‘Tao Po!’ An exploration of the role of Filipino-Canadian neighbourhoods in anchoring and cultivating Filipino-Canadian community

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Abstract

Social capital generation among immigrant communities has long been explored in migration literature. Especially for newcomers or groups that experience great barriers to host society institutions, co-ethnic capital remains a powerful resource (Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993). In contrast to the tighter-knit interpersonal networks of smaller immigrant communities of the 1900's, new trends in migration have created ethnic communities with much more pre-migration diversity and far sparser personal networks (Coloma et al., 2013). This new form of ethnic community makes mechanisms of co-ethnic social capital that require tight networks more difficult, and calls for mechanisms that rely on drawing on broader symbols of culture (Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993) more relevant for arousing co-ethnic solidarity. What the question, then, is how and where this cultural sentiment is generated. With regards to community-building, urban sociologists such as Eric Klinenberg have argued for recognizing community and public space as a form of social infrastructure vital to bringing people together (2018). Like social infrastructure, immigrant enclaves are spaces for network building and resource generation, but beyond simply being a space to interact in, in what way does the space itself evoke culture? How do people interact with and respond to the space (Lefebvre, 1992)? What are the spatial mechanisms of a thriving community? These questions are explored through the case of Joyce-Collingwood, commonly known as a major 'Filipino hub' of Vancouver, interviewing eight residents/regulars and including ethnographic field notes taken by the author over four months of regular visitations. Through this data, this paper articulates a framework that ties theories of space, place-making, and social capital together and ultimately argues for recognizing the 'cultural value' of immigrant enclaves more holistically and beyond retail. Rather, data points towards the need to recognize how spatial elements such as transit, housing prices, and small-scale

infrastructure such as walkability supplement ethnic businesses to generate accessible 'authentic' community space for place-making, and, in turn, local cultural repertoire generation, to occur.

Introduction

I am the daughter of two Filipino parents who now live in the suburbs of midwestern America. With our home nestled along the neatly kept rows of single-family homes, our lives look like Suburbia with a capital 'S': long open lawns, big box stores, and family road trips along the interstate. Living in a city without public transportation, most days are spent at home waiting for my father and the car to return from work before we can have a chance to leave the house. Sidewalks in our neighbourhood lead their way to four-lane roads that funnel into superhighways. Sidewalk businesses are few and far between. What this also means is that we live an hour and a half away from the nearest Filipino establishment, meaning every meal out for a taste of home is a road trip: one we must plan in advance and with purpose. Seeing other Filipinos we do not already know is an even rarer circumstance but is always greeted with the familiarity and gladness of long-lost kin. So naturally, when my parents came to visit Vancouver for the first time, I took them to Joyce-Collingwood.

For Filipino Vancouverites, Joyce-Collingwood is one of the places to be for homesick Filipinos to get their fix of tastes of Filipino dishes, sounds of our mother tongue, and the atmosphere of home. I brought them to Joyce for dinner that day at the Pampanga's Cuisine restaurant, one of the mom and pop restaurants in the area. As soon as we stepped through the door, the warmth and smell of Filipino soups and stews embraced us in from the late September chill. My parents smiled fondly as they looked over the selection of foods at the *kalinderya* (cafeteria)-style counter, excitedly exclaiming the names of the foods for purchase like the name of an old friend. "Oh, *laing! Kaldereta! Pinakbet*!" Filipino radio and 80's hits played on the

speaker over the sounds of pots and pans in the kitchen. When we found a seat we sat practically shoulder to shoulder, having to utter a 'oh, sorry!' every few seconds while we shuffled our chairs forward to make way for customers squeezing between the rows of seats. The scene is by no means the most glamorous, yet still my parents smile as they eat with their plastic spoons and forks on paper plates, my mom and dad affectionately telling me stories of the *kalinderya* style eateries they frequented when they lived in the Philippines. This is interesting to me because it was not that they *don't* have Filipino food back in the Midwest. There was that one restaurant there, after all, though granted, it is much 'cushier' than little Pampanga's: with proper cushioned seats in place of the garden chairs in Pampanga's, a much bigger location – even a tiki bar to boot. I ask what the difference is, my mom says this feels more authentic to her.

As we walked out of the restaurant that day, before my parents turned back to the sidewalk, they stood and looked up at the 'Pampanga's Cuisine' restaurant sign, browning and yellowing from years of battering from Vancouver rain. Throughout the week of their stay, I took my parents all over Vancouver's hottest tourist spots: Gastown, Capilano Suspension Bridge, Canada Place, all the shining jewels of the newly globalized Vancouver city. But standing there in front of Pampanga's that day, my dad asks if I can take a photo of him and my mom in front of the restaurant. I laugh incredulously.

"*Here*?"

"Yeah, why not?"

I shrug and take the photo. Before we turn back onto the sidewalk, my mom wraps an arm around my shoulders: "Thank you for bringing us here, *anak*[1]*."*

[1] *Anak* - 'my child' in Tagalog

Filipino diasporic experience is sometimes spoken of as if lived experience is relatively standard, and in some ways it can be. Outmigration to North America is grounded in the Philippines' colonial history and a cultivated taste for American lifestyles, and with it comes a degree of internalized racism (David, 2013; Rafael, 2000). Upon entering North America, many Filipinos are deprofessionalized and experience downward mobility, creating a racialized and classed experience of migration (Laquian & Laquian, 2008). Even among those who are relatively better off than others, migrants are nonetheless separated from their families, and adjustment is often accompanied by loneliness (Laquian & Laquian, 2008). Not just Filipinos, but immigrant communities more broadly have forever banded into co-ethnic communities as a way of pooling resources, sharing in joys and struggles, and surviving in an unfamiliar environment (Small, 2009; Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993). My own experiences living in four different cities in four different countries, however, have made me particularly attuned to the space-specific mechanisms by which communities come together and experience that sense of community.

The following thesis will understand the spatial functioning of immigrant enclaves through the case of Joyce-Collingwood, a prominent Filipino-Canadian neighbourhood in Vancouver, British Columbia. This thesis contributes to two bodies of literature. Firstly, it speaks to sociological literature on immigrant enclaves by extending existing literature on immigrant social capital. Previous literature recognizes the significance of immigrants' co-ethnic social capital which can be deployed through evoking a shared cultural repertoire (Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993). What is less clear, however, is exactly how this shared cultural repertoire is spread and maintained. This thesis hopes to expand on this literature by investigating space as a mechanism of shared cultural repertoire that holds co-ethnic communities together. Secondly, this thesis contributes to the budding field of Filipino-Canadian studies. As a body of literature

still in its infancy despite the size of the community – especially compared to its American counterpart – most Filipino-Canadian literature thus far takes macro-level approaches to questions of identity and the Filipino-Canadian experience (McElhinny et al., 2012). This thesis looks to refine how the field approaches Filipino-Canadian community by recognizing the ways that spaces facilitate co-ethnic socialization and generate a uniquely place-based Filipino community identity.

Literature Review

Theories of space and the use of space

This thesis draws on sociological traditions concerning space and community-building. As this thesis reckons with questions of the composition, use, and function of space I begin with a discussion of Lefebvre's spatial triad. While a natural way to talk about space is through referring to their individual functions (eg. Groceries stores are for grocery shopping), 'classifying' spaces would require an established language and shared understanding of spaces and their function, which can simultaneously delimit a space to serve a singular function (Lefebvre, 1991). If we acknowledge the contestation, appropriation, and resistance of space, how can scholars generate discourse around space that recognizes the many different narratives that can surround a particular space? To do so, Henri Lefebvre emphasizes understanding spaces as processes, and especially social processes (1991). In his work *The Production of Space,* Lefebvre outlines this process of social production with his spatial triad framework (1991). This spatial triad consists of three components:

1. **Representations of/conceived space:** Space which is imposed from the top-down; which orders and structures social interactions as designed by an authority (Lefebvre, 1991)

2. **Representational space/lived space:** The perceptions of space by its occupants (Lefebvre, 1991). These can reify the functions imposed by the conceived space but can also be open to counter-narratives (Lefebvre, 1991).
3. **Spatial practices/perceived space:** The observable ways that individuals engage with and within space (Lefebvre, 1991).

These three components of space then interact to form the process of space: one that is under constant contention, resistance, and imposition from authority (Lefebvre, 1991).

Important to note is the semantic distinction between ‘space’ and ‘place’ in the field of human geography (Tuan, 2002). Like Lefebvre’s conceived space, ‘space’ is simply space that exists (Tuan, 2002). It is the environment that serves as a potentiality for human movement and interaction, a ‘backdrop’ for daily human activity (Tuan, 2002). However, as in the last two points of Lefebvre’s triad, we can also come to know space through deeply intimate, personal, and sensory ways, generating a knowledge of space that arises beyond its simple existence, but rather colored through emotion, personal histories, and intersecting lives accumulated through experience in the space (Tuan, 2002). This is ‘place’ (Tuan, 2002). As an example of this distinction, Tuan draws on a historical example quoting physicist Niels Bohr that demonstrates this intuition for the distinction between space and place (Tuan, 2002). While visiting Denmark’s Kronberg Castle, fabled to be the residence of Shakespeare’s Hamlet, Bohr remarks:

> As scientists we believe that a castle consists only of stones, and admire the way the architect put them together… None of this should be changed by the fact that Hamlet lived here, and yet it is changed completely. Suddenly the walls and the ramparts speak quite a different language. The courtyard becomes an entire world, a dark corner reminds us of the darkness in the human soul, we hear Hamlet’s ‘To be or not to be.’ (Tuan, 2002)

Whether Hamlet lived or not does not matter – the space has taken on a meaning of its own nonetheless: it has taken on a sense of place (Tuan, 2002). It is within this framework of understanding space and place that I situate my discussion of Joyce-Collingwood.

Most important to this thesis, I build on scholarly conversations around space that recognize space's active role in community-building and maintenance. Rather than simply a way of organizing society, space and its use can actively order social relations through structuring the local environment in ways conducive to interpersonal contact and tie formation (eg. through the provision of public space) or inhibitive to interpersonal contact (eg. through divestment from communities and infrastructural degradation) (Klinenberg, 2018). Therefore, the use of space could serve as an intervention of community-wellbeing and maintenance (Klinenberg, 2018). In the introduction to his 2018 book *Palaces for the People,* sociologist Eric Klinenberg discusses the power of space as a community health intervention. Spurred by his findings from the 1995 Chicago heat wave, Klinenberg finds a consistent connection between the social infrastructure and well-being (Klinenberg, 2018). Through ethnography and demography, Klinenbeg finds that spaces that facilitate casual, consistent interaction between neighbors are associated with individual and community resilience and health – even beyond significant demographic characteristics such as race or ethnicity, gender, or social class (Klinenberg, 2018). His book delves further into the positive impact of spaces like public libraries, community gardens, and greenspaces and how the implementation and upkeep of these spaces cultivate the social ties necessary to mitigate the social atomization and community breakdown in cities that early urbanist thinkers lamented (Gramsci, 1903; Klinenberg, 2018, Wirth, 1938). Or, in other words, findings like these make a case for why space must also be accounted for when considering

community building and breakdown, rather than some ‘social ill’ plaguing society more generally (Klinenberg, 2018).

But even when constructing social infrastructure, this does not always imply its intended use – especially if the conceived space is not sensitive to the unique needs of the local community. This conflict between ‘represented/conceived space’ and ‘representational/lived space’ produces a ‘representational space’ that invites particular spatial practices from particular people, solidifying the ‘representational space’ in a way that diverges from its conceived intent (Lefebvre, 1991). As an example of this, Mario Luis Small’s ethnographic work on a Puerto Rican enclave in Boston he dubs ‘Villa Victoria’ recounts the use (or rather, lack of use) of the Jorge Hernández Cultural Center (JHCC) by local Villa Victoria residents (Small, 2004). The JHCC was constructed with the intent of showcasing Puerto Rican culture to the general public and bridging the divides between working-class Villa Victorians and the more affluent young professionals and college students residing in Boston (Small, 2004). Instead, conflicting expectations from local Villa Victorians, Latino college students, and white patrons around what kinds of ‘Latino culture’ would be showcased at the JHCC created a space that felt disingenuous to local Villa Victorians, thus turning the JHCC into a space not of intercultural exchange and interclass tie formation, but instead a ‘gentrified’ cultural space that showcased a commodified, marketized form of Latino culture that did not resonate with local residents and had stunted local participation at the JHCC for over a decade (Small, 2004). In short, in addition to understanding space’s role in structuring social interaction and engagement and recognizing the agency of people in shaping a space’s function, it is important to identify what *does* work for a community space like Joyce-Collingwood.

Immigrant community building and space

For newcomers even in diverse spaces, the local co-ethnic community is still a vital wellspring of social capital – especially as these co-ethnic communities are often the first supportive point of contact in an unfamiliar host society (Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993). One criticism of the social capital framework, however, is how it may place the burden on the individual to always act purposively and instrumentally to generate social capital for themselves (Small, 2009). Understanding the mechanisms of social capital generation and deployment, then, can lead to a more useful conceptualization of social capital (Small, 2009). This is especially significant for studying the social capital of marginalized groups who may face barriers to generating social capital. In their piece on the mechanisms of social capital deployment among immigrants, Portes & Sensenbrenner outline the concept of bounded solidarity (1993). Under their framework, bounded solidarity is a mechanism of social capital deployment evoked in reaction to perceived hostility or marginalization from broader society (Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993). The emergence of this form of solidarity is moderated by two major factors: the distinctiveness of the group and whether individuals can exit the host society to return to their country of origin (Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993). But beyond these two factors, Portes & Sensenbrenner still find that some groups with equal positioning on these two dimensions display stronger solidarity than others (1993). They thus also propose 'shared cultural repertoire' as a key mechanism through which bounded solidarity can occur
(Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993). To demonstrate the significance of cultural repertoire, Portes & Sensenbrenner contrast the relative strength of Chinese immigrant communities in America to Southeast Asian American immigrant communities (1993). Chinese immigrant communities, who imported a strongly centralized, unified cultural repertoire practiced through their various

family clan associations, continue to demonstrate strong bounded solidarity as indicated by in-group employment rates (Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993). In contrast, Southeast Asians originating from communities in Southeast Asia that were more sparsely populated were not as successful in unifying their diverse cultural repertoires and report a sense of community loss after immigration that can be damaging both economically but also health-wise (Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993). As such, a shared cultural repertoire and the perpetuation of this shared cultural repertoire is significant for the preservation and longevity of communities.

What is not explained by Portes and Sensenbrenner, however, is precisely how shared cultural repertoire is generated. Returning to this thesis' focus on space, much literature on social infrastructure focus on the ability for social infrastructure to build bridges across group boundaries (Anderson, 1995; Klinenberg, 2018; Small, 2004). However, it would be interesting to consider how these theories of public space can also generate self-understanding of one's co-ethnic identity and community (in other words, one's co-ethnic community's cultural repertoire). As a Black urban sociologist, Elijah Anderson draws on his own experiences of space and race within space to describe how urban public spaces can create places of 'refuge' from the indifference, atomization, and hostility of everyday urban life to generate moments of cosmopolitanism and conviviality – especially across racial boundaries (1995). In his book *Cosmopolitan Canopies,* Anderson describes his experience in Philadelphia's Reading Terminal, a downtown shopping district adjacent to a local convention center and at the intersection between white Kensington and black North Philadelphia, attracting a diverse visitor base (1995). In contrast to (and, as he describes, as refuge from) the hostility experienced on the streets – particularly as a black man – the terminal is a public space where occupants are expected to share the space and display mutual civility to one another (Anderson, 1995). In so doing,

moments of contact emerge between individuals who may not have otherwise come into contact, or even without engaging in contact, individuals engage in 'folk ethnographies' as they people-watch racialized others occupying public space that can play valuable roles in humanizing strangers (Anderson, 1995). Here, I also want to understand the role of social infrastructure in building strong communities internally. If we see how public space can inform more nuanced understandings of racialized others by providing 'civil' spaces of observation and engagement, how can public space also inform individual's understanding of their *own* communities?

Research in Switzerland on Asian immigrants' perceptions and patronage of Chinese restaurants found that regardless of citizenship status (which can be a proxy for time away from Asia), participants had no statistically significant differences in perceptions of Chinese restaurants (Vieregge et al., 2009). Moreover, despite relatively low rating of food quality, they continued to patronize businesses for more place-based nostalgic purposes such as interior decoration or languages spoken (Vieregge et al., 2009), suggesting that immigrants specifically sought out nostalgia and identity affirmation in places. Another study by Main and Sandoval tells the story of Los Angeles' MacArthur Park, and how this park, which was a hub for Mexican and Central American immigrants, empowered regulars with a strong sense of identity through its nostalgic atmosphere (Main & Sandoval, 2015). Later when local policies threatened the livelihood of their co-ethnic vendors in MacArthur Park who contributed to its nostalgic atmosphere, the community was empowered to band together to advocate for their protection (Main & Sandoval, 2015). Findings like these suggest that spaces and places play a role in evoking shared cultural repertoire, particularly for first-generation immigrants. However, these studies tended to draw more individualized conclusions around the relationship between place and identity formation. This thesis hopes to extend findings like these further to understand how

places contribute to sustainable (conceptualized in terms of longevity and community health) immigrant community.

Research Question: What are the specific spatial mechanisms that make a functional immigrant enclave?

Methods

The methods of this paper are largely driven by its epistemology. As a project that hopes to fill the gaps in a literature that mostly discusses Filipino space retrospectively and building off theory that recognizes space as a process, I enter this project hoping to capture the space as it is living and breathing, capturing resident and regulars' practices within the space as well as their understandings of the space. As such, this project is a combination of ethnography and interview.

Case: The Filipino-Canadian Community and Joyce Collingwood

The Filipino-Canadian community is a relatively new visible minority group in Canada, and yet has become one of the nation's largest visible minority groups (Statistics Canada, 2021). Numbers from 2013 indicate that only 5% of Filipino-Canadians in Canada at the time of survey arrived prior to 1970 (McElhinny et al., 2012), and yet as of the 2021 Canadian Census, Filipino-Canadians are the fourth-largest visible minority group nationwide just shy of one million (Statistics Canada, 2021). Most Filipino Canadians are concentrated in urban centers, with the three cities hosting the largest proportions of the Filipino Canadian community being Toronto (43%), Vancouver (18%), and Winnipeg (10%) (McElhinny et al., 2012). Filipino-Canadian migration can be split into two distinct 'cohorts' that differ in their post-immigration experience of Canada. Early cohorts experienced a markedly smoother integration experience, with most reporting they were able to find jobs rather easily and did not have much trouble keeping up with

the cost of living (McElhinny et al., 2012). Later cohorts, however, have had a markedly more difficult time integrating in Canada after experiencing deprofessionalization, discrimination, and having to navigate the bureaucratic institutions of their new host country (McElhinny et al., 2012). It is within the context of this 'new' experience of Canada that this thesis is situated.

Within such a brief period, Filipinos in Canada have grown to such a sizable proportion of the Canadian demographic; and yet Filipino-Canadian literature remains in its relative infancy – especially when compared to the flourishing academic sphere in the United States. There is yet to be any Filipino studies course taught at major Canadian post-secondary institutions, any official organization of Filipino-Canadian academics and research, nor official journals dedicated to Asian-Canadian studies, much less Filipino-Canadian studies: all of which the United States' academic sphere possesses (McElhinny et al., 2012). Filipino-Canadian studies thus stands at a moment of potentiality. To date, most foundational work has focused on macro-level aspects of Filipino-Canadian experience or the principles of the field more generally: epistemologically, how should the field carry itself forward? What are the institutional, geopolitical, and other factors that have pulled Filipinos to Canada? What is the current state of Filipino Canadian experience and representation? Answers to these questions comprise the groundwork laid down by scholars who have comprised the 'first generation' of Filipino Canadian literature of the last fifty years.

Given that most Filipinos in Canada arrived after the 1970's, a new generation of Filipino Canadians are being brought into the world, and with them, a new generation of scholars who are called upon to build on this foundational work: including myself. Much of the previous literature discusses temporalities: contextualizing and emplacing the current state of Filipino-Canadian life within intersecting timelines of Filipino history and Canadian history. This thesis aims to

additionally embed Filipino-Canadian life *spatially*. Though some previous work among the Filipino American diaspora has documented the life and death of Filipinotowns, these are usually done retrospectively and deconstruct the racist politics that led to the demise of these spaces or the loss and subsequent dissipation of the community (Mabalon, 2006). Other work in Canada around Filipino businesses has mostly focused on the successes and struggles of entrepreneurship in the Filipino-Canadian community more so than their community-tending function (Polvorosa, 2013). Moving forward and building off the work of previous Filipino-Canadian scholars, this thesis hopes to re-embed the study of the community within the everyday spaces and places they occupy, using the Joyce-Collingwood neighbourhood as a case study of how spaces maintain communities.

Case: Joyce Collingwood

To many Vancouverites, Joyce-Collingwood, sometimes shortened to 'Joyce', is a SkyTrain train station and bus hub, servicing 5 bus lines. As one of the stops along the Expo Line that connects the central Waterfront station in Vancouver's downtown to more peripheral neighbourhoods such as New Westminster and Surrey, Joyce-Collingwood is one of the key ports to the rest of the city. But to the local Filipino community, who still do not have their own cultural center[2], Joyce-Collingwood is commonly known as one of the major hubs for the community.

Joyce-Collingwood is by no means the only Filipino neighbourhood in Vancouver, nor is it the only place to find Filipino goods. As of 2024, Vancouver houses 4 locations of Jollibee, a popular fried chicken chain store from the Philippines with locations worldwide. Other notable

[2] Since writing this thesis, the City of Vancouver has committed to building Vancouver's first Filipino Cultural Centre and talks between the city and community have been ongoing.

Filipino chains around Vancouver include a Max's Restaurant, a popular dine-in chain from the Philippines that serves its famous house-fried chicken and Filipino dishes, and a Potato Corner, a popular fried potato snack store often seen in Filipino malls. Not to mention the many other small Filipino businesses scattered around Vancouver. Other popularly known Filipino neighbourhoods include Fraser Street, a long street stretching across the length of Vancouver where many ethnic businesses are concentrated surrounded by winding streets of single-family homes, New Westminster along the outskirts of Vancouver, or Burnaby.

What is unique to Joyce-Collingwood is its centrality and sheer concentration of businesses and cultural assets. As opposed to sparsely scattered businesses or a long strip of businesses, just across the street from the SkyTrain station sit Joyce's six Filipino businesses: Bao Bakery, Kay Market grocery store, the Kumare Express, Pampanga's Cuisine, and Plato Filipino restaurants, and the Sari-Sari Store convenience store. Plato Filipino, Kumare Express, and Pampanga's Cuisine are all independently owned Filipino restaurants presented in a distinct *kalinderya* style reminiscent of streetside cafeteria and soup kitchens in the Philippines. Food is served buffet-style, offered in 'combo meals' with rice and your choice of *ulam* (non-rice main courses). Here one will find many Filipino home-cooked favorites, from hearty servings of *laing*, or taro leaves and meat cooked in coconut milk and topped with chilies, to *dinuguan*, or pork slices served in pork blood soup. The restaurants are quite busy between patrons coming in and out to UberEats delivery drivers picking up bags of food. Bao Bakery similarly serves many Filipino grab-n'-go favorites, from warm pork *siopao* steamed buns, *ube* purple yam steamed buns, or *siomai* Filipino shrimp dimsum. Kay Market and Sari Sari Store both offer a wide range of Filipino grocery essentials unavailable at your average grocery store, from the leafy green *malunggay* moringa often used in various soups, to ready-to-eat *balut* fertilized duck embryo,

often served as a popular street food snack in the Philippines. It is also worth noting that Sari Sari Store takes its name from the family-owned convenience stores usually attached to the family home found in Filipino working-class urban or provincial towns. Further down the street from there is the Saint Mary's Roman Catholic church, with a Filipino churchgoing crowd large enough to be one of the few places in the city with a weekly Tagalog mass. These cultural assets are all situated within a five-minute walk from the SkyTrain station, making them highly accessible and well-known among the Filipino-Canadian community. The area is also highly resource-rich, housing a community health centre, senior residence, community policing centre, various immigration offices, the St. Mary's school serving kindergarten to grade 7, and a neighbourhood house that provides a variety of community-building and equity-promoting programming.

Beyond retail, service provision, and transportation, Joyce Collingwood also houses one of the densest concentrations of Filipino residents in Vancouver, and Filipinos comprise the largest immigrant group in the neighbourhood (Statistics Canada, 2021). The average annual income (calculated as a neighbourhood median) stands at $35,000, less than half of the Vancouver-wide average of $90,000 (Statistics Canada, 2021), with "many residents" spending between 30-50% of income on rent (Joyce Area Residents Association, 2016). The most common occupations also mostly consist of service and healthcare work, overall creating a markedly working-class Filipino demographic (Statistics Canada, 2021). However, since 2016, the City of Vancouver has set in motion plans for redevelopment, looking to erect high-rise condominiums and a new shopping district in place of the local businesses and affordable housing that have allowed Filipino-Canadians to call Joyce-Collingwood home (Chan, 2023; City of Vancouver, 2016). In anticipation of redevelopment, soaring rents have been pushing the local community

from their homes and businesses have been making plans to relocate, threatening the slow fizzling out of this thriving community space (Laderas & Nassar, 2022). Though plans for redevelopment have acknowledged the immigrant population in the area, rarely do these plans directly address the Filipino community (City of Vancouver, 2016). As such, few community-sustaining solutions have been put forward, and the development of Joyce Collingwood remains a hot topic among local activist groups and the community more generally (Joyce Area Residents Association, 2015; Joyce Area Residents Association 201). It is within this context that this thesis takes place. As discourse from media outlets and the city cite spatial and rational reasons for redevelopment including a "leaky condo crisis" and local communities assert the specific emotional, community-based attachments through which they connect to this space, Joyce-Collingwood is an active moment in understanding the role of space in maintaining a community, and what the loss of space means for community ties (Joyce Area Residents Association, 2015; Chan, 2023; Laderas & Nassar, 2022).

Ethnography

Ethnographic field notes were taken by me over four months visiting the research site at least once a week for at least 1.5-2 hours at a time. Notes were taken in a notebook or phone, mostly attuning myself to the general atmosphere of the area. In my initial visits I observed typical movement patterns between businesses, the ebb and flow of crowds during major periods (eg. Rush hours, church days), and how this contributed to the function of the space. When in the businesses, I paid attention to the behaviors of customers: who the clientele were, when they came, who they were with, how long they stayed, interactions between customers, interactions between customers and staff, sometimes striking conversations with customers if they seemed to be initiating contact. These ethnographic field notes are supplementary to the interview data and

were done with the intent of emplacing myself in the space interviewees are talking about. In many ways this ethnographic data also became a case study through myself of building a relationship with a space and how the space evokes a Filipino cultural repertoire within myself. These ethnographic field notes were synthesized into 'vignettes' that comprise my comprehensive ethnographic data: specific 'excerpts' of notable days or interactions that encapsulate the general atmosphere of the neighbourhood or exemplify Filipinos' interactions or relationships with and within it.

Interview participants and recruitment methods

Eligibility criteria included being a member of the Filipino-Canadian community and being a Joyce regular or resident. 'Regular' is conceptualized as an individual who visits Joyce-Collingwood at least once a month. 'Resident' is conceptualized as an individual who lives in the Joyce-Collingwood neighbourhood or in its adjacent walking-distance neighbourhoods. Participants for interviews were recruited through a poster put up in the Filipino-owned businesses in Joyce with permission from local business owners. Participants were also recruited through social media posts. Recruitment also relied on participant networks to snowball the sample. After recruitment, the sample size of the study stands at eight participants. All names used throughout this paper are pseudonyms. Their demographics are as follows:

Name	**Immigrant Generation status**	**Age**	**Profession in Canada**	**Relationship with Joyce**
Max	1st generation	Early 20s	Student	Resident
Rosa	1st generation	Mid-late 30s	Healthcare worker	Regular

Carlos	1st generation	Mid-late 30s	Mechanic	Regular
JR	1.5 generation	Mid-late 30s	Healthcare worker	Regular
Jun	1.5 generation	Mid-late 30s	IT	Regular
Amy	2nd generation	Early 20s	Student	Regular
Sabrina	2nd generation	Early 20s	Student, part-time barista	Regular
Maria	2nd generation	Early 20s	Student, part-time work	Ex-resident, regular

Interview

Interviews were semi-structured and lasted approximately 60 minutes each. Interviews were conducted on Zoom or in-person at the participant's convenience. These interviews were also conducted at the participant's choice of English, Tagalog or Taglish.

Constructing interview questions was a very strategic process, especially as I inquired into something as taken-for-granted as everyday spaces. It is thus ineffective to place the burden of sociological analysis on participants (eg. "Why is Joyce Collingwood important to you?"), especially when they themselves likely have never considered the role of this space in their adjustment and belongingness by merit of the 'ordinariness' of daily life (Jimenéz, 2021). The interview protocol is therefore guided by the question structure outlined by Tomás Jiménez whereby the interview guide is treated as a series of prompts rather than targeted questions, and questions are also written in a way that uncovers the 'taken for granted' aspects of everyday experiences like that of a neighbourhood (2021). Interviews began with a 'grand tour' question style (eg. "Imagine I am a new Filipino in Vancouver. Tell me about Joyce."), through which I noted what parts of Joyce participants seemed to 'linger on' as they talked, and therefore what

felt most salient to them (Jimenéz, 2021). Counterfactual prompts (eg. “Do you feel that you belong in Canada? How would your answer to this question be different if Joyce never existed?”) prompted participants to consider the role this taken-for-granted space plays in their life (Jimenéz, 2021). ‘Before-and-after' prompts were also used to target a particular ‘variable’ through questioning (Jimenéz, 2021). For instance, the question “What was your adjustment like before versus after discovering Joyce?” treats the personal discovery of Joyce Collingwood as an independent variable, with ‘quality of adjustment’ as a ‘dependent variable’. 'Contrast questions’ also allowed me to compare the difference between spaces to get a better sense of the unique qualities of Joyce (eg. “How does eating at the local restaurants at Joyce compare to eating at Jollibee or Max’s?”) that participants might not pick up on through a general question of what makes visiting Joyce unique.

Analysis

Data was analyzed in NVivo using a flexible coding scheme as outlined by Deterding & Waters (2021). Data was first coded by question as index codes for easier referral and to familiarize myself with the data. In line with Small’s approach to interpreting interviews, each interview was treated as a standalone case study in that each interview also included a comprehensive immigration history (Deterding & Waters, 2021; Small, 2008). Memos were recorded throughout the indexing process to pick up on notable themes for each participant or possible connections to literature that were then used as analytic codes. Throughout coding, especially articulate or exemplary quotes were compiled for future reference. As analytic codes were applied to each transcript, memos were kept of overarching themes that seemed to be connecting each interview, or notable contrasts between interviews that varied on major

demographic variables such as age or generation status. These would later inform the conclusions drawn from the data.

Results

Accessibility and Neighbourhood Vitality

Accessibility is an integral part of what makes Joyce-Collingwood tick. Even before conducting interviews, I was already aware that Joyce Collingwood's transit centrality was a vital part of the neighbourhood's appeal. The importance of access was a point corroborated by all participants who each mentioned the buses or SkyTrain. With my own relatives scattered around Vancouver, I often passed through Joyce-Collingwood, and have on multiple occasions patronized the local Kay Market for bags of *Chippy* BBQ chips that I remember from my visits to the Philippines or to take out a container of *sisig* – my personal favorite dish, and the signature dish, from Pampanga's Cuisine of sizzling diced pork cuts, onions, chili peppers and drizzled in *calamansi* lime – for a taste of home far too complicated for my meagre college chef skillset. Having spent more time around Joyce-Collingwood for this project and paying as much attention to it as I had, I was made more aware of how transit very much acted as the 'beating heart' of the neighbourhood; that is to say, the buses and SkyTrain draw a steady flow of people in and out of the neighbourhood, and each group of new visitors acts as a momentary 'pulse' of activity. On my very first day of ethnographic fieldwork, I recall a moment where the person sitting behind me on the bus to Joyce-Collingwood, a middle-aged Filipino woman who had been silent the entire ride, lit up as our bus pulled into the station and she looked out the window to see her friend waving and beckoning her over on the sidewalk. Having spent lots of time sitting by the windows in the *Plato Filipino* restaurant and watching the sidewalks, I observed how each bus

and train ignites moments like these as strangers walking along the sidewalk suddenly gawk at each other, followed by a "*Huy*! [Hey!]" and subsequent glad tidings, friends who had bumped into each other on transit wave goodbye, and new waves of customers pour into the businesses. Especially on Sundays when the church is the busiest, the streets are alive with families, often multigenerational: seniors with walkers accompanied by family members, children skipping over sidewalk cracks, friends, gaggles of *titas*[3] gossiping. On my first field day of 2024, I recall standing by St. Mary's Church as the families spilled out, greeting each other with new year's tidings. As I turned to head off, I passed by a large Filipino family of over ten, gathering for a selfie as the *tita* happily exclaims: "We have to take a picture! It's the first time we're all together in 2024!" In this way, it is worth noting that though Joyce-Collingwood is often spoken of in terms of the businesses, the feeling of belonging to Joyce-Collingwood is not contained within the walls of the establishments and extends to the neighbourhood more generally. Though this is sentiment is not brought up by most participants, Max especially emphasized this neighbourhood-level sense of belonging. Having lived previously in South Winnipeg where they describe the community as much more insular and community space as less lively, they especially emphasized a street-level sense of liveliness they perceived in Joyce-Collingwood.

> ... And I think walking down Joyce Collingwood... I get a sense of 'Oh... this... this feels like a Filipino experience.' because I'm walking and I'm seeing these people are walking on the street and I'm encountering them and there's... Outdoor seating which feels – there's something like, intangibly Asian about that to me. - Max

[3] Filipino honourific to refer to aunties

Moments of casual contact were quite common even among my interviewees, who say meeting people they knew in Joyce is a common occurrence. Laughing and gesticulating how she greeted coworkers she would run into at Pampanga's Cuisine, Rosa recalls:

> …and every time we're there I'm like "I know you! I know you!" [laughs] and I like catching up with people. I'm a very people person, and so that way that sense of community is so strong... And it just reminds me how it feels to be home. It's just our home away from home [laughs] so yeah! – Rosa

Even moments of contact with co-ethnic strangers nonetheless generate a sense of belonging. Fondly recounting a moment at the pizza place across the Filipino businesses, Max recalls:

... Actually, there's this one pizza place in Joyce Collingwood… I don't think it's Filipino owned, *pero* Filipino *yung* one of the workers [one of the workers is Filipino]... And whenever I go there I always feel.... *Na nagtatagalog lang ako... Nakakatawa ako minsan bibili ako tas... Tatanungin ko kung makano, sabihin niya sa akin 'tres lang, tres.'* [I just speak Tagalog... And it's so funny because every once in a while I'll go to buy something there and... I'll ask how much it costs and he'll say in Tagalog, 'it's just three.'][laughs]. *Kasi,* are we talking about dollars? But *parang pesos!* [Because, are we talking about dollars? But it's like we're talking about Philippine pesos!] [laughs] - Max

These moments of contact were common in my field notes, on various occasions while sitting in restaurants I observed the flash of recognition cross two patrons' faces before one of them exclaims "what are you doing here!" and squeeze by the tables to embrace one another, excitedly chatting each other up before apologizing for holding up a line. The restaurants were

often cramped and busy and create a very intimate space for people-watching and interactions – while some patrons keep to themselves, at times I noted patrons having conversations across tables, even when they belonged to different parties. Other times sharing the space together created moments of collectivity, as in one example from one visit:

> I step into the restaurant and am greeted with a blast of warm air that steams up the windows in condensation. I had put up a poster here recruiting for this study a week ago, but it seems the condensation had left it soggy up against the window and someone must have peeled it off. Christmas is over a month away but, in true Filipino fashion, Mariah Carey plays on the restaurant speakers... I eat my food and listen to the Christmas music they play, and I notice how the staff are singing along. One of the women working emerges from the kitchen, a biscuit in her mouth, dramatically dancing along to the music, making the other staff keel over laughing. As Mariah hits that "Oooh baby" in the post-chorus, I hear multiple voices quietly crooning along, seated customers and staff alike. I am one of them.

On another instance during a busy day of field work, I sat in Pampanga's Cuisine at a table meant for four eating my food alone. Before too long another customer, a young woman in a heavy Canada Goose jacket asks if she can take a seat in front of me and I oblige, nodding between bites of food as she scoots her chair back. She takes a few bites of her food and her eyes light up, and she lifts her head to ask me to tell her the prices for the different combo meals since I'm sitting closer to the menu on the wall, to which I politely fulfil her request. We sit in silence for the most part, but before too long I hear her suck in her breath – the familiar hiss of someone who can't seem to handle their spice. My quiet amusement must have registered on my face because she looks up and smiles and goes "*anghang!"* [spicy!], to which I laugh and agree. I

make a comment about how it's funny that I'm from a part of the Philippines known for having spicy food, and yet I can't seem to handle my spice either. She says the same, and quickly we find out that we are from the same region of the Philippines. She smiles pleasantly, remarking about how rare it is to find someone from that region of the Philippines here, and that she's really happy to meet someone. She shares that she had only moved here a year ago and it's her first time eating at Pampanga's Cuisine. She had passed by Joyce on many occasions while on transit, and decided that since she stops here so often, she may as well check it out – and she's happy that she did. She remarks that it feels like home here, jokingly telling me that she snapped a photo of a *siopao* bun she purchased at Bao Bakery to her mom captioned "See? You can live here too!".

Easy access to businesses keeps them alive and the atmosphere warm - for more reasons than the food.

As in the previous example, simply because of how often people passed by Joyce-Collingwood thanks to transit access, they spontaneously decide to stop and patronize the businesses, creating opportunities for moments of contact. Interviewees describe something I liken to a 'sinkhole effect', whereby on their way to another destination, they run into Joyce-Collingwood, and end up sinking their time into the neighbourhood because it's along the way. Joyce-Collingwood is certainly not the *only* place to access Filipino cultural products in Vancouver. With the growth of the Filipino community has come the expansion of Filipino businesses around the city; the lower mainland now houses 3 branches of Jollibee, a major Filipino fried chicken chain, a Potato Corner, a popular Filipino snack chain, and a Max's, a popular Filipino dine-in restaurant chain, not to mention other 'hubs' of Filipinos such as Burnaby, New Westminster, or Fraser Street that house their own Filipino establishments.

However, the transit centrality and accessibility of Joyce-Collingwood is what makes it notable and frequented by participants. For instance, Sabrina recounted to me a story of how her mother used to frequent a *siopao* bakery in Chinatown, which was out of the way of her commute and meant that she would only go if she was feeling up to it. Upon learning from her other Filipino coworkers that Bao Bakery at Joyce-Collingwood was just along her commute home, she began to frequent it, and thus Joyce-Collingwood entered Sabrina's life. In an exchange with Carlos, he poses a hypothetical to me that demonstrates why Joyce-Collingwood is the spot of choice to visit, particularly with friends, over other establishments and hubs:

> Carlos: ... You've been here Gab for quite a while. Do you drive?
>
> Gabby: I don't. I take the bus...
>
> Carlos: Right! So... if I ask you out - Gab, *kain tayo sa, ano, Filipino food!* [Gabby, let's go eat Filipino food!] Let's go to Max's!' 'Oh, it's so hard to commute there, I don't know how to go there!' Like so hassle, you have to get off at Royal Oak and then maybe walk right... so I'll just go to Joyce! They have crispy pata, they have the pancit. They almost cook everything there. So it's just a matter of after Skytrain get off train and walk for a couple of steps and then that's it right?

Authenticity

But beyond simply accessibility to cultural products, Joyce-Collingwood makes highly accessible a very specific flavour of Filipino experience unattainable by chain restaurant environments. Many first-generation participants came from working class or middle class backgrounds in the Philippines and described concrete memories of growing up in the Philippines from university cafeteria meals, their families' own home cooking. Compared to

chain stores, Joyce-Collingwood's restaurants evoked much more intimate and personal memories:

> *Iba yung nostalgia na mafefeel ko parang... Naiisip ko doon parang yung luto ni... Luto ng lola ko kunwari, kare-kare or bulalo* which is... [The nostalgia that I feel in Joyce is different. It's like... When I'm there I think of the cooking of my grandma, like *kare-kare* or *bulalo* which is...] They have different products. So I think those products evoke different memories for me? - Max

It is interesting to note that identification with this 'authentic' Filipino space, as well as distinguishing between 'authentic' and 'non-authentic' is possible and was done even without first-hand experience with the space. Jun, for example, describes how he had trouble fitting in with some of the Filipinos he met here in Canada initially because his family was middle-class in the Philippines, and most Filipinos who establish themselves in Canada are working class. Nonetheless, he described the *kalinderya* atmosphere of Joyce-Collingwood as "authentic" Filipino experience, even if it is not his own experience in the Philippines. This is especially obvious for the second generation, many of whom did not live in the Philippines at all or have never even visited.

By contrast, chain stores have a classed experience – even for Jollibee, a fried chicken fast–food chain. This is in part due to fried chicken's history in the Philippines whereby as an imported American food, it was regularly accessible only by the professional class. In comparison, the foods served in Joyce-Collingwood's restaurants are reminiscent of home cooking that I recognize growing up, and during my own time in Joyce-Collingwood, this is what I found myself appreciating most about my visits. These very intimate memories of home-cooking and school kitchens were described among many participants, and for these reasons they

even described reluctance to share Joyce-Collingwood with non-Filipinos out of the acknowledgement that they wouldn't appreciate it on the same level or that the tastes wouldn't be 'palatable' to foreign tongues. Interestingly, this meant that the way participants framed 'authenticity' was also dependent on a particular classed experience.

> ... I just brought my native friend to try Jollibee for the first time and they were like 'oh this is gas!' 'That's what I've been saying, this is gas!' [laughs]. But I wouldn't bring him to like a mom and pop shop just because in terms of taste the Filipino food is like, so different from the rest of Asia but to me it's home. - Maria

> You know how it is back home where basically there's a certain thing... I guess from a lifestyle standpoint, right, like a lot of working-class Filipinos would go to a *turo turo*[4] right but, you know, office people or, you know, even executives you won't catch them there. You won't catch them dead over there.... There's a little bit of shame in eating from places like that so I guess when you got places like Max's, Jollibee, those are 'sanitized versions' of Filipino experience right. - Jun

Price point also played a role in perceived authenticity. One 'mechanism' of this authenticity was through high prices' ability to 'gatekeep' cultural tastes from the community. Filipino food served at too high a price is perceived as 'snobby'. Conversely, the low prices at the restaurants in Joyce-Collingwood make a taste of home accessible to those who need it most. Sharing his observations of Joyce-Collingwood's restaurants' patrons, Carlos says:

> Because what I've observed there is working class people, they buy food there that they take to their night shift to their work, or they keep it for the rest of their week so that they

[4] Another word for *kalinderya*

> don't have to cook. It's affordable then: I'm living by myself, I'm renting out in Joyce, I'll just buy my food there. And I'll just buy fifty dollars of food I'll store it for one week... Those are the people I observe there. But if you go to Max's your fifty dollars won't last for five days. It's the chicken alone is enough for you to consume it even in one sitting. - Carlos

For reference, while doing my ethnographic field work, I often ordered the 'Combo 2' set meal from Pampanga's Cuisine, which cost $16.50 for two tubs of my choice of *ulam* (non-rice 'main course' dishes), a tub of my choice of soup, and one tub of rice, which could easily be partitioned out to multiple meals a week – an invaluable deal for a college student like myself. In comparison, one order of a 2-piece Jollibee fried chicken meal containing 2 pieces of chicken, rice, gravy, one side and a drink costs $12.50, and is usually eaten in one sitting. What this also means is that most of the clientele at Joyce-Collingwood's restaurants are working class or students, which many participants noted contributes to that 'authentic' feel: hearing different Filipino languages being spoken, loud bickering from families trying to calm their children, and the hustle and bustle of rush hour as tired customers return from a long day at work, sighing relief at a taste of home. Recounting her days as a nurse, Rosa described to me how Joyce-Collingwood's cheap meals, large portion sizes, and easy access via transit made it the perfect place to grab food to bring to work. Sabrina also described how she prefers getting her snacks and lunches at Bao Bakery on the way to school because the kinds of food served there – *siopao* buns or *siomai* dumplings – were easy to eat on the go. Cheap food accessible along the way to a destination and served ready to go for transit altogether make an accessible 'authentic' experience at these businesses that draws Filipinos in and makes them feel like they belong.

A counterfactual: Max in Winnipeg

Max especially offers a poignant example of the significance of access to community connection and well-being. Prior to moving to the Joyce-Collingwood area in Vancouver, Max's family settled in Winnipeg. Despite Winnipeg being another major hub for Filipino immigrants in Canada, Max clarified that most Filipinos are concentrated in North Winnipeg, whereas they settled in South Winnipeg which they described as "very white". Though North Winnipeg was accessible by bus, the hassle of having to commute the distance meant that they very rarely got to engage with the community and did not feel like they were a part of any Filipino community. Moreover, they described how the much colder prairies weather of Winnipeg made it such that going out was much more of an event: a sentiment that they speculate other Filipinos in Winnipeg must have resonated with as well because even when they did venture to North Winnipeg, the streets were not as lively as fewer people went outside, an atmosphere that they jokingly described as "kind of sad".

> *Parang ano pa lang. Nice. Na parang... ang daming parang* [It's just… Nice. It's like… There are so many] walkable Asian establishments in vicinity of each other, *malapit sa bahay ko*...] And I think back to my experience when *na* when I lived in the Philippines, *nalakad ko lang sa* Sari Sari store *lakad lakad ko sa* grocery [I could just walk to the Sari Sari store, take a walk to the grocery]. *Ang lapit lapit lang* [It was so close]. *Tapos* unlike in Winnipeg... *Ayun* [And then unlike in Winnipeg… Yeah.]. *Kailangan mag* bus, *kailangan susuot ng isang damak na* layers [I need to take the bus, I need to wear thosuands of layers] just to get out of the house [laughs]! And then *yung pupuntahan mo pang* Asian groceries, *wala siyang* outdoor seating *kasi nag sosnow, tapos... Ayun* [And then even when I do go to the Asian groceries, they don't have any outdoor seating

> because it's snowing and… Yeah.]... Like *nasa loob ka ng* building [you're inside the building] which is kind of sad [laughs]... - Max

Contrasting the 'warmness' of their memories of the Philippines and its lively streets with the life they lived in Winnipeg, their relative distance from the Filipino community, and the isolation they felt as a result, they described their time in Winnipeg as the "loneliest year of my life ever".

> *Pag nandoon ako sa* South Winnipeg [when I was there in South Winnipeg] I only hear like a passing Filipino voice and I would be so happy, like I would, like, whip my head around like 'Oh my god! It's a Filipino!' [laughs]. When I worked at [grocery] and there were Filipino customers I would be so excited to speak Tagalog with them. And so, yeah, it's nice that it's so commonplace here. – Max

As such, by comparison, the liveliness of Joyce-Collingwood gives them a much better feeling as a Filipino in Vancouver.

> I feel like... *Mas* appreciative *ako sa fact na* [I'm more appreciative of the fact that] I'm in this neighborhood because I knew what it was like to *not* be in that space. – Max

This sentiment of appreciation was echoed among other interviewees who I prompted to consider how their experience adjusting to Canada would change had Joyce never existed.

> …So I guess living here by yourself would have been hell. Like… You need to have a community to help you out here. So if there was no place like Joyce Collingwood where basically even if you're just having a bad day and all you want is basically that instant noodle that they don't have in the store because that's what you're used to when you're having a bad day back home? That does a lot for you. - Jun

Hybrid identities

But while space contributed to invoking that sense of home, it was also integral to identity formation and maintenance. All participants described themselves as 'Filipino-Canadian' or even simply 'Canadian', and all agreed that they felt they belonged in Canada.

The second generation especially tended define their Canadian-ness in quite stereotypical terms, often drawing on their English proficiency, love for maple syrup, hockey, and the like. But as they described themselves as Canadians – and unprompted – all roads led back to their Filipino community. While talking about her Canadian identity, Sabrina talks extensively about her participation in a fantasy hockey team, her ability to "dudebro it out while chugging a beer" and rattling off the statistics of the latest Canucks game, and her "love-hate relationship with snow". But as she carried on – and without interruption – she says:

> I think I'm just as Canadian – whatever Canadian means – as the next person like... I love hockey. I love drinking a beer, love hate relationship with snow [laughs] ... I'm a big fan of hockey for example, but like a big part of like the things that I love about hockey are I'm the person that's constantly advocating for the one Filipino wasian[5] player. I'm always brining up random statistics of just like what it's like being a person of colour in the NHL because that's just not something that's prevalent. Trying to make the game more accessible to communities that are not able to afford a game, like, that's supposed to be Canada's game you know like those are the conversations that I am attached for most of it so like… I don't think I would honestly be engaged with it as much if it weren't for like my Filipino identity. – Sabrina

[5] A common term used to refer to half-Western half-Asian folks.

Thus, all participants emphasized the importance of fostering their Filipino identity, even after obtaining Canadian status. When talking about him and his partner's choices in raising his children as Filipinos in Canada, 1.5-generation member Jun smiles and says he wants to raise his children in environments that are "unapologetically Filipino", hoping to avoid them growing to be Filipinos ashamed of themselves, especially after recalling him and his own peer's struggles growing up as teenagers in Canada when the Filipino community was much smaller. Second-generation participants also disapproved of other Filipinos they had met who grew up without their own communities, describing them as "self-hating", or stuck up towards their fellow co-ethnics. They then express gratitude for the communities they grew up in for allowing them the ability to grow up comfortable in their own skin while also being Canadian, giving way to a freedom of identity expression but also a humbleness to be grounded in their own Filipino history through their roots in the community, what second-generation Maria describes as "the beauty of being Canadian". When envisioning what she would have become had she not had her community, Maria laughs and says:

> I probably would have been, like, super self-hating [laughs]. Based on the other Filipinos that I've met who grew up in places without Filipinos, somebody has got to show them some type of love … Like I'd probably be that type of Filipino if I didn't grow up around [Filipinos] because, like, what am I supposed to go off of? Probably white people… Things would probably be like that if I didn't have my community. Because, like, who's going to hold me accountable? - Maria

And part of this rootedness in identity is understanding the local history – especially when the homeland is not accessible. When talking about the role of Joyce-Collingwood and other Filipino-dominated spaces in helping raise his kids, Jun emphasizes the importance of

having concrete, tangible places for his children to see other Filipinos, to see proof of the community's rootedness in Canada.

> Yeah it's always a matter of basically if there's an establishment because you can't make a culture artificial. It needs to come out from a spot where, yeah, they decided to gather here because there's some history. Is it a matter of convenience because the rent is cheaper? Yeah. But that's part of the history, so you can tell your kids or whoever hey this is where we all hang out because it was convenient back then and you know but this is where your people are. – Jun

Carlos also describes how he sees spaces like Joyce-Collingwood as valuable for teaching the new generations about their home culture:

> It's a good channel to have a taste of your roots of your culture. If you grew up here, it will be a good place for you to for the family to introduce them this is what it really feels like eating in the Philippines. It's not like when you go to Tim Hortons, when you go to the Keg, to Browns. This is the way we eat, this is the kinds of food that we cook because a lot of kids that grew up here – they're looking for the belongingness because even you speak English here because you grew up here... You can't run away that you're still Filipino! You're still Asian, right? - Carlos

Similarly, Max describes how seeing other Filipinos in Joyce-Collingwood fills them with a sense of empowerment. During their time in Winnipeg living in a majority-white area, they share that their feelings of needing to hide their Filipino traits "Made me feel kind of small, actually. And then it also was disempowering". By contrast, after moving to the Joyce area in Vancouver, seeing other Filipinos casually in space, seeing thriving Filipino spaces and

businesses, they feel a sense of empowerment. While acknowledging the faults of the 'Canadian dream', they nonetheless feel that neighbourhoods like Joyce-Collingwood and the people they see passing through Joyce-Collingwood tell them that:

> You can still be Filipino and successful. For me I think that's very empowering. And that... You can work somewhere *like yung mga* Filipino *sa* neighbourhood house [the Filipinos in the neighbourhood house] – they don't exactly have Canadian accents but they're in, like, office jobs and it's like wow! This is possible! So it's just... It's really nice that I feel like I'm a whole person who is perfectly capable who can do all these things. And I feel like that empowers me to become.. Ironically, a citizen of Canada more! [laughs]. – Max

In this way, their pride in and identification with Canada is matched with their ability to feel pride for their fellow co-ethnics' success and opportunities in Canada.

Purposive vs nonpurposive interactions

Participants had varying opinions on their intent with interacting with Joyce Collingwood, and there was divergence by 1) generation and 2) established communities.

First and 1.5 generation participants were much more intentional with their interactions with Joyce-Collingwood. They enter Joyce-Collingwood with the specific instrumental purposes of building community and networks, finding a specific ingredient or cultural product, or alleviating homesickness. Rosa, for instance, describes how Joyce-Collingwood served as her 'civic stepping stone' into the healthcare industry. Rosa is a nurse by training, but arrived in Canada through the LCP which requires two years of live-in caregiving work before applicants can apply for PR and search for jobs in their own field. Knowing that Filipinos have dense

connections, especially within their respective industries, her interactions in Joyce-Collingwood were done to deliberately expand her network.

> When I came back from the Live in caregiver program and slowly going back to nursing, I have to make ends meet, so I ended up doing nannying job, housework, as well being a cleaner and all this just so I could keep sustaining my cost of living here. And at the same time sending money back home... Through this community it really helped me to achieve where I am right now... Finding the right people in that – the community really had helped me in so many ways...

Aside from the instrumental purposes of network-building, Rosa also describes how being around other Filipinos helped alleviate her sense of homesickness, which is why she specifically wanted to build Filipino networks. Similarly, when Max's family made the decision to move to Vancouver from Winnipeg, they were quite deliberate in their neighbourhood choice after experiencing the absence of community and access to Filipino goods.

> So we didn't really experience that Filipino community... As much as other Filipinos might have. And it was so hard to find like... Asian food... It was just accessible in Joyce Collingwood. Like groceries Asian restaurants – Filipino restaurants much less – we had the commute like an hour just to go to this like you know Filipino slash Asian grocery in Winnipeg. And so it really mattered to us that we were in a space that... those things were accessible to us. - Max

Now in university, Max also describes how they will sometimes go out of their way to visit campus eateries where they know lots of Filipinos work when they feel homesick. After describing how they feel the need to assimilate to a more 'whitewashed' persona while at

university, speaking Tagalog on campus with service workers feels like a relative breath of fresh air.

> *Dinadayo ko minsan* [Every once in a while, I'll make that extra effort] just because I know there's Filipino workers there... Like... when I'm at the [building] and I need to like... I feel that I'm hungry... *bibili ako sa* [food service A] [I'll buy food from [food service A]] 'cause I know that there's Filipinos as opposed to buying in the other places... Even though I like [food service B] more than I like [food service A]! - Max

But this desire for connection with other Filipinos was not necessarily felt by all participants, especially for those who arrived with established networks. Unlike Rosa who came alone and was not already familiar with the branch of her family who was already in Vancouver or Max who endured their first year in Canada without that sense of community, Carlos, Jun, and JR came along with their families and had dense pre-established networks. For them, accessing cultural products or feeling a sense of home motivated their engagement with Joyce-Collingwood. I interviewed JR and Rosa together, and after Rosa explained at length her experiences coming to know Joyce and the importance it served for her coping with her loneliness and isolation after completing her LCP, JR, a 1.5 generation immigrant who came together with his family as a teenager, laughed and simply remarked that he goes to Joyce because he misses the food. Carlos, another first-generation immigrant states:

> I grew up in the countryside back home and I move into the city, so I'm done with the city life. So I'm looking try to feel the countryside vibe again... And that's where Joyce... kind of sits in my nostalgic experiences... - Carlos

A 1.5 generation immigrant and now a parent, Jun notes that his current interaction with Joyce stems from an effort to build up a relationship between his kids and the local Filipino community, specifically recognizing the key role that space plays in building a connection to local histories. When asking about what places like Joyce mean to his family, he says:

> I have kids that I want to embrace that culture… We're middle class here so it's not like you can go back home on a whim, so that's the closest thing to a Filipino community that you have and you can introduce your kids to. - Jun

For second-generation participants, Joyce-Collingwood's role in their life was a lot less salient: they would often describe Joyce-Collingwood as simply a place that they visit and feel belonging to, but not necessarily one that is incredibly integral to their sense of belonging. Unlike first and 1.5 generation participants, many did not have many direct memories of the Philippines to feel nostalgic for when in these spaces. Rather, their sense of nostalgia and belongingness in Joyce-Collingwood comes from the memories made within their existing communities, usually their families. As such, when asked about the role Joyce plays in their sense of identity, second-generation participants usually spoke about their memories of Joyce less personally than did first-generation participants, but almost through the eyes of their own parents, or with their own family as reference points.

For instance, Sabrina notes that she likes supporting the local businesses in Joyce because she feels a sense of kinship to them – almost envisioning the staff as her own family members and imagining her parents' struggle in coming to Canada, making her feel empathetic to the impressive feat of sustaining a Filipino business in Canada. When asked about her relationship to Joyce, Sabrina mostly talks about how important Joyce was to her mom and how it alleviates her mom's homesickness more so than her own. Amy mentions that her family typically goes to a

different church elsewhere, but occasionally, opts to go to St. Mary's at Joyce. When asked why that church, she responds:

> I guess it's because of my parent's influence? They like Joyce. They like the church. I'm going to assume it's because there's already a big community there that they want to feel more connected so that's why like just on a whim they would want to go to Joyce just to feel more connected to the community even though I know like my area I would say there's a decent amount of Filipinos but I feel like Joyce is more that place. - Amy

Discussion

Optimistically, all participants described an integrated Filipino-Canadian identity or Canadian identity framed in terms of Filipino-ness and a sense of belonging in Canada. Importantly, the ability to form these hybrid identities and a sense of belongingness is reliant on continued or historical engagement with space. As such, the availability of these neighbourhood spaces is not just important for instrumental purposes such as accessing goods, but rather to enrich the community and articulate a sense of identity. This corroborates previous findings that suggest a deeper engagement with immigrant businesses beyond simply accessing products (Vieregge et al., 2009).

The findings of this paper also highlight how space and cultural repertoire function bidirectionally: Joyce-Collingwood both evokes a nostalgic sense of home, while also actively articulating what home means by attracting particular crowds of people, particular spatial practices, that create a sense of home. Moreover, Filipinos continuously refer to this standard of 'authenticity' to 'keep themselves in check' and ensure they do not stray too far from their co-ethnic communities. Life in Vancouver as a Filipino-Canadian is thus influenced by the sense of

Filipino-ness articulated in these spaces where Filipinos see and learn from one another and make use of the neighbourhood's cultural assets. A similar effect is seen in Portes & Sensenbrenner's discussions of cultural repertoire wherein Nicaraguan immigrants in Miami purchase and proudly wear *cotonas* shirts, a shirt worn by Nicaraguan Indians, even when they would not wear them back in Nicaragua (1993). What results is a 'made in America' articulation of ethnic identity and how to present as Nicaraguan (Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993). Similarly, interactions in Joyce-Collingwood culminates to generate a set of 'Filipino cultural symbols' in the local cityscape and everyday life that Filipinos identify with and draw on to construct their identity, and thus generate a uniform sense of individual and community identity that is 'locally-grown' within local spaces.

Importantly, the role of space to identity-generation and community-building is a function of place-making more so than space alone. Here, this thesis expands on previous work by Eric Klinenberg (2018) to emphasize that beyond the existence of infrastructure, it's use by agents is what makes it functional. Returning to earlier discussions of Tuan (2002) and Lefebvre (1991), Joyce-Collingwood as a space only sets the conditions and potential for contact. Here, we see this functioning through high transit accessibility, sidewalks, and the presence of the small businesses. These spatial mechanisms set the conditions for frequent contact with the space, and thus frequent contact with others. It is only through this interaction and experience that a space becomes socially and culturally functional: by becoming a *place* (Lefebvre, 1991; Tuan, 2002). Importantly for the community, place narrative transports across generations: events far back in history continue to shape the 'aura' of places far into the future; one need only to look at monuments and heritage sites for an example (Tuan, 2002). The designation of Joyce-Collingwood by the community as a place that 'belongs' to them therefore has legacy – and a

vital one for the continuity of the community as future generations recognize the significance of this place to their community and recognize it as a cultural 'home base'.

By facilitating frequent contact with cultural asset and community-dense space, Filipinos in Vancouver come to know the neighbourhood as a 'safe haven'. In his work on *The Cosmopolitan Canopy,* Elijah Anderson describes an effect by which public spaces offer refuge from the anonymity and hostility of urban life (1995). In these spaces, otherwise alienated racialized 'others' can participate in civility with others: sharing the space, offering themselves up to be seen, and acknowledging their shared role in maintaining the civil atmosphere of the space (1995). It is possible that we may be observing a similar effect whereby neighbourhoods like Joyce Collingwood serve as 'Filipino Canopies'. Interviewees resonate with a sense of disorientation, fear, and loneliness felt as new immigrants in Canada. Participants discussed previously such as Jun and Carlos recognize their perpetual condition of racialization in Canada despite their efforts to assimilate, and thus the need to celebrate their cultural identity. Even second-generation Filipinos acknowledge the fragile balancing act of maintaining a Filipino identity – especially without any direct relationships to the homeland – in a Canadian culture that is hyperdiverse while continuing to be hegemonically white-centric. Spaces like Joyce-Collingwood, then, are a relative refuge to the daily anxieties of either establishing oneself in the new host country, or establishing one's identity as they grow up. They participate in similar practices of 'folk ethnography', or casual observation of others in space (Anderson, 1995), but here, to understand themselves as Filipinos, the agency and prosperity of the Filipino-Canadian community, and participate in uniquely Filipino sociability. Moreover, this idea of community 'refuge' in a 'Filipino Canopy' also invokes the conditions of bounded solidarity outlined by Portes & Sensenbrenner whereby bounded solidarity arises in response to perceived alienation

from the host society and barriers to exiting the oppressive conditions (1993). A 'Filipino Canopy' thus offers both a space and a community to take refuge in. Interactions with space and with others in space in Joyce-Collingwood therefore centralize the community and centralize what it means to be Filipino-Canadian, generating a sense of unity and belongingness that can be returned to in times of need: bounded solidarity (Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993).

Conclusion

Using the case of Vancouver's Joyce-Collingwood neighbourhood, this thesis contributes to two bodies of literature. Drawing on sociological theories of space, place-making, and immigrant social capital, this thesis outlines how space and processes of place-making express and articulate a cultural repertoire that is vital to bounded solidarity and the continuity of an immigrant community. Thus, it highlights the value of not only considering interpersonal practices that generate social capital, but also the spatial-infrastructural context that community bonding happens in, and how places become tied to communities' histories and legacies. Secondly, this thesis contributes to the budding body of Filipino-Canadian literature. Most notably, this thesis grounds Filipino-Canadian literature back into a localized context. In so doing, it adds nuance to discussions around Filipino-Canadian identity. Among some of the essential questions of Filipino-Canadian literature that foundational Filipino-Canadian scholars have grappled with is how we can possibly conceptualize the Filipino-Canadian community while recognizing the diversity of experience within it (McElhinny et al., 2012). By recognizing the local mechanisms that generate place-specific identities, this thesis offers a new direction for Filipino-Canadian studies that direct us to move down to a smaller-scale for understanding identity.

While this thesis has contributed to these theoretical traditions, it also raises more questions and potential future directions for research. Notably, recognizing the 'home-grown' Vancouverite Filipino identity shaped by Joyce-Collingwood speaks to a more underrecognized acknowledgement of 'regionalisms' within immigrant communities. This 'place-based' identity has been explored previously by scholars like Japonica Brown-Saracino who explored variations in how queer women understand their queer identities across various cities in the United States, and how place-specific articulations of queer culture arise from their local city environment (2018). However, most of Brown-Saracino's findings arise from understanding the cultural climate of the community, city policy, and overall place narratives around acceptance of queer folks more so than the actual role of city infrastructure in bringing people together. Considering the striking differences seen between different cities shared by interviewees in this project, understanding regional identities could offer a valuable contribution to Filipino-Canadian studies in disrupting both a singular normative conceptualization of Filipino-Canadian identity and recognizing the fluidity of cultural identity more generally.

This thesis also offered many other findings that, while not pertinent to the research question at hand, are still worth investigating in the future. For instance, a key factor to a sense of kinship and belonging with other Filipinos in Joyce-Collingwood is the ability to be 'legibly Filipino'. For second-generation members, they felt ambivalence around their belongingness with the community, balancing the desire to belong in the space with the recognition that if they engage with Filipinos in the space, they risk having their Filipino-ness invalidated if they miss cultural cues or references or are unable to respond in Tagalog. This ambivalent feeling around space could be explored in future work. Moreover, it may be interesting to consider how biracial

Filipinos might relate to the space, especially as their bodies are less likely to be ‘read’ as Filipino.

Joyce-Collingwood continues to be under threat of gentrification. After five years of limbo, some action has been made to secure the beginnings of development around the Filipino businesses, with a 679-unit high-rise tower project approved this last January to be situated just behind Bao Bakery (Chan, 2024). Just North of the Joyce-Collingwood SkyTrain station, considerable construction has already begun. Though current rhetoric around the preservation of the neighbourhood continues to center the businesses (Laderas & Nassar, 2022), and rightfully so, this thesis highlights that the space of the businesses is just the foundation. Businesses alone do not make communities; communities bring themselves to a space, collectively create a sense of home, a sense of place, and in so doing, we create ourselves. Moreover, spaces work in tandem with one another: transit brings activity to businesses, sidewalks bring foot traffic, foot traffic brings contact – these are all moving parts in a larger whole. Our identities as a community are deeply rooted in local places, and it is vital to recognize this holistic approach to immigrant enclaves for truly community-oriented planning.

At the end of my interview with Maria, she remarks that the Filipino community should have petitioned to demarcate the neighbourhood as a heritage site with the city of Vancouver, “We should have claimed it as Filipinotown… If we claimed it with the city they wouldn’t have been able to bulldoze it.” Carlos, too, says he feels like places like Joyce-Collingwood will be “something you always talk about when they’re gone”. While the neighbourhood continues to live and breathe, however, this thesis has worked to capture and celebrate this place in a moment in time: for all of its different meanings and purposes to the community.

As this thesis comes to a close, I conclude by explaining its title. I recall the first day I visited a sari sari store in the Philippines, being eight years old in my mom's hometown, a little village in front of a rice field. I recall the seasoning packets that hung from the storefront like garlands of bright yellow, the tins of canned foods lining the walls. I think of standing in front of Joyce-Collingwood's sari sari store a little over a year ago, a warm empanada pastry from the store in hand, seeing the empty development sign in the corner of my eye. As I began this thesis and considered what to title it, I could only think of the greeting my mom taught me to use when purchasing from a sari sari store.

"Tao po," A greeting, and a declaration of presence. Translated literally: "someone is here."

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