

Engaging Existing and Emergent Experiences: Narratives among Young Filipinas on Guam

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ABSTRACT

While Filipino people comprise the second-highest percentage of the population on Guam, unfortunately there is not a comparable amount of scholarly publication about the Guam Filipino population, much less on Filipinas specifically. Although there is scholarly interest in this area, there is also concern over the availability of primary texts. Profound questions arise because of this dearth: In what ways are Filipinas on Guam writing about their experiences about life on the island? How can existing narratives be brought into conversation with emergent narratives? This paper responds to the perceived silence by advocating revolution through language, as educators on Guam can guide students to recognize their postcolonial background and foster the production and representation of narratives for students' identity negotiation and political empowerment.

Keywords: Filipina, Guam, narrative, English, rhetoric

In conducting research for my master's thesis, "Palatable Experiences: Identity Formation in the Narratives of Three Generations of Filipinas on Guam," I encountered a dearth of narratives regarding Filipinas on Guam. My personal interest was to explore the identity formation of local Filipinas from the post-World War II generation to today, including the identity negotiations of Filipinas in the contemporary generation to which I belong. I found narratives were a most productive means of analysis. However, in conducting preliminary discussions on this topic with local scholars from different disciplines at the University of Guam—history, social work, linguistics, Chamorro studies, women's studies, and communications—I found that although there is scholarly interest in this area, there is also

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concern over the availability of primary texts. The immediate reaction was, “Are there even narratives of Filipinas on Guam?” This general sentiment was disconcerting, especially considering the significant size and influence of this population. As a composition instructor, I consider, then, the rhetorics of colonialism surrounding this perceived silence and the possibilities of representation and action through language for myself and other English educators on Guam.

In “The Filipino Community of Guam (1945-1975),” Bruce Campbell (1987) found that the Filipino community on Guam was an understudied area, lacking adequate resource materials to provide an accurate portrayal of historical events between Filipino and Guamanian communities (p. 2). While Campbell’s text is widely referenced, critical questions problematize his assertion: 1) Why is it that this prominent community remains understudied? 2) If there are available materials, who defines which are “accurate” and how many are “adequate”? While Filipino people comprise the second-highest percentage of the population on Guam, according to Guam’s Consulate General of the Philippines, Bayani V. Mangibin (personal communication, October 20, 2012), unfortunately there is not a comparable amount of scholarly publication about it, much less on Filipinas on Guam specifically. Confronted with the apparent lack of Filipina narratives in scholarship and published works on Filipina identity on Guam, I was determined to excavate stories and narratives wherever I could find them and resolved to make these works and the individuals behind them better known within the local community. I endeavored to counteract the silence that I perceived from their absence in scholarship by speaking through a multitude of voices. I began by extrapolating a sense of the identity negotiation in the letters and storytelling of my grandmother, Ruthie Caser, the professional recordings and published storybook of my mother, Alpha Espina, and my own personal songs, and then extending my analysis to other Filipinas within each of our respective generations.

This dearth, nevertheless, continued to undermine the development of my work, and I continually faced the difficulty predicted by the scholars of gathering enough primary texts. Pervading my extrapolation of the available, mostly unpublished narratives were profound questions: In what ways are Filipinas on Guam creating written texts that can then be transcribed, preserved, passed down, and disseminated? Why are these writings going largely unnoticed? What are the causes of this perceived silence? What are the intentions and implications of their

writing? Moreover, how can existing narratives be brought into conversation with emergent narratives? While these questions underlie my research, my research only begins to answer them. Moreover, pivotal, practical questions still remained: Now that I am aware of a need, what should my response be as a scholar and educator who also belongs to this community? How can I encourage other young Filipinas to write for self-discovery, personal fulfillment, and political empowerment? While I admit that I am at present unable to fully answer these questions, I strongly believe that educators are at the forefront of addressing this perceived silence and disconcerting dearth. David Dzaka (2004), in “Resisting Writing: Reflections on the Postcolonial Factor in the Writing Class,” identified several questions about the writing development that postcolonial subjects should ask themselves, such as: (a) “How are my writing difficulties and peculiarities related to my postcolonial background?” and (b) “To what extent are metropolitan writing theories responsive to or interrupted by postcolonial realities?” (p. 157). This rhetorical analysis of narratives examines the rhetorics of a history of colonialism that underlie perceived silences in mainstream scholarship, as well as perceived writing difficulties among this population. In this way, the analysis of narratives, according to David Herman, is a basic human strategy for coming to terms with time, process, and change (2009). In considering the implications of time and the importance of process for change, English educators on Guam can guide students, particularly young Filipinas, to begin asking such questions by helping them to recognize their postcolonial background and by critically analyzing their writing difficulties in light of this background. Educators can also learn to adapt writing theories to fit their context and serve the purpose of increasing the production and representation of these narratives for identity negotiation, personal fulfillment, and political empowerment.

Recognizing a Postcolonial Background

According to Guam Filipina scholar Clarisa Quan, Filipinos and Chamorros forged a relationship through shared colonialism in the advent of Western colonization. From 1521 to 1898, Guam and the Philippines were colonized by Spain, and after the defeat of Spain in the Spanish-American War of 1898, Guam and the Philippines fell under American rule (Quan 2018). From 1941 to 1944-5, both the Philippines and Guam were forcibly occupied by Japan (Quan 2018). While Filipino men such as Jose Rizal, Carlos Bulosan, Bienvenido Santos, and

Jose Garcia Villa are most often associated with the Philippine literary tradition, Filipino writer Nick Carbo (2000) affirmed that though there is little mention of Filipina writers, their poems, short stories, and novels contributed much to Philippines literature, especially during the last part of the nineteenth century (p. vii). The works of Filipinas should be emphasized and explored in order to examine their historical and cultural significance. Making young Filipina students aware that they are part of a rich literary tradition can inspire them to make their own contribution. Through their writing, they can affirm Filipina poet Eileen Tabios's (2000) assertion that the postcolonial Filipina writer cannot allow the silencing of their stories as "bastard[s] of the Philippine diaspora" (p. xv).

Instead of being 'bastards,' Filipina author Leny Strobel (1996) suggested that young Filipina students can be "born-again," with their narratives attempting to construct an identity through the weaving of historical knowledge and personal memory and articulating a Filipino voice through their own language (p. 40). They must understand that their lives and their history are inseparable from the Philippines and recognize its value as a point of reference and inspiration. According to Tabios (2000), personal history is informed by the Philippines, whose troubled history teaches passion, compassion, hope, hopes thwarted, perseverance, human frailty, humor, irony, humility, and pride (p. xvii). It is access to this historical knowledge, in both Philippine and Filipino American history, that enables Filipina students to reconstruct their own personal history and sense of who they are, as well as bridge the gap between generations of other Filipinos, such as Philippine-born parents and grandparents. The rich yet troubled legacy of the Philippines can inform their writing and help them to solidify who they are in the complex contours of the Filipino diaspora.

Strobel (1996) further found that this "born-again" voice is emerging most loudly among Filipino college students (p. 42). While they have acknowledged and incorporated the purported historical knowledge of the United States and the Philippines, they do so in a critical language that challenges what their parents and the educational system have passed on to them (Strobel, 1996, 42). These young Filipinos are questioning the validity of official historical accounts, attesting to their concern and involvement in the perpetuation of their cultural heritage. They acknowledge that a lack of knowledge about the Filipino colonial past prevents them from understanding how they have been shaped by historical and political constructions and hinders

them from understanding how racism constructs and limits the experiences of other ethnic groups (Strobel, 1996, 42). Insight into the colonial past of the Philippines is essential to understanding their position as postcolonial subjects, as well as the plight of other postcolonial subjects.

It is for this reason that composition scholar Victor Villanueva (1993) in *Bootstraps: From an American Academic of Color* advocated a “critical consciousness”—the recognition that society contains social, political, and economic conditions that are at odds with the individual will to freedom (p. 54). While philosopher and educator Paulo Freire first developed this concept, Villanueva (1993) elucidated it by suggesting that students make contradictions between their world views and the “official” world views explicit by looking at their individual histories and cultures and comparing those histories and ways of being with what they have been made to believe is their place in the world (p. 54). According to Villanueva (1993), education in traditions and in a national language should be placed in historical perspective so that ideologies and mythologies would be exposed (p. 136). Teaching young Filipina students on Guam to discern the different ideologies and mythologies that inform their experiences would allow them to critically analyze their position within conflicting and overlapping designations. They must be taught and encouraged to critically analyze what they have been taught and interrogate what has been accepted as truth.

Many young Filipinas on Guam are well aware of the cultural tensions that underlie what it means to be a hybridized “American.” They are American, but not white. They are American, but also Filipino and Guamanian. They are American, but “territory” American—physically, culturally, and politically distant from “the states,” not mainland American. Filipinas on Guam live and grow between these dizzying and dividing political designations. As Americans of color, Filipinas on Guam cannot accommodate the ideological contraries they carry until they recognize the “antagonism” or “tension” between the cultural multitudes they contain (Villanueva, 1993, 58). Young Filipina students must realize that they each are multi-cultured, multi-tensioned, and filled with contraries, despite the “American” designation, and also recognize the ways this dynamic position enables them to take advantage of numerous perspectives and possibilities. This cultural consciousness marks the beginnings of a journey of re-discovery or re-construction of cultural identity and stimulates a critical questioning of the contexts that have shaped their

family's immigration experience and their own personal identity as young Filipina Americans on Guam.

Committing this journey to writing would not only help Filipina students on Guam work through their identity formation but would also help to better document the experiences of Filipinas on Guam as a whole. Postcolonial and transnational feminist theorist Chandra Mohanty (1991) asserted that writing becomes the context through which new political identities are forged, and it becomes a space for struggle and contestation about reality itself (p. 34). Writing is an invaluable tool for the Filipina on Guam to come to a critical consciousness of who they are in relation to their complex history of colonization, migration, diaspora, and adaptation. In addition to writing and recording these experiences, young Filipinas on Guam must also read, understand, and locate them within the institutions in which they were produced. This critical process of reading and writing is of utmost importance if young Filipinas are to contribute significantly to an understanding of the Filipina experience on the island. However, the writing of Filipinas on Guam is subject to the long, convoluted history of their postcolonial background.

Critically Analyzing Writing Difficulties

In his seminal text, "The Miseducation of the Filipino," prominent Filipino historian Renato Constantino (1966) claimed that Filipinos have learned to use American criteria for their problems and look at their past with the eyes of a visitor, so that although information is learned, attitudes are not developed (p. 15). Although the young, "born-again" Filipina has begun to question accepted accounts of Filipino history and culture, it is even more crucial that she see the relevance and pertinence of these questions to her own situation and context. Constantino (1966) strongly insisted that because of American imperialism, young Filipino and Filipino American students do not have proper regard for the Philippines or concerns for its people embedded in their consciousness. They, therefore, remain unaware of how their difficulties and struggles have been and continue to be affected by colonial history.

For instance, while Filipinos are essentially oral in nature, writing was introduced as part of an imperial process (Dzaka, 2004, p. 166). Their difficulties in writing should be understood with this consideration. As postcolonial students, Filipinas on Guam have been the victims of misguided literacy practices that arose from their colonial past and still remain in place, even

after independence (Dzaka, 2004, p. 168). In her study of the composing processes of seemingly unskilled writers, Sondra Perl (2011) advocated teachers changing their perception of these writers by being more attuned to the highly elaborate and deeply embedded processes that students bring with them (p. 38), such as a postcolonial context. Unfavorable writing habits have been ingrained through imperialist practices and young Filipina students' general apprehension of and distrust of language cannot simply be disregarded or solely attributed to cognitive or developmental deficiency.

English educators must be understanding of young Filipina students and their writing difficulties. Perl (2011) suggested that teachers first identify the characteristic components of each student's process that facilitate writing and which components inhibit it (p. 38). Teaching composing entails attending not only to the forms or products but also to the explicative processes through which they arise (Perl, 2011, p. 39). This requires a deeper analysis of students' work beyond the superficial and instead to the development of ideas, analyzing the context in which these ideas are developed. Dzaka (2004) posited that when these students exhibit shallowness in their writing, it is not because they are incapable of being expressive, deep thinkers; their struggles with writing originate out of a sincere desire to communicate (p. 169). Errors and difficulties are partly due to their history—a history of miseducation, misguided pedagogy, domination, and submission. Historically, these are the byproducts of colonization. Basic writing scholar Mina P. Shaughnessy (2011), in a process she simply termed “diving in,” urged English educators to become a student not only of new disciplines but also of the students themselves, in order to perceive both their difficulties and their incipient potential (297). According to Shaughnessy (2011), “the greatest barrier to our work with them is our ignorance of them and of the very subject we have contracted to teach” (p. 297). English educators must therefore be up to the challenges of overcoming misconceptions of their young Filipina students' writing difficulties and reorienting themselves to novel ways to develop these students' writing, foster their ideas, and evoke their creativity.

The difficulty of finding Filipina narratives on Guam can possibly be the result of what Dzaka (2004) called “writing resistance”: an aversion to writing as a thoughtful process, manifested by the extreme disinclination to write anything beyond the routine recording of prescribed information (p. 158). Therefore, the perceived silence and absence in mainstream

scholarship possibly belies more intention and agency. While Filipinas on Guam may be writing in personal notebooks, in public school classrooms, and in college classrooms, this writing has not yet been translated to the public sphere. Surely the Filipina on Guam has something to say, other than simply answering a prompt or completing an assigned essay? Or is the dearth in scholarship and publication indicative of a sort of resistance? For the resisting writer, there is nothing intrinsically exciting or motivating about writing, whether personal or academic, because it is a distasteful requirement that is only faced when one must and not because one has something significant to communicate (Dzaka, 2004, p. 158). English educators should accordingly encourage students to write by helping them to discover the communicative imperative of their writing and convince them that their thoughts and ideas can and should contribute to discussions on culture and society. English educators must find ways to help students recognize that they do have something to say and to help them say it in ways that cause people to listen. As Audre Lord advocates in “The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action: “[I]t is not difference which immobilizes us, but silence. And there are so many silences to be broken” (1993, p. 44).

Perhaps the question for these young Filipina writers is not just simply whether or not to write but *how* they are going to write to connect with others. Even the apparent dearth of narratives can be reconfigured to a political message. While the silence of Filipinas on Guam suggests apathy or disinterest, Helen Grice (2004) in her analysis of artistic creativity, form, and fictional experimentation in Filipina Americans’ writing found that silence is less a symptom of stifled self-expression or creativity or of passivity, but is rather a form of resistance in its own right (p. 183). This correlates with the characteristic of Filipino American writing to use and manifest various modes of ambivalence, such as subversive language, form, and genre, and thematics, such as displacement, as sources of creative and oppositional energy (Grice, 2004, p. 184). When young Filipinas on Guam discover *what* they are going to say, the English educator can help them discover *how* to say it effectively.

Adapting Writing Theories

The position of the educator is indeed an influential one and the decisions made within the classroom can have lasting effects on students intellectually and emotionally. For instance,

the instructor's authority in the classroom reflects configurations of power that had structured relations between colonizer and the colonized in the past and continues to organize relationships within the postcolonial state (Dzaka, 2004, p. 165). It is therefore essential that English instructors use language to empower and illuminate students, rather than suppress and discourage them. An instructor who only operates from a position of power is invariably dominating, and the postcolonial student thus becomes an appraised, dehumanized being incapable of exercising free thought, expression, and action (Dzaka, 2004, p. 165). Erika Lindemann (1987) in *A Rhetoric for Writing Teachers* poignantly stated that “[w]riting teachers confront paradoxes” and must place themselves in the center of these paradoxes (p. 7), rather than in positions of removed, unquestioned domination. It is therefore the role of the educator to appreciate writing that discovers meaning, form, and self and to encourage students to write to explore their experiences and locate themselves in relation to a complex society (Lindemann, 1987, p. 7). Although many educators have not been exposed to the concept of hegemonic forces, they need to be aware of these power relationships that continue to affect meaning. They must also be equipped to guide students in their navigation within these forces, using a variety of strategies reflecting a decolonial pedagogy. This pedagogy, according to Noah De Lissovoy (2010) in “Decolonial Pedagogy and the Ethics of the Global,” is a curriculum against domination and is oriented against the epistemic and cultural violence of Eurocentrism that underlies the politics of content and knowledge in education (p. 280). For example, such a decolonial pedagogy in the writing classroom challenges the imposition of Standard American English as the accepted form of communication in a composition classroom and interrogates how students use language for their own purposes, reflecting their own contexts.

English educators should provide for a rhetorical situation that would allow Filipinas on Guam to express to others their hopes, fears, doubts, and (ir)resolutions in the midst of accepted history and official ideologies. Villanueva (1993) described this as a dialectic among students, a dialectic between student and teacher, between lived experiences and official ideologies (p. 136). Instead of presenting information “as is” and uncontested, Filipina students should be allowed to see the subjectivity of official history and prescribed language and be given the tools to find their own voice within it. As young Filipina students talk and write about the ways their self-identification fits with or differs from the representations they read, a process of formation or

transformation takes place, described by rhetoric and composition scholar Susan C. Jarrat (2004) in “Beside Ourselves: Rhetoric and Representation in Postcolonial Feminist Writing,” which can create a locally grounded understanding of the circumstances of Filipinas on Guam (p. 112). They must be given the opportunity to write about their interactions with and within current political representations of the Filipina on Guam and also discuss the multiplicities inherent in that role. As members of the youngest and most contemporary generation, these students must realize the significant influence their voice can have in reshaping and transforming current representations of Filipinas on Guam.

Villanueva (1993) maintained that change is possible when language is used consciously (p. 121). He posited that rhetoric is the principal means by which change can take place because it includes writing, a means of learning and discovery, and literature, the discoveries of others (p. 121). Because rhetoric is how ideologies are carried and hegemonies are maintained, rhetoric provides the only means by which they can be countered (Villanueva, 1993, p. 121). In their contemporary generation, young Filipinas can collapse harmful dichotomies and correct inaccurate representations through rhetoric. Jarrat (2004) affirmed Villanueva’s (1993) assertion of the importance of rhetoric, as she stated that rhetoric gives names to figures that structure relations in language and the material world (111). Rhetoric is both political and figurative representation, affecting not only politics but also cultural practices. Teachers must explain to students that when an institution uses power over others to represent themselves politically or to act for them, the represented group is sketched, painted, and described in a particular way through that process (Jarrat, 2004, p. 111). Rhetoric mobilizes interaction between political representation and cultural re-presentation and enables transformative practices by calling attention to where and by whom Filipinas on Guam are described (Jarrat, 2004, p. 113). By adding their narratives to the existing conversation about Filipinas on Guam, young Filipina students essentially move the discussion away from only the dominant discourses and insist upon the importance of a diversity of experiences.

Young Filipinas on Guam can engage in transcultural rhetoric, wherein they speak or write from a position they themselves reconstruct, described by compositionist Louise Rodriguez Connal (2004, p. 205). This transcultural rhetoric enables young Filipina students to develop the ability to decide what to do in particular contexts, allowing them to create new uses of language

and rhetorical gestures within old and new contexts (p. 215-216). They forge a place for themselves within the discussion of the Filipina community on Guam and speak from this new position. This rhetoric gives the students more choices to subvert linguistic codes, sites, or contexts not useful in the process of reclaiming stories and systems that oppress women and minorities (p. 216). Young Filipinas on Guam can select from dialects and the ways of knowing available to them when dealing with political issues in their lives (p. 217). The competency and agency of this group is apparent in their ability to use and synthesize the resources at their disposal to fulfill their purposes of cultural and political re-presentation.

It is therefore essential that Filipinas on Guam see the imperative of adding their voices to the historical and cultural milieu of Filipinos on Guam. This creates a bold reconfiguration of the subject of Filipinas on Guam that involves the group in its formation and complicates the representation that is theorized by classical Western systems (Jarrat, 2004, p. 120). Jarrat (2004) suggested that effective pedagogy is a means of enabling students to challenge and transform apathy and disinterest, which has created the dearth of information on and from Filipinas on Guam:

Every pedagogical moment is a complex fusion of re-presentation, exercises of executive power, and transformation of consciousness. If we enter into that process relying solely on a “retreat” response—claiming to speak only from our own narrow positions—we not only blind ourselves to the multiple functions of pedagogical discourse, but also lose opportunities for political effectivity. (p. 128)

Teachers must therefore use their instruction to enable students to write multiple versions of themselves informed by a knowledge of rhetoric in its political and figurative functions and give them access to their own experiences of conjunction and disjunction, association and substitution (Jarrat, 2004, p. 128). This use of rhetoric can be an empowering tool of self-discovery for the young Filipina on Guam to find and express her voice.

Dzaka (2004) put forward that the seemingly simple solution is to “[e]mphasize process, not product,” and he described practices that enact this solution: (a) Teachers should provide students “sufficient time to wrestle with the conditions of a writing assignment, intervening perceptively at appropriate stages in the process until an acceptable product emerges” and (b)

Teachers should “[m]ake use of peer response and evaluation, journals, and all the latest trappings of process and interactionist models of pedagogy” (p. 168). The cognitive acts of creating and criticizing can be eased and enhanced through the recursive processes of free writing, drafting, and revising, but only if students have a certain minimum proficiency in English. Dzaka (2004) cautioned, however, that it will take time for students’ thinking to break free from imperialist thinking and move toward self-expression. English educators should patiently guide students as they liberate themselves through their own rhetoric and writing. They must help them develop a sound, transformative writing process that engages their thoughts and induces them to share these ideas. Dzaka (2004) maintained that such a writing process must be established before content of the writing can be improved (p. 169). This is a process that focuses on the significance and the message of the writing first before mechanics, organization, and style.

In an interview with Andrea Lunsford, feminist cultural theorist Gloria Anzaldúa (2004) discussed the importance of openly and honestly interrogating one’s postcolonial position through writing:

Writing is very liberating and emancipatory; it frees you up. In the process of writing, you’re reflecting on all of the things that make you different, that make you the same, that make you a freak. You’re constantly grappling with identity issues. Postcoloniality looks at this power system discipline—whether it’s a government, whether it’s anthropology, or composition—and it asks, “Who has the voice? Who says these are the rules? Who makes the law?” (p. 51)

Allowing Filipinas on Guam to reflect on who they are—their similarities, differences, and peculiarities – can be a liberating starting point to begin writing. This can be done through different types of narratives, as identity theorist Michael Bamberg (2012) found that narrative lends itself to sorting out how a person can view and present his or her sense of self (p. 7). It “makes claims vis-à-vis the who-am-I questions” and can be argued as the privileged genre for identity constructions because it requires the contextualization of characters in time and space (Bamberg, 2012, p. 5). Different types of narratives that may be effectively used include life

story-oriented written narratives, personal literacy narratives, “talk-story” narratives, and critical analyses of Filipino/a literature.

Mohanty (1991) confirmed that life story-oriented written narratives are an important context in which to examine the development of a critical consciousness (p. 33). In addition to being marked by their class and ethnic position, narratives such as testimonials, life stories, and oral histories are a significant mode of remembering and recording experiences and struggles because they are not produced in a vacuum (Mohanty, 1991, p. 33). The narratives of young Filipinas on Guam can emphasize the value of their unique historical situation and cultural context. In her autoethnographic study of identity, Peruvemba S. Jaya (2011) found that the narrative approach uses the varied dimensions of self in a processual rendition of the story of the individual’s journey through time, so that they recognize that identity is self-reflexive and is a stage of ‘becoming,’ rather an ‘being’ (p. 758). The rewriting and remembering of history through narratives is a process that not only is corrective to the gaps, erasures, and misunderstandings of hegemonic masculinist history, but it also leads to the formation of a politicized consciousness and self-identity (Mohanty, 1991, p. 34). Allowing students to express themselves from their own vantage point can be an empowering experience that helps to further solidify their sense of self and equip them with the confidence to write from their position.

As they analyze their position as writers, students can learn to explore and manipulate language in new, empowering ways. A personal literacy narrative can allow a student to reflect freely on her development as a writer as a therapeutic experience for reinventing herself (Dzaka, 2004, p. 170). English educators can ask students to describe their journey of learning how to speak, read, and write. They can describe their strengths and weaknesses and hopefully come to a deeper understanding of why they have confidence in some areas and difficulties in others by evaluating the context. Writing their personal experiences in their own language can enable them to see how their writing has been affected by politics, history, and society. They can then begin to see the utility of writing for both self-discovery and self-expression and find that their experiences can act as a catalyst for meaningful writing assignments.

Furthermore, a compilation of narratives through “talk-story” can promote collaboration among Filipinas on Guam with the collective goal of increased visibility. Grice (2004) stated that “talk-story” is also a potentially highly subversive female language of community and

intergenerational connection for Filipina Americans (p. 192). Allowing young Filipina students to be in constant conversation with one another through collaborative writing projects enables them to compare experiences and come together as members of the same community. Because women's talk is social and accesses a nuanced range of emotions, desires, and intentions, gathering to talk-story allows these young women to console, advise, argue with, critique, grapple with, and support one another (p. 192). These talk-stories draw on the strengths of Filipinas' oral culture. Moreover, in addition to conversing with their peers, young Filipina students can engage with Filipinas on Guam from previous generations, as I had done in my thesis research, and draw upon the collectivity of Filipino culture to expand their understanding of Filipinas on Guam through time. These talk-stories are tangential, coded, and often non-linear or non-objective, as they include women's experiences and imaginative stories that retell traditional stories or invent subversive stories (Grice, 2004, p. 192).

In addition to narrative writing assignments, reading assignments can also inspire young writers to think critically and creatively about their position. Dzaka (2004) also suggested that the process of self-transformation for students is greatly assisted by readings that establish a frame for interrogating the past and imagining possibilities for reinventing the present (p. 169). Students on Guam, particularly Filipinas, should be given reading material that speaks compellingly to their situation as a postcolonial female subject. Writings by contemporary Filipina American writers such as Cecilia Manguerra Brainard, Jessica Hagedorn, Marianne Villanueva, and Linda Ty-Casper are significant in their dynamic movement from otherness to self-realization, according to Dolores de Manuel (2004) in her analysis of contemporary Filipina American fiction (p. 103). While the canon of Filipino American narratives is often described as a literature of exile portraying the pain of dislocation, current narratives can also be read as simultaneously making a more positive impulse towards wholeness (p. 103). English educators can provide readings from contemporary Filipina American writers that suggest a movement towards re-centering and reclaiming identity and view cross culturalism and multiracialism as an acceptance of difference on equal terms (de Manuel, 2004, p. 103). Inspired by these narratives, acceptance of difference and diversity can lead students to a creative engagement that transcends conflict and cultivates construction of the future.

Literary scholar Wai Chee Dimock (1991) found that when history is interpreted by a critical reader, she is bound to encounter a sedimented construct, rather than a unified entity: “a figure traversed by time and dispersed in time, making its staggered appearances in a variety of stages, in its residual, established, and emergent forms, and through its inflections by class, gender, and race” (p. 615). Students should be guided to become critical readers who meditate on their points of divergence and their points of coincidence with history and think about the uneven genesis, conflicting identities, and different modes of interpretation (p. 615). It is then that they will find that “history” needs to be reconceived as something less than homogenous and something less synchronized (p. 615). They will recognize that that they have power as readers to read critically and question what has been taught to them and powers as writers to counteract and transform what has been previously written. They will realize that they, too, have a place in the sedimented, multidimensional, and dynamic history of the people of Guam.

Conclusion

As I concluded my graduate thesis, the most fulfilling aspect was undoubtedly the opportunity to express myself by recounting my own re-discovery of my cultural heritage as a Filipina on Guam. While the impetus of my work began as a counter to perceived scholarly invisibility, I found that excavating the generational stories also required a personal excavation of my own doubts as a writer and as a member of this local community. As I wrote, I grappled with my own conceptions of self as woman, Filipina, Guamanian, and American, and writing became an opportunity to redeem my place within the history of Filipinos on Guam by making my struggle known. The reflexivity of my research continues to affect me in profound ways, and I am impelled to write to make the Filipina community on Guam better known to myself, as well as to the island.

As an educator, I hope to use my own personal narrative to encourage my young Filipina students to also write to interrogate their own positionality as emergent members of this community. I also hope to develop my pedagogy to enable them to critically analyze available historical accounts and engage with the resources provided by Filipina writers in the previous and contemporary generations. My instruction can furthermore promote working together with

peers and previous generations in the construction of identity as Filipinas on Guam. I recognize the advantages afforded by my position to cultivate interest among my students so that we can collectively combat the dearth that silences who we are and where we came from. Working collaboratively alongside my students in the production of narratives would build the corpus of “adequate” and “accurate” historical materials. In this way, the eventual answer to the question of “Are there even narratives of Filipinas on Guam?” would be a resounding “yes,” comprised of the multitude of voices and experiences in this diverse, yet unified community.

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