

Constructing Modern Filipino Identity: A Cultural Thematic Analysis of Selected Short Stories from Bamboo Girls: Stories and Poems from a Forgotten Life by Ian Rosales Casocot

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Abstract

Modern Filipino Identity is shaped by cultural, historical, social, and everyday experiences. This study examined the formation of modern Filipino identity through the cultural themes of five selected short stories from Ian Rosales Casocot's *Bamboo Girls: Stories and Poems from a Forgotten Life*. Grounded in social constructivism and an interpretivist perspective, the study employed a qualitative literary-cultural research design. The study purposively selected and analyzed five short stories using Reflexive Thematic Analysis, following Braun and Clarke's (2022) six phases. Five major cultural themes emerged: Family Power and Survival; Strength Through Hardship; Poverty and Resourcefulness; Politics in Everyday Life; and Memory and identity. These themes reveal that modern Filipino identity is fluid and continuously negotiated through family relationships, resilience, socioeconomic realities, political experiences, and personal and collective memories. The study concludes that contemporary Philippine short stories serve as cultural texts that document and reconstruct modern Filipino identity while providing insights into Filipino lived experiences, cultural awareness, and critical literacy.

Keywords: *Modern Filipino Identity, cultural thematic analysis, Reflexive Thematic Analysis, contemporary Philippine literature, Ian Rosales Casocot, Bamboo Girls*

Introduction

Rationale

Modern Filipino Identity is an evolving social and cultural construct shaped by personal, social, cultural, and political experiences. Rather than being defined by a fixed set of characteristics, identity develops through interactions among individuals, families, communities, and broader social contexts (Eslit, 2024). Berger and Luckmann (1966) explain that meanings and social realities are constructed through social interaction and become embedded in everyday life. Similarly, Hall (1990) views cultural identity as an ongoing process of construction and reconstruction. Thus, in contemporary Philippine society, Filipino Identity may be understood as an ongoing negotiation among traditional values, regional diversity, modernization, and social change.

Moreover, literature provides an important medium for representing and interpreting Identity construction. It enables individuals and communities to express, preserve, and interpret their beliefs, values, memories, and lived experiences (Semiyeve, 2025). In particular, contemporary Philippine short fiction portrays personal and sociocultural experiences that reflect the complexities of Filipino life. Such literature represents family, memory, social conditions, and everyday experiences as spaces where cultural meanings and identities are negotiated (Sacurom et al., 2024). Similarly, regional and Philippine-based literature contributes to the understanding of Filipino identity by representing the histories, languages, traditions, and social realities of specific communities (Baradillo, 2023). In this context, the present study focused on five selected short stories from Ian Rosales Casocot's *Bamboo Girls: Stories and Poems from a Forgotten Life*. The stories portray experiences involving family, hardship, poverty, politics, memory, and identity, providing relevant contexts for examining how cultural meanings and social experiences contribute to the construction of modern Filipino identity.

Although previous studies have examined Filipino identity and Philippine Literature from historical, cultural, regional, and literary perspectives, a gap remains in understanding how interconnected cultural elements are represented collectively in contemporary Philippine short fiction. Existing studies have provided valuable insights into Filipino cultural experiences; however, fewer studies have specifically examined how family, hardship, poverty, politics, memory, and identity interact within selected contemporary short stories. Therefore, a focused qualitative examination is needed to understand how these interconnected cultural narratives shape and represent modern Filipino identity.

Accordingly, this study employed Braun and Clarke's (2022) Reflexive Thematic Analysis to identify recurring patterns and meanings within the selected stories. The analysis examined how the narratives represented social realities, lived experiences, cultural practices,

and relationships associated with modern Filipino identity. By examining these elements collectively, the study sought to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how contemporary Philippine literary narratives construct and negotiate identity.

Furthermore, the study has implications for the teaching and learning of Philippine Literature. Understanding how Filipino identity is represented in contemporary literary works may help educators develop culturally responsive approaches to literature instruction and may encourage students to examine literary texts in relation to their culture, history, communities, and social experiences. In this way, contemporary Philippine Literature may serve not only as an object of literary analysis but also as a resource for understanding cultural identity and diverse Filipino experiences.

Literature Review

Understanding modern Filipino identity requires viewing identity as a social and cultural construction. Berger and Luckmann (1966) explain that identity develops through social interaction and shared meanings, while Eslit (2024) emphasizes that Filipino cultural identity is continuously shaped by the interaction between Philippine cultural heritage and broader social influences. Thus, identity may be understood not as a fixed characteristic but as an ongoing process influenced by historical, cultural, and social experiences. Within this perspective, Philippine Literature provides an important space for examining how these experiences are represented and interpreted. Contemporary and regional Philippine Literature captures diverse Filipino experiences and social realities, making literary texts relevant sources for examining cultural identity (Casocot, 2022; Alunan, 2023; Baradillo, 2023).

Family is one important context through which Filipino identity is constructed. Filipino family relationships are characterized by interdependence, mutual support, respect for elders, and collective responsibility. Falzarano et al. (2022) and Famoso (2021) emphasize the importance of family values in Filipino social life, while Gundran et al. (2022) identify family relationships and responsibilities as significant aspects of the Filipino social experience. Moreover, Costes (2024) highlights the negotiation between family obligations and individual aspirations in identity formation. Taken together, these studies suggest that family provides an important cultural context for negotiating belonging, responsibility, authority, and personal aspirations.

Beyond family, experiences of hardship may contribute to resilience and self-understanding. Grygorenko and Naydonova (2023) and Miranda and Cruz (2022) identify adaptation, coping, and social support as important aspects of resilience. Similarly, Rajagopalan et al. (2024) associate resilience with cultural identity and social support. These studies indicate that resilience is influenced not only by individual capacity but also by social and cultural

environments. Consequently, literary representations of hardship can reveal how individuals respond to adversity through perseverance, adaptation, and resourcefulness.

Socioeconomic conditions also shape the experiences through which identity develops. Poverty influences individuals' choices, opportunities, relationships, and everyday experiences within their communities. Márquez Pulido (2021) examines how poverty can influence people's perceptions and experiences, while Yates (2022) emphasizes the importance of understanding poverty within its broader social context. Therefore, literary representations of poverty may extend beyond material deprivation by portraying how individuals and families demonstrate agency, resilience, aspiration, and resourcefulness despite socioeconomic limitations.

Political experiences likewise form part of the social context of identity construction. Political realities may influence family life, community relationships, civic participation, and personal experiences. Coronel (2022) examines the relationship between political memory and Philippine experiences, while Bronstein (2023) considers the influence of religious authority on social experiences. Mayer et al. (2024) discuss participation, communication, and political identity, whereas Yusingco (2022) focuses on participation in governance. Furthermore, Diaz (2025) connects political and socioeconomic experiences with issues of justice, accountability, and national identity. These perspectives suggest that political consciousness develops not only through formal political participation but also through everyday social experiences and relationships.

Memory is another significant dimension of identity because it connects past experiences with present understandings of self and community. Lazarus (2023) establishes a relationship between memory and identity, while Wildschut and Sedikides (2023) emphasize the role of nostalgia and autobiographical memory in maintaining continuity. In the Philippine context, Coronel (2022) demonstrates how memory contributes to the understanding of historical and political experiences. Accordingly, literary representations of remembering and forgetting can provide insights into how individuals interpret their past and negotiate their present identities.

Overall, the literature establishes that Filipino identity is shaped by interconnected familial, social, cultural, economic, political, and historical experiences. However, although these dimensions have been examined across various studies, their interconnected representation in contemporary Philippine short fiction remains less explored. In particular, limited attention has been given to how family, hardship, poverty, politics, and memory operate collectively in shaping representations of modern Filipino identity. To address this gap, the present study applies Braun and Clarke's (2022) Reflexive Thematic Analysis to five selected short stories from *Bamboo Girls: Stories and Poems from a Forgotten Life*. The study therefore examines how recurring cultural meanings and social experiences are interconnected within the narratives and how they contribute to the construction and representation of modern Filipino identity.

Epistemological and Theoretical Perspective

This study was grounded in Social Constructivism, which argues that meanings and identities are socially constructed through experiences and interactions (Creswell & Poth, 2024). It also includes an interpretivist approach, in that meanings are construed through context and interpretation (Kouam, 2024; Mustofa, 2024). Accordingly, the researcher employed a qualitative literary-cultural research design and used Reflexive Thematic Analysis to understand and interpret the meaning of the selected short stories (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

Objectives

The study examined how modern Filipino identity was constructed through the cultural themes embedded in the selected short stories from *Bamboo Girls: Stories and Poems from a Forgotten Life*. Specifically, it examined how modern Filipino identity was constructed through Family Power and Survival; Strength Through Hardship; Poverty and Resourcefulness; Politics in Everyday Life; and Memory and Identity.

Methodology

This chapter outlines the methods employed for the study of the formation of Modern Filipino Identity through the culturally relevant themes apparent in the selected stories from *Bamboo Girls: Stories and Poems from a Forgotten Life*.

Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative literary-cultural research design. The qualitative approach was employed as this study was more interested in the meaning and the representation of culture as opposed to the quantification of the same. In this study, I have adopted Braun and Clarke's (2022) Reflexive Thematic Analysis to identify, elaborate, and interpret the meanings contained in the selected short stories.

Data Sources

The primary data consisted of five short stories from Ian Rosales Casocot's *Bamboo Girls: Stories and Poems from a Forgotten Life*. The five short stories included: "Everything Taken Together Has the Weight of Heaven", "It Always Breaks My Heart A Little to Let You

Go”, “*What We Choose to Remember, What We Choose to Forget*”, “*You Got It All*”, and “*Enough of This Is True*”. These short stories were selected as they contained layers upon layers of representation of modern-day Filipino identity and supported the research questions. The secondary data used consisted of scholarly books and published articles from reputable scholarly journals on Philippine and Filipino cultural studies, identity and literature, as well as qualitative thematic analyses.

Data Collection Process

The selection of the five short stories was the first step in this process. Ian Rosales Casocot permitted their use in academic research. The researcher looked into each short story several times. This was to assist in developing recognition for the characters, the order of the events, and the overall sense and context of the language. The researcher put marks along the text to indicate where they expected to find data and prepared a short summary of each short story to help in the planned analysis. The short stories were the principal data. The researcher looked into the short stories in detail after familiarization, and did Reflexive Thematic Analysis, as described by Braun and Clarke (2022). The researcher coded and applied the analysis in order to discover the regularities and the meanings in the data. A literature analysis expert also reviewed the coding, analysis, and the textual information. The researcher made the final translation of the analysis.

Data Analysis Procedure

This study employed Reflexive Thematic Analysis as described by Braun and Clarke (2022). Familiarity with the research stories was achieved through repeated reading. Initial coding was performed on fragments of the text that the researcher perceived as significant in the context of the research questions. The researcher subsequently considered the coding and developed possible themes based on similar coding. At this stage, the researcher analyzed the text in the context of the potential themes that had been developed and examined if the themes captured the relevant patterns of meaning. After this, refinements of the themes were performed to address any issues of clarity, and redundant themes were discarded. The final themes were named. The themes thus developed were analyzed in the context of the research questions along with the literature pertaining to these themes. The final themes were named as Family Power and Survival, Strength Through Hardship, Poverty and Resourcefulness, Politics in Everyday Life, and Memory and Identity. The themes were developed post the completion of data collection and were the result of coding and analysis.

Trustworthiness of the Study

The author of the research engaged with the data repeatedly. Further trustworthiness was ensured through thorough documentation of the analytical phases, peer debriefing, and the researcher reflexivity. The peer debriefer was given access to the analytical phases and the accompanying data. The researcher maintained reflexivity by describing the author's role in creating meaning from the data, as described in Braun and Clarke's (2022) Reflexive Thematic Analysis.

Research Protocol Ethics

Because the study includes no human participants, the primary ethical concern was using copyrighted literary materials as primary data. The author of the selected stories granted approval for their academic use and for citation. This approval made it legitimate for the research to examine and quote the literary works. The work and the particular literary collection were cited and acknowledged throughout the research.

Results and Discussion

The Reflexive Thematic Analysis of the five short stories in *Bamboo Girls: Stories and Poems from a Forgotten Life* identified five inter-related themes: Family Power and Survival, Strength Through Hardship, Poverty and Resourcefulness, Politics in Daily Life, and Memory and Identity. The themes reflect the complexity and dimension of contemporary Filipino identity and how it varies through different family networks, the lived experiences of hardship and poverty, politics, and the memory of the past. Each of the themes is explained below with accompanying evidence from the short stories.

Theme 1: Family Power and Survival

Family Power and Survival is illustrated by patterns and examples of family power, kinship, obligations, responsibility, and influence. The data indicated that family is a cultural space within which the values, norms, and opinions, as well as the authority of the individual, are all contextual. This is related to Javillonar (2023) and Falzarano et al. (2022) who stressed the closeness and mutual support, as well as the interdependence and shared responsibility, that characterizes family relationships. Likewise, Alburez-Gutierrez et al. (2022) defined kinship networks as both a source of support and obligation, while Mamayson (2025) underscored the

continued relevance of respect for elders and family obligations. These authors are all agreed that family continues to be the mainstay of a culture of values and identity.

Excerpt 1

“As far as Mamerta Vea was concerned, tersely worded disapproval from her should have been enough to put a stop to anything she found impolite or objectionable.” (Enough of This Is True, p.123)

Mamerta Vea’s disapproval of family members is more informal and relational and has been identified as a form of family authority. Family members obey and pay respect to members who are elder relatives. Family authority, as this example illustrates, can informally rely on the respect of family members and culture. This is consistent with what Mamayson (2025) has outlined, the respect that is due to elders, and with Famoso’s (2021) view of the family as the basis for the formation of values and where individuals bear moral responsibility.

Excerpt 2

“From the shadows that cloaked her near the door to her mother’s room, Angela emerged into the light ... and felt she had use for marriage after all.” (Enough of This Is True, p. 137)

Angela's feelings about marriage are expressed within her family. The passage indicates that family obligations and concerns balance against family members’ aspirations and personal choices. Falzarano et al. (2022) and Javillonar (2023) support that family responsibility and interdependence are of prime importance. This is also supported by Costes (2024), who noted that the Filipino identity is formed through balancing family obligations and personal aspirations. Seño (2023) also supports that Filipino identity is built on family obligations and social obligations.

Excerpt 3

“Arsenio—after a seduction meant to break his heart ended successfully for the schemers—would be made to fall in love.” (Enough of This is True, p. 144)

This shows how one family member's emotions and behaviors can be shaped by the multiple family systems they interact with. Arsenio shows the friction between the need to be independent and the pull of family and kin. This friction is seen in Alburez-Gutierrez et al. (2022) and Gundran et al. (2022), where the authors emphasize the importance of obligations and reciprocal duties within Filipino kinship ties.

The three excerpts demonstrate that family is the primary cultural context in which authority, responsibility, autonomy and choice balance against the collective interest. The Modern Filipino Identity, therefore, is constructed in the context of the family, with individual autonomy being balanced against family expectations. This also supports Costes (2024) and Bonifacio et al. (2022) who situated family responsibilities, the individual, and cultural identity and their relation to personal aspiration. Family subsequently provides both the support and the framework within which individuals negotiate their roles and responsibilities.

Theme 2: Strength Through Hardship

Patterns of emotional adversity, resilience, self-awareness and personal growth have combined to form the theme of Strength Through Hardship. It is interesting to note that hardship is not synonymous with suffering. Participants identified hardship as an experience that builds perseverance and a deeper understanding of the self. Grygorenko and Naydonova (2023) refer to resilience as the capacity to adapt and recover from trauma, while Kenny (2022) and Bovin et al. (2022) show how trauma and suffering are documented in creative and social contexts.

Excerpt 1

“Years later, I believe there is still a part of me that agonizes from an inexplicable sense of abandonment, constant and haunting.” (Everything Taken Together Has the Weight of Heaven, p. 26)

The passage illustrates how hardship can be integrated into the identity of an individual beyond the original experience of hardship. Abandonment is not an experience that gradually disappears. It is more accurately described as a continuation of the emotional experience of the individual, which is demonstrated in the case of the narrator. This also supports Bovin et al.

(2022), who contend that trauma and suffering are framed within social and individual context. Personal resilience is not the absence of pain.

Excerpt 2

“There is no such thing as becoming inured. I wear abandonment like a silent badge of living and surviving.” (Everything Taken Together Has the Weight of Heaven, p. 26)

In resilience metaphors, the experience of suffering is often subverted into a marker of survival. In this case, the passage suggests resilience is the ability to keep living with pain rather than evolving into a state of callous uncaring about pain. This way of thinking about resilience is in line with Grygorenko and Naydonova (2023) who suggest resilience is the ability to keep functioning in the face of misfortune. This also reinforces Rajagopalan et al. (2024) who claim the interconnections of cultural identity and social support impact the ways one can cope with hardship.

Excerpt 3

“There was no understanding what I felt then. The feeling seemed alien, and I had no vocabulary to account for its viciousness.” (Everything Taken Together Has the Weight of Heaven, p. 35)

The inability to articulate suffering demonstrates how pain cannot be articulated and understood. In this case, the inability to name the pain is a representation of the trauma that degrades emotional and verbal comprehension. Kenny (2022) has also outlined literature's ability to represent pain in a way that is difficult to verbalize, and Aquino (2025) has associated literature with trauma and the beginning of the healing process of one's identity.

The excerpts demonstrate that resilience is not equivalent to the absence of suffering, but rather is the ability to understand suffering, and continue to move forward in the presence of it. As shown in Miranda and Cruz (2022) and Rajagopalan et al. (2024), relationships and social supports are important to coping and developing resilience. It can therefore be argued that

poverty plays a role in the formation of the modern Filipino identity through the development of perseverance, self-understanding, and the ability to persevere through hardship.

Theme 3: Poverty and Resourcefulness

Poverty and Resourcefulness arose from patterns of material deficiency, adaptability, perseverance and optimism for possible futures. The findings evidence that poverty is described as the lack of material resources as well as the lived social condition that informs and impacts everyday decisions, relationships, and the opportunities and aspirations of one's family. For Yates (2022), the social condition is a matter of one's life chances. For Márquez Pulido (2021), people negotiate structural constraints through creative, daily practices. McKay et al. (2025) and Gogola (2025) associate financial constraints to family relations and household well-being, respectively.

Excerpt 1

"We had been living in a ramshackle downstairs apartment somewhere in the bowels of Tubod for five years by then." (You Got It All, p. 67)

"Ramshackle" describes poverty as long-term and lived, as opposed to simply a passing hardship. The length of time refers to economic restrictions, and the passage signals their long presence and the limited space they create in everyday family life, aligning with Yates (2022) and Albert (2023) on the effects of economic vulnerability on Filipino households. It also corresponds with Cortes (2021), where everyday environments and material conditions signal the cultural and emotional dimensions of poverty.

Excerpt 2

"Mother was an irrepressible woman who could make do with anything, and turn even the shittiest of circumstances into livable comfort." (You Got It All, p. 69)

"Make do" shows creativity, flexibility, and perseverance in the face of the challenges of taking care of the family, and poverty is not the dominant feature of the family. This supports the finding of Márquez Pulido (2021) where everyday inspiration becomes a response to everyday constraints. It supports McKay et al. (2025) and Garcia et al. (2022), who study financial constraints on family well-being and relationships.

Excerpt 3

“Every day his route was a constant stream of pharmacies and little shops dotting the commercial enclaves... all of them along Colon Street...” (You Got It All, p. 81)

The character’s repeated movement through commercial spaces indicates an ongoing search for work and economic opportunity. Instead of remaining inactive amidst poverty, the character engages with the economic terrain with the intention to change their circumstances. This relates to Yates (2022), who links everyday activities to large-scale economic and social conditions, and Albert (2023), who addresses the economic insecurity of Filipino households.

Poverty isn’t just about a lack of material possessions. It influences family life, aspirations, everyday choices, and the availability of opportunities. While the stories also show how poverty evokes ingenuity, perseverance, and dignity, this reflects what Sebola and Abodunrin (2021) and Adabpal and Chauhan (2025) cite in *Portraying Poverty and Social Exclusion*, which affirms that literature is an important means by which poverty, inequality and the experiences of the socially excluded serve as a means for social inclusion. Thus, poverty is a defining characteristic of the modern Filipino experience not because it is the only thing that characterizes Filipinos, but because the responses of Filipinos reveal their resourcefulness, their perseverance in the face of the lack of means, and their aspirations to have a better life.

Theme 4: Politics in Everyday Life

Politics in Everyday Life develops from the awareness of politics, family conflict, civic engagement, social consciousness, and how politics impacts the articulation of everyday experiences. The data shows that politics is not just around elections and governmental structures; it permeates the domestic realm, the way we communicate and how we interact socially on a day to day basis. Bronstein (2023) points out how as we engage in social interactions on a day to day basis we experience authority, inequality of power, and other social problems. Umekwe and Oyedele (2023) suggest that literature has the opportunity to question hegemonic political climates and cultures. Mayer et al. (2024) relate communication and civic engagement to political identity.

Excerpt 1

“The house became a fierce battleground of assorted posters—yellow, red, and blue—by the heated stretch of January of 1986.” (You Got It All, p. 73)

“Battleground” illustrates how politics has the ability to divide up a family and spill over into the domestic realm. The different colors suggest different political perspectives, personal conflicts, and family interactions. Rather than remaining apart from the family, politically, family members integrate politically into the social space of the family. This illustrates Bronstein (2023), who argues for the social experiences’ conflicts, and Diaz (2025), who illustrates the relations between social and political experiences.

Excerpt 2

“In crisp illustrations and talk balloons spread over many pages, they spelled out how to vote in the coming elections.” (You Got It All, p. 76)

By framing voting as a cultural public practice/habit, the passage emphasizes the need for political and public communication. Election participation will become more inclusive if the familiar structures of literacy and communication used in the realm of the everyday are also used in the realm of the political. This connects to Mayer et al. (2024), in which “communication” becomes a pillar of “civic engagement,” and to Umekwe and Oyedele (2023) in which “literary,” “communicative,” forms of “social” and “political” are areas of special interest. Yusingco (2022) also supports the need for participation in governance and in community decision-making.

Excerpt 3

“She is not all right. We know because she laughs at the strangest, unfunniest things these days.” (It Always Breaks My Heart a Little to Let You Go, p. 109)

While the excerpt does not specify a political occurrence, the character’s behavior indicates the effect of pervasive social un(in)certainly on personal and interpersonal(ly) un(in)certain relations. This supports Bronstein (2023), and Diaz (2023) in that the social and political creative realm will bring about a broader political engagement.

The three examples show that politics is not just about formal political institutions, but also family, communication, participation in society, and the emotional aspect of life. This lends support to Gomez (2026) and Virador-Cagayan (2026) who suggest that many of the Philippine literary narratives are able to reunite local voices with historical and cultural realities and provide the means for the reconstruction of the Philippine identity within the framework of the political and civic aspects of daily life.

Theme 5: Memory and Identity

Memory and Identity are the outcomes of the patterns of remembering and personal, social and cultural change and the balance between remembrance and self-reflection. The results show that memory is the active construction of personal identity. Albrecht (2022) and Basseler and Birke (2022) focus on the interconnections of memory, interpretation, and identity. Mukherjee (2021) stresses memory's role in social and historical consciousness. Wildschut and Sedikides (2023) and McAdams and Jennings (2024) also place remembered experiences as part of psychological and personal identity.

Excerpt 1

"I guess that was the way memory worked—all of our past spread like a wide and sleeping country, submerged in all our everyday forgetfulness." (What We Choose to Remember, What We Choose to Forget, p. 61)

As the metaphor of the past as "a wide and sleeping country" suggests, personal histories remain part of our present. This can be attributed to the way remembering is defined by Basseler and Birke (2022) as making sense of ourselves and the world, and memory being defined by Wildschut and Sedikides (2023) as past-present connectedness.

Excerpt 2

"'Is this you?' She screamed her delight. 'But you are not a little boy anymore!'" (What We Choose to Remember, What We Choose to Forget, p. 62)

For this individual the other person's memory restores them to a previous version of who they once were. Although the narrator has changed, the recognition of childhood demonstrates the self is connected across time. This is representative of the views of Albrecht (2022) and McAdams and Jennings (2024) and the value of collective memory and self-identity.

Excerpt 3

"I realized then that we have become oh-so-good at paving over everything." (You Got It All, p. 89)

The reference “paving over everything” means replacing or modernizing some familiar spots and memories, while the author’s sentiments of having “occupied both past and present” describe how memory reminds us of the past. This overlaps with many of the other authors, and with Mukherjee (2021) and Bond (2023), who focus on the role of memory and literature in preserving historical events. Aragon (2021) and Martinez-Juan (2023) also analyze similar ideas as they investigate the memory of the Philippines and its people. Eslit (2024) also says that the changing ideas of the world may change the way we perceive ourselves, but they won’t take our cultural identity.

These three examples imply that none of us can truly separate our memories from the present. Identity is reconstructed not only by the experiences we remember, but also by the people and social environment we find ourselves in. In this context, Aragon (2021) and Martinez-Juan (2023), among others, cite Philippine literature to support cultural memory and changing identities.

The five themes illustrate how modern-day Filipino identity is relational and flexible and is created and reshaped through lived experiences. While family is where early socialization and the negotiation of responsibility, belonging, authority and personal choice occurs, the maturation of character through the refinement of one’s self and the development of resilience often occurs through difficult experiences and the fight against poverty. Politics, family and community relationships combine with everyday experiences, while memory connects and identifies an individual with their history and cultural heritage.

The above themes illustrate a sense of interconnectedness and orientation, rather than isolation, and serve the social constructivist and interpretivist approaches. The interconnections illustrate that the identity of the modern-day Filipino is supple and flexible as it is shaped through family, community, politics, local culture and history. The narratives selected demonstrate Filipino identity as lived and negotiated through the shifting and changing circumstances of the self and society.

The results call for the inclusion of contemporary Filipino realities in academic curricula through the incorporation of Philippine literature that includes the diversity of lived experiences. These works will help students analyze and analyze their lived experiences, cultural values and social status and historically situated Filipino identity. Philippine literature has the potential, and perhaps the most importance, for giving students a rich insight and understanding of the changing and expanding nature of Filipino identity.

Concluding Insights

This study revealed that the modern Filipino identity, as illustrated by the five stories in *Bamboo Girls: Stories and Poems from a Forgotten Life*, was formed through integrated

social, cultural, economic, political, and historical experiences. Five major themes were identified by the analysis as: Family Power and Survival, Strength Through Hardship, Poverty and Resourcefulness, Politics in Everyday Life, and Memory and identity.

The first major theme Family Power and Survival revealed that belonging, responsibility, and survival are molded by family. Strength Through Hardship featured the resilience, perseverance, self-understanding, and the presence of hope. The theme, Poverty and Resourcefulness, reflected the characters response to the lack of the means through creativity and adaptability. Politics in Everyday Life revealed the political and socioeconomic conditions that influenced the character's relationships and the choices that they made on a daily basis. Memory and identity revealed how past experiences and memories influenced the characters' understanding and definition of self, family, and community.

These findings indicated that the five themes were interrelated. Family relationships influenced the response to hardships and poverty. Politics and the economy influenced family relationships and the individual's personal choices. The memories of personal experiences were integrated into identity. These relationships show that Filipino identity was a confluence of the personal experiences and other social and cultural realities.

The study suggests that modern Filipino identity is multifaceted and fluid. It is constructed through family, hardship, poverty, politics, memory, and family. Identity as a socially and culturally constructed phenomenon is also aligned with social constructivism and interpretivism. However, the study identified only five case studies from a single literary source, thus, the findings cannot be generalized to all Filipino identity and Philippine Literature.

Recommendations

Contemporary Philippine literature can be taught in the English and Literature class to represent the diverse experiences of Filipinos. Identity-centered discussions and activities can be connected to literature and social and cultural experiences. Philippine Literature can be developed through reading and literary seminars by teachers, curriculum developers, and school administrators can develop Philippine literature through reading and literary seminars, incorporating contemporary Philippine literature. Students can be directed to engage with Philippine Literature by reading in combination with literary reflection, discussions, and analysis.

Other Filipino identity constructs and dimensions of identity (i.e., gender, migration, religion, etc.) outside memory, politics, family, and poverty can be explored by future researchers through a focus on other regional, mentioned collections, genres, and authors.

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