Brown Skins, White Minds (David, 2013a) casts a bright torch into a dark void of awareness around the Filipino American experience. David’s work is capable of transforming one’s thinking around race and culture in America. Yet the present text is delivered to readers in a premature fashion. What is Brown Skins, White Minds about? This question is quite hard to answer, as the text transitions from a scholarly “reintroduction of colonial mentality to the field of psychology,” (p. xxv) to a “storyboard for [David’s] own personal decolonization journey” (p. 238). Reading the book from cover to cover represents a case study in how a scholar may authentically but unintentionally evolve from a practitioner of “serious research” to a courageous champion of Me-search (Nash & Bradley, 2011).

However, while Brown Skins, White Minds may have benefited from another thorough round of editing and revising, the passion David brings to the
topic, and the gravity of his work more than compensates for the discordant delivery. The real risk is that David’s message is understated or altogether missed by critical audiences who may find the text as designed difficult to engage. However, to his credit David acknowledges that “this book is not perfect” (David, 2013a, p. 238). Furthermore, in keeping with the spirit of Kapwa, David acknowledges that the work of both the writer and reader is not resolved by arriving at the final page of his text, nor is their journey a separate one. Both “fellow beings,” or Kapwa-Tao (p. 109) are called upon to “spark the decolonization journeys of individuals, communities, and systems by raising awareness about the existence and effects of colonial mentality” (p. 238-239).

Despite the structural flaw in Brown Skins, White Minds, I intend to honor Kapwa and join David on our journey. Thus, through this review I aim to address some of the obstacles two critical audiences may face in accessing the emancipatory knowledge (Vadeboncoeur, 1998) David has assiduously stockpiled. Those two audiences are (a) White teachers who work in schools and communities of color, specifically but not exclusively as teachers of Filipino American students, and (b) the general Filipino American community which has not (yet?) been subject to concerns around mental health, but may suffer from colonial mentality and internalized oppression.

In preparing to develop guides for these audiences, I first review David’s theoretical foundations and original research in postcolonial psychology. I then make a case for David’s story being better served as a scholarly personal narrative (Nash & Bradley, 2011). I further expand upon the literature cited by David, and develop associations between theories in postcolonial psychology that are analogous to concepts within the critical race theory (López, 2003) framework in education. Additionally, I explore the ways in which the application of history as part of our decolonization journey can be improved upon. My positionality is addressed next, in order to account for a White man writing on the topic of postcolonial psychology among Filipino Americans. Finally, I develop thorough guidelines to better support the decolonization journeys for the two critical constituencies addressed above, White teachers and Filipino Americans.
Before I continue the development of an empathetic companion guide to Brown Skin, White Minds, I should acknowledge some of the rich emancipatory knowledge David provides. David’s extensive research (2008, 2010; David & Okazaki, 2006, 2010) on Colonial Mentality, specifically applied to Filipino Americans, forms the bulk of this knowledge. While David brings a level of theoretical awareness that is both deep and broad, he begins with Fanon (1963) and the introduction of a four-phase colonial model. Fanon’s four phases of colonization include:

(I) The “forced entry of a foreign group into a geographic territory with the intention” of resource exploitation (David, 2013a, p. 54).
(II) The colonizer “imposing its culture on the colonized, disintegrating the indigenous culture” and reconstituting the culture of the oppressed according to the preferences of the colonizer (p. 54).
(III) The portrayal of the colonized as “wild, savage, and uncivilized peoples” whom must be monitored, tamed, and civilized (p. 55).
(IV) The establishment of “political, social, and economic institutions” designed to benefit the colonizer while subjugating the colonized (p. 55).

David asserts (p. 54-55) that the colonial experiences of Filipinos and Filipino Americans directly parallel the four phases of Fanon’s colonial model:

(I) The indigenous Tao were forcibly overrun by Spain and the United States, despite significant resistance. The goal was to control the resources, including slave labor as a resource, of the Philippines.
(II) Under Spanish and American rule, “the Filipino ethnicity and culture were demonized, inferiorized, or attached with undesirability while European standards, ideals, beliefs, and ways of life were portrayed as superior or more civilized” (p. 55).
(III) Filipinos experienced “brutality, injustice, and maltreatments under Spain and the United States,” based on a rationale that such treatment was necessary in order to “educate, uplift, Christianize, teach, train, or civilize” Filipinos.
(IV) The Catholic Church, corrupt government, an economy dependent on foreign assistance, and oppressive public school systems are all examples of institutions that reinforced subjugation in the colonial and neocolonial Philippines.

Additionally, David explores Harrell’s (1999) use of Fanon’s (1967) term *Manichean*, derived from the religion of the same name, introduced by the Persian prophet Mani in the third century AD. Harrell’s Manichean societies are oppressive in nature, framed around “incompatible opposites,” which contrast the positively-viewed “light,” dominant group, with the negatively-viewed “dark,” subjugated group (David, 2013a, p. 58). The key for David is how this history of colonialism, and the development of Manichean societies and institutions are manifest in participants’ internalized oppression, or *internalized colonialism* (p. 56). It is also worth noting that Fanon’s well-known 1967 work, *Black Skin, White Masks*, appears to inspire David’s title, *Brown Skin, White Minds*, though David does not list the book as a reference.

Because there is a shocking and disproportionate lack of research on Filipino Americans generally, and specifically in the category of internalized oppression/colonialism, David draws a lot of strength from supportive work focused on African Americans, as well as Hispanic or Latino/a Americans. For example Hall (1994) describes the *bleaching syndrome*, which describes how many Hispanic or Latino/Americans will “value and internalize all aspects of the mainstream culture – including the idealizations of light skin color – at the expense of their (heritage) culture” (p. 310). This is a literal representation of the dark/light dichotomy as established by Manichean, oppressive groups. This dichotomy also represents a contest between dominant-group values and knowledge, and a “heritage culture,” or *indigenous* values and knowledge (David, 2013a, p. 245).

In one more stark example of internalized oppression/colonialism, David shares the work of Varas-Diaz and Serrano-Garcia (2003), who find that Puerto Ricans experience confusion and shame with regard to their ethnic and cultural identity, feel inferior about being Puerto Rican, and may lack a sense of
national pride. It is the development of tools to measure and assess the toll of these types of internalized oppression/colonialism on Filipino Americans that has driven David’s career and scholarship.

According to David (2013a), while generally internalized oppression/colonialism and colonial mentality are synonymous, “colonial mentality is the term often used in the Filipino and Filipino American community” and thus Filipinos and Filipino Americans (Filipino -/ Americans) may be more familiar with this term (p. 62). More precisely, David and Okazaki (2006) define colonial mentality as:

characterized by a perception of ethnic or cultural inferiority that is … a specific consequence of centuries of colonization under Spain and the U.S., [and] … involves an automatic and uncritical rejection of anything Filipino and an automatic and uncritical preference for anything American (p. 63).

The first tool that David and Okazaki (2006) introduced was a Colonial Mentality Scale (CMS), which is comprised of 36 statements that represent common manifestations of colonial mentality (CM) in Filipino -/ Americans. A higher CMS score suggests a greater presence of CM (David, 2013a, p. 66). By aggregating data from more than 600 Filipino Americans across the United States, David and Okazaki found evidence of both overt and covert manifestations of CM. Examples of behaviors driven by CM that David cites include: avoiding the sun to keep skin light, pinching noses to make them seem less flat, and even “marrying-up” by wedding a White person (p. 67). Additional types of CM include Within-Group Discrimination, and Colonial Debt as a consequence of the Golden Legend, a claim that the indigenous Tao possessed little of value prior to Spanish and American colonization (p. 70). Overall, David and Okazaki found that 30% of the population they sampled “endorsed at least one type of CM manifestation” (p. 71).

To bring to life the impact CM has on an individual basis, David frequently incorporates the voices of Filipino -/ Americans from his own correspondence, as well as from other researchers:

My ambition as a kid was to be like an American. We’d been taught in school that the
Americans were our saviors, that they brought us democracy. When I saw cowboys-and-Indian movies, I always rooted for the cowboys. I preferred American-style clothes. Americans were rich, handsome and superior. Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary looked like Americans, with their white skins and long noses. I degraded Filipinos because they were ugly, with flat noses and brown skins. But I was also ugly (Karnow, 1989, p. 17).

David acknowledges that the CMS has limitations, and requires the participant openly acknowledge evidence of self-deprecating and group-deprecating habits or mindsets. “The possibility that one may feel inferior because of one’s Filipino heritage may … be difficult to admit, or if true, difficult to disclose” (David, 2013a, p. 79). To help “activate” hidden CM in Filipino Americans, David and Okazaki (2010) used a customized word fragment completion (WFC) task.

In the WFC study, 172 Filipino Americans were randomly assigned to an American or a Filipino “condition.” Essentially, they were presented with a list of five easily recognizable terms associated with American or Filipino culture, with letters missing to form a fragment, such as ENGL_S_ and TAGA_O_ (David, 2013a, p. 88). The sixth term was ambiguous, ending in the suffix _ _ _ ERIOR. Possible solutions to the WFC task include the positive and negative terms SUPERIOR, INFERIOR, and neutral solutions such as ULTERIOR. According to David, 72% of Filipino Americans assigned to the American condition interpreted the ambiguous term as “SUPERIOR,” compared to only 57% of those assigned to the Filipino condition. Likewise, 27% of Filipino Americans assigned to the Filipino condition interpreted the ambiguous term as “INFERIOR,” compared to 11% of those assigned to the American condition (p. 89). Thus, David confirms the presence of CM in a significant percent of the Filipino American population. A second study reinforces these results (p. 90-91).

However, because the WFC studies used terms that were easily identifiable, David recognizes that “it is possible that some participants may have become aware of the purpose of the task and, thus, may have intentionally altered their interpretation of the ambiguous stimulus” (p. 92). To account for this
research limitation, David employed two additional tests, whose methods are better suited for assessing the covert mindsets associated with internalized oppression. These tests are Lexical Decision Priming (LDP) and the Colonial Mentality Implicit Association Test (CMIAT), as applied by David and Okazaki (2010).

In the LDP, participants are given the simple task of sorting words and non-words, by pressing an “A” or “5” on the computer respectively when a word is presented. Prior to each word being displayed on the computer screen, participants are “primed” with a stimulus, which in the case of David and Okazaki (2010) was “American,” “Filipino,” or a neutral term “YYYYYY” (David, 2013a, p. 93). What participants don’t know is that the words presented are divided into two categories, pleasant or unpleasant. The premise is that if a participant cognitively considers the primer to be pleasant or unpleasant, their reaction times when making those associations will be faster, and therefore their association stronger. As David explains (2013a) although “an individual may not become aware of the purpose of the prime, the mere exposure to the prime alone activates links and nodes that the individual may have learned to closely associate with the prime stimulus” (p. 94). David and Okazaki (2010) found that indeed Filipino Americans were primed to associate the term “Filipino” with unpleasant words, and the term “American” with pleasant words, reinforcing their case for covert CM.

The CMIAT is similar in some ways to the LDP, but “does not depend on self-report and introspection and is less vulnerable to response biases” (p. 97). The CMIAT as applied by David and Okazaki (2010) asks participants to press an “A” or “5” to categorize words as either pleasant or unpleasant. Their findings, based on two implementations of the study, supported a stronger conclusion than other tests, suggesting that as many as 6 out of 10 Filipino Americans may have CM (David, 2013a, p. 100). In contrast to the earlier 3 in 10 measure, this may capture the difference between more overt CM and covert CM, meaning about 3 in 10 may have CM but not be aware. This group may also overlap with the Filipino Americans I expect to address in the supportive “guide” to Brown Skins, White Minds.

In addition to the innovative techniques applied
by David and Okazaki (2010), David (2013a) continues in *Brown Skins, White Minds* to devote two chapters to the mental health implications of CM (pp. 137-178). Similarly, David devotes another chapter to postcolonial psychological research, which is important to practitioners and researchers in the field (pp. 203-231). This is critical work, yet in this review I focus on sections of David’s text most relevant to our target populations, including Filipino Americans who have not (yet?) engaged with the mental health community. These are Filipino Americans, however, who may still suffer from CM, and even experience some of the same mental health struggles as actual clinical patients. Given that reality, I will share some of the lessons from David’s chapters identified above, specifically encouraging all Filipino Americans to reflect on the *Filipino American Decolonization Experience* (FADE) (p. 183), and Nadal’s (2004) *Filipino American Identity Development* (PAID) model (David, 2013a, p. 125).

Given David’s groundbreaking work in applying rigorous, previously established research practices to assess CM, specifically in Filipino-/Americans, I believe it is important to clarify that my focus in this review on engaging our two critical audiences assumes David’s conclusions to be valid. There is no published, accessible research that calls into question David’s research outcomes, though Abrera (2009) makes a case for a historical preference for fair skin among Filipinos prior to a Spanish presence (p. 44). Furthermore, David’s open acknowledgement of the limitations of his studies, as well as his frequent tendency to repeat psychological studies, supports a commitment to integrity in his research.

Rather than perpetuate, and thereby encourage the tradition of the book review as a glorified summary of a text, I will now attempt to unpack David’s research in the context of the larger decolonization journey we are—all of us—embarked upon. Whether the reader is aware of this journey or not is worth considering, but technically a moot point, for as Scheurich and Young (1997) assert, the epistemological foundations, or ways of knowing, of Western Society are racially and culturally biased. And as *Brown Skin, White Minds* affirms, we are all either a part of, or directly affected and influenced by those Western epistemologies. As an example, consider the misrepresentation of David’s text
as primarily a psychology research text, as opposed to a scholarly personal narrative. Western, “objective” studies tend to require the researcher to recede into the background, while scholars who adopt critical, constructive, or generally relative philosophies may advocate for the presence of the scholar’s voice, in a way that validates indigenous values, and still empowers the researcher to conduct methodologically-sound research.

The publisher of Brown Skin, White Minds, Information Age Publishing (IAP), should have encouraged David to reframe his work as a scholarly personal narrative (Nash & Bradley, 2011) as opposed to a scholarly work of psychology. It is understandable that a scholar like David might begin a major work with an intention to summarize the findings of the vast body of research on colonial mentality he has gathered in his early academic career. However, it is clear by the end of his text that David’s purpose shifted, and his focus became one of sharing his decolonization journey, with a hope that the book might “serve as a catalyst, a source, or even a supplement for others as they conduct their own MESearches” (David, 2013a, p. 239). I believe that David’s decolonization journey is worthy of a book entirely apart from a summative text aimed directly at psychologists.

The scholarly personal narrative, a “methodological cousin of autoethnography” (Nash & Bradley, p. ix) is a “conjoining of personal perspective and scholarly insights” (p. xiv). Thus David’s desire to share his research findings, and also to share his decolonization journey need not be mutually exclusive. The concern is that placed on a psychology shelf, the book as is may likely be misunderstood, or worse not even acknowledged or experienced by the “students, teachers, researchers, service providers, and professionals from various disciplines” David hopes to inform and inspire (David, 2013a, p. xxvi). As an example, at various points in the book, I questioned whether I should be reviewing this text for an education research audience. This dose of doubt is attributable to the attempt by David, with the encouragement of his editors, to attempt to write two (or more) books in one. Additionally, it was not beyond the capacity of Information Age Publishing to conceptualize and support a scholarly personal narrative, since Nash and

As an example of scholarly personal narrative (SPN) in the field of education, consider Gloria Ladson-Billings’ popular text *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children* (1994), written a year before Robert Nash first publicly introduced the SPN concept. Ladson-Billings’ text was designed, like David’s book, to address a “broad and varied” audience (p. xvi). Like David, Ladson-Billings “offers a mixture of scholarship and story—of qualitative research and lived reality” to her readers (p. xvi). For David, IAP, and others who may face a desire to share their scholarly and personal journey, *Dreamkeepers* and countless other examples outlined by Nash and Bradley (2011) may offer a strong roadmap to guide the scholar/narrator in his or her writing.

Since the effort required by David and his publisher to restructure and reprint *Brown Skin, White Minds* is so great as to render that outcome unlikely, the remainder of this review will emphasize the ways in which certain audiences may best access the critical information on colonial mentality provided within.

This is a review for an educational publication, written by an education researcher, aimed at least at one constituency explicitly rooted in education. As such, I believe it is helpful to establish which terms and theoretical concepts from David’s work are analogous in the field of education, specifically within the critical race theory framework. Additionally, in making correlations across disciplines, I pay respect to David’s desire to expand his audience beyond the field of psychology, and make his work generally more accessible.

Generally, it seems that the theoretical foundations for *Brown Skin, White Minds*, and many of the conclusions of David’s research, are consistent with the assumptions integral to critical race theory. These include the concepts of *latent, institutional, societal,* and *epistemological,* or *civilizational racism* (Ladson-Billings, 1998; López, 2003; Scheurich & Young, 1997), as well as the concepts of *structured silences,* *counter-narrative,* *cultural congruence,* and *funds of knowledge* (González & Moll, 1995, 2002; Ladson-

First, it is important to note that while CM is not a prevailing term in education research, internalized oppression is a common concern for research on the experience of minority populations. Additionally, the entire critical race theory framework rests upon an assumption of latent racism (López, 2003). Latent racism represents a set of actions that can lead to a perpetuation of internalized oppression, or a continuation of “hidden” CM, as David describes it.

More importantly, latent racism is preserved and reproduced through the presence of institutional, societal, and epistemological/civilizational racism (Scheurich & Young, 1997). This connects directly with phase IV of Fanon’s (1963) model of colonization, which describes the formation of enduring institutions, which continue to subjugate the colonized. Public education systems, which preserve and reproduce racially-biased assumptions and outcomes, are one example. Another is the housing market, which has been documented as the primary driver of neighborhood segregation (Drier, Mollenkopf, & Swanstrom, 2004). However, even the way in which we measure success in the Western world is subject to racial biases, taken to a civilizational or epistemological level.

Measuring “success” based on levels of income, and the percent of a population that has attained a college education, for example, presumes these are sound “ways of knowing” whether a person is accumulating valuable capital. However, as González and Moll (1995) establish, there are other funds of knowledge. This connects directly to David’s push for the proper valuation of indigenous or heritage cultural values. There is no global measure such as GDP for the indigenous value of Kapwa, whose steady erosion equates to a devastation of Filipino epistemology.

When David asserts his voice as a mesearcher, advancing his personal decolonization journey, he is also pushing back against structured silences, and advocating for counter-narratives, another critical component of critical race theory (López, 2003). In addition to his own voice, David frequently incorporates the voices of other Filipino Americans into his text, adding additional counter-narratives to beat back the void sustained by racism embedded in the
deepest institutions of Western society. This overarching struggle for cultural congruence (Ladson-Billings, 1994) ties back to the conflict between dominant and indigenous values, especially the disintegration of culture that occurs in a Manichean society.

A struggle for cultural congruence exists in David’s work at the epistemological level of psychological research. This is captured by his differentiation between traditional Western psychology and Sikolohiyang Pilipino, or indigenous Filipino psychology (p. xxvi). Yet it is David’s pursuit of cultural congruence that inspires him to plead for Filipino Americans to “love both cultures, appreciate both cultures, value both cultures, respect both cultures, know both cultures, be competent in both cultures...EQUALLY (sic)” (David, 2013a, p. xxvii). In this and other pursuits, David echoes themes that are gaining strength in education research, concepts whose foundations are rooted in decades of dedicated research in communities of color. However, David’s desire to “love both cultures,” American and Filipino, is actually impeded by his approach to relating a critical history of Filipino -/ Americans.

In his section on the colonial and contemporary history of Filipino -/ Americans, David (2013a, pp. 3-49) introduces several disturbing historical accounts which were new to me, as a former grade-school teacher of American History, and also unfamiliar to my partner, a Filipino American teacher whose graduate coursework included cultural studies classes that incorporated texts on the Filipino American experience. If she and I were shocked, distressed, awakened, and encouraged to reflect upon and discuss these episodes, then surely they may be of value to a broad community of American teachers and Filipino Americans, who may not begin the experience with our depth of knowledge.

Examples of shocking episodes include the deaths of an estimated 200,000 civilians as compared to 16,000 soldiers in the Philippine-American War (p. 25), the “Kill Everyone Over Ten” order carried out by US Army General Jacob H. Smith (pp. 31-32), and President McKinley’s use of benevolent assimilation to justify subjugation of Filipinos he judged were “unfit for self-government” (p. 26). However, the incident that has been the most troubling for me to reconcile is
the description of the Philippine Reservation: This 47-acre reservation, complete with “authentic” dwellings and “natural” living environments of the “savage Filipinos,” presented the American public a range of Filipino civilization levels, with the Negritos and other indigenous tribes being portrayed as the most savage and the Philippine Scouts (United States-trained Filipino soldiers) being the most civilized … The Philippine Reservation was the most popular site during the St. Louis World’s Fair, as Americans curiously watched the captured Filipinos as if they were animals being displayed in a zoo (p. 31).

However, while this history is impactful and appropriately jarring, without a carefully curated context, it may not be as useful as David hopes, and may devolve into historical sensationalism. As an example, David describes the debate in the United States on the question of acquiring and occupying the Philippines as “heated,” yet only presents what may have been the most sensational and negative speech on the Senate floor (p. 27). Who were the advocates for the Philippines in this heated debate? Why does David sacrifice those purported voices of support in order to allocate space only for voices of hate? Additionally, the use of grossly derogatory political cartoons, while impactful, might not have the effects David desires.

One of the most pernicious consequences of creating a sensationalist version of history is that the reader is trained to recognize only easily identifiable, overt acts of racism. This allows Filipino Americans and White Americans, and the teachers of both, to look around at contemporary society and proclaim those episodes as products of the past, which today are no longer tolerated. This perception is a stepping stone away from the declaration of a post-racial society, an outcome that seems strongly antithetical to David’s research outcomes. Additionally, David explicitly says in his introduction that Filipino-/ American cannot “love only our heritage culture -- we cannot be ethnocentric or in the case of Filipinos, Filcentric” (p. xxvii), yet then confesses in his section on history to be “Filipino-centric” in order to promote empowerment of Filipino-/ Americans (p. 2). However, by over-
reaching and falling prey to purely sensational tendencies, David may actually undermine his efforts.

As part of the decolonization journey, and consistent with the FADE framework, the development of a critical history of Filipino -/ Americans is an important step in the right direction. However, given the current framing of Brown Skin, White Minds as a scholarly research text, David’s sections on history suffer from a notable level of underdevelopment. However, were David’s work to be reframed as a scholarly personal narrative, then his own personal perspective on the history of Filipino -/ Americans might be validated, and the scholarly critiques mitigated. Either way, because a more rigorous history would likely aide David’s cause, and because the historical component is so essential to the FADE process, it would be worthwhile for David to consider collaborating with an historian. An historian rooted in theory and methodology might make David’s output even stronger, and more in line with his call for cultural congruence through “mutual love” of at-times dichotomous cultures. To further emphasize that this is well within reach, David may consider beginning with faculty at his own University of Alaska – Anchorage, where Ian Hartman (2011) approaches American History from a multicultural perspective.

Before I transition from David’s work to direct attention to how two critical constituencies may better access his emancipatory knowledge, it is worth addressing my positionality as a researcher. Why is a White male asserting his view on a text written by and largely for Filipino -/ Americans? As I will briefly address, I am representative of another important, if secondary audience, White teachers working in communities of color, who may benefit all groups by possessing a greater cultural congruence. I am also writing this book review because there are not enough Filipino Americans in research positions, due to deeply troubling trends David identifies. Lastly, I perceive that I may be subject to the harms of an epistemological bias against indigenous values. I believe that the lasting impacts of colonialism and the perennial renewal of a Manichean society create harms that encourage self-hate even among privileged populations (i.e. White males). I believe we can also learn to love ourselves, if we embrace David’s call to embark on mutually-
supportive decolonization journeys, or generally develop a “muscle memory” for anti-racist habits and perspectives.

As a former teacher of U.S. history at a grade school in South Texas, and as a continuing facilitator and coach for new teachers, including in secondary social studies, I often promote a set of recommended texts. These are well known and highly regarded texts, which aim either to promote anti-racism, or to encourage a critical history of America, and effectively introduce counter-narratives that align with a multicultural-historical perspective. However, I went back and realized upon reviewing *Brown Skin, White Minds* that these texts make almost no mention of Filipino Americans, and thereby even these “radical” and exemplar texts create structured silences.

As an example, consider Pollock’s (2008) *Everyday Antiracism*, which is increasingly referenced as a resource for teachers addressing privilege, power, and oppression in the K-12 classroom. Filipinos are only referenced directly in one brief mention, contextualized as part of “a range of ethnic and linguistic backgrounds, including Filipino, Pacific Islander, Vietnamese, Mexican, African, African American, and White” (212). The other reference is to a girl who is acknowledged in parenthesis to be “from the Philippines” (152). If these references are indicative of the depth of awareness among even the most radical of texts advocating for anti-racism in schools, then woe betide the Filipino American student in a less than radical educational environment. Additional examples include Loewen’s (2008) *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, which has one brief reference to the Philippine-American war, as part of a rhetorical question (p. 256). This is a text Nadal cites as inspirational in his decolonization journey (p. 242), but still falls short.

For positionality purposes, it is important for White teachers who will influence generations of White and Filipino American students (and African American, and Hispanic and Latino/a students) to possess an ever-greater depth of cultural awareness. It is also worth noting that my newfound awareness of Filipino American structured silences in otherwise exemplary texts, an unintended consequence of David’s section on Filipino-/American’s history, might also dampen the
weight of my earlier critique. Brown Skin, White Minds reminds readers that the Filipino American population in the United States is the second largest among all Asian American groups, behind only Chinese Americans. This makes the structured silences addressed above that much more egregious. As many as 60,000 Filipinos enter the U.S. anew each year (p. 234). However, despite the size of their American population, Filipino Americans “yield the lowest socioeconomic returns with respect to jobs and salary levels among all racial/ethnic groups” (p. xix). Furthermore, “Filipinos continue to be underrepresented in higher education and have lower educational achievements than their Philippine-born and other Asian American counterparts” (p. xix). Attempts to characterize Filipino Americans as a “model minority” only serve to perpetuate these harms by choking off awareness of a growing crisis. Were this crisis to abate, an education researcher of Filipino ancestry would likely be available to assume my role as reviewer.

The third point on positionality is perhaps the most tenuous, but also the most personally significant. I don’t actually want to be an education researcher in Austin, not at least more than I want to spend every day with my two sons of biracial heritage in the Rio Grande Valley in South Texas. I don’t want to chase systemic change, not at least more than I want to spend every day in a purposeful classroom in El Valle. However, the lack of incentives supporting rural teaching left me unable to break even economically, even after seven years in the classroom. I was lured away from the indigenous community of my boys’ extended family, and encouraged to scale the ladders of academic and career advancement. Yet I am convinced the goal is not to choose either/or in this dichotomy, but to map out the cultural incongruence that creates the divide, and to document the downside of an epistemological bias in favor of Western values of self-advancement and economic opportunity. It is this bias that makes it hard for me to accept a life, at the present moment, in the one place I most want to spend my days.

If I cannot in good faith make that leap, then I will stain in ink the divide, and in the meantime encourage others to pursue their own decolonization journey, in order to call attention to, and thereby loosen
the grip of the institutional, societal, and epistemological racism/colonialism we daily experience. Consider the portion hereafter a manual for reading *Brown Skin, White Minds* and sparking decolonization journeys for two stakeholders in particular, (a) Filipino Americans, and (b) White teachers.

It is important to acknowledge why these constituencies are worthy of such attention. When I first requested to write a review of *Brown Skin, White Minds*, I expressed my intent as follows:

From both an academic perspective and an experiential lens, I am excited to examine this text, and to consider from the context of the relevant literature, to what extent “Brown Skin, White Minds” serves as an authentic source of emancipatory knowledge for those Filipino Americans who may face internalized oppression. Additionally, I would seek to identify what guidance and insights the text may provide for the many non-Filipino teachers who engage these students on a daily basis (personal correspondence).

The first constituency, Filipino Americans who may face colonial mentality (CM), or *internalized oppression* (David, 2013b) are both an intuitive stakeholder group, but also a group whose breadth welcomes multiple advocates. While David is best positioned to address the CM of Filipino Americans from the standpoint of a clinical psychologist, there are significantly more Filipino Americans who may suffer from the consequences of CM, yet may never encounter a mental health professional. These Filipino Americans, like the teachers I met in the Rio Grande Valley, or the nurses who delivered my two sons, are the target constituency I aim to address.

For Filipino Americans who want to gain the most from David’s text, it is recommended that they first read about the Filipino -/- American Decolonization Experience (FADE) (pp. 179-202) which is essentially David’s clinical description for a “decolonization journey” to help mitigate the harms from CM. What is important is to consider to what extent the harms experienced by FADE participants are held in common by the entire Filipino American community. Because this is a sensitive topic, and because the FADE program
follows a complicated and at-times painful course, it may be helpful to form small reading groups, which approach the reading in measured but persistent doses. Additionally, participants may want to take David’s original CMS questionnaire, which is accessible online to Filipino Americans.

It may also help to focus on the FADE chart (p. 199), which emphasizes a three-stage model that will guide the rest of the recommended reading from Brown Skins, White Minds. In addition to this chronological course-guide, it is advised to examine Nadal’s Filipino American Identity Development (PAID) diagram (p. 127). This will help Filipino Americans consider how their progression on the decolonization journey may influence their perception of different groups. Sometimes, counter-intuitively, progress may lead to phases of negativity and deprecation, akin to the stages of grief.

Consistent with the FADE chart, the first phase should consist of a critical examination of the past, with the goal of participants developing a “complete and accurate understanding of their heritage culture and its history” (p. 199). As David asserts, Filipino -/ Americans should “have a more complete, accurate, and critical understanding of [history] … because it may assist in identifying the source of their colonial mentality” (p. 25). As a group, armed with some of the balanced critiques of David’s historical approach, it is recommended to proceed reading the section on Filipino and Filipino American history (pp. 3-49) as well as the section on indigenous Tao values (pp. 107-121). The purpose of this reading may be to identify noteworthy events, or culturally significant concepts and terms, and then to discuss to what extent the group is aware of the meaning or significance of each concept or term. Perhaps each concept or term can be written down to create an inventory of references to heritage culture and colonial history. If a term is largely unfamiliar, that may be indicative of a loss of indigenous knowledge due to epistemological colonialism. This makes the later section, on indigenous Tao values, even more significant.

My partner and I jumped to this section when reading together, and while naiveté may have driven me to ask her about each term in turn, her responses drove her to learn more. She did not know the term Kapwa,
but she did know baranggay, though not in its indigenous context. As an example of the interesting outcomes from this exercise, she associated baranggay with “neighborhood” as opposed to its original reference to “a tribal unit of government” (p. 10). A tribe or village may seem like a neighborhood, but absent authority, which may represent the loss of indigenous authority. Interestingly, there is a similar etymology for the American English term burg, which forms the suffix of Pittsburg, PA, and Edinburg, TX. In this context, it might simply mean village or town (or today, city), but originally a burg was a small unit of government, and burgesses were representatives, like the datus of the Tao who gathered from each nearby burg, or baranggay, respectively, to make decisions.

The next stage of the FADE decolonization journey is to evaluate the present, which may require more of readers than simply to absorb David’s words. However, David’s preface (pp. xiii-xxvii) and the afterword and additional commentaries located at the end of the book (pp. 241-275) are a good starting point. Using the same notebook into which key concepts and terms were written, it might be a good idea to keep a daily journal of reflections over the course of several weeks, and perhaps encourage at least one daily conversation with someone about the Filipino American experience. This stage allows “individuals to develop a complete and accurate understanding of their contemporary experiences as Filipino Americans” (p. 199).

The third and final FADE stage is one that will likely be lifelong (though the first two may provide recurring insights over the course of a life), and involves “making connections” between the past and present to help “eliminate self-blame … and eliminate feelings of loneliness” among other proposed gains (p. 199). However, if a group of individuals keep journals throughout their experience with David’s text, they may come together as a group periodically to compare notes, and push each other in terms of a mutual development of a larger critical awareness. While this is itself an insufficient proposal, the idea is to encourage readers who will not likely grasp tightly the reins of postcolonial psychology, but would benefit from a selective reading of Brown Skin, White Minds. A better outcome would be for Filipino
Americans to take ownership over the process entirely, and to pave over my recommendations with a still more effective written guide to FADE.

The decolonization journey David discusses, and that of researcher Kevin Nadal, addressed in the afterword (David, 2013a, p. 241) and countless others referenced in Brown Skin, White Minds typically pass through American schools and universities. While a history of colonization in the Philippines may begin the process of establishing colonial mentality in Filipinos prior to their arrival in America, the Western values and embedded epistemological biases in the United States can reinforce or worsen CM, as consistent with the statistics on Filipino American success outcomes described above. For this reason, teachers must endeavor to engage actively in anti-racist or anti-colonial pedagogy in order to ensure their classroom is a welcome space for Filipino American students. This level of awareness, however, will likely result in fruitful outcomes for students from all cultural backgrounds who enter such an exemplar classroom.

For teachers it may be helpful to first review the foundational concepts of critical race theory and internalized oppression outlined above. If a teacher is not willing to accept that racism/colonialism is covert and latent in America, which for White teachers may be more difficult than it seems, then there is little point in continuing to attempt to adopt an anti-colonial pedagogy. This is difficult because the White culture being dominant, many White teachers have not experienced levels of cultural incongruence significant enough to challenge the fundamental assumptions of a free, meritorious society that undergird the self-deluding official narrative of America. For White teachers, the process of what I might call White Teachers Decolonization Experience (WTDE) follows the same initial FADE protocol as Filipino Americans, except it will be more difficult initially. There may be periods of stop-and-start progress, punctuated by weeks or months (or years?) of stagnant progress, or even regression.

It is essential for White teachers to, upon acceptance of the concept of covert, latent racism, to review the section of David’s text on Filipino and Filipino American history. It may also be helpful for White teachers to form reading groups, which also
might be contextualized as a *professional learning community* (PLC) specifically focused on colonial mentality (PLC-CM). Progressive schools may even support a PLC-CM, allocating planning time for use in reading, review, and discussion of colonial mentality. In these groups, it may be helpful to gather for one day a week for several weeks, and for each participant to offer up a piece of Filipino -/ American history, as revealed by David, but also presented in the source texts David utilizes (Constantino, 1975; Ignacio, et al., 2004; Le Espiritu, 2003; Rimonte, 1997). With all of these texts in hand, it should be easier to mitigate some of the potential harms from an underdeveloped critical history. It should not be the role of the PCL-CM to challenge the accounts of history as presented, but to challenge the implicit societal and civilizational assumptions that might lead to personal discomfort. If teachers have never challenged the assumption of America and the West as a liberating force focused on spreading democracy, then this process may be difficult and require a significant investment of time.

White teachers must also recognize how this history connects to their students’ experiences in the present-day. If they feel they can handle an empathetic consideration of a critical Filipino -/ American history, and essentially validate those historical counter-narratives, the next phase may be to examine the values of the indigenous Tao (David, 2013a, p. 107). However, White teachers may feel compelled to assume that their students must know all of the indigenous terms and cultural values expressed in David’s text. Consequently, students’ lack of awareness of their heritage culture may lead White teachers to assume that either the text or the students’ knowledge is lacking. However, it is important for White teachers to understand that this incongruence may be due to CM, as indigenous knowledge and values have been systematically deprioritized and stigmatized throughout centuries of colonialism and subsequent oppression as minorities. Students’ who express the sentiment that these concepts possess little value may further be expressing evidence of CM. The goal of this part of the process is for the teachers to contemplate with empathy how *Kapwa*, and other indigenous values, may possess inherent value, and to consider how their gradual but persistent eradication may represent a valid and potent
harm to their students ancestors, and for their students.

It is not the job of the teacher to act to reconnect students to this knowledge, but to reflect on their own practices, and to consider in what ways they are promoting Western values and may perpetuate the erosion of indigenous knowledge, if they continue to act without awareness and cultural respect. The goal is for the PLC-CM to develop a more robust culturally relevant pedagogy that can guide them in their development of respectful curricula and in their implementation of daily lessons. This leads to the final, and lifelong commitment for teachers, to evaluate their practice through the lens of cultural awareness on a daily basis. As an example, consider the challenge of English language learners.

As David shares in his personal narrative (Preface), as a new student in the United States, he “struggled with my accent, my Ps and my Fs, my “he” and “she” (p. xvi). A teacher who encounters a similar Filipino American student today may analyze the student’s responses through a purportedly objective lens of academic achievement, and determine that they need help with their English. However, both types of “errors” flagged above are a consequence of divergence between Western and Filipino cultures. The indigenous alphabet, or baybayin (p. 8) possesses no differentiation between “F” and “P” sounds, and “the indigenous Tao regarded men and women so equally that they did not even have words such as “he,” “she,” “him,” … “his,” or “her” to differentiate between men and women” (p. 11). Writing red marks on papers for defaulting to indigenous patterns, and labeling these patterns as “bad” may have a deeper impact than on the development of English grammar. Consequently, praising students for quickly adapting English standards might reinforce a Manichean dichotomy between American and Filipino cultures. Furthermore, students who receive praise may mock or condemn those that have trouble decoupling from their native cultures. All of these, very probable occurrences, can lead to self-deprecating, group-deprecating, and generally negative interactions between various sub-groups within a Filipino American student population. The complexity of a seemingly simple set of errors reveals the nuance a teacher must possess in order to accurately share the rules of English grammar, without reinforcing harmful
epistemological biases!

The goal is not for White teachers to fail to make mistakes, but to begin to understand the level of effort required for them to begin the journey down the long road toward a habitual embrace of anti-racist and anti-colonial practices as part of their pedagogy. Additionally, as they grow in their practice, they can critique even the most “radical” texts, to ensure that these resources take into account the Filipino / American perspective. Together, with great care, respect, risk, and effort, we can all make advances on our decolonization journeys, hand in hand, Kapwa-Tao.

* The Tagalog phrase *Tumatawid Ng Tulay*, introduced in the title of this review, translates as “crossing the bridge,” and is a reference to the challenge of crossing the “chasm” opened up by colonialism and epistemological racism. The journey across that divide is promising for Filipino Americans, offering a hope of abandoning internalized oppression (self-hate), as well as inter-group and intra-group hate, and instead arriving at a self-appreciating, group-appreciating understanding of Filipino American identity (Nadal, 2004). However, there is also peril, in that one may pass through phases of negativity, self-deprecation, and group-deprecation en route to a healthier identity. It is David’s firm belief, however, that “if we can learn to hate ourselves, we can learn to love ourselves” (2013a, p. xxii). The title is also a play off of Gonzalez’ *Cruzando el Puente* (2005) which validates David’s support for indigenous values as a strong example of Gonzalez’ *funds of knowledge*.

References


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