



UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES

**Doctor of Philosophy in Education
(Biology Education)**

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**Persistence of Filipino American Students in
Undergraduate Biology Major: A Phenomenographic Study**

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ABSTRACT

This phenomenographic study explored the range of different ways by which Filipino-American students experience factors that may affect their persistence in undergraduate biology. A semi-structured individual interview protocol was employed to gather qualitatively different meanings of how the participants interpret persistence through their lived experiences and contexts. Findings in this study supports much of the previous literature and persistence theories on interrelationships between individual, family, ethnic community, and educational institutions in student persistence. However, this study highlights the importance of negotiations between students and their parents, indicating that the influence of parental and familial influence on students and student's retention is multidirectional and iterative and not unidirectional as previously depicted in some studies. It also elucidates the dual role of the students by showing that aside from being "recipients" of support as traditionally presented in previous studies, they can also be "agents of and contributors to change" and both spaces for change enhance self-efficacy and consequently provide greater opportunity for the students to persist in their studies. Lastly, this research has also highlighted the role of gender in student persistence in Biology. This study indicates that male and female students have common experiences which influence their persistence, but female students' lived experiences may still be shaped by the wider institutional biases and cultural factors that have historically prevented their greater participation not only in biology but also in other sciences. This study offers a number of implications for enhancing student persistence among Filipino-American students in biology major which can be

categorized into implications for student recruitment and retention in biology undergraduate programs.