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Cover Page Footnote
[1] I use an “x” in hxstory to challenge patriarchy in the normative spelling of the word.

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Show and Tell: The Roots of Our Farm Shall Be Nourished

Kirsty Nicole Bayo-ang Bocado

The educational system perpetuates capitalism and material wealth, valuing White and Western ideologies, thus alienating certain identities and narratives. As a first-generation and low-income child of APIDA immigrants, I strive to bring awareness to cultural wealth due to the erasure of marginalized identities and narratives. Rather than just focusing on the struggles of holding multiple marginalized identities, I showcase the joys of practices and traditions in my culture and highlight the hope my communities give me as a descendant of militants and revolutionaries. In this article, I raise awareness of lived experiences that are often left out of the educational pedagogy and institutional structure that is not made for everyone. I will share a personal narrative to explain my first defining experience within an oppressive system. I will reflect on how this experience and researching cultural wealth theory led to newfound compassion for myself, my family and how they persevered, my ancestors and how they inspired me, as well as action and optimism in higher education. This article is intended for readers who struggle to share deeply personal and heavy stories, especially after having dealt with discrimination and exclusion. The intention is that readers will nourish their roots by telling their stories, nourishing the educational space with their lived experiences and the unapologetic love they have for themselves. Also, this article will serve as a reference for higher education practitioners to incorporate more inclusive exercises and practices so we may embrace cultural sensitivity and humility in the academy. By exploring a more liberatory praxis in academia which often denies such notions, we will be able to center marginalized identities and narratives and transform higher education, starting with honoring and celebrating ourselves and our identities with the utmost hope, joy, and love.

Keywords: APIDA, cultural wealth theory, Filipin@, first-generation, identities, immigration, intergenerational trauma, low-income, narratives, parentification, Philippines, storytelling

Kirsty Nicole’s [they/them] life activities (playing piano, violin, trombone, and guitar, freestyle street dancing, rock climbing, running, and playing tennis) inform their research interests on accessibility, (dis)ability, education, environmental justice, equity, inclusion, involvement, marginalized identities, mental health awareness, neurodivergence, queer justice, racial justice, social justice, sustainability and more. Through activism and community organizing, they study student activism, student leadership, educational systems, collective people power, and the (r)evolution of the masses.
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Show and Tell: Author’s Narrative

When I was in elementary school, I had an assignment to bring in an "artifact" or "family heirloom" for Show and Tell. I asked my parents what they owned from my grandparents or any relatives or anyone from the Philippines. They said they did not have anything. When they immigrated to America, they each only brought a backpack, suitcase, and a “sum of pocket money.” As children, they grew up in dire poverty with families and communities being torn apart by drugs, guns and violence so they did not have much in the first place. All they brought to America was their selves and the gratitude that they survived and persevered. At a young age, I was not sure how to process this information. I remember being overwhelmed with concern about how I was going to fulfill my assignment. My parents insisted that I did not need to bring something flashy and glamorous, such as a piece of jewelry, a doll or sports regalia, which we were sure most classmates would bring. They offered to write about the farm that was protected in a secluded area and had been passed down for generations. It is a big, beautiful farm with free roaming animals, plentiful vegetables, and vast, open fields. I played on the farm many times when I went to the Philippines as a young child. Though each trip was brief, I still remember decades later how it felt to run freely and pet the animals and carry the vegetables. My parents proudly wrote about the farm on a piece of computer paper, filling it top to bottom, front and back.

The next day, I watched my classmates present expensive antiques, vintage collectibles, and sections of wills. I was so ashamed. I felt like I did not have something tangible and valuable to show. When it was my turn, I lied and said that I did not bring anything. The truth was that the piece of computer paper was still in my back pocket. My parents had folded it into tiny squares that morning and stuck it in my jeans so I would not forget it. But I intentionally “forgot” it. I could not bring myself to take it out. My teacher reprimanded me in front of everyone. I cannot remember the exact words, but I still remember how hot and red my face felt and that I cried a lot. Yet in that moment, I preferred getting in trouble than having to admit that my family and relatives grew up on the streets and in poverty, and that even though my parents immigrated to America, we still did not have much money or many things. I thought it was stupid that the only thing I could “show and tell” was a "piece of land” compared to the antiques, collectibles, and material wealth my classmates brought.

When I joined Anakbayan New Jersey, a Filipin@ community organization, I learned that the farm was indeed an honorable and sacred artifact or heirloom worthy enough for Show and Tell. However, the farm is also honorable and sacred enough on its own, without the validation of this classroom assignment that perpetuated the White and Western ideology of recognizing material wealth, leaving little room for creativity and differences. My farm is the land of my ancestors and of many generations. My farm is the land that is (so far) untouched by United States intervention and only by the humans and animals native to that area. My parents, aunts, uncles, grandparents, and cousins grew
up there. My relatives that work on the farm are responsible for raising the animals and treating the crops with the utmost care. They did not play outside in parks where it was dangerous so their playground was the dirt and mud surrounding the farm. They did not always have enough money for food so from morning to night, they obtained food by carrying buckets of water, lugging sacks of rice, and harvesting vegetables. They did not have phones or computers to connect with friends so their way of communication was by yelling across the fields to whoever else was working and the light showed them the way to each other.

I share this narrative now because I did not get to share this narrative in the classroom back then. I did not think my family’s farm was worthy and valid at a young age. I thought I had to meet the requirements of this strict assignment and the classroom did not set up a safe space for me to name this dissonance. I did not know what to name this dissonance at the time. As a practitioner in the field of higher education and student affairs, I now know that my apprehension came from wanting to fit into the dominant White and Western practice of “Show and Tell.” My teacher emphasized the kind of “Show and Tell” that determines that only physical, tangible artifacts and heirlooms with monetary value are worthy of presentation. I now know my farm was not physical and tangible and of monetary value in a way that is acceptable in America, but its presence as being rooted in the earth is priceless. Our farm provided food, labor, and sustenance for my family, surrounding neighbors, and the animals and vegetables. While our farm might not seem as flashy and glamorous as other objects, it transcends far beyond the capitalist realm.

Reflecting on my experience and finally recognizing my farm and its story has motivated me to teach others to consider their own practices and traditions passed down through their ancestors and generations. I am motivated to teach folks that it is okay to honor their own unique ways of storytelling. My experience with this classroom assignment is just one of many examples of how education can suffocate the roots of people’s hxstories while there are various hxstories whose roots should be nourished.

**The Roots of Our Farm: Explaining Various Hxstories**

In this section, I will give a brief overview of Philippines hxstory, discuss first-generation and low-income identities, connect hxstory and identities to intergenerational trauma, and offer written excerpts from my parents.

**Brief Philippines Hxstory**

In order to explain why my parents are in America, it is important to explain the conditions that bring many Filipin@ immigrants into the United States. There is significant financial debt and corrupt economic practices in the Philippines due to bureaucrat-capitalism, feudalism, and imperialism. Because of our political climate in the Philippines, we fall deeper and deeper into poverty. There are many impoverished neighborhoods where “poverty is double its city average” (Bobis,
Maghanoy, Tucay, Perez, Atenas, Manondo, 2018). Many laborers find jobs in America to send money back home, often through agencies. These laborers often endure unsustainable income and educational disparities of their own, so they deal with abusive treatment and exploitation from employers. Also known as the Labor Export Policy, this policy of sending laborers abroad explains why there are so many Filipin@ nurses, maids, and caretakers in America, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and other countries. Because of this policy, many Filipin@ workers are overseas in these countries, working in healthcare and housekeeping. My mother is one of these nurses and my father’s work in the Philippines is not transferable in America which explains our ongoing poor financial situation. For the longest time (until my brothers also started working), I was the “breadwinner” of the family. Because I am still a financial contributor, my paychecks are split between providing for my siblings, cousins, and extended family in the Philippines. Other issues in the Philippines include enslavement of indigenous populations, rampant military intervention, low-wage labor recruitment and growing displacement related to forced migration from nations torn apart by wars or devastated by economic policy. Immigrants, such as my parents, are affected by economic, international, and political factors, moving from one country to another and so they entered America “by choice.” Through Anakbayan New Jersey, I was able to further understand the conditions that forced the migration of my parents and most Filipin@'s in the first place. By studying the global history of the Philippines, I am better able to conceptualize my family hxstory and how it ties to my personal story which includes holding first-generation and low-income identities.

**Holding First-Generation and Low-Income Identities amidst Parentification**

Looking over legal and medical documents, writing professional papers and resumes, handling important meetings and phone calls, managing many bills and finances, speaking up to negotiate issues - these are just some of the obligations I took on (and still do) for my parents and family members. Working multiple jobs, sending money back home, pursuing a bachelor’s degree and then a master’s degree - these are just some of the responsibilities I had and goals I strived towards for my parents and family members.

Students whose cultural background emphasizes family interdependence may be expected to fulfill obligations to the family that conflict with college responsibilities (Tseng, 2004). I relate to this conflict as a first generation student, having to be ambitious and stellar in academics (being in the Top 10% with honors and AP Classes and maintaining a GPA as high as a 4.7) while maintaining involvement (being in almost all of the school’s music ensembles, multiple dance groups, and sports teams all year round) and demonstrating hard work and resilience to my family. I was parentified at a young age due to traditional Filipin@ culture and heteronormative constructs. Cho (2021) defines parentification as children providing care to their parents and family members. There are two types of parentification: emotional and instrumental (Bobis et al., 2018). Emotional parentification is defined
as the child addressing emotional and social needs and instrumental parentification is defined as addressing living conditions such as the house and everyday routines (Bobis et al., 2018). I addressed emotional and social needs and living conditions as best I could starting from a young age: giving up my paychecks for our bills, finances and our relatives in poverty, offering emotional labor and support for my family’s hardships and struggles, taking care of my brothers and cousins academically and socially, and a whole lot more. Essentially, I was obligated to be the breadwinner, babysitter, guardian, and parent. The sense of obligation to act like a parent at such a young age did come from a genuine intention but I cannot ignore the notion that I felt deep down that I had to “give back.” Ceballo, Mauriz, Suarez, and Aretakis (2014) expand more on the idea of giving back. This idea of “giving back” is prevalent in their research, where they observed that children had a strong desire to give back to their parents, because of their dedication, love, and sacrifices (Ceballo et al., 2014). In Ballysingh’s (2019) research, there is a cultural tendency for Latinos to serve as providers which is like Filipin@ people serving as providers to their relatives. My parents, brothers and I all currently still serve as providers by sending clothes, food, money, and products back home to the Philippines, while also keeping track of my cousins’ and relatives’ academics, expenses, and livelihoods.

**Impact of Financial and Social Factors, Including Intergenerational Trauma**

One of the dynamics my family and I have had to work through was the lack of parental guidance and presence that led to such parentification. My parents were parentified from a young age as well, thus contributing to a cycle. In addition to parentification, there is also intergenerational trauma. The trauma my parents faced is intricate and multi-faceted, including but not limited to drug wars, neighborhood violence, poverty consciousness, and a whole lot more within the family and the surrounding community. Although they left the Philippines for a better life in America with no physical baggage, they certainly carried a lot of emotional and mental baggage as many immigrants do.

In America, my parents’ aspirations were to receive a stable income and establish a family. The truth is that my parents have always worked two (often three) jobs each, barely making ends meet, to achieve even just a meager income. I vividly remember being in elementary school and taking care of my brothers and the house. There were times when grandparents and extended relatives had to take care of us. We had no idea of the exact relation of some caretakers but had to trust them and divide money and meals as necessary in a cramped house. In general, we did not have the best living conditions and we were always short on money. At some point in my childhood, my family and I lived in a crappy apartment near Yankee Stadium, but we never had the money or time to attend a game. To tie back to my narrative, one of my memories of Show and Tell was a classmate sharing their signed baseball cards. To them, the baseball cards represented fondness and fun. To me, the baseball cards represented a childhood memory we did not get to have.
In addition, there was trouble understanding what it meant to be living in America as children born and raised in Harlem and New Jersey to parents born and raised in the Philippines. My brothers and I more easily and quickly adapted to United States customs, language, and culture compared to my parents. The urgency of assimilation was a big factor in this messy transition. My brothers and I became translators of English lingo and slang and American dynamics and rules, which resulted in intergenerational conflict and family conflicts because we upended cultural norms. For example, the strict discipline and parenting that my parents learned from the Philippines clashed with the freedom and independence my brothers and I were striving for in Harlem and New Jersey. As we learned to reconcile the discipline and parenting with the freedom and independence, we realized that our family’s story is complicated yet beautiful.

When I consider ways I can combat the erasure of my culture, I think of storytelling and having these complicated, yet beautiful stories passed down through our ancestors and relatives. My parents’ immigration stories are full of fear, hope, joy, love, sadness, and triumph. I asked my parents if they could contribute their “istorya” (Filipino word for “story”) to this article. By sharing their contributions, I hope it brings forth action and optimism to lovingly embrace the complexities of immigration and culture. Please note that the grammar, spelling, and syntax may not be perfectly accurate, but I purposely have not edited any parts. I left their words written exactly as they wrote them to respect the authenticity of their voices.

**Mother’s Istorya**

LIFE is not easy but if you believe in Him and in yourself, everything is possible. Growing up to a poor family is what made me dream of a greener pasture. Going to school with limited amount of clothes, holes in the shoes, not enough money to buy meals are not something that I am ashamed of. Seeing my father with dirt on his face as a laborer and my mom working in the rice fields is what motivated me to finish my college so I can help my parents and younger brother in the long run. It is not easy, but I made it. America is where I am. For now, still struggling and working hard but for a better cause. As a nurse, it made me fulfilled taking care of elderly patients. Trying my best to send my kids to college to get education so they will have a bright future ahead of them. Instilled in them how to be humble with kind and respectful heart and to work hard in order to appreciate life and people of all walks of life.

**Father’s Istorya**

Growing up in the farm is really hard. I have to wake up around 5 am and tended the carabao, feed them until am 8. I have to let them eat for 3 hours. That’s when I start plowing the field until 11 am when the sun is really high and hot. In the farm there was no electricity. I use gas lamp, candles to study. Never had a frozen food. Mostly vegetables and fish. I raised chickens, goats, pigs, and ducks but
we don’t eat them. Raise them to sell in the market. In exchange for other goods. To buy clothing and some other things, some school supplies. I walk for about 3 kilometers from the house to the school, where there’s no roads. I walk in the middle of the farm going to school. All these hard works didn’t stop me from following my dreams. Instead it made me realized that “success always accompanied hardwork and failure.”

**Shall Be Nourished: Honoring Those Before Us and Celebrating Ourselves Now**

I share my parents’ story as one of many ways to honor our cultural wealth. Instead of focusing solely on the disadvantages within our country and community, we can also showcase our abilities, knowledge, and skills. I learned how to synthesize these perspectives through Yosso’s cultural wealth theory. Yosso (2005) conceptualized cultural wealth theory as a “challenge to traditional interpretations of cultural capital.” For example, recognizing my family’s cultural wealth has taught me to challenge the White and Western dominant narratives as well as the notions that we are defined solely by our deficits. Reflecting on my Show and Tell experience and examining more of my family’s hxstory has allowed me to name the different types of cultural capital we have.

There are many types of cultural capital as defined by Yosso (2005) which are aspirational, familial, linguistic, navigational, resistant, and social. According to Yosso (2005) these forms of cultural capital encourage students of color to “bring knowledge from home and their communities into the classroom.” Students of color and students with multiple marginalized identities are present in the classroom and higher education systems and therefore, must be acknowledged and recognized. In this section, I will give a brief overview of community cultural wealth theory and recommendations to inform higher education practitioners on how to better support students.

**Community Cultural Wealth Theory**

Reflecting on my Show and Tell narrative in conjunction with community cultural wealth theory helped me learn to be a better advocate for myself, my family and others. This advocacy also gave me awareness of our strengths so I could share about my relatives and communities from a strength-based approach. Yosso’s (2005) framework promotes a strengths-based approach, discussing six forms of cultural capital within communities:

- **Aspirational** - dreams, goals, and hopes students have despite facing inequity
- **Familial** - family context, information, and knowledge
- **Linguistic** - ability to communicate through language or multiple languages
- **Navigational** - knowledge to exist and navigate educational spaces
- **Resistant** - hxstorial legacies that are passed down through generations
- **Social** - using social connections to gain access to institutions
Studying Yosso’s framework helped me realize examples of cultural capital within my family:
- **Aspirational** - my parents’ dream of immigrating to America and raising my brothers and me to become successful
- **Familial** - working together to support each other and our relatives while fulfilling our respective duties and roles
- **Linguistic** - many of our family members speak English, the Philippines national language, Spanish, and multiple dialects
- **Navigational** - although being first-generation, my brothers and I relied on mentors and resources to be successful in high school and then in college and graduate school
- **Resistant** - awareness of oppressive structures has helped us to be look out for ourselves and for each other
- **Social** - we were involved in our church, the community, our middle school and high school which helped us better adjust and maintain connections and relationships

By studying the different types of cultural capital and presenting examples within my family, I can better advocate that we offer a lot of cultural wealth and valid lived experiences. Cultural wealth and lived experiences are a very valid part of our whole beings and should be recognized in academia as such (Ballysingh, 2019). By recognizing a student and their lived experiences, we are able to embrace the whole student. Students all have stories to tell and narratives that are of value. It is important to center non-dominant narratives amongst White and Western academies which fail to recognize various forms of cultural wealth.

My family and I felt pressured to fit into White and Western academies, institutions, and structures in America because of academic standards and cultural norms that were inherently discriminatory and exclusionary. We were taught to label the language barriers, poor living conditions, and Filipin@ traditions as deficient and lacking but we have since learned to frame them differently. Through the community cultural wealth theory framework, we recognize the intelligence and talent of being able to speak more than one language, the perseverance and resilience of being hardworking and involved, the tenacity through systemic poverty, the beauty and uniqueness of Filipin@ practices and traditions, and so much more. Even if we can honor ourselves in our homes and communities, it is important to expand this honor loudly and proudly in other structures, such as in institutions of higher education. It is also important to continue celebrating ourselves and celebrating others.

**Recommendations for Higher Education Practitioners**

In addition to learning more inclusive frameworks such as cultural wealth theory, there are practices that can be implemented to welcome students’ ancestries, backgrounds, identities, and roots. In dominant Western and White culture, we do not provide enough space for those who fall outside the dominant context, and we instead perpetuate colonized, whitewashed hXstories. Thus, students
experience a multitude of traumas: discrimination, exclusion, macroaggressions, microaggressions, their stories not being told, their truths not being heard, and so much more. Students conform and have no resources and support, particularly in higher education. According to Yosso (2005), higher education practitioners often assume that students and their parents need to conform to the educational system. However, higher educational systems should be making space for additional contexts, hXstories, and perspectives when interacting with students and families. There should be more enforcement of best practices for working with students of various cultures, particularly first-generation, low-income and students of color at predominantly White institutions (Ballysingh, 2019). Embracing inclusivity and practicing intercultural humility and sensitivity to value all experiences can help students and their families to experience more hope, joy, and love in institutions. There are tangible ways to advocate more actively in educational structures so that students and their families can be honored and celebrated. In no particular order and with consideration that this list can always be expanded, please note the following suggested recommendations:

- Consider the standard questions and practices that set the atmosphere of the classroom or academic space at the beginning of the year. Questions such as “Where are you from?” or “What is your hometown?” or “What is your family like?” can be loaded and sensitive. Practices such as “Show and Tell” or “Bring Your Parent to Work Day” or “House Roleplay” can be restrictive and assuming.

- Create space to embrace varying experiences, narratives, perspectives, and stories by establishing community guidelines. Set these community guidelines whenever students are interacting, speaking and working with each other such as during icebreakers, group exercises, classroom activities or homework assignments. Community guidelines include rules around how students address issues, manage conflict, participate, present themselves, and show up.

- Evaluate the language and rhetoric used in the classroom, particularly around words such as “diversity.” Are you using “diversity” as a buzz word or “promoting” it as a “selling point?” Are you using “diversity” to encapsulate all types of identities? Diversity is not just race but also includes age, class, ethnicity, gender identity, national origin, neurodivergence, physical ability, religious values, sexual orientation.

- Incorporate acknowledgements and information from and for different cultures and identities. Examples include having a readily accessible land acknowledgement, asking for people to share their gender pronouns, educating students about religious and traditional holidays, and setting up the classroom or academic space differently to accommodate different learning or physical abilities.

- Go beyond traditional classroom activities and homework assignments by encouraging students to contribute their own creative ideas and input. Welcoming their perspectives allows for various ways of storytelling and collaborating with others. Examples include having
students choose the current event or news article to discuss that day or having them submit artistic, musical, or dance elements that let them express more freedom.

- Introduce literature and references outside of academia, which often perpetuates whiteness in education. A lot of valuable information made by marginalized groups can be found in nontraditional resources. Examples include social media like Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, and YouTube as well as multimedia like brochures and zines.

- Produce more K-12 and college readiness programs such as pre-orientation programs and financial aid programs for students and families. Having more availability will accommodate different working schedules. Having more accessibility via different language offerings and different modes (virtual, in person) will accommodate different learning needs.

- Stay up to date on state and national laws and policies that affect many of our students. In recent years, there have been laws and policies put in place that affected multiple marginalized groups such as DACA recipients, indigenous folks, transgender folks, women, and BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color). Being informed will help to more intentionally check in and provide any needed support to the students.

- Research how institutional power arrangements and structures favor majority groups to the detriment of other marginalized groups and then further evaluate your positionality and actions in these systems. Examples include reading literature related to anti-racism or capitalism, diversifying your news resources, being more open to being corrected, and holding your colleagues accountable.

- Design targeted professional development content that focuses on acknowledging one’s biases and privileges and awareness of their identities. By training faculty and staff to do more self-work, they can be more vigilant of how they are impacting and interacting with their students.

As previously stated, this list was in no particular order, and it should be considered that it can always be expanded. My expectation is that higher education practitioners will actively incorporate and improve upon such practices to make academia more inclusive and welcoming to all students. As we consider how we have contributed to discrimination, exclusion, macroaggressions, microaggressions, not telling stories, not hearing truths, and so much more in the past, we can learn to do better for ourselves and our students for the future.

**Closing**

Sometimes, I ruminate about going back to that past and pulling out the piece of computer paper from my back pocket to talk about the farm during Show and Tell. I was scared back then. But now I know I was scared because of the structure I was existing in. So, I no longer blame myself in the present and I will no longer hold back in the future. I have since learned that I was in a classroom
where these types of stories were not encouraged or welcomed. It is not possible to go back to that specific moment but it is possible to share my story and encourage others to do the same in such moments in the educational structure. To this day, I still do not have something exactly physical or tangible to bring into a classroom for Show and Tell. My farm is at home. It is in the Philippines. Nowadays, I proudly claim how I love my farm and my story and our hxstory and our identities with hope and joy amongst other Filipin@s and other students also holding marginalized identities. Although this is an event that left a lasting impact, it also taught me the importance of advocating for myself, my family, my relatives, my culture, and my community. Through this event, my involvement in organizations that encourage self-compassion, and my research on frameworks related to cultural wealth, I have learned to honor and celebrate myself, my family, my relatives, my culture, and my community. Particularly in institutions of higher education, I can model for other practitioners and students how embracing our narratives and identities leads us to embrace all narratives and identities in diverse communities. As I continue navigating being a higher education practitioner supporting students in academia, I will continue to call on educational structures to center and uplift students of all identities and narratives with the utmost hope, joy, and love.
References


