

Introduction

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The *Review of Women's Studies Volume 33* features a collection of articles built on women's stories, taking individual and collective agency as a central theme. Featured in these articles are leaders in times of disasters, mothers during the COVID-19 pandemic, migrants providing digitally mediated unpaid care work, community organizers facing urban poor housing, and professionals in their midlife. These studies are guided by methodologies that privilege the voices of the women, effectively capturing the nuances that their lived experiences entail. They lead the readers to an exploration of how women embody, respond to, navigate, negotiate, and even transform gendered realities.

Opening this issue is "Navigating Tiwala in Disasters: Rural Women Leaders and Social Constructions of Trust With International Humanitarian Organisations" by Kara Danielle Medina. Women's leadership during disasters and organized women's roles in humanitarian work are well established in literature, but how Tiwala underpins the interaction between grassroots women on one hand and humanitarian organizations on the other is underexplored. Thus, Medina examines how organized rural women understand and experience Tiwala, and how it is key to how humanitarian INGOs are able to work with them during disasters and facilitate their access to humanitarian response. Working with the *Pambansang Koalisyon ng Kababaihan sa Kanayunan* (National Rural Women's Coalition), among her findings is that the INGOs' credibility, consistency, sense of mutuality and reciprocity, and delivery of aid that matters to the community determine the rural women's Tiwala.

The study concludes with how humanitarian and the larger development system improves when informed with a localized feminist praxis.

Women are similarly found to lead organizations in urban poor communities, particularly for housing. While recognized by the government and established in literature, there is still much to be explored on the specific nuances of such community-based organizations. Given this, author Ervin F. Grana conducted a case study of the Tatalon Chapter of the *Pinagkaisang Lakas ng Mamamayan* (People Power United), entitled “Gendering Legitimacy: The Case of a Women-Led Community-Based Organization in Barangay Tatalon, Quezon City, Philippines,” to surface the different levels at which the organization strives to establish its legitimacy—from its officers to the community members and the local government. Of significance to their legitimation, the author found, are internal power dynamics as well as external structures such as “decentralized urban planning” and “democratic erosion.” The study also showed how the very task of community organizing can compound the struggle to achieve adequate housing.

The third article looks back at the COVID-19 pandemic. Authors Holden Kenneth G. Alcazaren, Andrew Bonifacio L. Clete, Bianca Camille G. Clete, and Arnielle Mari H. Resuello zoomed in on how mothers who were also teachers—or “mother-teachers”—had a particular narrative when it came to the sudden shift to remote learning or distance education during the pandemic that illustrates the extent of women’s strength. They probed into these narratives to surface how the mothers tapped into their roles as teachers to cope with the situation, in their article entitled “Understanding Motherhood During COVID-19: Experiences of Mother-Teachers in Distance Education.” Their findings affirmed that the mother-teachers leaned on their professional knowledge and skills to ensure that their children were able to learn within the new setup as much as possible, despite their own struggles in personally and professionally coping with the pandemic. Interestingly, their narratives also show how the mother-teachers reflected on their experiences as students themselves as they became increasingly active participants in their children’s education.

The fourth article is entitled “Women’s Midlife as Gendered Development: The Lived Experiences of Selected Filipino Women in Midlife” by Amapola L. Baes. It takes off from a critique of common misconceptions about women in midlife, such as becoming more passive in the events of their lives, as “male-centric theorizing.” Through interviews and focus group discussions, author Baes drew out stories that illustrate a more dynamic picture of the women. She organized these into affiliative and occupational roles, identifying themes including a sense of pride in their past achievements and an acknowledgment of their changed roles within their social relationships. Baes emphasized the women midlifers to be in the midst of what she calls self-expansion as well as varied experiences of transitions, thus challenging popular stereotypes on midlife as a static stage for women.

In the last article, “The Paradoxes of Mobile Care Work: The Case of Aging Filipina Australians in a Digital Era,” authors Earvin Charles B. Cabalquinto and Athena Charanne R. Presto looked into aging Filipina Australians’ care practices as these are mediated by digital technology. Their data gathering methods included photo elicitation as well as interviews, facilitating as well a multimodal illustration of the women’s experiences. Among their findings is that technology, such as digital devices, the internet, and online applications or services, have made it possible for the women’s care practices—for themselves as well as others, even their families overseas—to continue uninterrupted by distance and time differences. Anchored on intersectionality, the authors describe the aging Filipina Australians’ experiences of digitally-mediated care practices as a paradox for being “easier yet also made more imperative,” adding to the growing conversation on the significance of digital technology in women migrants’ lives.

This issue of the *Review of Women’s Studies* is concluded by six of Mae Panes’s paintings that similarly capture women’s stories, in visually striking colors and shades. These paintings, entitled *Mulat*, *Pikit*, *Maya Ilongga*, *Dancing in the Moonlight*, *Patadyong ko nga Pula*, and *Ili-ili*, present a view of women as they interact with other people, objects, nature, and with their own bodies.