according to Kondo, serves as an arena to produce new ways of knowing race. Kondo demonstrates this in her analysis of her own participation and close work with Anna Deavere Smith and David Hwang, two prolific artists of color whose influence and work onstage has changed the ways that theater about minority populations is viewed. Kondo's close work with Smith and Hwang, and her role in the preparation for the production, give a look into the paratheatrical of the plays she is a part of.

Another important part of *Worldmaking* is when Kondo discusses Deavere Smith's strategies of playing other characters and essentializing their identity down into various markers such as clothing, makeup, or accessories. Specifically, I look at Deavere Smith's play *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992* and how Smith's execution of *Twilight* as a one-woman show is tied to the multiethnic PCN cast. While Kondo points to Deavere Smith's *Twilight* for many reasons, one of

[34] Dorinne K. Kondo, *Worldmaking: Race, Performance, and the Work of Creativity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), 25
[35] Kondo, *Worldmaking*, 26

Kondo's discussions includes the politics of representation. Most of this discussion deals with the fact that Deavere Smith plays a variety of roles from different ethnic backgrounds as a Black woman. Kondo argues that Smith's own body cannot be removed from her roles as she continues to "put on" these roles however Smith finds a way to essentialize people to defining characteristics to give the audience a way of recognizing various characters.

One example of this is when Smith performs as Kondo in one of her many renditions of *Twilight*. Despite their physical differences, Smith can essentialize Kondo to a signature style of blouse, red lipstick, and singular hoop earring. Audience members can realize the difference between Smith's portrayal of Kondo versus her other characters because of these markers. These markers of character that Smith brings to the stage are important to her practice as an actress and are critical to how the audience may read Smith's own body. Deavere Smith, despite being a Black woman, can take these characters and "wear them" like a costume through these essentialized markers. While this is also part of the process of race making and breaking that Kondo discusses in earlier chapters, Deavere Smith's efforts in breaking genre through her one-woman show still has implications that can extend to other productions, including the PCN.

Questions of whether these multiethnic casts are legible as playing Filipinx Americans are also invoked here. Both dancers and skit actors are asked to step into a different character or role onstage. For skit actors, this role is the role of a certain character who, oftentimes, is FilAm. While actors are not forced to visibly show they are FilAm, we can only hypothesize that they are due to the context clues around them. This may include the scene and situation being portrayed and even the dialogue that they use in the skit as well. Allusions to specific cultural dishes, using vocabulary that is common in FilAm households, and even harking back to historical moments are also used during the PCN skit. Discussing themes about what it means to

be FilAm is another way that non-Filipinx actors are read as FilAm as well. Actors will refer to themselves as FilAm through the character they are playing, solidifying in the audience's mind that these people may, in fact, be FilAm.

This question, however, is trickier when I turn to think about the dances instead. While the dances come from different regions of the Philippines, they are often essentialized as Barbara Gaerlan writes in "In the Court of the Sultan" through the character that dancers are asked to "put on." The Muslim, Tribal, and Mountain dance suites often require a more serious or stoic character while the Maria Clara and Rural dance suites required a flirty and fun character, respectively. These subtle differences in character again essentialize these dances into their typecast characters and create small distinctions between the dances. Costumes are another part of this as well. Different dances call for different costumes as well. For example, the Mountain dance suite requires male performers to go shirtless and wear only a *bahag* while female performers wear nude bodysuits, beaded accessories, and a tribal patterned skirt. Essentialization through costuming is yet another way for audience members, especially those who have attended multiple PCNs, to distinguish between the various suites. However, the performing body can also be read in a variety of other ways as well.

Karen Shimakawa's *National Abjection* is crucial in thinking about not only the performance of Asian American bodies on stage but also crossethnic performance. Karen Shimakawa's final chapter in National Abjection discusses larger themes about representation. Utilizing earlier topics from the larger book, including discussions of what national abjection is and how Asian Americans are implicated in it, Shimakawa's final chapter draws upon two of Ping Chong's plays in East-West Quartet, *Deshima* and *Chinoiserie*, to discuss the Asian performer and the performing body. Both *Deshima* and *Chinoiserie* aim to situate the Asian

American body and the defining features of being Asian Americanness within the larger context of globalization and imperialism.

Chong utilizes actors of color in a variety of nontraditional roles and uses their bodies as a way for audience members to question their imposition of race on these characters. One scene that sticks out is in *Deshima*. Chong utilizes a majority Asian American cast and in one scene, he uses Asian American actors to play white Americans before quickly transitioning to having them play Japanese Americans. Here, the audience picks up this quick transition and, as Shimakawa points out, the transition pushes the audience to think about what allows us to impose race onto various characters and performers based on certain characteristics or even cues from the play itself. Chong does the same thing in his other play *Chinoiserie* by having Aleta Hayes, an African American actress, play the role of Vincent Chin's mother. Chong is purposeful in having Hayes play Mrs. Chin especially considering Mrs. Chin being the "mother of a (virtually unpunished) hate crime" and asking the audience to think about what Mrs. Chin might look and sound like. Hayes' own positionality as an African American woman is poignant in discussing the larger structural factors that, as Shimakawa points out, led to "the collapse of the US automotive industry (because of the ascendance of Japanese companies during the 1980s), and its attendant effect on cities like Detroit."[36]

Shimakawa states an interesting point about Hayes's role and argues that Hayes's performance asks the audience to "reorganize its expectations of conventional relationships between (biological) race and (cultural) identity"[37]. Our understanding of who is Asian American and, more broadly, what is Americanness, are pushed here by Hayes and her role as Mrs. Chin.

[36] Shimakawa, Karen. *National Abjection: The Performing Asian American Body*, pg. 156
[37] Shimakawa, 156

Hayes's body, in the same ways that Deavere Smith does in *Twilight*, creates a distinction between herself and the character she is playing. As a Black woman playing a Chinese woman, there are many obvious physical differences between the two. Hayes and her performance, alongside the performance of the Narrator who is played by a Black actor, highlight and situate the relationship between Black Americans and Asian Americans. Both communities have worked with white racism and suffered the same abjection. The larger connection between the abjection of both Asian American and Black American communities that Chong made in *Chinoiserie* emphasizes that Asian American abjection does not take place in a vacuum but instead is a part of a much larger process of abjection that is necessary for creating a national American identity.[38]

Chinoiserie tackles these larger ideas of Asian Americanness, specifically Chinese Americanness, using some of Chong's own experiences as well as other historical moments relating to Chineseness and Chinese Americanness. Like Chong's other work, *Chinoiserie* embarks on creating a non-linear history that pulls past and far past together to create what Shimakawa calls a "history that is cumulative rather than serial."[39]. One interesting scene that Chong utilizes is a reworking of the 1879 play *The Chinese Must Go* by Henry Grimm. In this portion of *Chinoiserie*, Chong punctuates racist Chinese descriptions with what Shimakawa calls Chinese American sensibilities. In the same vein, Chong utilizes another text, An English Chinese Phrasebook published by "Wong Sam and Assistants" is punctuated by more modern cultural references and movement sequences that are performed on the side while the phrasebook is read aloud. All this together disrupts these static notions of Chinese Americanness and instead

[38] Shimakawa, 158.
[39] Shimakawa, 148.

showcases an "image of Chinese Americanness in motion/process."[40] Rather than understanding Chinese Americanness through the phrasebook alone, the use of these movements showcase how Chinese American culture and what it means to be Chinese American changes through time.

Shimakawa's analysis of Chong's work is incredibly important in thinking about my own thesis and work with non-Filipino students who perform in the PCN. Chong's own interventions in thinking about Chinese Americanness and even the larger ideas of national abjection that Shimakawa discusses are important in thinking about the ways in which performance can both enhance but push back against these static notions of the body and race. Audience members are asked to inscribe notions of stereotypical Filipinx American culture onto non-Filipino bodies through their performance as FilAm characters. These ideas of who is and is not Filipino and what experiences make someone Filipinx and/or FilAm are often inherently laced into the PCN.

Skit writers and PCN Directors are often choosing themes and dances that push forward and reinforce well-known ideas of Filipinx-ness and Filipino Americanness. However, it is also important to note that performances such as these have the possibility of critiquing these ideas of Asianness and Asian Americanness. Shimakawa's work is important in situating these ideas of national abjection that she discusses in *National Abjection* and how these claims of Filipinx-ness and Filipino Americanness by a pan-Asian/multiethnic cast can be used as tokens of diversity in the larger rhetoric of the neoliberal university. These ideas of coming together under the name of one show are discussed by many respondents and are important to the larger questions of what it means to be perceived as performing in a show designed for FilAm students.

In thinking about the ideas of the theater, I draw upon Daphne Lei's work on nineteenth-century Chinese theater and the questions of who needs the theater and who is speaking when

[40] Shimakawa, 150.

performing in the theater. Lei's work also focuses on the paratheatrical - the behind the scenes of the actual performance - that appeals to audience members to come see the show. In this case, the paratheatrical included banquets held for audience members and frequent invitations to look backstage to satisfy "a voyeuristic curiosity."[41] The spectacle of the performance, in all its glory, is what drew audience members to nineteenth century Chinese theater much like what draws people into the PCN space. Many videos promoting PCN satisfy this same curiosity that Lei notes in her article as well. They will often focus on the behind-the-scenes whether this was clips of people doing make-up or even previous rehearsals leading up to the final show. These details that embody this paratheatrical make these performances somewhat of a spectacle to watch that requires this background knowledge to understand how much progress has been made. More about the paratheatrical is discussed later in Chapter 7 where I talk about the theatrics and the paratheatrical more in detail and specifically about the PCN.

Community Building and Identity Formation

I also look at the ways in which the community is built – specifically within the Filipinx community. Martin Manalansan's "Searching for Community: Filipinx Gay Men in New York City" highlights the ways in which community is formed. Manalansan's article highlights the permeable boundaries that form in Filipinx gay communities and how there are boundaries between who is welcomed as well boundaries between different sections of the community. Rather than viewing community as one cohesive and unified group, Manalansan stresses that community can be seen as a variety of smaller groups tied together by the string of their ethnic heritage. Manalansan's article pushes past normative thinking of community formation and

[41] Lei, Daphne. "The Production and Consumption of Chinese Theatre in Nineteenth-Century California," (2003) 296.

instead questions how people form communities and what brings people together in the name of community.

Within this same vein, Manalansan's book *Global Divas* has a chapter dedicated to community formation for gay Filipinx men in New York City. While this chapter is somewhat like "Searching for Community," this book chapter specifically focuses on the ways in which community is formed and demarcated through space. While New York is considered a haven for many people in the queer community, Manalansan emphasized that different boroughs and neighborhoods were hubs for different pockets of people within the larger queer community.

I look to Manalansan to think about the positionality of non-Filipinx performers in the context of a larger Filipinx community and performance on the university campus. While Manalansan specifically discusses how the Filipinx community creates boundaries within themselves, I extend these boundaries to include discussion around the permeable inclusions and exclusions of non-Filipinx students within the PCN. While PCNs are again a space made by and for FilAm students, allowing non-Filipinx students to perform creates a permeability that is often necessary when searching for community. At the same time, FilAm students emphasize their claim over the PCN by controlling aspects of the performance such as the topic of the skit, the dialogue included in the skit, the dances that are chosen, and even the title. While some non-Filipinx students can enter these spaces as leaders, they do not make these decisions alone and instead collaborate with other Filipinx students. Demonstrating these porous boundaries again echoes Manalansan's claims to community as it pertained to the Filipinx queer community.

I hope to also apply Manalansan's argument of space as markers of community and place it into the context of the university campus. Manalansan's argument also echoes back to the work of Hernandez as mentioned earlier in thinking about how PCN is seen as a space for FilAm

students where there were few FilAms in administrative, staff, or faculty positions on campus. For FilAm students, these questions around community and sharing space with other non-Filipinx students is crucial in thinking about their experience within the PCN. Where are Filipinx American students allowed to congregate and mingle together? What happens when non-Filipinx students come in and join these spaces? These questions are answered somewhat by both FilAm and non-Filipinx respondents who discussed their impressions of a multiethnic PCN cast and emphasizes the unique role Barkada plays in creating communities and spaces for FilAm students. While cultural organizations are places where students can gather together, these spaces are ever changing due to the ways in which the university operates.

"Searching for Community" is also important in thinking about how cultural identity is formed through community as well. Identity is not only individually formed but also created in relation to the community people surround themselves with. Demarcated spaces for students to gather is another important aspect of community and these spaces are often necessary to form communities. However, my arguments of permeable communities are also important in thinking about the ways in which PCNs are community spaces not only for Filipinx American students but also those who want to learn more about Filipinx culture. PCNs, as Gaerlan and Gonzalves note, are important spaces for FilAm students to learn about their ethnic identities. However, unlike traditional classrooms, the Bayanihan-style dances, costuming, and different dance suites provide students with a learning environment and experience that is both exciting and eye-opening. As Gaerlan also comments, this new style of learning is also the reason why many FilAm students are excited, even anxious, to show their parents what is going on.

Mark Pedelty's article "Teaching Anthropology through Performance" expands on this notion of non-normative teaching methods and spaces, specifically the relationship between

performance and the university. Pedelty argues that performance can be a great method of teaching students because of how hands-on it is and how it also breaks up the monotony of the classroom. He also argues that while performance is a great way of teaching, it also is not as accepted because of how "fun" is incorporated into these performance centered teaching methods. Pedelty's article highlights the various ways that performance can create opportunities for learning about other cultures. In line with Hernandez's work about formal and informal spaces of learning, PCNs are a tool and space for people to learn about Filipinx culture. Pedelty's emphasis on how it can be a space for learning about a different culture is true for both FilAm and non-Filipinx students. FilAm students can gain knowledge about different IPs and their cultural dances in the Philippines while non-Filipinx students gain an understanding to I look to Pedelty's argument to also think about the power of the university in regulating what types of cultural performance is accepted and what is relegated to the side as informal teaching.

Alongside being a space where non-Filipinx performers are taught Filipinx culture, PCN is a unique Filipinx American experience for many FilAm college students. While PCN may claim to call itself a performance of Filipinx culture, it is a uniquely Filipinx American experience and emphasizes the Filipinx American experience in most, if not all, of its aspects. The PCN, however, is part of a larger moment in the college experience that many students of color seem to find themselves in. The PCN, other cultural performances like it, language classes, and cultural organizations all fall under the guise of a cultural reawakening and cultural immersion that is typical of many college students of color. Many students of color will try to reclaim their ethnic and racial heritage in college through participation in ethnic/racial/cultural clubs on campus.

To discuss this more, I look to Leny Strobel's work on the "born-again" Filipinx American experience[42] to contextualize how students of color, specifically FilAm students in Strobel's case, are using specific spaces to claim their identity. Strobel also situates her work in a larger discussion around Asian panethnicity and the FilAm stake in it. One of the main findings in her work was that many participants identified, first, as Filipino American[43] above other identifications such as Asian American or Asian. Strobel notes that the bulk of her respondents were from the post-1965 Immigration Act era and so many of her respondents were US-born second generation FilAms. This distinction is also important to Strobel's work to understand how earlier FilAms may have found community formation quite difficult when there were less FilAms in the US.

Strobel's participants are often involved in two different processes: one of decolonization and one of indigenization. Strobel does not use decolonization in the literal sense of land back to IPs nor even a return to a "precolonial state of identity"[44]. Instead, she emphasizes that the decolonization process is "undoing the effects of colonization on the Filipino psyche by recognizing the master narratives that constructed colonial identity and replacing them with indigenous narratives."[45] Strobel defines indigenization as worldviews, beliefs, and practices that define Filipino-ness. Here, Strobel gestures a sweeping arm to a pre-colonial period that is meant to encapsulate a general Filipinx experience rather than recognizing the various IPs that are present within the Philippines. Decolonization and indigenization are a two-fold process that first require FilAms to transform their thoughts and attitudes before they reclaim cultural values. For

[42] Strobel, Leny, "Born-Again Filipino: Filipino American Identity and Asian Panethnicity." pg.33
[43] Again, using the typical -o/-a ending here is used instead of the -x ending I have used throughout this paper to honor the ways that Strobel and her respondents discuss their identity as Filipinx Americans.
[44] Strobel, pg. 39.
[45] Strobel. pg. 38.

many FilAms, this is a reclamation of language, through Tagalog classes, that is oftentimes paired with a desire to seek out and learn FilAm history.

In thinking about the processes of decolonization and indigenization that FilAm students go through, I look towards the PCN as another space for this same time of identity reclamation and formation. The PCN is a space where FilAm students reclaim and relearn parts of their Filipinx identity heritage. The different aspects of the PCN - from the skit to the dance suites - provide a different aspect for FilAm students to learn from. I also emphasize that at universities where Tagalog language classes are not offered, the PCN replaces that classroom space. While Strobel's argument may stretch for the FilAm community, I place non-Filipinx students within this space to question what the PCN offers them. While non-Filipinx students learn the same things that FilAm students learn, these processes of decolonization and indigenization do not take place for non-Filipinx students. Instead, the PCN is a space where students can create pan-Asian community through a shared journey of learning as I have mentioned before. However, I believe that Strobel's work and linking this pan-Asian community is important given the larger context of identity formation within the Filipinx community and their connections to the Asian American community. PCN can offer a space for connection for pan-Asian community building and allow for FilAms to not only take pride in their ethnic heritage and in their comfortability in being FilAms but also can connect with other Asian Americans and create this larger sense of panethnic community.

Strobel's conversations about the tensions between panethnic and FilAm identity formation are crucial for understanding the importance not only of FilAm identity but larger community formations as well. Her work is also a piece in other studies done by scholars who study identity formation of Asian Americans. Iwamoto, Negi, et al. discuss the identity formation

of Indian American and found that Indian cultural events were crucial to connecting to their ethnic identity. For many Indian Americans, these events were safe spaces where they could not only interact intimately with their ethnic culture but also celebrate their culture through things such as food, clothes, dance, and music. Although many participants found themselves embarrassed and hesitant to participate in these events as children, they later embraced these traditions and hoped to pass down these traditions to their children. Iwamoto, Negi, et. al also found that their participants hoped to pass down the values that their participants learned growing up.

Although Iwamoto, Negi, et. al's participants are much older than Strobel's participants, all of them found that there was a desire later in their lives to reconnect with their culture. Iwamoto, Negi, et. al notes that the reason many participants rejected their traditional cultural practices was because of conflict between themselves and their parents. Many of their participants refused to learn about their culture despite their parents' effort to instill traditional cultural values in their children. Although parents and families are often seen as the main sources of culture and passing on culture to their children, the lack of self-propelled desire to learn culture shuts down the child's desire to learn and causes them to rebel. I believe that Strobel's article then picks up from Iwamoto, Negi, et. al's article. Strobel's participants were often learning about their ethnic heritage on their own efforts and not because their parents told them to. This is perhaps the key to why college students start to become more willing to learn about their culture - there is no external parental pressure or influence to learn about their culture.

Strobel notes that the experiences of FilAms, in her research, were rooted in a refusal of parents to pass down the culture to their children. Making this distinction links back to the slippery racialization of FilAms but also is crucial in understanding the importance of spaces like

PCN. Strobel's work again grounds the work of Iwamoto, Negi, et al. but also raises questions about non-Filipinx students who join PCN as cast members. While many students may have gone through the process that Iwamoto, Negi, et al. discuss in their article, this does not explain their desire to join PCN. What specifically do they gain from performing in an ethnic performance that does not center them? I would, again, bring in the works of Manalansan regarding community formation in order to highlight that while PCN is a space for FilAms to reclaim their ethnic culture, the permeability and openness of the PCN as a community space allows for non-Filipinx students also use that space in order to build community relationships as well.

While the influence of authority figures like parents play a huge role in forming the identity of Asian Americans, location has had a hand in this identity formation process as well. Gao's article focuses on how location plays a larger factor in how Asian Americans view themselves. Gao's study takes place in the Midwest where the Asian American population is not as dense as on the West Coast and they found that Asian Americans felt less connected to ethnic heritage due to the White and Black peers who make up most of their student body of their schools. Spaces and locations where there are few Asian Americans decrease the connection that Asian Americans feel to their own ethnic identity. Min and Kim found in their research that young adulthood was seen as the perfect time frame for their Asian American participants to explore their identity. The participants felt that once they came to college, they were exposed to a more "cosmopolitan" environment and were able to meet and connect with more Asian Americans than in their hometowns. The discussion of place on identity formation is crucial to thinking about how community formation also takes place on certain college campuses. Chapter 3 will discuss more about how the space of SCU's campus, despite its location in the diverse Bay

Area, influenced how Asian Americans viewed themselves as members of the campus and how it affected their community formations.

CHAPTER 3: The SCU Jesuit experience

To set the scene for where this research takes place, I zone into Santa Clara University in the San Francisco Bay Area. This chapter introduces the demographic data of Santa Clara University, sets the stage for a glimpse into a very limited Asian American experience at SCU through my own past research, and pulls from my own personal anecdotes about SCU to set the scene.

Right in the heart of Silicon Valley, Santa Clara University stands on Ohlone land as a Jesuit liberal arts style college with its colonial history as a mission site since the early 19th century. One of the oldest universities in California, SCU prides itself on its Jesuit tradition, heart for social justice, and its proximity to tech hubs in San Jose and San Francisco. With an undergraduate population of about 5,000 students, SCU emphasizes an intimate connection between its professors and students with class sizes up to 40 students per class. This alone is perhaps one of the largest differences between other sites of study for PCNs. Many scholars, including Gonzalves and Alves, point to UCLA or other larger research universities where there is a critical mass of Filipinx American students. However, the Jesuit (read: Catholic) tradition of Santa Clara may bring in other Filipinx students who went to Jesuit schools or have a strong tie to their faith. Off the top of my head, three of my closest friends who were Filipinx American also went to Jesuit/Catholic private high schools.

SCU is a predominantly white institution by most accounts. According to data from Data USA on SCU's diversity statistics, the total percentage of white students at SCU (undergraduate and graduate) is 40.7% while the rest of the student population is made up of BIPOC students. While at first glance seeing a "majority" population of BIPOC students is reassuring, disaggregating the data shows the sparse percentages in comparison to the white student

population. 18.4 percent of the students self-identified as Asian, 17 percent of students identified as Hispanic or Latinx, 6.58 percent of students identified as two or more races, and 2.54 percent of students identified as Black or African American.[46] For some students, the diversity on campus was not a huge factor, often leading them to find social connections who were like-minded or shared the same interests. For others, these numbers and the overwhelming white population create desires for students to seek out friendships with other students of color.

Finding a community is incredibly important in college but the small size of SCU as a university does not allow for students to strictly stick within ethnic specific circles like they may in larger universities. For many Asian American students, they begin to accept intermingling in pan-Asian spaces and a need for pan-Asian community for students to have a robust social life. In fact, many cultural clubs on campus do not disclose that their spaces are just for members of the specific ethnicity being represented. Instead, Asian American students join organizations that provide them with a community that extends beyond cultural or ethnic identity.

In previous research that I have done while at SCU as an undergraduate student, many students who came to SCU found themselves at odds with their Asian American identity for a variety of reasons.[47] Some students came from predominantly Asian American neighborhoods and found themselves shocked at the predominantly white student population at SCU. Many students faced small instances of racism from microaggressions to a sense of disconnect from their white peers. These jarring experiences and realizations led many students to feel othered and were oftentimes traumatic as well. Other students found themselves in a reverse culture shock where the diversity at SCU was much greater than that of their high schools. Whichever

[46] Data USA, "Santa Clara University."
[47] This work was unpublished and written for a class (ETHNIC 165: Community-Based Research)

way these students faced culture shocks; many students felt their desire for an Asian American community increase. Students, from their first year onwards, began to seek out pan-Asian or ethnic specific spaces to find community and feel at home at SCU. Some students chose organizations that fell in line with their ethnic identities while others joined spaces where they knew upperclassmen from their high schools. This desire for finding community led Asian American students to cling tightly to the spaces and friendships that they found.

One gathering space for students of color at SCU was the Multicultural Center (MCC). Founded in 1985 by six different cultural organizations on campus, the MCC is considered "the multicultural programming body and racial/ethnic advocacy voice for the campus community."[48] The MCC is now home to 14 different cultural organizations on campus and has been a welcoming space for all students of color. Of the 14 organizations within the MCC, I focus on Barkada, the Filipino American student union. Barkada was founded in 1983 by Gem and Butch Yabut and Ronald Martinez as a support organization for Filipinx students at SCU.[49] Barkada was one of the six founding organizations of the MCC and has become a staple in the community of SCU. The Tagalog word *barkada* translates to a "group of friends" and is a definition that many Barkada members will agree is fitting.

The first PCN on SCU's campus was performed in 1990 after Orlene Carlos Gentile, an SCU alum and then-Barkada member, wanted to take Barkada's mission of increasing awareness of Filipinx culture and community to the next level. Gentile was inspired by other FilAm collegiate organizations who were also performing their own PCNs at the time. SCU's PCNs have been running for the last 30 years and has since expanded to a two-night performance that

[48] "MCC," Santa Clara Center for Student Involvement. https://www.scu.edu/csi/organizations/cso/directory/mcc/
[49] "About PCN" webpage, Barkada PCN WordPress

brings in 1000s of audience members. Barkada's PCN has become the largest student-run production on campus and is a testament to the "cast's hard work and energy, alumni's knowledge and assistance, outside Filipino organizations' support and mentorship, and P-Staff's passion and teamwork."[50]

Beckoning back to the work of Hernandez, PCN at SCU operates as a space outside of the classroom for learning about Filipinx and FilAm culture that students may not get otherwise. SCU's curriculum is influenced by the Jesuit philosophy of *cura personalis* - care for the whole person - and dedication to social justice. While there is some overlap between curriculum of other universities, the religious affiliation requires students to take three different levels of religion courses - though students are not limited to learning just about Christianity and Catholicism - and an Experimental Learning for Social Justice (ELSJ) course that requires students to partner with a local community organization or school. These classes mark the experience at a Jesuit university and differentiate SCU's curriculum from a place like UCLA.

Although SCU has an Ethnic Studies department and has an Introduction to Filipino American Studies class - ETHN 50 - there are no faculty available to teach the class. Here, I recognize that the university does not have the bandwidth, resources, or time to expand the Ethnic Studies department and allow for other lecturers to come to SCU and teach this class. Instead, as Hernandez argues in his article and his research site, students are often left to make meaning for themselves and learn about their culture in non-classroom spaces and other extracurricular activities. PCN here fills in a gap that the university does not provide and forces students to seek out other spaces like Barkada and PCN to help their understanding of FilAm culture. This is very much in line with the work of Hernandez who also discussed how PCNs

[50] "About PCN," Barkada PCN. https://barkadapcn.home.blog/about-pcn/

filled in the gaps that many universities were missing when it came to their experiences with FilAm representation on campus. SCU had no institutionalized space for FilAm students to explore their identity, leading students to not only create these experiences but also reaffirm them.

Providing more information about the SCU experience is key to understanding what my participants discussed in their survey answers. I utilize this chapter to provide more context to the experience of my participants. Chapter 4 lays out my methodology before I dive into the specifics of the PCN experience.

CHAPTER 4: Methodology

This project started with a keen interest in UCLA Samahang Pilipino Culture Night (SPCN). However, with the COVID-19 pandemic, the various lockdowns in different California counties, and other research interests arising between the time of my proposal and starting my own research efforts, I decided to turn my efforts elsewhere and look back at my experience at SCU. I also must acknowledge that a large body of work and research has been done at UCLA and alongside SPCN folks. I felt that my experience, along with those of my friends and other non-Filipinx PCNers, was unique amongst other FilAm organizations especially here in California. Looking to SCU was a choice I made to, as mentioned before, expand the work of other FilAm scholars who have studied PCN at larger universities. I wanted to look at how my experience compared or even differed and see if being at a smaller campus made a difference to the PCN experience. Funded by the UCLA Asian American Studies Center and following IRB-approved methods of recruitment, data collection, and storage, I set out to distribute surveys to friends and alumni of SCU.

Knowing the difficulty of working or studying from home for almost a full year, I decided to utilize surveys rather than my initial plan of participant-observation and semi-structured interviews. While I knew that interviews would get me much lengthier and in-depth answers, I knew that finding participants and working out a time to talk about would be draining on all parties involved especially with the added burdens of working and studying from home. Surveys on the other hand were easier to disseminate and required less time and effort from my participants. I thought up and crafted a survey consisting of 14 questions that asked basic questions like name, graduation year, and level involvement as well as questions asking participants to reflect on certain aspects of their PCN experience. I hoped to get insight into why

students joined and stayed in PCN and their thoughts about the experience itself. I also hoped to see how the PCN experience compared to other cultural shows that my respondents may have been involved in, to see if PCN stood out in any way. The full list of my survey questions can be found in the Appendix at the end of this paper.

My process of finding participants was mostly convenience-based and through snowball sampling. I had a list of people who I knew were involved in PCN, both Filipinx and non-Filipinx, and had personally reached out to have them fill out the survey and even asked some of them to help distribute the survey to anyone who they thought might be interested in this research. Most of my participants ended up disseminating the survey to their friends, many of whom I had surprisingly crossed paths with. The methods of outreach included personal contact through text message, personal contact Facebook Messenger, and posting in PCN-related Facebook groups to gather more informants. While I am unsure about the numbers of folks who were contacted, I estimate that a total of 100 participants were contacted through these various methods. After about two months of outreach and waiting, I closed the survey after having a total of fifteen people respond, seven of whom identified as non-Filipinx. While all my survey respondents were given the opportunity to use a pseudonym, a few of my participants were okay with using their real names. Therefore, the names of my participants are a mix of real names and pseudonyms. All participants have graduated within the last 5 years from SCU and were involved in PCN for at least one year during their undergraduate experience.

At the end of the survey, I asked my participants to provide me a way of contacting them. While most I knew I could get in touch with easily, I wanted to allow my participants to choose the format that I contacted them although I knew I could contact most, if not all of them, fairly easily through social media. While all of them provided a method of contact, most participants

filled out their surveys sufficiently and did not require follow-up. However, there were a few, most of whom were either involved in other cultural shows or provided points of interest, did receive follow-up requests in their preferred method of contact. These follow-ups were again, recorded and stored through IRB-approved methods. When looking at the data collected all respondents were Santa Clara alumni who were involved with PCN for at least one year. The next few chapters will look at my main arguments based on the data collected.

CHAPTER 5: PCN: A Place for Community

One place where students found connection was in PCN and, more broadly, through Barkada - the FilAm organization on campus. While this pan-Asian community is not unique to just PCN and Barkada, I choose this space specifically because of the extensive studies done on PCNs at other institutions with majority FilAm casts and want to shed light on the nature of PCN and community building in a different setting. I would also argue that the sentiments extended and expressed here are not unique in PCN alone. The same themes of community and bonding can be found across all other Asian American cultural organizations on SCU's campus.

For many of my survey respondents, PCN was more than just a show. PCN often served as a way to connect with others and many of my non-Filipinx respondents became involved because of other friends, roommates, mentors, and family members who were previously involved with PCN. One respondent, Kai, discussed her experience and involvement with PCN as a non-Filipinx student at SCU. Kai had originally just joined the larger FilAm organization, Barkada, during her first year at SCU and joined PCN after her roommate had convinced Kai to join at the last minute. Looking back, Kai was glad that she decided to do PCN, calling it a "highlight of [her] freshman year."[51] Since then, Kai performed in PCN up until her senior year and, after graduating, came back as an alum dance teacher. PCN was a pivotal space for Kai to not only take on these new experiences but also learn about Filipinx culture and connect with the larger community in Barkada.

> The community in PCN was so welcoming and learning the culture and history behind the dances was truly amazing. It was so much fun to get to know so many new members through dancing and practicing together… To me, PCN gives us the chance to deepen our

[51] Kai, survey response

> cultural appreciation and connect with other students from all backgrounds as we grow and practice together in preparation for the show. PCN allowed us to get to know our Barkada community better and form new friendships and also gave us the opportunity of being a leader and help put on an amazing show.

Kai emphasizes in the quote above that PCN was a place for community building and also to "grow and practice together in preparation for the show."[52] Her focus on other opportunities of building community and taking on new roles highlights Kai's own experiences in PCN. Despite not being Filipinx, Kai appreciated her roles in PCN and wanted to take on other roles as well in order to give back to the PCN community. She also noted that she took on other roles including a small acting role during her senior year. She had never imagined herself acting before but wanted to get more involved with PCN and found that this was the right opportunity to do so. Connecting with other community members and building upon relationships that she had established over the years led Kai to feel a lot more comfortable with herself and take on these larger roles. Even as a dance teacher, Kai was able to take the things she had learned as a student and dancer within PCN and expand on her knowledge of Filipinx culture. PCN provided Kai a space to fully dive into the history and meaning behind the dance she taught in a way that she was not able to before as a dancer. Again, Kai was taking on a larger role than she had ever anticipated as a first year joining Barkada and was able to do so because of her experience as a PCN cast member. Kai's consistent dedication to PCN and Barkada over the course of her four years also demonstrated to the PCN Directors that she worked with that she was willing to come back and put in the work again. The Directors she worked with recognized that dedication and called on Kai to continue coming back. The PCN community and

[52] Kai, survey response.

experience served as the backbone that Kai could lean on while she grew both as a performer and a person.

Kai was not the only respondent who found the courage to pursue something way out of her comfort zone. Colman was another non-Filipinx student who echoed many of the same sentiments that Kai talked about in her survey. In thinking about his journey to PCN, Colman reflected that he had joined PCN for a variety of reasons. His role as First-Year Representative in Barkada and the opportunity to hang out with other friends of his who were also involved with PCN were some of the main reasons he joined PCN. However, one notable experience for Colman was seeing his older brother perform onstage. Colman remembers hearing "the legends of [his] older brother making a name for himself by walking out alone on stage and screaming in nothing but a loincloth as part of a cultural dance" and wanting to learn what compelled his brother to transform in such a stark fashion.[53]

For Colman, hearing about his older brother transforming into an entirely different person on stage piqued his interest in PCN and led to his involvement as well. After stepping foot on the SCU campus, Colman's own PCN experience echoed his brothers simply through the realization that "with the right people and effort by [his] side, [he] could do anything."[54] For Colman, PCN was more than just a performance, it was an experience that marked his college career, leveled up his confidence in himself and his abilities, and eventually led to his rise as one of three co-directors of PCN during his senior year. In speaking directly about his decision to run for Director, Colman also reflected on the fact that his Ate, who was also a non-Filipinx (Chinese American) student herself was one of three co-directors of her senior year PCN as well. Seeing

[53] Colman, survey response.
[54] Colman, survey response.

his own Ate, who was born and raised in Hawai'i, take on a leadership role solidified for Colman that he too could take on this leadership role despite not being Filipinx American himself. He noted that the beauty of both Barkada and PCN was in their acceptance of letting other people of other cultures take on these roles.

Colman's PCN was unfortunately cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic but, despite the lack of a final performance, the cast, alumni helpers, and PCN staff surprised him and his co-directors with a video of their experience together. Colman reflected on this heartwarming moment, saying that he found renewed strength in the familial bonds that his cast shared despite it not culminating into a final performance as it had in his years prior.

Kai and Colman's experiences are a testament to the strength of community, especially the pan-Asian community within the PCN space. Both of them were able to take on these larger leadership roles and create stronger relationships with the PCN community. Their level of involvement also demonstrated and emphasized that there was something that PCN brought to the table for non-Filipinx students who may not have as close of a personal connection to Filipinx/Filipinx American culture.

Much like the experiences of Kai and Colman, other students felt drawn into the PCN space because of previously established social relationships. Some students, like my respondent Q, were personally recruited into PCN by their "Kuya" or "Ate" from the big-little system in Barkada. Others, like Matt and Collin, joined PCN because of their close friends. For Collin, he had initially joined Barkada his first year, but it was not until his sophomore year that he decided to join PCN after more of his friends joined and convinced him to join as well. For Matt, he wanted to continue the relationships that he built as a member of Barkada during his first year and decided that joining the PCN cast was the best way to do so. Matt also noted that most of the

people that he surrounded himself with talked highly of PCN and many upperclassmen encouraged him to join. While both reflected on the fact that they felt no immediate cultural connection to PCN, both were able to learn about Filipinx culture as a result of joining PCN.

Christine is another respondent who recognized that despite people having the ability to learn about Filipinx culture, they mainly join because of their friends. Christine, much like Collin, joined PCN during her second year and after watching PCN as an audience member. After watching PCN, she remembered how she really resonated with the idea that the cast seemed like one big family onstage. This desire to be a part of something larger than oneself is incredibly important This pushed her to join PCN during her sophomore year and perform.

My own experiences as an undergraduate student mirror those of Collin, Matt, and Christine. Like Christine, I was enthralled by the theatrical elements of the PCN including the costuming and the dances. Being a part of this larger production meant something to me as an undergraduate and it was a unique experience that could not be matched even when thinking about my experiences in other culture shows. My reasons for coming back echoed those of my respondents as well. I took a break my junior year because of other more pressing responsibilities but I came back my senior year in order to show support for two of my housemates who served as the directors for our senior year PCN.

However, unlike other respondents, my immediate connection to the PCN cast and the "PCN magic" was not established until my senior year. Like Lotto, my first year performing in PCN was a bit awkward and while I grew a bit closer to those who were in my specific dances, I did not feel extremely connected to the entire cast. Like Lotto, I think it was mostly because my main social circles were not strictly within Barkada. And when there was downtime in the greenroom, I felt really awkward and did not know who to talk to. Most of my other friends who

were performing knew more people than I did and were able to mesh more closely with their other cast members. But I struggled a lot in my first year performing feeling at home. The lack of "PCN magic" that I had experienced was something that Matt also commented about as well. He notes that during his last year, he was not as excited to perform like he was in past years. While he could not nail down one particular reason for this lack of excitement, he discussed other reasons such as other responsibilities outside of PCN, the dances that he was cast in, or even just the length of time that could have washed away some of the magic.

While these experiences with PCN magic are not mentioned by other respondents, it is an important factor to mention in regard to the level of involvement that non-Filipinx students had in the PCN. Both Katrina and Colman were involved with Barkada or in PCN as P-Staff and so their commitment was much higher than mine or Matt's commitments. Other factors also led to a limited involvement with PCN. Christine mentions how, as a commuter student, she found it difficult to attend practices especially after a long day of classes. To her, these scheduling problems, which were no issue for students who lived on campus, greatly impacted her schedule as a student and made attending practices difficult for her.

As these non-Filipinx participants demonstrate, social circles were extremely important to the formation of the PCN cast and was what kept the PCN spirit alive. However, Amanda, a FilAm respondent, noted that when promoting PCNs, she felt that many cast members were recruiting others for all the wrong reasons. Amanda cites how people will focus on reasons such as "it's so much fun, your kuyaate's doing it, it's just one hour a week, you'll regret it if you don't, there's a big party after, etc." instead of focusing on the culture and ability to learn about Filipinx culture.[55] However, in line with what other non-FilAm students have demonstrated, what

[55] Amanda, survey response.

Amanda saw as not the best reasons were encapsulating the feelings that many respondents shared. As a Filipina woman, Amanda was glad to see more people participate in PCN, echoing the idea of "the more the merrier" (more on this in the next chapter). But recruitment efforts for PCN shied away from the larger picture of what a PCN actually was or stood for and instead focused on these other reasons for joining. Amanda even reflected on the fact that PCN castmates would often shift their focus quickly when they were performing "[e]specially in the last month or so leading up to the show, a lot of the emphasis is on PCN as a production -- knowing your counts, memorizing your lines, etc. Then afterwards, the focus quickly shifts to a party because it's over." [56] Here, again, the focus on social circles is a huge emphasis, and oftentimes even in an unhelpful way, for many non-Filipinx and even some Filipinx students as well. By focusing on these larger markers of the actual performance, the afterparty, and the people who perform, as Amanda says, performers forget the larger picture of who they are actually performing for and what this performance means to FilAm students.

[56] Amanda, survey response.

CHAPTER 6: By Us, For Us, With Them: The FilAm Perspective

While many of the reasons that non-FilAm students centered mostly around their social ties, many FilAm joined, first and foremost, to connect with their ethnic heritage and culture. Like Strobel notes in her article, many come wanting to connect more closely with their Filipinx heritage and learn more about their culture. As "born-again Filipinos," they desired to learn more about Filipinx culture and organizations and spaces like Barkada and PCN were the premier places to do so.

In many ways, these connections to culture stemmed from a yearning that many FilAm students had due to a lack of exposure to Filipinx culture at home. Seraphine described his experience coming from a predominantly white neighborhood in the East Coast. His surroundings, and lack of a FilAm community outside of his own family, gave him no opportunities nor a desire to learn and connect to his Filipinx culture. He recalled that he wanted to conform as best as he could to Eurocentric beauty standards or even cultural norms to fit in. But after coming to SCU as a first year and hearing about PCN from upperclassmen, he seized the opportunity to embrace his culture and join PCN. He commented on his growth and his pride in his Filipinx heritage stating that "since [his] first PCN, I am proud to be Filipinx-American. I no longer have the desire to conform to the Eurocentric standards just to fit in. PCN gave [me] the courage to embrace who I am, who my parents are, and what it means to be Filipinx."[57] Seraphine was not alone in his experience as a FilAm reclaiming or reconnecting their culture after performing in PCN for the first time.

Similar to Seraphine, Abigail did not get much exposure to Filipinx representation or stories outside of her immediate household. Being able to "see a bunch of different people

[57] Seraphine Aphelios, survey response.

coming together and celebrating the Filipino culture through the arts was exciting and empowering."[58] Outside of this desire to connect to her culture, smaller instances of performing with other FilAm community members at her high school as well as seeing her older brother perform in PCN strengthened her desire to join PCN when she came to college. She knew right from the start that she wanted to get involved with the PCN community and pushed herself to do so.

For both Seraphine and Abigail, their lack of a FilAm community outside of their own family and their own personal intrigue were what drew them to Barkada and PCN. This was not uncommon for many other FilAm students at SCU. Lotto, who identified as half-Filipinx, echoed the same desire to learn more about the Filipinx community due to his own lack of exposure to Filipinx culture growing up. He even mentioned that after performing in PCN, it felt good to connect with his Filipinx side of his family. Amanda also recalled how her excitement to join PCN drew from her desire to deepen the friendships she had made as a member of Barkada and her desire to connect with other FilAms who her age were and not just family members. To her, the excitement around PCN was an extension of her desire to be involved in Barkada. Amanda furthered this claim by saying that she was just excited to be a part of all things Barkada. Like Amanda, Sonny also felt this inherent connection to the PCN after joining Barkada. He recalls that he felt this immediate sense of belonging. This connection to the FilAm community at SCU strengthened a desire to perform in PCN when one of his grandmothers passed away during his first PCN. In his eyes, Sonny felt that connecting to his culture through PCN created a greater connection to his grandmother and he felt that performing in PCN would make her proud.

[58] Abigail, surrey response.

While these initial connections start people's involvement in PCN, other factors come into play as they continue their college career. For some, this call to return to the PCN stage came from the headrush that came from performing. For others, this obligation came from their larger roles in Barkada and previous roles in PCN the year before. Amanda and Sonny both felt somewhat obligated to be a part of PCN due to her leadership roles in Barkada. Their involvement in PCN, however, went a step further when both joined the P-Staff later. Sonny explained that the information that he had as a board member for Barkada was important to the production of PCN and therefore created another reason to join P-Staff. For Sonny, these experiences led him to become PCN Director during his senior year on top of other personal connections to PCN.

However, these ties to culture are not the only ones that people have to have join PCN. Like other non-Filipinx respondents, many felt called to join for the same social ties that many non-Filipinx students felt inclined to further as well. Seraphine emphasized how the influence of upperclassmen persuaded him to initially join and the friendships he made throughout PCN is one reason why he kept coming back. In the same vein, Abigail used PCN as a place to grow closer with her KAA - Kuya Ate Ading - family.

> My grand ate was one of the PCN Directors during my first year and the rest of my KAA fam were all doing PCN. Even if they were not super active in going to general Barkada meetings, they ALWAYS made sure to participate in PCN. So PCN was an important way for me to spend more time with my Kuya and Ates and deepen our relationship. Later, it became the rest of the community. PCN is such a unique type of bonding that really connects you to people you otherwise wouldn't have connected with. I spent

HOURS with these people every week during rehearsals, team bondings, and performance nights so we really became a family.

Like other non-Filipinx respondents, Abigail emphasizes the same dynamic of PCN being both a space for community and a space for personal growth. The attitude of PCN as a family is shared by both Filipinx and non-Filipinx students, creating a shared aim by both communities to continue this spirit within the PCN cast. This response, amongst other responses, emphasized a yearning for something more in their social experience at SCU. Whether respondents knew it or not, they were all desiring a stronger connection to a community and this community just so happened to be grounded in PCN.

Other respondents also echoed these same feelings of wanting to be closer to the community. Matt C. noted that, as a transfer student, he wanted to get to know other Barkada members and found that PCN seemed to be the place and space to do so. He expanded upon this by saying that being a part of PCN was the last piece he needed to be "fully accepted into Barkada"[59] and provided him with friends that he could lean on. He also emphasized that all of this created a connection to his culture that he had not experienced before. Mik noted that her desire to perform in PCN came from seeing it performed for the first time and seeing her friends perform in it. Like other non-Filipinx respondents have noted, the friendship and added fun of performing with friends drew some FilAm performers in. For Matt C., the PCN was a key piece in creating community but also connecting to his culture. Mik echoed these sentiments by adding that she felt like Filipinx culture was being appreciated.

Amanda's reasons for coming back to PCN emphasized something more than the community connections that she had at SCU. She notes that PCN is what marked her college

[59] Matt C., survey response

career, mostly because of the year-long preparations that were in place for the performance but felt that saying "the meaning of PCN lays in the friendships and memories along would be a disservice."[60] While Amanda spoke about the relationships she made through Barkada and PCN fondly, she also knew that the PCN was also something more for her when it came to her own identity as a Filipina American.

> For me specifically, I have always been very insecure about my Fil-Am identity; especially as a third gen light skinned Fil-Am, my experiences (family, exposure to culture, etc.) rarely match those of the greater Fil-Am community. PCN was one of the first concrete experiences that I was able to share with other Fil-Ams, and that empowered me and gave me more confidence in my identity. Looking beyond just me, I also recognize the empowerment for the whole community in the celebration of our Filipino roots and the diasporic identity. For many, PCN is like the first step in rediscovering and reclaiming the Fil-Am identity. PCN is very much a Filipino *American* thing, and with each production we are able to express and share what it means to us to be Filipino American -- this is something we still don't have exposure to in the media… I will always think of my opportunity to be a part of something so big and impactful and empowering as nothing less than an honor and privilege.

One of the things that sticks out here, among other things, is the fact that Amanda felt the PCN was a reclamation of her FilAm identity. She comments on how she felt her experience as someone both third generation and lighter skinned really impacted the way she thought about her identity. To her, PCN felt like a space that she could finally share with other FilAm students and share together. While other elements of her childhood may not have aligned with the traditional

[60] Amanda, survey response

FilAm experience, the PCN compensated for that lack of shared experiences. What I also think is powerful to note, and perhaps what differentiates Amanda's own answer in comparison to other respondents, is the fact that she calls this experience a *FilAm* experience rather than a *Filipino* experience. While other FilAm respondents have noted how PCN helped them connect to their Filipino culture and heritage, Amanda's response resonated with what other scholars, like Theo Gonzalves, say about PCN and the PCN experience. While there may not be a real reason why Amanda distinguishes, I would argue that it is her own perceptions about her positionality and her identity is what may have caused this distinction.

Perhaps one of the most interesting things in comparing the reasons for why FilAm students join versus why non-Filipinx students join is precisely because of the initial contrasts that I thought I would see. However, after looking through the results, I find that they often share the same feelings about PCN especially when it came to this idea of community discussed largely in Chapter 5. One other element that stood out when looking at the survey responses from all respondents calls back to Daphne Lei's paratheatrical which centers the preparations made for a performance instead of the actual performance itself. What is it about the PCN performance itself that draws people back in? How do other theatrical elements entice performers to take the stage for the first time and take the stage again? This next chapter will highlight the ways that theatrical preparation creates a desire for performing and continues to bring cast members back for more.

CHAPTER 7: The Glam, The Glitz, and the Theatrics

For those who joined PCN after watching it in the audience, we see that there is more to the performance than just the social ties. For many, the theatrics - and paratheatrics - of the performance are what brought them to PCN. The idea of being a part of something that required so much effort, costuming, and time was perhaps a big reason to be a part of PCN. Here I want to question the theatrics, and paratheatrics, of the PCN in contrast to other cultural shows on campus. SCU's PCN takes place at Mayer Theater, an auditorium that SCU uses for large events such as first-year orientations, large speaker series, and Theater Department performances. PCN is not the only cultural show that takes place at Mayer Theater. There are other organizations on campus who use Mayer Theater as the set of their cultural show. Yet somehow, the PCN always draws a large crowd and entices people to join, even those who are not FilAm.

Using Lei's paratheatrics, I link how the aesthetics of performance and need for community come together on the PCN stage to captivate its audience members and join in on the show. One more place that I look to examine in thinking about the paratheatrical is in the recap videos made by Barkada to celebrate or commemorate the experience of PCN as well as through people's own. While these videos are tradition for almost every school year, I focus on the videos made in the last 5 years (2015-2020) and focus on how the blending of both actual show day and pre-show rehearsals allow audience members, and past cast members, to reminisce on their PCN experiences with each other.

Throughout all the PCN recap videos I watched, I was able to see a common thread through all of them. Most, if not all, had a focus on the behind the scenes of the performances. Whether these were clips from run-throughs to actual shots of the green room on the day of the performance, these videos gave viewers a look into what happened behind closed doors and in

preparation for the performance. Even though these videos are aimed at PCN performers to recap their experiences, the message still rings proud and true for all of those who were a part of PCN. Seeing myself and my friends in these videos brought back an earnest sense of nostalgia and warmth. These videos often centered on the idea of bonding together and creating memories as a large family. Audio clips from the speeches of PCN Directors focus not only on this aspect of family but also for the cultural ties that many people have to the PCN. The emphasis not only on this community but also on the preparation that it took to put together a PCN are crucial to showing the growth of the cast but also the intricacy of the performance itself.

Perhaps the most interesting part of these videos is that the pre-performance prayer is captured in these videos. Just before performing, it is tradition that some senior class members, who performed in PCN for all 4 years of their college career, give an inspirational speech or last words or lead a prayer for the entire cast. This distinct element of SCU's PCN being included in the recap video emphasizes not only the connection of Catholicism within the Filipinx community but also the location of SCU's PCN on a Jesuit campus. The prayer marks the PCN as a distinct space for FilAm students as many FilAm students either identify as Catholic themselves or grew up in Catholic households. While this is often done in private, displaying these to the public again creates a sense of community and closeness that may not have been noticed otherwise. Even within the green room[61], the prayer is often respected and most, if not all, people will bow their heads out of respect.

These small elements are only a small part of the picture. One of the most exciting parts of the PCN process is the progression of the performance as the years went on. Several people

[61] The green room refers to the backstage area that many performers will sit in to relax before their performances onstage. Oftentimes, this was the main gathering area for PCN cast members and where any last announcements were made.

note this idea of improvement and how they enjoyed watching the ways that the PCN came together. Seraphine emphasized how he enjoyed watching dancers "who have never danced before blossom into beautiful, charismatic performers was inspiring and memorable."[62] Because the PCN dances never overlapped except at run-throughs and dress rehearsals, many people were able to visually see the improvement from run-through to run-through and then watch the piece de resistance - the costumes - tie it all together. Because PCN did not require any previous training or experience in a specific type of dance, it echoed exactly what Seraphine brought up - anyone could dance in the PCN because there were no prerequisites or try-outs. Abigail expanded on this using her own experience both as a dancer during her high school and college years.

> I was part of the hip-hop and hula teams in high school and the hip-hop team at SCU but have always felt insecure about my dancing skills in those genres because I never received traditional training. But everyone doing PCN usually [does not] have any formal background in traditional Filipino dancing, so I was really able to learn and appreciate the dance style without feeling the need to compare myself to others. Dancing in PCN really empowered me in a new way that I didn't even know was possible… so PCN dancing was a new form of expression that allowed me to fully embrace who I am.

Abigail, who had initially felt insecure when dancing on the hip-hop team and did not have the same classical/traditional training as other dancers did, was able to embrace her love for dance even more through PCN. This level playing field, or even difference in dance ability, did not matter when learning the choreography to traditional Filipino dances. Even when it came to the modern hip-hop dance, no one was barred from performing. Abigail also echoed the same

[62] Seraphine, survey response

excitement that Seraphine had felt when watching dancers blossom as both a cast member and as PCN Director:

> I've always been the type of person who loves seeing the creative process and building something from the ground up… I love seeing how those practices magically transform people on stage into a form of expression that impacts so many people. I love seeing everything come together, as if by magic. I also [love] how there's so much heart that goes into making the show… As a PCN Director, my favorite part of PCN is seeing the growth in my cast members. Many of the people who do PCN usually don't have any dance or acting experience and they're usually not Filipino.

The creative process, or the preparations for the actual show, are a large part of the performance that audience members do not see but played a huge role in feeling excitement for the final show. Abigail expanded on this idea of how those who had no dance experience at all, especially those who had no experience dancing traditional Filipino dances, put their heart and soul into PCN and their joy in performing was obvious:

> PCNers put so much of themselves into preparing for the show through HOURS of practice on top of their incredibly difficult school and workload, as well as other extracurricular activities that I'm sure they sometimes wish they didn't join PCN. So, my favorite memory is seeing the absolute joy on everyone's faces after curtain call as they hug each other, holler, and celebrate what they all just did together. They left their hearts out on the stage for everyone to see while still having the time of their lives — which is something many of them didn't even think they were capable of when they first joined PCN.

Abigail felt that as a PCN Director, and even during her time as a cast member, the joy after the curtains dropped are a reminder to the cast to celebrate the performance they put on together. These memories, and these feelings, were the culmination of almost a year of practice and planning and to Abigail, it was one of the best things about PCN.

Colman expanded on this idea more by referencing the "PCN magic" that occurs during the show.

> "PCN magic is some magical force that, on show night, brings everything together more perfectly that you could've ever imagined. If you were struggling on nailing a certain part of your dance for weeks in practice, somehow PCN magic made you execute it flawlessly on stage."[63]

What Colman references could be more broadly called the adrenaline rush that comes from performing on stage. However, Colman's reference to PCN magic is a testament to the excitement that came from being a part of such a large performance. Kai echoed Colman's own feelings about PCN coming together especially when it came to "learning new parts of a dance and then seeing it all come together.

In a similar vein, Matt liked "social aspects of being part of a large performance that involved multiple practices and rehearsals."[64] For Matt, just being a part of the cast and something large like the PCN was exciting by itself and added to the magic of performing with the other PCN cast members. He recalled that the "feeling of performing at the end was something [he] had not really experienced before and [he] really liked it so [he] came back"

[63] Colman, survey response.
[64] Matt, survey response.

again to perform the next couple of years.[65] Collin also said that his favorite part was performing. Although he was never much of a performer, he felt that:

> having all that effort and practice to be worth it was very satisfying. Not to mention the relief of finishing your dance and being able to cheer on friends was also great.

Not only did Collin find joy in being able to see his own results pay off, but the ability to cheer on his friends and watch them perform on stage was just as rewarding if not a part of the PCN performance as a cast member.

Collin, Matt, Kai, Colman, and Abigail all allude to Lei's idea of the paratheatrical and how these improvements and feelings of communal joy were unique to the PCN stage. Adding on the Rondalla players[66], the house band, and the theater itself, the PCN was, and remains, a performance that is unmatched on SCU's campus.

While the actual performance of the PCN is a central part of all of this, I highlight how respondents discuss the feelings leading up to and on performance night to emphasize that rather than the actual performance itself, the feelings linked to performing were far more influential in bringing people back to the PCN stage. Several respondents also noted that there were other factors that led them to join PCN as well. Christine recalled how she was inspired by the aesthetics of the performance - "the beautiful dances, costumes, skits, and culture that they share through the show."[67] Christine's emphasis on the costumes and culture displayed on stage was another element of the show that drew her in. These costumes can be seen as self-Orientalization as Gaerlan points out in leading audiences to place static images, colors, and facial expressions

[65] Matt, survey response
[66] Rondalla is a group of string instrument players. Rondalla has roots in Spain and is evidence of Spanish colonization in the Philippines. While rondalla has roots in colonization, rondalla as it is known to the Philippines is also uniquely formed by the Philippine archipelago.
[67] Christine, survey response

on various indigenous groups in the Philippines. Matt C. noted that the physical transformation that many male performers took on was something that he enjoyed as well. I want to pause here to think about Matt C.'s comment specifically in line with Gaerlan's argument of self-Orientalization.

Matt C.'s comment is perhaps most directly related to the *bahag* that male performers will wear during the Mountain dance suite. The *bahag* is a loincloth that many male performers wear and require them to go shirtless. While there are other costumes that many male performers wear that do not require a shirt, male performers in the Mountain dance suite were required to be bare chested on stage. With their bodies on display, many male performers will often physically train to get in shape for the *bahag*. While this may seem like a moot point to explore, I believe that Matt C. brings up another good point about the behind the scenes of the PCN. The bodily transformation required to be okay performing bare chested is what I emphasize here and is a part of the process that many male performers will go through during what is deemed "PCN season." The smaller moments like this are still important to the PCN and should not be discredited when thinking about the PCN production.

I bring in discussion of Gaerlan's argument of self-Orientalization to connect with the larger theme that Gaerlan discusses within the Muslim dance suite. Much like the Muslim dance suite, the Mountain dance suite is a call to the northern Luzon region of the Philippines. The costuming for this dance requires male performers to wear *bahags* while female performers wear nude bodysuits and a tribal print skirt along with beaded accessories. The argument can be made that the nude bodysuits are meant to allude to the fact that these women may traditionally have not worn clothing on top. I, again, connect this same kind of Orientalist view that Gaerlan saw within the Muslim dance suite to question how these issues of costuming not only emphasize a

kind of professionalism attached to PCNs but also display a certain narrative around certain groups. Audience members may focus on the fact that these male performers are shirtless and one piece of fabric away from being naked instead of on the cultural meaning or history of these dances. The costuming is a significant part of the paratheatrical experience and serves to emphasize the theatricality of the performances on stage.

Another aspect of the process of PCN that many of my respondents mentioned was the ability to learn about Filipinx culture. While this was previously discussed in the previous chapter, FilAms were not alone in this excitement around learning about their own culture. Other non-Filipinx performers also mentioned that learning about another culture, specifically Filipinx culture, was a part of the process they enjoyed.

Q mentions that she "enjoyed and appreciated the experience of learning more about Pilipino culture and being able to do so alongside my closest college friends."[68] Here, Q's response combines learning about Filipinx culture with this shared communal experience that made the experience more enjoyable. Kai also echoed the same sentiments around learning about Filipinx culture. She notes how it was "inspiring to learn about the different cultural dances of the Philippines."[69] Here, she emphasizes the difference of these cultural dances if only to note how they all have different origins within the Philippines. Kai also notes how she continued "doing PCN to further [her] understanding of the different types of cultural dances."[70] Christine also notes the same feelings as Q and how she enjoyed "coming together with others to spread the beauty of the Filipino culture, and to have fun and build a family while doing it."[71] She ties in learning about Filpinx culture with the added layer of creating a family and having fun. Both Q

[68] Q, survey response.
[69] Kai, survey response.
[70] Kai, survey response.
[71] Christine, survey response.

and Christine emphasize that community is a part of the experience when learning about Filipinx culture.

A perfect example of this that I can remember is the shared struggle of both FilAm and non-Filipinx students trying to learn the Philippine national anthem. I can distinctly remember the times when we, as cast, would sit down and go through the national anthem line by line learning the correct pronunciations of the Tagalog and try to remember all the words. For many of us, especially non-Filipinx performers, this was met with a lot of stumbling along and trying our best to learn the anthems before the actual showtimes. I reference this event specifically because learning the national anthems was something that occurred at run-throughs when the whole cast was present and was a part of that shared experience. If this had been done differently, perhaps as something each cast member had to do on their own, I think that the actual learning of the national anthem and the memories tied to it would not have been as impactful or as memorable. Here, I emphasize the beauty and excitement of being able to dwell in this experience of learning Filipinx culture together to really get at this idea that both Q and Christine hint at.

While the performance and transformations that take place on stage are a part of what draws people back to the PCN, it is also important to note that the multiethnic nature of the PCN cast is something that is unique to SCU's PCN. The next chapter will explore how various groups perceive the multiethnic PCN cast and the larger implications of the multiethnic cast.

CHAPTER 8: So, what do we look like?: Perceptions of the PCN cast

An added note to the discussion of performance, again drawing from Kondo's work, is the perception of the cast onstage. Kondo notes how Deavere Smith, a Black woman, will play other ethnic and racial groups as a part of her performances. Deavere Smith will find ways to play up certain characteristics of specific people to identify herself as playing another role. Kondo even noted that when Deavere Smith played Kondo on stage, she put on several marking features of Kondo's - her signature singular earring, a specific type of blouse, and bold red lipstick - to mark herself to the audience as Dorinne Kondo. Even if audience members did not personally know Kondo, they could tell that Deavere Smith was putting on the role of someone else even if Deavere Smith and Kondo were completely different physically.

As mentioned before, this same idea of synthesizing a character is often present within the theatrical skit of the PCN production itself. Non-Filipinx actors will take on the role of a FilAm character and the audience members will read them as FilAm. However, in some cases, the ethnicity of a specific character may not be specified and will often be left for interpretation. In SCU's PCN titled "Pagyakap Sa Paranaw," one of the main characters, Jessie, is played by someone who is non-Filipinx. Jessie's actress visibly looks more East Asian than her fellow cast members however her role may not be read as FilAm. In the vignette that stars Jessie, she and her friend Kyle are trying to bring people out to save the International Hotel in San Francisco. Jessie's character and her concern for the I-Hotel, while it can be read as concern as someone who is FilAm given the history of the I-Hotel as a place for the elder Filipino manongs to live, can conversely be read as a concerned Asian American college student. Because of Jessie's actress's ethnicity, it is up to the audience to read her as however they want. Even when I watched Jessie on stage, I was never sure if she was meant to represent someone who was

FilAm. This is perhaps one of the more interesting moments of having a panethnic cast where the legibility of a character is not as crystal clear.

In another example, SCU's PCN from 2017, "Ang Pinanggalingan" stars a non-Filipinx actress in the main role of Anne. Here, the audience can visibly read Anne as FilAm due to the context of the skit's story. Anne, Jackie, and Raymond try to unfurl their family history to figure out how their families have crossed paths through stories that are often attached to pivotal moments in Filipinx history. The story opens on a typical Filipinx family party and the audience is immediately introduced to Anne, Jackie, Raymond, and their other family members. This provides more than enough clues for the audience to understand that Anne is to be read as FilAm despite her actress not identifying as FilAm.

Here, the audience are a part of the same "racemaking" and "racebreaking" that Kondo discusses in *Worldmaking*. With Anne's character, the audience is making Anne out to be FilAm while her actress is breaking down conceptions of what it means to look Filipinx. Jessie is more ambiguous and up to interpretation, leaving the audience to take on the role of racemaking due to Jessie's more East Asian features as well as the less explicit clues around her character and story.

This same idea of synthesizing a character is present in all PCN performances, especially in the "traditional" dance suites where performers take on a character with specific facial expressions and attitudes. Gaerlan's work on analyzing the Muslim dance suite emphasizes the role of specific characteristics such as the signature regal or proud look that many Muslim suite dancers are asked to put on. However, I want to highlight this idea even more within a multiethnic and sometimes multiracial cast. As noted before, SCU's PCN allows for all performers - both those who identify themselves as Filipinx and those who identify themselves as non-Filipinx - to join as a cast member, creating a multiethnic cast that is mainly pan-Asian. I

build on the previous chapters about this sense of community as well as the theatrics of the performance to understand what this multiethnic cast means for SCU's PCN.

Many non-Filipinx students indicated that experiencing the PCN as someone who was not Filipinx was an enjoyable experience. Many also expressed gratitude for being able to perform alongside their FilAm peers as well. Cindy mentions how, as a transfer student, she was happy not only to be a part of the PCN and learn more about Filipinx culture but also to have a role within the performance as someone who was non-Filipinx. Cindy's comment emphasizes that the opportunity to be accepted within the PCN space and take on a role made an impact on her even if it was a role she considered "less important" compared to the roles other performers had in her dance. Matt echoed these same positive feelings as a member of the multiethnic cast. He emphasized that "although the performances may not have as much meaning to non-Filipino/a students, there was a significant emphasis put on teaching the performers the cultural significance of the dances." Matt, like many other non-Filipinx performers, learned what these dances meant while practicing and felt that issues of cultural boundaries were not an issue nor a hindrance to people joining PCN. I also note that the dance teachers often made it a goal to teach their dancers the significance of the dance to teach both Filipinx and non-Filipinx students the importance of the traditions behind these dances.

Other non-Filipinx performers turned to ideas of cultural appreciation when thinking about the multiethnic PCN cast. Kai emphasized that she was astounded at the diversity of the PCN cast and how appreciation of Filipinx culture brought castmates together. The binding force here for Kai was Filipinx culture and the shared desire to appreciate and perform Filipinx culture. Christine furthered Kai's point by explaining how appreciating culture was not something that someone could do to their own specific culture.

> In my opinion, you do not need to be born as/a member of a certain culture or ethnicity in order to appreciate and share another culture apart from your own, as long as it is appropriate and respectful. I believe that this was maintained in PCN.

The spirit of coming together through the PCN was something that Christine felt was maintained throughout the entire PCN process. She also, in reflecting on her own PCN experience, enjoyed showcasing Filipinx culture and coming together "with others to spread the beauty of the Filipino culture."[72] Although she was not Filipinx herself, Christine's comments emphasize that she was excited to share Filipinx culture with the larger SCU community.

Along the same lines as Christine, Collin appreciated learning about Filipinx culture and felt that his dance teachers made it a point to teach the significance of the costumes and the movements, adding another layer to the PCN experience. Sonny, reflecting on his time as PCN Director, recalled how he required all participants who wanted to only be in the Modern suite had to join a traditional suite as well.

> Something I chose to do while our friend… and I were directing together, was requiring cast to do at least one cultural dance if they wanted to do modern. This contradicted the previous year's lack of requirement, allowing anyone to do modern regardless of show involvement otherwise. I felt that it was important that our cast is built around the cultural aspect first, and the modern dance suite is an additional enjoyable aspect of the show. Overall, I think I'm trying to get at the idea of a multi-ethnic cast is awesome, but I also think that leadership should always aim to uphold the cultural aspect at the focus of the show, which some years I feel did not.

[72] Christine, survey response

Here, Sonny shoulders the responsibility as a member of PCN leadership to remind the cast of the cultural aspects. PCN was not just a performance for him, and many other cast members, but it was a connection to his Filipinx roots. He wanted to make sure that all cast members were reminded of this as they performed onstage and making the executive decision to require at least one traditional dance upheld that standard. For Sonny, he wanted others to take part in Filipinx culture and not just join because of the modern dance suite. While arguments can be made for the "unfairness" of Sonny's decision, I counter these arguments to say that Sonny's decision instead created the same environment for learning and appreciation that previous respondents also mention. His decision remained faithful to the roots of PCN.

Colman also emphasized that the beauty of PCN, and the larger Barkada community, to accept performers of other cultures was only a testament to the strength in the community. He also noted how his Ate is, who identified as Chinese American and grew up in Hawai'i, co-directed PCN only a few years prior to Colman. Colman's experience as Director, as well as his *Ate*'s, emphasizes the trust and acceptance that the PCN community has for its cast members who take on leadership roles. The cast trusted that members of the community who stayed actively involved in PCN were viable candidates to carry on the torch and would have the support of other FilAm alumni and students to put on a great show.

J Beans also commented on how he "enjoyed the openness of not having ethnic restrictions."[73] While J Beans' comment can be taken at face value, I also use his comment to think about the other invisible barriers that may have been in place for other cultural organizations when it came time for their cultural shows. Perhaps Barkada's large and diverse membership was a testament to its ability to accept other members. In comparison, other smaller

[73] J Beans, survey response.

clubs may have had a harder time bringing in new members due to their size and lack of visible diversity. Here, pan-Asianness seems to harm other cultural organizations in a way that it did not harm Barkada in its recruitment for both general members and for PCN cast members.

The sentiments across the board for non-Filipinx performers was that they were happy to be a part of the PCN experience and were grateful that PCN was open to anyone. When FilAm students responded with their thoughts on the multiethnic cast, a variety of responses came up all of which were positive.

Sonny felt that being able to share the stage and Filipinx culture with non-Filipinx students was an awesome experience.

> I think being able to have people that are non-Filipino (and even one white person whom much of my family were pumped to see) is an awesome thing to have. Having non-Filipinos really commit to PCN and its principles makes me feel empowered as we of different ethnic backgrounds can create something so powerful and faithful to its origin nation. That being said, I also recognize that this is not the motivating factor for all in the show… From a director mindset, I think there's a lot of pressure to hit certain numbers of the cast members. Basically, there's a sort of pressure from last year, to meet if not beat last year's PCN cast number. When gathering this wonderful cast of Filipino and non-Filipino performers, there is sometimes a greater focus on numbers, and the multi-ethnic cast is a result of that, rather than the other way around. Basically, I feel like the multi-ethnic cast isn't exactly an initial goal of PCN recruiting, rather a result of Barkada's initial recruiting and the distinction of PCNs not only at SCU but around California.

Sonny's description of the experience of having non-Filipinx students perform has many layers to it. For one, he was in awe of the dedication many non-Filipinx students had to the PCN,

something echoed by other FilAm respondents. He also felt that seeing non-Filipinx students perform in PCN was not only something that he felt reflected PCN's principles and values but also came from a more material goal of being able to up the numbers of the previous PCN's cast. Sonny's point emphasizes this scramble that P-Staff and PCN Directors may feel in the process of marketing their show and wanting to have as many people as they could participate. Sonny also notes that recruitment for both PCN and the larger organization, Barkada, is part of what caused a multiethnic cast. Sonny mentioned that while the initial goal was not recruiting a multiethnic cast, other factors ultimately caused SCU's PCN to have a multiethnic cast. Sonny also mentioned a larger factor of the reputation of the PCN not only at SCU but also around California. He noted that because of PCN's rich history and establishment in California, resources are more readily available for PCNs all over creating a more professional-looking cast and show. This idea again plays into what I mentioned in the previous chapter about how the theatrical elements of the show were an important part of drawing people into the PCN space in the first place.

Sonny also hints at how the solidified PCN genre led to an increased interest in PCNs because of its reputation and most audience members knew what to expect when coming to a PCN. Sonny, who had also gone to see other PCNs at other schools, knew that when he walked into another school's PCN, he knew what he was going to see. This, to him, also emphasized the reputation of the PCN being well-established, especially in California. On a more small-scale SCU level, he points to how there is an initial moment when recruiting for PCN to get as many as to join which, he says, overlaps with Barkada's recruiting as well. This connection, he emphasized, is incredibly important as "most if not all PCNers are Barkada members first."[74]

[74] Sonny, survey response.

The overlap between Barkada and PCN are important here in recruitment and again emphasize that community connections are incredibly important to the experience of PCN.

Seraphine points to a broader assumption about the multiethnic cast rooted in the idea of a shared humanity.

> PCN is about celebrating life as human beings. This human experience extends beyond being ethnically Filipino. Before we discriminate based on race and ethnicity, we must remember we are all human beings walking alongside each other. I am proud of those who are non-Filipino, since they have assumingly less incentive performing and learning about a culture that is not their own.

Seraphine's ideas of sharing this common human and community experience can be tied back to arguments around panethnic communities as many non-Filipinx cast members hinted at. Rather than cutting off the PCN to only celebrate the FilAm experience, Seraphine felt that opening the PCN space to others was only a part of the human experience and should be shared. Abigail also comments on the power of PCN to unite people and bring people together. She shares that culture "is not meant to divide us, it's meant to unite us."[75] She expanded on this by emphasizing how bringing together people from different cultures and ethnicities allows the cast to appreciate their differences that led to a stronger community that had each other's backs. She notes, much like how I did in my earlier reflections of PCN, that even when PCN is over, the cast can collectively see themselves as part of an "us" instead of creating an us versus them dichotomy. Here, the "us" included people who performed or were a part of the PCN experience while the "them" referred to those outside of this circle. She also commented how after directing PCN, an audience member had emailed her describing the impact of watching PCN. This

[75] Abigail, survey response

message reminded Abigail why she directed PCN and how PCN held "different messages and truths that anyone can relate to, regardless of cultural background."[76]

The pride that Seraphine talks about is something that other FilAm respondents shared as well. Amanda shared in this awe of the commitment that non-Filipinx students had to PCN. She also shared Sonny's ideas of "the more the merrier"[77] when it came to the number of participants. The commitment and dedication, especially considering the long hours that PCN takes up as a production as a whole, were clearly very impressive to FilAm respondents. And while PCN may not carry the same meaning for non-Filipinx students as Amanda and other FilAm students, the dedication that non-Filipinx students had to the production helped "facilitate the community and production that I value so much."[78] Amanda also described how she was even more impressed by those non-Filipinx students who committed to even bigger roles within PCN leadership, whether as PCN Directors or P-Staff. Again, this dedication demonstrated the community and production that Amanda valued and created a larger sense of community within PCN that continued this cycle of non-Filipinx participation.

Opportunities to be in leadership as a non-Filipinx student are rare across most, if not all, FilAm organizations. However, at SCU, many non-Filipinx students are encouraged to be a part of PCN leadership especially, as Amanda mentioned, if they have shown dedication to PCN over the course of their college career. This opportunity is something that I argue is rooted in the sense of community that many PCNers have continued to echo. These opportunities for leadership would not be possible without community support, as other respondents such as Kai and Colman have mentioned in previous chapters.

[76] Abigail, survey response.
[77] Amanda, survey response.
[78] Amanda, survey response.

Other respondents like Matt C. and Mik both emphasized how it was surprising that other students would have an interest in Filipinx culture at all. Matt C. expanded on that point further by noting that he had rarely encountered people outside of the FilAm community who were "interested in finding out more about it, much less learning the cultural dances and customs."[79] Mik felt that having non-Filipinx students be a part of the show felt nice because it felt like Filipinx culture was being appreciated. Abigail also echoed this pride in being "Filipina because there are so many people from different backgrounds that want to join PCN."[80] In line with the research that Iwamoto, Negi, et al. and Strobel did around identity formation, college provides an opportunity for not only FilAm students but non-Filipinx students to explore Filipinx culture. Seeing that other people were taking an interest in something that FilAm students were not able to fully embrace growing up demonstrated not only the power of PCN as a tool for teaching and learning, but also formed a sort of celebratory push-back against the invisibility that FilAm students face on college campuses. Sharing Filipinx culture together showed a level of dedication that many FilAm students could find within themselves yet it seemed that finding other non-Filipinx students to share this experience with gave FilAm students an even greater sense of pride in their Filipinx heritage and culture.

Another large aspect of the multiethnic cast that I want to capture is the audience perception of the PCN cast. In my own perusing of previous PCN recordings, it was somewhat hard to really pinpoint who is FilAm and who is not. This may be because these recordings are often done from the top of the auditorium, making it difficult to actively tell the difference between performers. Usually, I could not tell who was and was not FilAm unless I knew all of

[79] Matt C., survey response.
[80] Abigail, survey response.

the people who were cast in a certain dance. Even then, in looking back at my senior year PCN, it was incredibly difficult to really pinpoint non-Filipinx vs. FilAm performers in some of the larger dances. This is something that other respondents pointed out as well in thinking about these larger ideas of panethnicity. Sonny mentioned how his family was excited to see one white person amongst the cast. Here, the legibility and markers of race are more visible when PCNers are performing on stage. For Sonny's family, this meant that seeing a white person in the cast meant a lot more and was a lot easier than trying to differentiate various Asian ethnicities.

Amanda also shared similar experiences that her family had when they came to watch her perform in PCN. She mentioned how her parents asked her about white or white-passing cast members but "never about other pan-Asian cast members."[81] Amanda also hints at the idea that there were a variety of ethnic groups in the Philippines and there was no one specific way to "look Filipino"[82] which may have led her parents to not question other Asian American students who were performing in PCN. For all her parents knew, these Asian performers could have been Filipinx.

Both Amanda and Sonny speak to a larger issue of legibility of the Asian American body on stage and how performing under the PCN banner may cause certain assumptions about the Asian American students who were performing. Many audience members of the PCN only come to watch their friends and therefore only know at most five other performers. Without the prior knowledge of the cast make-up or even about the demographics of the larger SCU campus, assumptions can be made about the makeup of the cast.

[81] Amanda, survey response.
[82] Amanda, survey response.

Pan-Asian acceptance, as Amanda called it, seems to fly under the radar and does not call for excitement the same way that visible and legible difference does. Thinking about Kondo's *Worldmaking* and linking this pan-Asian acceptance, PCN can then be seen as a space where new ideas of race can take place. Here, I argue, the audience is partaking in the racemaking process by creating their own ideas of not only who is allowed and who is not allowed to perform in the PCN but also how to react to visible differences in the cast. On the other hand, performers are then taking part in this racebreaking process by shattering the illusion of a strictly FilAm cast. Yet this racebreaking is perhaps more nuanced and only legible to those who take the time to look into these moments.

Amanda, who had participated in other cultural shows on campus aside from PCN, recalled how her parents were shocked to hear that she was “”allowed” to participate in other culture shows.”[83] These moments of racemaking and racebreaking, while not unique to the PCN alone, are important in thinking about how the performance is again another space for creating a new space and changing and emphasizing perceptions around the PCN cast as a unit.

In a more recent example, SCU recently released the recording of their 2021 PCN. Due to the constraints of COVID-19 and the general difficulty of creating community through ZOOM, the cast was much smaller this year and the number of people who were actively performing in the dances had dwindled down. This change in cast numbers was interesting when comparing the size of the cast last year and even the alumni who would help with PCN. All the dances were taught by members of Kawayan Folk Arts, a performance group that many SCU alumni are a part of, and the dances had at most three or four performers on stage. I bring in this example only to highlight how the constraints of COVID-19 have shaped the ways that community can form

[83] Amanda, survey response.

and how the moments that many of my respondents bring up are missing through platforms such as ZOOM.

I also highlight this example to also emphasize how the recording of this year's PCN, along with the smaller cast size, made it quite easy to identify who was or was not Filipinx. In fact, the only non-Filipinx cast member I saw was a returning member who I had known while I was a student at SCU. Again, the events of this past year only add another layer of complexity to the idea of a multiethnic cast that warrants more exploring later. Yet it also highlights how experiencing the full breadth of PCN and the PCN magic - from learning the basic steps to finally performing on the night of the show - was important to the retention of cast members, especially those who were non-Filipinx.

CHAPTER 9: #WhyIPCN: Implications, Conclusions, and #WhyIPCN

My research has shown me a lot about the PCN space that I had never considered before while a part of the PCN space. First, PCN is a space for community that is unique to those who are a part of the cast. PCN's impact on the community allows people to grow and start to take up leadership roles or other opportunities they might not have done otherwise thanks to the support and influence of those around them. Not only that, but PCN also provides a space to grow relationships and carve out time for others that might not have otherwise existed. Some people created new friendships; others were strengthening older friendships. Whatever the reason, community building was an incredibly important part of the PCN experience.

Second, the idea of PCN magic is something that is a huge part of the PCN experience, especially within the paratheatrical experiences of PCN. It is not just the performance itself but everything leading up to the performance that draws people into the PCN space and makes them want to perform again. From the costuming to the backstage rituals, the magic of sharing these experiences of the performance itself creates a magical experience that draws people back into the PCN space.

Lastly, the perceptions of a multi-ethnic PCN cast creates a larger discussion for thinking about the Asian American body on stage both from an insider perspective and an outsider perspective. The insider perspective highlights how the sharing of Filipinx culture is incredibly important and something that all PCNers - FilAm and non-Filipinx - enjoyed as a part of the PCN experience. However, from the outside, panethnicity seems to take over unless very legible differences are made between Asian American and non-Asian cast members. The ideas of essentializing roles and the body are ones that I explore in thinking about how non-Filipinx cast members take on the role of a FilAm character.

This study is not without its limitations. First, is the sample size. I was only able to reach fifteen students and only seven of them identified as non-Filipinx. Therefore, the ideas that my respondents gave may not have been as accurate of a representation about the PCN experience as a non-Filipinx performer. However, I do find the answers from FilAm respondents to be equally helpful in thinking about a multiethnic/multiracial cast. I also must highlight my own positionality as a researcher here. I have only performed in two PCNs and was only a cast member. My perspective on the PCN experience is therefore limited in comparison to those who may have been a part of P-Staff or more heavily involved with PCN. Most of my non-Filipinx respondents were also cast members and therefore did not provide me with a full breadth of the PCN experience. I also must acknowledge that my positionality as a Korean American, or as someone who identifies as non-Filipinx, may also obscure my reading into the PCN experience. My view of the PCN experience can only come from what I have seen through my other friends or through my own research and experience. The cultural connections that Gonzalves and other FilAm scholars lay out, especially those that are specific to diasporic Filipinx folks, is something that I do not have the full understanding of. Another thing to note is that my method of research, surveys, did not provide super in-depth answers in comparison to other methods of research. My method of spreading out my surveys may have also hindered my sample size and the depth of my responses as well.

In thinking about future research and where to go from here, further research can and should be done around other cultural performances and organizations who also have multiethnic and multiracial performers. I also believe that this phenomenon of multiethnic performance is something that I would be interested in seeing if other universities, especially larger universities, have as well. I also believe that the location of SCU within the Bay Area in California also

makes this research a bit easier to do given the diversity within California and, oftentimes, the desire to come to California. I would be interested in understanding how other schools outside of California and in areas where there are less Asian American students deal with these multiethnic and multiracial performances. Linked more closely to this work, I would also like to see how this idea of PCN magic carries on after students have graduated from college. How do FilAm students and non-Filipinx students engage with their experiences with PCN once they enter the workforce? Do non-Filipinx students engage with performance groups that are more closely tied to their own ethnic identity? The ways that PCN magic may continue on once students exit college may be another route of research to look at to see the lasting effects of PCN on Asian American students.

With the slow workings to bring things back to in-person schooling, I would also be interested in seeing how the COVID-19 pandemic has changed cultural performance and even community building. Are there more folks that are joining groups that are specific to their ethnic group because of this lack of direct exposure to the body of people getting involved with specific organizations? How do people stay in contact with their friends over ZOOM? Does online learning hinder community formations and cultural performance? Or does it provide new ways of thinking about community formation and cultural performance?

When I first came to the topic of writing about PCN, there was a lot of fear and imposter syndrome that came up. What was I doing writing about something that was so precious to my FilAm friends? I am not even Filipinx American myself - how could I write about this? Was I taking up too much space? Yet I could not shake the feeling that I needed to write about this experience that shaped the college experience of myself and many of my friends. And after many

conversations with professors, other students in the program, and friends, I had a little more faith in myself to take up the task of writing about PCNs.

As I have finally seen my work unfold and finished the various bits and pieces of this work, I can say that I am happy with my decision to write about this and glad that I saw it through. Seeing my friends excited about me writing about our shared experiences, reliving the PCN memories, and hearing from my respondents how impactful PCN was for them made this process worth it. And as I look back at my undergraduate years, PCN and other cultural performances were a huge part of my college career. From planning KSA's culture show for 3 years to performing on the stage as a cast member of both KSA Cultural Night and Barkada's PCN to simply attending cultural performance to support my friends and those who I worked with, cultural performances created a space where I could meet people, support my friends, and learn something new about a different culture. The free food that was served during some of the shows was also something that I enjoyed as a broke college student but that was only an added perk.

Writing this, COVID-19 has changed the way that cultural performance and PCNs are done. However, this does not mean they are any less valid. Instead, students are embracing new ways of connecting with each other and still trying to find the magic both in performing but also creating community. PCN still seems to provide a space for students who want to connect with old friends, make new ones, or connect more with their culture. More research is needed to support these claims and I believe that studying the ways that living our lives virtually for over a year now have changed the ways we form community and create connections, especially at the collegiate level, would provide great insight into how we can move forward to create community more effectively and with more care.

Throughout this work, I have avoided talking about the reasons why I joined PCN, the #WhyIPCN if you will. This was partly intentional to give space to my respondents but also to provide myself some time to really think about this question. Why do I PCN? When I think about #WhyIPCN, I realize that my reasons for initially joining PCN were the same as many of my respondents did: for my friends, for the costumes, and for the idea of being in a large-scale production like this. The newness of it all, especially when watching it as a young and fresh-eyed 18-year-old, was one of the most exciting parts for me. Being in the audience made me feel like I was a part of something but also drew me in like a siren call to come and see more. Performing made me feel like I was finally a part of something and inspired me in my work as a member of KSA's executive board.

When I joined for the second and last time during my senior year, my reasons were a bit more honed in. I joined because I wanted to support my friends in their process of directing. I joined to be able to stand alongside them and be a part of their PCN experience for one last time. I joined because I needed the community support more than I thought I would that year. I joined because I knew that we would never be able to do something like this with this much passion and fun again. Although I was only one person out of a cast of 90 people, my presence mattered to them. As did every other person's presence on that stage.

PCN reminded me how important community was. It still reminds me of how important this community is, especially in these times of isolation and Zoom University. But they also remind me that there is always something to look forward to, even if we cannot share them in the ways that we knew how to.

APPENDIX: Survey Questions

Name, Graduation Year, and Pseudonym that you would like to use.

How many years were you involved in PCN? And in what capacity? (performer, P-Staff, Alum, Dance teacher, etc.)

What parts of the actual performance were you involved in?

What led you to join PCN? Be as specific as possible!

What led you to continue performing in PCNs?

What did (or does) it mean for you to perform or be involved in PCN?

Were you involved in any other cultural shows? If you answered yes, which cultural shows were you involved in and in what capacity? (ex. Dancer? Board member planning cultural show? Skit performer? etc.)

What was your favorite part of PCN?

What was your least favorite part of PCN?

One of the unique things about SCU's PCN is that, because of SCU's size, we often had a mix of Filipino/a cast members alongside other non-Filipino/a students performing. What were your impressions of having a multi-ethnic cast?

Any other things you want to mention about your PCN experience that I may not have asked about?

Any questions for me as the researcher?

If I have any follow-up questions, what is the best way to contact you?

Any feedback for me about this survey or anything else that you might be interested in understanding?

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