Humanities Diliman (July-December 2016) 13:2, 75-101

The *Ube* ("Roots") Generation

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> Grandmother smiles at me
> and the lines on her face
> deepen, reminding me of bark.
> I see her withered fingers
> strong on my hands,
> and somewhere inside me,
> a tree takes root. Above,
> the sky displays its stars
> with pride. Tonight, I know
> the many stars are bruises
> bleeding starlight.
>
> – "Roots" by Conchita Cruz
> *Going Home to a Landscape*, 262

ABSTRACT

Filipino people comprise the second-highest percentage of the population in Guam, and this local trend mirrors that of the mainland United States. Using the metaphor of *ube*, I use the term "ube" to characterize the generation of my grandmother—the initial generation in their families to immigrate to Guam from the Philippines, after the post-WWII migration surge. I term this generation the Ube ("Roots") generation and describe how those in this generation use narrative as an attempt to negotiate their identities in new surroundings. Using an autoethnographic methodology, I interview my maternal grandmother, Ruthie Caser. I supplement this interview with (1) Caser's letters, (2) the diary entries of her mother, Rebecca Alvarez, which reference Caser's transnational relations between Guam and the Philippines, (3) a personal interview with Bernadette Provido, who was petitioned by her husband in connection with Camp Roxas, and (4) the responses in a 1976 survey of attitudes of Filipinas in Guam by Loida C. Retumban. By examining the experiences of the Ube generation through the personal telling of their own stories, I investigate the

ISSN 1655-1532 Print / ISSN 2012-0788 Online

ways in which they reconcile their Filipino culture with the local and American cultures of Guam. I nevertheless maintain the caveat that my intention is not to determine the extent to which these immigrants retain their original culture or adopt the American culture. Rather, I hope to depict the process whereby they maintain and preserve aspects of their Filipino “roots,” while transforming and being transformed by their new landscape. This paper is part of a series, “Palatable Experiences: Identity Formation in the Narratives of Three Generations of Filipinas on Guam,” which examines the identities of the Ube Generation, the *Sapin-Sapin* (“Layers”) Generation, and the *Halo-Halo* (“Mix Mix”) Generation.

Keywords: Guam, Filipina, autoethnography, narrative, generation identity

To proudly assert that I am Filipino has been a subject of complication and ambivalence, and I have often contemplated my position as the granddaughter of Filipino immigrants, a Guamanian, and also an American. Filipino people comprise the second-highest percentage of the population in Guam—approximately 26.3 percent according to Guam’s Consulate General of the Philippines, Bayani V. Mangibin. This local trend mirrors that in the mainland United States (US), as Filipinos now comprise the second-largest immigrant group and second-largest Asian American group in the United States, according to Yen Le Espiritu’s chronicle of Filipino lives across cultures, communities, and countries (23). Although I am a part of the significant Filipino population in Guam, to define and to develop a personal sense of self within the distinct yet overlapping identities of Guamanian, Filipino, and American continue to be a challenge. Using a methodology grounded in narrative theory, I preface this paper with this vignette of my personal experience to foreground my purpose in pursuing this research, inspired by Carlos Romulo’s moving sentiments in “I Am a Filipino”: my responsibility to tell the stories of my Filipino ancestors of the past and to perpetuate my Filipino culture for the future.

I wanted to examine the lives of Filipinas in Guam, and I wanted to examine those lives through the lenses of unpublished narratives—letters, journals, oral storytelling—that document the everyday rhythms of these women as they transplanted roots in a new land and maintained them. Their stories are narratives that document their real lives and real experiences and can help them make sense of themselves, one another, and the world, according to narrative theorist David Herman (54). I analyze excerpts of letters, journal entries, and stories as primary sources of lived experiences that provide valuable insight into the perspectives of these women. My analysis refers to Herman's working definition of narrative as "a basic human strategy for coming to terms with time, process, and change," which contrasts with "scientific" inquiry but is no less valuable (127-29). While I understand the limitations of this research, I argue that these unpublished narratives complement scholarly research to provide a more complete picture of these women's immigrant identities. My analysis is furthermore enhanced by the perspective of postcolonial and transnational feminist theorist Chandra T. Mohanty, who finds that because writing is marked by class and ethnic influences, the experiences and struggles of, particularly third world, women are able to be remembered and recorded within their cultural, class, political, and economic contexts through oral histories, testimonies, and life stories ("Cartographies" 33). These personal narratives remain inseparable from the contexts within which they were produced.

A recovery of these contexts of the past, through the sharing of stories and narratives, reveals the cultural roots made vulnerable by assimilation. These narratives reveal what is lost in the classic assimilationist perspective, described by Rubén G. Rumbaut and Alejandro Portes in their landmark study on immigrants in America, that conceptualizes acculturation as a linear, irrevocable process that homogenizes culture, language, perception, emotion, and behavior (2573). Narrative theory, informed by a feminist perspective, thus acts as a productive means of analysis for this particular work that seeks to divulge the multidimensional nature of the immigrant identity in Guam and desires to promote representation and recovery by engaging families and communities in sharing their experiences.

By building a community of memory and a collective literature through shared narratives, Filipino Americans re-member their complex and fragmented past to form a distinct cultural history and identity, essential in dealing with the increasing migration, exchange, and interaction in Guam and within the global arena.[1] The experiences of postwar Filipinas in Guam are particularly significant because of the influx of Guam's population during this time and the radical cultural change that occurred as a result. According to local Filipina scholar Clarisa G. Quan, Filipinos were contracted en masse to assist in rebuilding efforts after World War II, as well as after several destructive typhoons. As generations of Filipinos continue to establish themselves in Guam and contribute to the island's economy, politics, and culture, the history of Filipinos in Guam is invaluable to the overall history of Guam. My hope is that this analysis of their narratives will contribute to Filipinos in Guam being better understood and act as an impetus for further study of the diasporic Filipino community in the Pacific.

DIGGING UP THE UBE STORIES

In an attempt to locate my roots in the island I call home, I interview my maternal grandmother, Ruthie Caser. She animatedly recounts a life of change, disappointments, and perseverance—a poignant portrayal of life as a Filipina immigrant to Guam. In contemplating my position as a third-generation Filipina in Guam, I realized that my understanding of my positionality would be incomplete without tracing back to the experiences of my grandmother, who first immigrated to Guam in March of 1968.[2] Although I had heard stories about her life indirectly—from my mother, aunts, and uncles—a personal interview in which she describes her experiences in the Philippines, moving to Guam, and maintaining her Filipino culture illuminated the plight of her generation of post-World War II Filipina immigrants in Guam. By listening to her stories, my grandmother and I enact what Ronald Takaki describes in his chronicle, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans*, that in the telling and retelling of their own stories, elderly immigrants reclaim the authorship of their own history and desire for the younger generations to know about their experiences (9-10). Because story, according to narrative theorist David Herman, is anchored in a particular, durative vantage point, it not only conveys semantic content, but also allows for the experiencing of events (2089-90). By listening, I am able to experience. Caser’s narratives allow me to investigate her immigrant experience through her unique vantage point so that I may gain an understanding of the thoughts, emotions, and motivations of her generation.

Caser’s husband, Eddie, came to work as an accountant for Mid Pacific Distributors Guam in 1966 as part of the “brain drain,” the post-1965 wave of Filipino professionals, eventually becoming the chief financial officer. Petitioned shortly afterward, Caser was forced to discontinue her near-completed studies in dentistry and settle in Guam as a full-time homemaker. When asked in a personal interview if life would have been different had she stayed in the Philippines, she expresses regret and admits she probably would have been afforded more opportunities: “Oh . . . maybe . . . because . . . I would have been practicing [dentistry], too. . . . Practicing. . . . I did not . . . get my board exam, you know. . . . I could have been number one—top . . . Yeah, because Grandpa was petitioned and I have to stay with my husband. We didn’t have to, we didn’t have to struggle” (Caser). Although it was not Caser’s choice to come to Guam and abandon her education, she ultimately sacrificed her own aspirations to fulfill what she felt was her duty to her husband and family. She expresses disappointment in having been forced to come to Guam and discontentment in having her dreams unrealized. For Caser, her new home became the site of disappointment and discontent.

Although migrants are often portrayed as passive and disembodied actors following the ebb and flow of political and economic forces, investigating personal, individualized immigrant experiences through their own personal narratives adds flesh to migration studies and allows for a fuller understanding of the complexities of leaving one's home for the promise of another. Rachel Silvey, in her work on feminist advances in migration studies, advocates this emphasis on the corporeal geographies and the embodied experiences of migrants to reveal the racialized and gendered circumstances that underlie migration (5). Furthermore, in her analysis of Filipino Americans across cultures, communities, and countries, Yen Le Espiritu affirms that immigrant men and women are neither passive victims nor homogenous "pools of migrant labor" that respond mechanically and uniformly to the same structural forces; instead they are active participants in the process of migration who vary by gender, generation, class, and culture (24).[3] Also contesting the simplistic notion of the immigrant, Rumbaut and Portes find that immigrants are all too often "painted with broad strokes" that neglect differences and impute motives that are inconsistent with reality, leading to unjustifiable prejudices (1287-94).[4] Overgeneralization of the immigrant experience can thus be counteracted with a more thorough understanding of the unique viewpoints and agency of individual immigrants.

In order to investigate this complexity and counter the simplistic perception of the Filipina immigrant, I supplement Caser's interview with her letters and the diary entries of her mother, my great-grandmother, Rebecca Alvarez, which reference Caser's transnational relations between Guam and the Philippines. I furthermore relate her experiences to that of other first-generation Filipina immigrants in Guam to formulate a conception of this generation's identity formation: (1) a personal interview with Bernadette Provido, who was petitioned by her husband in connection with Camp Roxas, and (2) the responses in a 1976 survey of attitudes of Filipinas in Guam by Loida C. Retumban.[5] An analysis of these various modes of life storytelling depicts the complexities of the Ube generation's immigrant experience. As a work influenced by feminist theories of migration, this paper focuses on the gender politics of identity construction and the complex relationships between identity, migration, and place. With an emphasis on the drive and agency of Filipina immigrants, especially in repressive, patriarchal circumstances, I hope to enact a complex reading of power that refuses dualistic, structure-agency polarizations, and insist that mobility is enmeshed in the cultural struggles of migrants, as well as the forces at work in controlling their mobility (Silvey 7). I examine Filipina mobility in Guam through their narratives of moving to Guam from the Philippines, as well as the ways they use narratives to navigate within their new island home.[6]

THE *UBE* ("ROOTS") GENERATION

Ube is a trademark flavor of the Philippines. Made from the root of the purple yam, ube is often used as the quintessential ingredient in a variety of Filipino drinks, pastries, and desserts. Because of this, the ube flavor in Guam is most commonly associated with the Filipino population. Dishes and desserts containing ube act as tangible symbols of the Filipino ethnic identity that draw together Filipinos within their transnational context in Guam. In his collection of essays on Filipino identity, Fernando Nakpil Zialcita validates food as an appropriate metaphor for ethnic culture and likens enjoying a Filipino dish to acknowledging that the Filipino Other has a value worth welcoming into one's being (1). Similarly, Leny Mendoza Strobel's study of the decolonization narratives of post-1965 Filipinos finds that food is a powerful nonverbal carrier of cultural meanings and emotions, such as love, nurturing, and belonging (72). The cultural meanings inherent in Filipino food can be used in conjunction with theory to understand vastly complex experiences and concepts.

Due to the fluid nature of identity, I have found that the extrapolating power of a food metaphor is particularly helpful in articulating its intricacies. Using the metaphor of ube, I use the term Ube to characterize the generation of my grandmother—the initial generation in their families to immigrate to Guam from the Philippines. I specifically chose ube as a metaphor for my analysis of the first generation because it is a foundational component of the other Filipino desserts that I use in my research on the identities of the second and third generations of Filipinas in Guam. Ube is foundational to sapin-sapin and halo-halo, just as the first generation is foundational to an understanding of these subsequent generations.[7] I relate the dynamics of each generation's identity to three of the most popular Filipino desserts, each with their own distinct meanings and consistencies: ube for the first generation, sapin-sapin for the second generation, and halo-halo for the third generation. I do this not to totalize, essentialize, or fix identity in a frozen state, but to instead make the study of these identities more palatable.

Using the ube metaphor, I describe the ways the first generation, as the initial generation to settle in Guam after the migration surge of post-WWII, uses narrative as an attempt to reconcile their cultural roots with their new surroundings. The tenacity and adaptability of the ube root allows it to thrive in tropical temperatures. This parallels the tenacity and adaptability of the Ube generation, who has been transplanted to a new place in the tropics and is determined to thrive and grow. Just as the ube flavor is ubiquitous in the Philippine nation, Filipino immigrants comprise a substantial part of the Guam and mainland US populations. From 1969 to 1971, 80 percent of Filipino workers went to Guam or to other neighboring Asian countries, according to Bruce Campbell's seminal text on the Filipino community in Guam (21). Retumban writes that many Filipinos came to Guam as contract workers for the Marianas Stevedoring and Labor Company (MASDELCO), as military, as professionals, or as petitioned wives and family members (10). Of particular interest to this paper is the post-1965 wave of immigrants, who were mostly professionals, including doctors, nurses, and engineers, seeking better employment opportunities, a better future for their children, and the "American Dream" (Nadal 6-7).[8] In the twentieth century, Filipinos continued to migrate to the United States and its Pacific territories, most notably Hawaii, to work on sugarcane and pineapple plantations (Asis). Bayani V. Mangibin, Guam's Consulate General of the Philippines, estimates that approximately 70 percent of Guam's Filipino permanent residents are professional/skilled workers.[9]

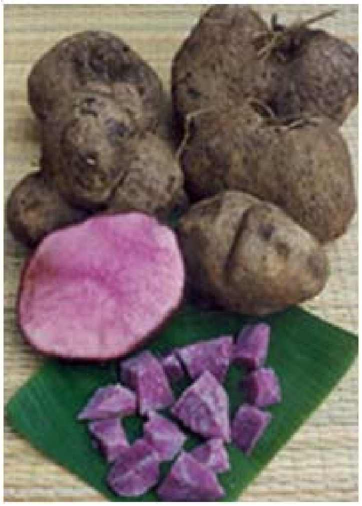

Figure 1. *Dioscorea alata,* the root plant from which *ube* is made; Sri Lanka, Department of Agriculture (DOASL); "Crop Recommendations"; DOASL, 2006; Web; 6 Sept. 2013.

Figure 2. Ruthie Santos Caser, my grandmother; Personal photograph by Cid Caser; 14 Aug. 2011.

Like the *halayang* ube dessert, which is a sweet jam derived from the root of the purple yam, this generation is characterized by being rooted in their Filipino culture, having immigrated in late adolescence or adulthood. In his handbook on Filipino American psychology, Kevin Nadal characterizes the first generation as often maintaining many of the values from their country of origin and often having difficulty becoming accustomed to the new values in the United States (7). By examining the experiences of the Ube generation through the personal telling of their own stories in interviews, personal letters, and survey responses, I investigate the ways in which they reconcile their Filipino culture with the local and American cultures of Guam. I nevertheless maintain the caveat that my intention is not to determine the extent to which these immigrants retain their original culture or adopt the American culture. Rather I hope to depict the process whereby they maintain and preserve aspects of their Filipino culture while transforming and being transformed by their new landscape.[10] The processual nature of narratives enables the Filipina immigrant story in Guam to be shown in all its contours. These discursive productions, according to Mohanty, document and record the history of popular struggles; foreground experiential and historical "truth" that has been obscured or erased by hegemonic, elite, or imperialist history; and bear witness in order to change oppressive rules ("Cartographies" 33). The Ube generation's stories are not produced in a vacuum but are instead grounded in lived experiences and personal perceptions that reveal the process of navigating in and through underlying powers.[11] I use three characteristics in the ube metaphor to describe the processes of transplanting, rooting, and growing for the Ube generation, depicting the processual, transformative nature of their identity formation.

THE TRANSPLANTING OF THE UBE GENERATION

In a personal interview, Provido affirms Caser's emotions concerning arrival in Guam. Provido came to Guam in January 1962 through the McCarran Act, after her husband had been granted American citizenship. Migrating also required her to leave her career in social work: "I left my work. Resigned from my work. I was sad to leave. For eight years, I was working there. . . . My sisters were all professionals. They were all in stable condition" and they did not understand her coming to Guam to become "a simple housewife" (Provido, personal interview). Caser's and Provido's sentiments portray the dualistic expectations imposed on Filipina women: although they are encouraged to be successful in their educations and careers, many maintain *marianismo* roles by getting married and having children as primary life goals (Nadal 164).[12]

Figure 3. From left to right: myself, Bernadette Provido, and Bernadette Provido Schumann; Under the American Sun; Schumann, 5 Apr. 2013; Web; 6 Sept. 2013.

Both Caser and Provido embody the educated, middle-class Filipina with a promising career in the Philippines. They, however, were ultimately still subject to patriarchal forces that deprived them of their professions. Unlike the Filipina immigrant from the labor class or provincial background, Caser and Provido were more likely to view their arrival in Guam as a loss, rather than an opportunity. After being prompted in the interview to describe the difficulties of her arrival in Guam and simply asked if she enjoyed it, Caser offers a long pause and justifies her decision to follow her husband: "You know . . . You have . . . I had to be with my husband—wherever my husband goes.… He's in Guam, I have to be in Guam. See, husband and wife, they have to be together" (personal interview). Provido, in the same way, says, "I like the Philippines, but because of my husband here" (sic) (personal interview). These statements align with Retumban's finding that a majority of Filipina women migrated for economic or marital reasons (11).[13]

These statements are also evidence of the disconcerting pattern Espiritu found among Filipino American immigrants, wherein it is common for the woman to subordinate her career and compromise her part to accommodate her husband's career choices (155).

Unable to fulfill her professional expectations, Caser turned to creating narratives in the forms of letters and storytelling to find fulfillment and to remain productive. Mohanty states a crucial point that is often forgotten is that women are produced through their relations with their simultaneous and overlaid contexts, such as kinship structures, colonialism, and organization of labor, and are also implicated in forming these relations ("Under Western Eyes" 203). Bound by conflicting forces of expectation, the women of the Ube generation can feel insignificant and incapable. They can, however, choose the roles and responsibilities they wish to fulfill for their own personal sense of worth and forge these roles within their narratives. Caser and Provido, as economically and politically disadvantaged subjects, attempt to maintain their value and significance by using narrative to affirm that they are upholding their female virtues and remaining dedicated to their families. As an act of agency through its narratives, the Ube generation converts seemingly subordinate positions, such as that of a homemaker or domestic, to positions of empowerment and belonging.

THE ROOTING OF THE UBE GENERATION THROUGH (HO)ME-MAKING

These transformed positions often take place within the domestic, home sphere. In *Yearning*: *Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics*, bell hooks asserts that the very meaning of "home" changes with experience of decolonization and radicalization:

> At times, home is nowhere. At times, one knows only extreme estrangement and alienation. Then home is no longer just one place. It is locations. Home is that place which enables and promotes varied and ever changing perspectives, a place where one discovers new ways of seeing reality, frontiers of difference. (148)

The notion of "home" thus transcends the boundaries of a physical location or household structure and instead becomes a site for change and discovery. Asian American literary scholar Elaine H. Kim proffers that perhaps there is no "home," but a place of contestation that both negates and affirms (xiii). Like home, identity is constantly in process and is less a refuge than a site of contending, multiple meanings (Kim xiii). Although they have left their home in the Philippines, the Ube generation does not see itself as homeless. Instead they use narratives to construct a new home for themselves, simply transplanting the notion of home into a new locale. First-generation Filipino Americans often undergo a change in cultural values, beliefs, habits, and language. Although they have learned certain cultural norms and standards in the Philippines, they may adjust to the dominant cultural norms and standards or completely reject their heritage and adopt the norms of the dominant group (Nadal 52).[14] While she has learned to appreciate the culture and navigate herself within the island community, Caser reveals in her narratives an underlying sense of dissatisfaction. In the interview, Caser recounts how she first began to adapt to the Guam community linguistically, despite her initial apprehension:

> So when I first got to Guam, I was—right behind our house was the Onedera Store. . . . So when, when he saw me . . . I was frequenting his store. . . . All he would say was, "Hafa adai!" ["hello" in Chamorro language] . . . So I would just smile. So after many days, he would say, "Hafa adai!" See, you would answer, "Todo maolek." ["I'm fine" in Chamorro language.] . . . See, I learned. . . . It's easy. It's like Philippines." (sic)

By learning local, colloquial greetings and expressing familiarity with a Chamorro storeowner, Caser espouses the culture of her surroundings and the people of her new community. Caser's narrative of linguistic adaptation shows that (1) migration changes individual and group identities, affiliations, and cultural attitudes and practices; and (2) movement involves the remapping of cultural identities and practices for all those involved, as described by Linda McDowell in her work on feminist geographies (210). I argue that, essentially, the process of home-making for the Ube generation is simultaneously the process of "me-making," so that "home-making" becomes "(ho)me-making"—the making and constructing of home and self. As the home is intimately linked to self, the Ube generation re-make their homes in Guam and also re-make their selves through the assertion of their agency, the gradual restructuring of their culture and values, and the expansion of their perspectives through their written and oral narratives.

Espiritu expands the sense of home-making, defining it as the process by which diverse subjects imagine and make themselves at home in various geographic locations by establishing difference, jostling for power, including and opening doors, and excluding and closing borders (2). By re-envisioning and re-telling their experiences through narratives, they engage in both types of home-making: constructing a sense of home as both an imagined and actual geography and forming roots in both their private domestic space and their larger geographic place (Espiritu 2). They not only revise their reality of home but also re-create reality through the narratives they tell to others, as well as to themselves. The Ube generation thus can use narrative as a cognitive and communicative strategy for navigating the gap in everyday experience between what was expected and what actually takes place (Herman 368-69). They create for themselves a home in what Herman terms a "storyworld," a world evoked implicitly and explicitly through narratives as a means of sense-making (1423-26). Alan M. Berman et al. emphasize exploration and competence in the process of identity formation, with the individual as an intentional agent proactively participating in the construction of her/his world (14). The Ube generation create a storyworld in which they are proactive agents constructing a place—whether physical or metaphorical—that they can call home. Not only, however, do their narratives construct a personal storyworld home, but they also reshape their world within the community by re-envisioning themselves as agents for change. Such agency is perhaps most poignantly seen in Provido's proud declaration, "After all the difficulties and the problems and the hardships . . . I adjusted myself." Similarly, when asked if the presence of different cultures affects their life in Guam, 65 percent of the respondents of Filipina women in Guam asserted that they were not affected because they "were intelligent enough to adjust themselves" (Retumban 30). I argue that instead of falling victim to their circumstances, the Ube generation actively transforms their circumstances through the storytelling of their physical, mental, and emotional acts of rooting themselves in their homes and community.

Caser's and Provido's narratives describe their departure from the Philippines and how each learned to become accustomed to her new surroundings. A prolific writer of letters, Caser sent letters almost daily to various family members, documenting her thoughts, emotions, and the process of her (ho)me-making. Her perception of home is both connected to and disconnected from the physical space in which she lives (Espiritu 2). Espiritu uses the metaphor of a turtle to describe immigrant identity formation within transnational flow, wherein immigrants anchor themselves by "carrying 'home' on their backs" and continuing to invest in "back-home" lives and ties, even as they establish social, economic, and political relations in their new country (9-10). They are able to forge and sustain strong sentimental and material links with their countries of origin by engaging in activities such as sending remittances and communicating with family members back home (Espiritu 70-71). Caser carries her home in the Philippines by remaining connected to and invested in it through written letters that share the stories of her experiences with friends and family back in the Philippines.

Although the process of (ho)me-making can be cathartic and productive, the narratives of the Ube generation reveal that it is not without its difficulties. Caser says she was initially excited to come to Guam because she associated it with America, but was horrified when she was forced to live with four other families in one house, who all had a linguistic background different from her own: "I cried! I was trapped. . . . I was really crying for a few days, in spite of me with my husband. Yeah. I was so sad because grandpa would leave the house eight o'clock. He would come home by midnight, because from work he would go bowling" (personal interview). While learning Chamorro phrases from a local storeowner enabled Caser to better adjust, the linguistic disparity within her first home in Guam was an alienating experience. Like Caser, Provido recalls her initial disenchantment: "Hah! It's hard. It's really hard. During that time we have few. All these parts were all boonies. . . . Only a few buildings are here. . . . It's a hard, hard life. We lived in a Quonset hut and very hard. . . . The first time I came here, in the morning when I woke up, I heard the birds singing in the boonies. So I even cried. Very hard!" (sic) (personal interview). To combat loneliness, Provido spent time sharing experiences with a community of "town mates," who had also come to Guam from her province in the Philippines and eventually became "like family" (personal interview). These conversational narratives between town mates were a means of forming solidarity in the midst of dispersal. Thus, the Ube generation's concept of home is constructed and requires effort. Through the sharing of their experiences through oral storytelling, letters, and everyday conversation with friends and loved ones, the Ube generation endeavors to create a perception of home mentally, physically, and emotionally.

For the Ube generation, the Philippines often acts as a point of reference and a site for comparison, indicating their rootedness in Filipino culture. They are more inclined toward characteristics that remind them of their home and community in the Philippines. The narratives of the Ube generation become a "literature of exile," described by Oscar Campomanes as a tenet of the Filipino American experience wherein the Philippines is either the original or terminal reference point as Filipino Americans reverse the locus of "promised land" from the United States to the Philippines (51). In her narrative, Caser explores how her adaptation to Guam culture is facilitated by Guam's similarity to the Philippines. Throughout the interview Caser describes the aspects she most appreciates, such as fiestas, the Liberation Day carnival, the respect shown to the elderly, and the friendliness and unselfishness of the Chamorro people. Caser exclaims, "It's like the Philippines!" (personal interview). As suggested by Espiritu's turtle metaphor, Caser continues to carry the Philippines on her back through favorable comparisons as a coping mechanism to aid in her adjustment. Similarly, 55 percent of Retumban's respondents stated an appreciation for the Guam cultural values of respect for elders, novenas and fiestas, independence, togetherness, and religiosity (35). When asked about the people of

Guam, 47 percent of respondents said they are similar to Filipinos, friendly, kind, helpful, respectful, and religious (46). Analyzing nostalgia, matchmaking, and displacement in the Filipino American narrative, BegonÞa Simal Gonzaìlez finds that longing and remembrance of homeland underlies the narratives of generations of Filipino Americans and a nostalgic recollection is often associated with the Philippines because it is where childhood or youth were spent (42). The Ube generation's narratives relate Guam to the Philippines perhaps in an attempt to transpose the feelings of home associated with the Philippines to a new home in Guam. They can, in this way, assuage any initial apprehension by affirming familiarity and begin to perceive Guam more positively. The transplanting of the Ube generation therefore involves transposing the feelings of home and familiarity associated with the Philippines to their new home in Guam by making comparisons within their narratives. These comparisons, however, are not always positive.

In a letter to her aunt simply dated December 1, Caser's description is seemingly positive, but further analysis reveals suppressed chagrin:[15]

> Gusto ko pa rin sa Guam ["I still like Guam"], slow pace. Everywhere 2 ["to"] go, shops, restaurants, road, 2 ["to"] always meet my friends, siempre ["of course"] 2 ["to"] meet 1, 2 or 3 friends, hindi puede wala ["it's impossible not to see anybody you know"]. We only have Micronesia Mall, Guam Premium Outlets [and] SM sa ["at"] Agana Shopping Center. Hindi puede mag-loko sa Guam, huli ka agad ["You cannot do crazy things in Guam, or you're caught right away"]. Ma chizmiz ka agad ["You'll be gossiped about"]. Small ang Guam ["Guam is small"], everybody knows everybody, no smog, no pollution kasi ["because"] we're surrounded by the beach, Pacific Ocean. (sic)

By stating that she "still" likes Guam, Caser intentionally affirms her fondness for the island she has been living in for, at the time of the letter, almost four decades. However, her use of "still" may also indicate rationalizing, in which she attempts to convince the reader—and perhaps herself—that she has learned to adapt to the island despite her reservations. She writes that she enjoys the leisurely pace, the places to go, and meeting up with friends. She, however, immediately negates these positive statements by clarifying that she only meets up with a few friends, there are "only" three main shopping centers, and areas are highly regulated. Her statement of "everybody knows everybody" has a slightly negative connotation, as she emphasizes the propensity for gossip. While she optimistically points out the lack of pollution, her comments on the size of Guam imply insignificance. Her emphasis of being surrounded by beach and ocean may be symbolic of the alienation and marginalization she feels.[16] In a review of Filipina narratives, Marianne Villanueva finds that although the narratives ostensibly portray love, suffering, power, family, guilt, failure, and endurance, "peel the sheath and what you find beneath is dispersal, evasion, and ambivalence" (13). Beneath the sheath of contentedness, Caser's narrative reveals the complex emotions that accompany dispersal, such as her rationalizing indicating an unsure answer to her questions of satisfaction. Through this narrative of evasion, she reveals her vulnerability and refusal to confront issues of happiness, contentment, and adjustment. Her narrative is also one of ambivalence toward her current home—a constant back-and-forth between satisfaction and dissatisfaction in her circumstances. The Ube generation must mentally and emotionally contend with changing, conflicting perceptions of home and reconcile senses of familiarity and belonging within a new context. Excavating the stories of the Ube generation reveals an intricate, entangled process of laying down roots in a new home.

THE GROWTH OF THE UBE GENERATION BENEATH THE SURFACE

Initially for this research, I intended to analyze the letters Caser had written to her family members during her migration, describing her process of coming to and settling in Guam. While the causes and consequences of migration and its impacts on the community have been well documented, until recently, far less attention has been paid to the journey itself (McDowell 203). Alvarez's diaries from 1967 to 1970 reveal that Caser frequently sent letters, pictures, and packages from Guam to the Philippines, often weekly to bi-weekly. On December 17, 1968, Alvarez writes: "Mailed . . . cards. rec'd [received] cards. advance. Alpha's came [from] Sandi. Many cards for members from Ruthie (very thoughtful)" (sic). Caser also frequently wrote to her sister, aunt, and friends. Caser's letters came so regularly that even after only a few days, Alvarez became anxious when she did not receive any correspondence, writing on February 19, 1969: "Wondering why Guam doesn't write. Could anyone be sick? Really, no word from them! No news!" (Alvarez). Although family members assured me that some of those early letters had been saved, my attempts to retrieve them from the recipients in the Philippines and the US mainland were unsuccessful.

Caser was also reluctant to share the contents of the letters with me, admitting that these letters were "angry" and "filled with complaints."[17] In the same way, Campbell found that many Filipino immigrants were reluctant to impart individual events due to previous labor problems existent in Guam during the turbulent 1960s (2). Literary critic Jamil Khader finds that although collective memory and cultural trauma play a significant role in the ways the diasporic community is imaged, what is actually remembered by diasporic subjects depends on the relational nature of their identities (6). The Ube generation not only chooses what they wish to remember in their narratives, but also what they wish to divulge through their narratives. Caser's reluctance furthermore demonstrates a fear of the permanence and vulnerability of what is written, perhaps because of what will be revealed and who will be involved. Feminist and postcolonial theorist Trinh T. Minh-ha reasons that such fear is because writing constitutes a commitment of language and denotes a historical solidarity—once written, the story becomes inseparable from history (5). Feminist literary critic and philosopher Hélène Cixous similarly equates writing and saying the truth with death because it is forbidden, hurts everyone, and suppressing the truth satisfies the need for love and cowardice (37).

For Caser, revealing the truth may prevent her from continuing in the storyworld she had toiled to create for herself, jeopardizing her perceived stability. The withheld narrative is also a narrative of meaning- and self-making, as evasion enables her to avoid reality and perpetuate her constructed storyworld. While I am unable to examine these letters directly, I indirectly discern a sense of their contents through the reluctance and repression associated with them. Literary scholar Peter Brooks supports the validity of such indirect reading, finding that the internal, repressed plot of a narrative can be remotivated and consistently reread, since the reader may perceive the complex history of unconscious desire at work in the text, even if it remains unavailable to the conscious subject (516). Although this physical narrative is unavailable, the withheld narrative still demands to be read, organized, and interpreted, as American Studies critic Wai Chee Dimock advises, into some semblance of clarity and order (603). This is described by Dimock as feeling the "texture" of history and historicizing a text "to recover those uneven velocities and shifting densities, to deconstruct its special unity into a virtual (and uncharted) sequence, a momentary conjunction of temporal traces, with no particular center of gravity and no particular teleology" (615). By historicizing and analyzing available narratives, I am still able to extrapolate some of the sense and substance of Caser's migration and adaptation to Guam culture and society. The presence of the repressed in Caser's letters suggests the difficulties of the Ube generation to share their experience as immigrants, wanting to portray their adaptation positively to avoid complications. The inner growth of the Ube generation beneath the surface can still be discerned through close examination of internal meanings inherent in available narratives. Their roots continue to grow and expand beneath what is easily discernible.

For the Ube generation, the production of personal narratives is a means of sustaining these hidden roots. McDowell finds that women migrants often had to create an image of home in a foreign land and their thoughts and feelings are recorded in letters home and in diaries, rather than in official documents and treaties (216). In "Negotiating the Transnational Moment: Immigrant Letters as Performance of a Diasporic Identity," Kathleen A. DeHaan confirms that letters provide a site where immigrants construct, articulate, and deliberate their knowledge of the world (108). They provide vignettes of the migration experience and function rhetorically as a means of maintaining familial connections, providing justification for migration, and negotiating changing identities. Caser's regular correspondence with family members not only enabled her to maintain ties with her homeland, but also provided a space for her to contemplate her situation, articulate her changing views, and ultimately document the dynamism of her identity. As a social practice, letter-writing also helped to inhibit the loneliness of immigration by enabling care, concern, affection, and emotional support to be related across distances (DeHaan 109). However, immigrant letters are not indisputably accurate accounts of immigrant's daily lives and rather are selected reconstructions of events, conversations, and observations that express the ongoing negotiation of a contingent and emerging worldview (DeHaan 114). Although immigrant letters are representative of lived experiences, what remains unwritten and unseen reveals as much as what is written and allowed to be read.

Caser's explicit references to religion and medicine reveal her desires for authority and value. References to God, prayer, and medicine are tropes of Caser's letters, as evidenced in a letter dated May 29, 2006:

> Auntie dear, I know you're on your prayer time now. Let's talk for few minutes. Aspirin daily can prevent forgetfulness. (Alzheimiers) [sic] . . . We should take also [vitamin] E. for good memory, 1,000 . . . Too much is harmful! . . . B-vitamins are vital for brain's health. When you crave for tomatoes, it's a sign that you're anemic!!! . . . God bless, I'll write again today! (sic)

Even in her recent letters, she continues to show an interest in medicine, perhaps in an attempt to reclaim the career that was sacrificed in migration. Displaying knowledge of medicine endows her with an authority and productivity that she may not feel as a full-time homemaker in Guam. Repetition of medical knowledge constitutes a return that describes the end in relation to the beginning, so that by shuttling back and forth, the end is delayed and the shape and detours of the middle can be revealed in the way that the writer wants it to be portrayed (Brooks 512). Through the repetitions in her narratives, Caser attempts to rewrite what has already been. Her faith and spiritual beliefs, in the same way, act as a salve for the hurts incurred and are a source of empowerment and hope, not only for herself, but also for her family whom she frequently writes. Her repetition of medical knowledge and faith displays a need to reenact, reproduce, and work through repressed material as if it were present, rather than simply recollecting it as belonging to the past (Brooks 511). Frequency and iteration indicate a range of possibilities and allocate attention to evaluating certain events (Herman 1751-53). By repeating the features of professional knowledge and faith in her narratives, Caser emphasizes their importance to her past and to her life, in general. The narratives of the Ube generation are a means to actively and currently work through the most troubling issues of the past, making it possible for them to accept their current circumstances by both repeating and repressing them.

TANGLED ROOTS OF TRANSNATIONAL FAMILIES

The most predominantly repeated aspect of Caser's narratives is her emotional account of her transnational family. Caser immigrated shortly to Guam after my mother, Alpha Espina, was born, leaving her in the care of Alvarez in the Philippines.[18] Within the first second of the interview, without being prompted, Caser began to justify her decision to leave my mother in the Philippines:

> But I wanted to take your mother [Espina] with me, but my mother [Alvarez] said, "Over my dead body!" . . . And then everyone was saying, "Oh, do you want your mother to die? Leave! Leave the Alpha [Espina] with her! . . . Then she [Alvarez] said, "No! No! She's mine! Over my dead body! You cannot get her!" So, so I went to Guam and left her [Espina], see? . . . I was a very good mom [and] daughter. But your mom [Espina] said, "Why did you leave me in the Philippines?" . . . [Alvarez is] my mom. She's my mom and she said, "Over my dead body." . . . Nobody could touch her [Espina]—not even me. Yeah, not even me.

Caser continued to repeat the phrase "over my dead body" and constantly alluded to her difficulty in leaving my mother. These circumstances are common among transnational families, Espiritu finds, with some cases having members wait for more than a decade to be reunited with their loved ones in the United States (78). Although separation was often imposed and prolonged by restrictive immigration policies and an convoluted petition process, in some instances, like that of Caser, separation was a deliberate decision to accommodate the often conflicting needs and desires of individual family members (Espiritu 78). For those in the Ube generation, the separation of families is contingent on both governmental and familial obstacles and considerations.

Nevertheless, in the years that Caser was separated from her young daughter, narratives constituted an integral means of maintaining their relationship despite the distance. Caser communicated her concern and care through her letters, with accompanying gifts. Alvarez's diaries, in turn, document Espina's activities daily with the intention of sending them to Caser in Guam, so that Caser would remain aware and knowledgeable of Espina's growth and development. Caser could then experience and observe the growth of her child vicariously through Alvarez's vivid and meticulous descriptions, such as how often she urinated, how contented she was to look at pictures of "Mama Yutie [Ruthie] and Daddy Eddie" and her siblings in Guam, and how often Espina would ask to go to Guam to be with them. Many transnational families diligently keep in touch through letters, phone calls, photos, visits, and resources and remittances sent back to the Philippines (Espiritu 78).

On March 26, 1969, Alvarez wrote how, even as a toddler, Espina oscillated between her devotion to grandmother and mother, Guam or the Philippines. Sociologist Rhacel Salazar Parreñas finds that children left behind by Filipina migrant mothers often look for emotional cues as signs of a caring mother and feel loved by a mother's projected grief, suffering abroad for the sake of her family (192). While Espina felt love and emotional care from Alvarez, Espina also expressed a devotion to her mother, Caser, who would send her words of care and concern along with gifts from far away.

Filipina migrant mothers often attempt to fulfill the expectations of their children and overcompensate for their physical absence through "intensive mothering," defined as maintaining involvement despite distance, and establishing intimacy through routine phone calls, letters, text messages, *balikbayan* boxes, and scriptures (Parreñas 190-91).[19] In the personal interview, Caser reasons, "We all gave everything . . . all of our everything to your mom," suggesting that separation did not affect the extent of love and care given to my mother.[20] As members of the Ube generation are sometimes separated from their children and family upholding familial ties requires devotion and duties to be stretched out across nations and cultures. Both parties act as sender and receiver of narratives, and both those departed and those left behind are shaped by the transnational context. Family dynamics and relationships are indefinitely altered to incorporate the separation and dispersal of family members into different cultures and distant communities. In doing so, the Ube generation uses the sending and receiving of narratives to create an expansive identity that is entangled in their location and the location of their offspring.[21]

CONCLUSION

Because of the multitude of emotions associated with being transplanted by migration, growing roots through (ho)me-making, and expanding roots in a transnational family, Caser now defines home and posits her mobility contingently on her family.[22] On the second page of a recent, undated letter, Caser writes her aunt: "I want to be by my kids [and] APO's [grandchildren] They need me" (sic).[23] She thus defines herself and her value in taking care of her family. When asked in the personal interview, Caser says that Guam is now her home:

> Where is home? Of course, Guam. Grandpa was even planning to retire in the Philippines and I said . . . "Oh! Now we are old, we are starting to divorce?" . . . Of course I want to stay in Guam! My kids are here! My grandkids are here! . . . Go to Philippines and I will stay here. . . . See, because I don't want Philippines. I will be—you will be killing me. My heart will be with my kids. Here in Guam. In my heart, I cannot leave my children. (sic)

Although she had initially come to Guam to follow her husband, she now claims an identity independent of him and is more inclined to follow her own desires and aspirations. There is permanence and resolve as she concludes the oral narrative of her immigrant experience by proclaiming Guam as home. Caser is able to retrospectively evaluate her decisions and assess her progression through the years as she shares her oral narrative. Like Caser, when asked if she thinks of Guam or the Philippines as her home, Provido contemplates, "Oh, I think now, after more than fifty years in Guam, I consider Guam [home]. . . . It's very hard there in the Philippines. . . . If we have a home there, if we have a house there, but all my sisters are gone. . . . It's hard to live without your children. . . . The family is here" (sic) (personal interview). Caser's and Provido's resolve to continue in Guam attests to the multi-rootedness of the Ube generation's identity because of the interworking of migration, (ho)me-making, repression, recollection, and revision. In "Diaspora and Cultural Memory," Ann Hua describes this as the contradictory and multi-accented "double perspective" of diasporic subjects, wherein they acknowledge an earlier existence elsewhere and have a critical relationship with the cultural politics of their present home, all embedded within the experience of displacement (195). Comparative politics researcher Consuelo Cruz finds that identity is dependent upon the choices individuals make within shifting sociopolitical and historical environments, stressing the intersubjective and constructed properties of identity (279). Remembering, re-membering, and documenting memories through narrative act as a catalyst for self-recovery and community building for these diasporic women, enabling them to resist the colonial tropes of victimization and Otherness (Hua 205). Their narratives enable the Ube generation to articulate to themselves and communicate to others the intricacies of their multi-sited, multi-rooted identities.

This analysis through narrative theory is not meant to be reductive, but rather I seek to inductively discern some semblance of a Filipina identity in Guam using available sources. While I acknowledge that these narratives alone cannot provide a complete representation of this population, I do hope that they will contribute to an understanding and recognition of the myriad of voices that compose this immigrant identity. Informed by feminist theory, this work recognizes the importance of rewriting and remembering history to counter the gaps, erasures, and misunderstandings of hegemonic masculinist history and also form a shared political consciousness and self-identity (Mohanty, "Cartographies" 34). The narratives of these individual women are not just indicative of their singular consciousnesses, but instead these women also "speak *from within* a collective" (Mohanty, "Cartographies" 36). The collective voices of the Ube generation depict the interrelatedness of their experiences and present an immigrant identity that is constituted through a range of intersecting, competing forces and a process reconciled through agency.

The interlinkages of home, work, family, and culture in the identity of the Ube generation can be metaphorized as expansive, enmeshed, cross-cutting roots that establish them in both Guam and the Philippines, connect them to areas of significance, and ultimately provide them nourishment for growth. Though the initial transplanting is delicate and painful, their narratives affirm that over time, this Ube "Roots" generation germinate, develop, and eventually thrive.

ENDNOTES

[1] By creating a collective memory, as suggested by Consuelo Cruz in her study of identity and persuasion, Filipino Americans can be impelled to define themselves intersubjectively through shared past struggles and historical accidents so that they can collectively discern and perpetuate a veridical account of history (276).

[2] The importance of my grandmother's story to my personal story is characteristic of Filipino culture, wherein elders are encouraged to spend time with their grandchildren to form bonds across generations and impart knowledge and affection (Nadal 42).

[3] Espiritu argues that in order to capture the varied contexts and experiences of migration and to understand the motivations and behaviors of those who migrate, their lives need to be more intimately examined, taking into consideration both the social contexts in which they decide to migrate and the complex social and familial networks that support the migration process (24).

[4] In order to avoid this common error in their own work, Rumbaut and Portes bring the narratives of the immigrants to the fore and listen as they share their struggles and fears.

[5] Both Provido's and Retumban's respondents offer viable comparisons. Provido arrived in Guam a few years before Caser and they share similar experiences. Moreover, her daughter, Bernie Provido Schumann, is a second-generation Filipina in Guam and a subject in my paper "The Sapin Sapin Generation," published in Pacific Asia Inquiry 5.1. Retumban's respondents were all first-generation immigrants, lived in Guam for no less than five years at the time of the survey (1976), and most were over the age of 20 (55).

[6] The first-generation Filipina immigrant in Guam has recently captured cinematic attention through the release of Mga Dayo: Resident Aliens, a feature film for the Cinemalaya Film Festival that was shot in Guam and written and directed by local filmmaker Julius Sotomayor-Cena. The film depicts the personal struggles of three Filipina immigrants in Guam during Thanksgiving Day and uses the varied experiences of the three characters to resist a monolithic representation of Filipina immigrants as domestics or female "entertainers." The film's (in) conclusion parallels the inconclusiveness of these issues, which I hope to elucidate further through my research.

[7] I use the sapin-sapin dessert, which contains a layer of ube, in my paper on the second generation of Filipinas in Guam, whom I term the Sapin-Sapin generation. This paper is published in Pacific Asia Inquiry 5.1. I extend this metaphor into my research on the third generation of Filipinas in Guam, using the halo-halo dessert, which also contains halayang ube. I discuss the third, Halo-Halo generation in my chapter to be published in Representing the Feminine: Gender, Identity, and Nation in Postcolonial Southeast Asian Literature.

[8] This generation is associated with the "brain drain" of the Philippines: the ineffectiveness of the Philippine economy to absorb high-level skills, such as physicians, engineers, and skilled laborers, and the loss of these professionals to the opportunities presented by migration. Unlike the previous generations of laborers and non-sponsored students, this wave of professional, educated Filipino immigrants was allowed to thrive because of

the Immigration Act of 1965, which repealed both the Asian Exclusion Act of 1924 and the Walter-McCarran Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1952 (Nadal 15). With the repeal of United States exclusion laws, Filipino immigration quickly increased in the 1970s. The 1965 Immigration Act, which abolished the national-origins quotas and permitted entry based mainly on family reunification or occupational characteristics, dramatically increased the number of Asian immigrants. The Philippines has been the largest source of documented immigrants from Asia and are the second largest source of all immigration, second only to Mexico (Espiritu 31). See Campbell, Strobel, and Posadas.

[9] Approximately 20 percent are unskilled and the remaining percentage is composed of students, preschool children, infants, and the unemployed, according to Mangibin.

[10] This position is adopted from Espiritu's methodology, which rejects the essentialist position that identity is bipolar, gravitating toward either pole of assimilation or nativism, as suggested by assimilationist and pluralist schools. Instead, Espiritu presents the strategies that Filipino Americans have used to construct distinct new cultures and subcultures and rework dominant ideologies about their place in the United States (180). Espiritu maintains that immigrants and their children live at the intersection of multiple subject positions, instead of being positioned in a singular unified manner (180).

[11] Mohanty emphasizes the importance of life story-oriented narratives. Testimonials, life stories, and oral stories are a significant mode of remembering and recoding experiences and struggles because they are contingent upon the exigencies of the political and commercial marketplace and the knowledge, skills, motivation, and location of the subject (Mohanty, "Cartographies" 33).

[12] According to Nadal, current Filipino and Filipino American gender roles may reflect a combination of indigenous, Spanish, and American values (164). Although indigenous Filipino culture was gender-neutral, after centuries of colonization, Spanish gender role values of machismo (male dominance) and marianismo (female submissiveness) still seep into interpersonal dynamics between men and women.

[13] There are numerous motives for Filipino migration, including economic, political, familial, and personal aspirations. Espiritu attributes migration to the US to the grave economic conditions in the Philippines, including a weak infrastructure after US withdrawal from Vietnam, bankruptcy and inflation at the end of the Marcos era, gigantic debt, dependence on foreign imports, massive unemployment, and unequal distribution of wealth (31). The martial law and abuses of the government imposed by Marcos also prompted mass immigration of Filipinos to the United States in search of reprieve and social freedoms (Espiritu 32). Moreover, individual motives—personal longings, dreams, and fantasies about different possibilities—propel many Filipino immigrants to pursue opportunities and a higher standard of living for themselves and their families (Espiritu 36).

[14] I consulted Alicia M. del Prado and A. Timothy Church's "Development and Validation of the Enculturation Scale for Filipino Americans" for a description of multidimensional models of enculturation that suggest that one's orientations to host and native cultures are relatively independent dimensions, contrary to uni-dimensional models of acculturation.

[15] Although a year is not indicated in the letter, Caser gathers from context that it was possibly sent between 2004 and 2006.

[16] Despite problems, setbacks, and suffering, most immigrants view their American lives in a positive light, translating into high expectations and sustained effort to achieve them; this optimism may also suggest the desire for immigrant adult to give the "right" answer (Rumbaut and Portes 1347-50). Pressure to react positively is also accentuated by the Filipino value of pakikisama ("social acceptance or conformity"), which seeks social acceptance and values the collective over the individual (Nadal 40).

[17] She at one point became so obstinate and questioned, "Why are they [professors] so hot on grandmas anyway?"

[18] My mother's identity formation is the subject of my paper, "The Sapin Sapin Generation," published in Pacific Asia Inquiry 5.1.

[19] Balikbayan boxes, literally "repatriate boxes," are packages sent to or brought to the Philippines.

[20] Some of these acts of devotion include hanging a life-sized painting of Espina in the house to remind her siblings of their sister abroad and "stealing" her siblings' toys to send to Espina in the Philippines (Caser, personal interview).

[21] Sustaining a transnational family requires the effort of those who leave and those left behind, in order to foster a sense of devotion and togetherness despite distance. In a study of local and transnational negotiations of identity, Lotta Haikkola describes the transnational context as a field of relations that encompass both local and translocal social relationships that form the transnational context of everyday life—a network that constitutes multiple destinations and nodes, rather than a singular link of sending and receiving (158).

[22] Of interesting note is that both Caser and Provido remark that their children do not speak any Filipino language, do not consider the Philippines their home, and have an aversion to certain aspects of the Filipino culture, such as food.

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