Community and Control in a Colonial Collection: Filipinos and Archival Protocols
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Background
The University of Michigan Museum of Anthropological Archaeology (MAA) houses the largest collection of Dean C. Worcester’s photographs of the Philippines from 1890-1913. Some images include sensitive, graphic content of indigenous Filipinos from over 100 different tribes across the islands. Currently, viewing is restricted to in-person visits. Before MAA publishes these photographs to their database for online access, the museum wants to know how can they control access and who makes these decisions? This question is complicated by the scope of the collection and the lack of existing cultural protocols for dealing with Filipino materials.

Methods
1. Literature Review
2. Stakeholder interviews
3. Personas
4. Touchpoints

Literature Review
Few publications exist that cover the treatment of sensitive materials in Filipino collections in the United States and abroad. Literature consulted primarily deals with Native American, Aboriginal and Indigenous materials. Their protocols serve as models for future work with marginalized communities and their materials.

Key Themes:
- Different cultural contexts understand sensitive materials differently
- Source communities are diverse and varied
- Source communities need to be treated as partners in work
- Relationships must endure past initial consultation for the work to be impactful

Interviews
In early 2020, I interviewed 5 stakeholders who had experience with the Dean C. Worcester Photographic Collection. These stakeholders can be broadly categorized into two groups for how they encountered the collection: archivists/curators or researchers. However, most of the stakeholders had multiple professional interests in this collection that spanned both groups.

Key Findings:
- Source communities should be involved with decisions about the collection
- Local Filipino groups and Filipino scholars at U-M should be consulted
- Filipino inclusion is key and must be a priority
- A broader community of scholars and departments at U-M are interested in collaborating on this work

Stakeholders were predominantly non-Filipino and key themes from these interviews need to be understood in this context. More Filipinos need to be engaged in future work.

Discussion
Existing literature and protocols stress the importance of involving source communities as partners or co-curators. While it would be ideal to involve the multiple indigenous communities directly, this may be outside of the scope of MAA’s ability. MAA, as part of U-M, is well-situated to involve Filipino scholars and communities in the area. It is imperative that Filipinos are included in future work to provide online access to the materials.

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Bibliography: