

**Negotiating the Filipino in Cyberspace:  
New Zealand-based Filipinos' Identity Construction in Social Media**

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New Zealand-based Filipinos' Identity Construction in Social Media**

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## **ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP**

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Alwin C. Aguirre

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---

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\*Ethics approval (11/84) for the research was granted by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 1 July 2011

## ABSTRACT

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The study aims to understand how Filipinos in New Zealand construct their identity as diasporic subjects when they talk about their lives on Internet-based social media platforms. Examining how individuals work out their identity is a crucial task in contemporary times, which many consider as complex and networked but also, insecure and unstable. Filipino diaspora and identity form a case that demonstrates the intricate practice of managing the steady impact of decentring and insecurity in a globalised world.

I work on the premise that migrants are in a state of *liminality*, a transitional period where they do not fully belong to either the former or new status. The ubiquity of Internet-based media in everyday life plays an important role in understanding and expressing migrant identities. New media act as the *stage* of performances of their lives, their sense of self, national belonging, and attachment.

Two cases of personal social media were the focus in the study – Amy’s Facebook profile and Ka Uro’s blog. State-produced texts were also examined as sites of official discourses on Filipino migrants. Adopting the procedures of *discourse-centred online ethnography*, I drew data from the multimodal ‘texts’ in these online platforms and interviews of the persons who authored them.

My investigation is ultimately an exercise in interpretation. I assume a stance that takes language as a site of struggle for control over meanings and ways we constitute action. The analysis is discursive, critical, and multimodal in approach. In accounting for the richness of the semiotic resources that the Internet offers and the conflicting relations of power in both the migrant situation and new media participation, I deploy the principles of critical discourse analysis, multimodality and discourse as *recontextualisation* of social practice.

Analysis of the data reveals that social media function as online archives for *making memories* – keeping the family in the Philippines posted about life in New Zealand or documenting migrant life for posterity. At the same time, the participants also perform migrant identity and the quality of their migrant lives through these media

formats. They do so by ‘place-making’ in which the idealisation of the new home represents their successful immigrant journey.

The discursive manoeuvrings in their social media writings enact both the dismantling and building of boundaries in their identities. Triggered by specific instances, migrant identity is constructed strategically as hybrid, binary, or ‘essentially’ Filipino. Connection to national roots is undoubtedly evident. Personal discourses unveil a national consciousness. Amy and Ka Uro carry the Philippine nation on their backs by performing the ‘good’ qualities of being Filipino or by taking concrete action to ‘assemble’ the best kinds of Filipinos in New Zealand to ‘rebuild’ a better Philippines.

Finally, the cases demonstrate that the potential for agency new media writing possesses resides in ‘recoupling’ the author with the text and making experiences less *transparent*. Using social media necessitates ‘writing’, and writing necessitates contemplating the ordinary. Seeing the self from an unfamiliar angle leads to rethinking one’s position in a complex network of social relations.

# 1 INTRODUCTION

## *DITO BA, O DITO BA? BELONGING SOMEWHERE ON THE INTERNET*

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### *Vignette 1: The medical test*

It would not be too much to say that the building was packed with people – some floors more than others. It was a seven-storey structure located in a corner of a crowded street made even narrower by cars parked and vendors lined up off the road. St. Luke’s has been known to be the refuge of the rich and the powerful. This branch in Manila is an extension and its business is to make sure Filipinos going to some developed countries do not burden these nations’ health care system. It was where my wife, my then two-year old son, and I got scrutinised quite thoroughly – from head to foot, inside and out – to fulfil the medical requirements for an international student visa in New Zealand. My wife, who was suspected of having had TB because of a white stain on her X-ray, was forced to ‘produce phlegm’ for a few consecutive early mornings’ collection, as if to draw out any trace of a disease she secretly carried. Of course, it turned out negative. But having been labelled by a medical authority made even her question her knowledge of her own body history. Forced to perform sickness, she would tell me after each collection, made her feel that she really was sick. Me, I only had cholesterol way above acceptable level. They demanded that I medicate.

We learned when we got there that St. Luke’s is one of the few accredited clinics – a ‘one-stop shop’ says its slogan<sup>1</sup> – in the country that perform medical inspection of those who would like to fly to the USA, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. That means virtually every single one who is there on any given day has one desire: to leave.

UNDP (n.d.) statistics say that more than three thousand Filipinos emigrate daily. If any of them were bound for one of the four countries St. Luke’s provides service to,

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<sup>1</sup> See the clinic’s website <http://www.slec.ph/about-slec.shtml>. It explicitly brands itself as a ‘one-stop-shop’ of required testing for medical clearance purposes.

they would have been subjected to the same procedures as we were. The clinic – architecturally streamlined on the outside and maddeningly labyrinthine on the inside – seems to me a liminal space. It stands in between one’s place of origin and place of destination. It is an in-between space where persons are pathologised and bodies are classified according to their fit, not for safe travel, but for occupying a place in a foreign land.

*Vignette 2: Pabaon<sup>2</sup>*

Saying goodbye, whether temporarily or for good, is a bittersweet moment. The undertaking involves masochistic ritualisations of the parting through practices instilled in the culture and embedded in one’s habit of body and mind. We know how it is to say goodbye, how painful it is, how unsettling, how sad. Yet, there are ways to make it seem a moment of celebration – the ritual of gathering around people with good thoughts to offer even as they also are caught in the middle of keeping to themselves and expressing sympathetically an odd combination of not wanting to let go and willingness to set free.

In the Philippines, people say goodbye in groups, and around food – events are built around the presence of food as a signifier of sharing in abundance. In my wife’s university department, we had one of our last goodbyes before coming to Auckland. Everyone, as expected, gave us warm, if standard, well-wishes. Clichéd, yes, but we never tire of submitting to the routine even when our bodies get exhausted trying to endure every single send-off. On our way out of the building, though, I was jolted out of my fatigue by words uttered with utmost conviction. The woman who assists us in photocopying our teaching materials (yes, there is such a job in the Philippines) exclaimed her parting message from her little coop under the steps that lead to the second floor classrooms: *Mam, itayo niyo ang bandila ng Pilipinas!* (Maam, raise the flag of the Philippines!). She directed her cry to my wife, but the directive was undeniably for both of us.

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<sup>2</sup> Pabaon (*pa-bah-on*) is a local term that means parting gift, which could be material or symbolic in nature.

## 1.1 Little stories: What cannot be left behind in leaving

I have opened the thesis by offering an account of two little scenarios that involved my leaving for New Zealand to pursue doctoral studies. The vignettes, first, serve as an inkling of the different concepts that have informed the study: the idea that the ‘liminal’ characterises the general ambivalent status of migrants and the unavoidable ‘load’ that one’s national or ethnic label carries when moving transnationally. They depict a certain sense of specificity to my experience of moving across national borders. Also, the stories provide a good background to me as a researcher and my connection to the chosen topic. Initially, what I hoped to do in the study was to understand how Filipinos in New Zealand construct their identity as diasporic subjects when they talk about their lives on Internet-based new media platforms. But what I found out was the project entailed involving my daily life as, technically, I am categorised as a temporary overseas Filipino during the course of my studies.<sup>3</sup>

I decided to stay in Auckland while doing the research although the objects of my analysis – social media texts – are not confined by geographic borders. My assumption is that despite the ‘vastly open’ notion of the Web, our geographic *placedness* plays a significant role in either limiting or expanding the opportunities for creating and recreating ourselves, understanding our realities, and interrogating our position in social relationships. This is not to say, though, that one’s location exists independent of other places. One may be at home but home is located somewhere and that somewhere also has a particular placement. Such is the reason for my use of the first line of an 80s Filipino popular song, *Dito ba?*, which in English would be ‘Is it here?’. Admittedly dated, my reference is still appropriate enough to underscore the problematic assumption created by the pervasive notion that the Internet has brought us to, or unto us, a limitless world. I am one with Miller and Slater (2000) in their insistence that the Internet should be viewed in reference to how it is ‘owned’ by particular users in particular contexts. So the question, ‘is it here or is it here?’ is crucial in the study because, as Curry (1999) points out, *hereness* is an ethical dilemma. ‘We are always in a wide range of places’ but our

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<sup>3</sup> The Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO) categorise Filipino migrants into three: permanent, temporary, and irregular. Students belong to the second category along with overseas workers.

actions and practices are defined and only understood within a particular context (Curry, 1999, p. 103). Therefore, discourses even within the borderless realm of the Web can only be made sense of by regarding them as a product of particular human engagements situated in particularly unique localities.

What the anecdotes above fail to tell is that my father was an overseas worker. Until the mid-80s, Filipino labour migration was mainly comprised of able male bodies parting ways with their families to take on manual labour in the Middle East in order to provide better lives for their loved ones. The systemic context of this mass exodus was, as I shall discuss in more detail below, the Philippine state's programmatic deployment of its workforce abroad. My father was one of those who endured being outside the homeland to gain a chance at a better future. Those times are a blur to me now. I was probably too young or uninterested to be aware. The only things that my memory keeps are a photograph of him being surrounded by the golden desert, letters handwritten on onionskin paper, voice-recorded messages on cassette tapes, and a big block of cheddar cheese.

Curiously, delving into the topic of Filipino migrant identity made me re-realise that I, too, am a product of a labour migrant family. This, obviously, is nothing special. But being Filipino, it is not easy to be completely unattached to the reality of its diaspora. That is why even when I say there's nothing special about being an overseas worker's child, it is certainly of a particular significance.

Writing this introduction induces a streaming of images of that part of my childhood: getting excited about *padala*<sup>4</sup>, delicately writing a letter on translucent sheets of paper, recording our messages on a rickety stereo recorder, a black toy truck filled with stickers, a remote control car, dining at a restaurant to celebrate his return, riding on his shoulders on our way to the carnival. My memory is, still, in a shambles. I wish there was a way to better organise these disjointed scenarios into an

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<sup>4</sup> *Padala* (*pah-dah-lah*) is something that is sent to someone through another's care – a consignment. Because of the preponderance of overseas worker families in recent decades, the concept has become attached to migrant remittances. The word has also become a staple element of the local and transnational 'semiotic landscape', to use Thurlow and Jaworski's term (2010a), particularly as it concerns corporate appropriation of the practice through mass media and promotional advertising.

orderly retelling of that piece of my personal history. Ka Uro, whose blog is a case included in the study, had this objective precisely in mind when he started blogging about his migrant life in New Zealand: he envisions his daughter reading them when she has grown older.

In a way, the objects, letters, voice recordings, and photographs that those working abroad send their families are mnemonic crutches. As these fulfil their basic functions, they also serve as aids to memory-making. The blog, as well as other more modern modes of social media, is the same – it has the potential to become an archive of thoughts even as it performs its communicative utility at present. Only, new media forms have the capacity for dissemination not possessed by older modes of long-distance communication. As such, web-based media, if used as a way to connect with families who are not physically present, can also have an audience beyond its intended recipients. Or perhaps, it is now the case that when one decides to use these new media to primarily maintain ties with loved ones, one also inevitably internalises a wider audience.

Aside from the personal background I have presented, I also provide in this chapter a discussion of the larger systemic context that informs my reading of identity dynamics in new media writings included in the study. The succeeding section accounts for the general characteristics and historical details of the Filipino diaspora both on a global scale and specific to the case of New Zealand as host nation. Besides imparting an overall picture, I especially endeavour to shed light on the neoliberal underpinnings of Filipino diaspora as it is configured today. The changes, opportunities, and challenges wrought by the ‘complex interconnectedness’ of systems (Urry, 2003, p. 36) in neoliberal globalisation are not just limited to the political and economic domain for there is always the interplay of cultural and ideological exchange. This inseparability of the material and the symbolic informs the rationale and objectives of studying migrant identity discourses produced and consumed in Internet-based media. The final section of the chapter gives an overview of the structure of the thesis.

## **1.2 The bigger picture: Filipino diaspora as state-sponsored mass exodus**

Diaspora has been appropriated by various groups in both academic disciplines and sectors beyond it (Clifford, 1997). Its current alliance with transnational, post-structural, and postcolonial projects has largely defined the theoretical route of diaspora discourses and experiences. San Juan (2000), however, issues a caveat against the postmodernist tendency to eschew politics by noting that any analysis of identities (whether ethnic or diasporic) ‘will remain vacuous if it does not take into account the reality of imperial world-systemic changes’ (p. 231). Neoliberal globalisation may be the prime example of the ‘world-systemic changes’ that San Juan encourages critical inquiries on identity to consider. This is an invaluable perspective in the study since ‘globalisation’ is the condition of late modernity characterised by, among other things, the defiance of spatial and temporal distance (Harvey, 1989; Giddens, 1991; Fairclough, 2010), a context in which I aim to situate my readings of New Zealand-based Filipinos’ articulations of identity in social media.

### **1.2.1 Filipino diaspora in a global context**

Critics argue that though Filipino emigration for labour has long been in existence, its immensity as seen at present only started in the 1970s and was promoted in the 1980s, when the government recognised the huge economic potential of selling its human capital abroad (Alcid, n.d.; Bello, 2011; San Juan, 2000). It was in fact during the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos that the government institutionalised exporting labour to mitigate the economic slump. Deployment increased in spectacular fashion in the following years, and this is not unrelated to the program of structural adjustment dictated by the World Bank and the IMF on the country in the 1980s in order to ‘free market forces’ and improve economic performance (Bello, 2011). This reveals the complexity of Filipino labour diaspora that is camouflaged by discourses of personal agency, individual decisions, and natural tendencies on the part of the migrant worker.

Today, 11 per cent of the Filipino population lives abroad, 20 per cent of the workforce is deployed overseas and nearly half of the population depends on Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW) remittances of relatives (Bello, 2011; POEA,

2011). OFW is now a category of citizens in the Philippines and in so-called 'receiving' societies from Hong Kong to Yugoslavia (San Juan, 2000, 2009). These Filipinos are bestowed identities that have largely been defined not by their inherited culture and history but by their occupation and, in many cases, lower status as a group of people in receiving countries.

The 2011 Philippine Overseas Employment Agency (POEA) report listed the following as the top ten destinations for land-based OFWs with all countries having seen an increase in deployment from the previous year, a trend likewise reflected in the case of deployed Filipino seafarers:

1. Saudi Arabia
2. United Arab Emirates
3. Singapore
4. Hong Kong
5. Qatar
6. Kuwait
7. Taiwan
8. Italy
9. Bahrain
10. Malaysia

Occupations that take the top spots among land-based OFWs include service work, production work, and professional and technical work – more than 46 per cent are in service while 32 per cent are in production (POEA, 2011). Interestingly, statistical data glosses over certain realities when, for example, manipulating the representation of skill categories in data reports completely erases certain facts that are significant to the full understanding of the situation or trend in migrant work. In 1998, for instance, Scalabrini Migration Center, a group that promotes the interdisciplinary study of international migration, compiled some 1997 POEA unpublished data on new hires. In the said report, the category 'service', which accounts for 34 per cent of skill category in that period, underscored the sub-categories 'maid' (21 per cent) and 'caretaker' (9 per cent), and under the 'professional' skill (23 per cent) category, the sub-category 'entertainer' (12 per cent) was emphasised (Battistella, 1999, p. 236). Although there is no official reason for the practice of lumping together certain occupational categories in official published reports, one can argue that it is an attempt at sanitising. Political correctness may be a valid reason for the measure as the words 'maid' and 'caregiver' (and similar terms) have taken on derogatory

connotations especially for Filipino women migrant workers, most of whom are in service work. These women have taken the brunt of demeaning and condescending significations as the term ‘Filipina’ has become pigeonholed as a particular type of occupation.

Although each receiving country is unique, there are common problems and issues that OFWs have to confront such as discriminatory, xenophobic and racist policies; laws and practices that legitimise violations of migrants’ rights (e.g. gender-based violence); the lack of effective redress mechanisms; and, the illegal recruitment and trafficking of girls and women (Alcid, n.d.; Quina, 2010). Rhacel Parreñas (2001), in probing the imagined global community of Filipina migrant workers, highlights the issue of ‘partial citizenship’ that haunts them in their daily lives in a foreign land where they are left vulnerable to exploitation and abuse given that they are considered a lesser race and unwanted citizens. Despite her analysis being focused on the specific experience of women OFWs, citizenship issues obviously affect migrant workers regardless of gender. Although few nations seem to be relatively more accepting by granting foreign workers a chance at full citizenship (e.g. Spain, Canada and the USA), political and social inequalities still hound them (Parreñas, 2001). This situation is true for New Zealand. While eligibility for full citizenship is available to migrant workers, racial inequality and disparity in access to basic services still remain a paramount issue (see for instance Butcher, Spoonley, & Trlin, 2006; Henderson, 2004; New Zealand Human Rights Commission, 2012; The Centre for Applied Cross-cultural Research Victoria University of Wellington, 2007).

### **1.2.2 Filipino diaspora in New Zealand**

It was in the year 2003 when the New Zealand government recruited workers from other countries to fill in gaps in the labour sector through the Skilled Migrant Category – a points-based policy that allows people to gain permanent residence if they fulfil certain qualifications to contribute to New Zealand economically and socially (Masgoret, Merwood, & Tausi, 2009). It was not only in the early part of the twenty-first century that Filipinos landed on New Zealand shores, however. The 1936 census records six people born in the ‘Philippine Islands’ (Baral, 1995; Walrond, 2009). Tony Noblejas, who arrived in 1969 and was one of the earliest and most prominent Filipinos in Auckland, recounts the forlornness of settling in a new

country with only a handful of compatriots – a few students and teachers – and no Philippine Embassy to speak of (Norman, Udanga, & Udanga, 2011, p. 9). Although it is clear from his account that the Filipino population was sparse and that official country representation lacked presence during that time, it also reveals that Filipinos have found their way to the region long before the introduction of particular immigration policies. By 1981, the Filipino population totalled 405 and until the 1990s most Filipino migrants were young women who were often thought to have met New Zealand men through friends or by answering newspaper personal advertisements, while some were ‘mail-order brides’ (Walrond, 2009).

In 1991, there were still more Filipino women (3,450) than men (1,467) in New Zealand and the sex ratio remained the same even after a decade (2001) with women numbering 7,047 and men 4,041 (Statistics New Zealand, 2010). This trend somewhat shifted in the data on Permanent and Long-term (PLT) migration flows of Filipinos wherein by the June 2007 year, a slightly higher net PLT inflow of males (1,600) compared with females (1,500) was recorded (Statistics New Zealand, 2007).

In 2001, Filipinos (75.2 per cent) have the highest labour force participation among Asians in New Zealand (Statistics New Zealand, 2002). In 2006, Filipinos were the fourth largest Asian ethnic group (after the Chinese, Indians and Koreans) in New Zealand numbering 16,938, a more than 50 per cent increase from 2001 (Statistics New Zealand, n.d.). The New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade in 2010, however, estimated that the Filipino population in the country was at 35,000. The Philippines is also one of the top five source countries of skilled migrants (Masgoret et al., 2009).

It is interesting to see how Filipino migrants in New Zealand negotiate their identities within the complex matrix of social categories as transnational citizens. It is especially important to understand their process of identity construction since they appear to have unique resources to view and *re-view* their subjectivity compared to Filipino migrants in other host nations. In terms of occupation, for example, although many hold positions in the nursing or health profession (that, in itself, engenders certain stereotypes), data show that there are also many in other fields. In 2007, for instance, the main professional group of female PLT arrivals from the Philippines to New Zealand was the business professionals group (Statistics New Zealand, 2007).

### 1.2.3 Filipino diaspora in the clutches of neoliberal globalisation

Giroux (2004) equates the neoliberal ideology to a terror that has beset humanity. In an incisive and emotional critique, he emphasises the death sentence that it has meted out on those who it determined, quoting Susan George, ‘are not worthy of life’ in the first place. In the same vein, Harvey (2005) sees neoliberalism’s destructive effects in the way it forces all domains of human action to be within the ambit of market exchange, hence, destroying previously held ethical systems only to replace them with contractual obligations. As many commentators have argued, neoliberalism has created a lot of *mess* by enforcing state abandonment of its responsibility over the welfare of the larger section of the population to satisfy unabated profit-making, which is imagined as natural free market laws.

The specific neoliberal economic policies, a legacy of the Washington Consensus<sup>5</sup>, imposed by developed nations on developing ones forced the latter to open their markets and lift protection barriers and regulations. Klein (2007) asserts that the spread of libertarian free market principles in these poorer countries became possible through the exploitation of their vulnerabilities and weaknesses by powerful institutions and leaders on the global stage. She exemplifies this opportunistic strategy using ‘disaster capitalism’ (Klein, 2007, p. 355ff), a concept that pertains to the way tragedies and disasters are *harnessed* to force communities and governments to accede to specific policies that they would otherwise find difficult to accept. Generally, in terms of concrete policy methods, the neoliberal path to development requires the following (Chang, 2005, p. 251): liberalisation of access to commodity and finance markets; privatisation of public utilities; and labour deregulation. Dependence on foreign direct investments, obliteration of labour security measures, and a weakened state role and authority characterise the neoliberal route as evidenced by its failure to eradicate poverty and implement better mobility for people (see for instance Chacón, 2007; Chang, 2005; Kingstone, 1982; Peters, 2008).

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<sup>5</sup> John Williamson (2004) coined the term in 1989 referring to the specific policies ‘everyone’ in Washington agrees the whole of Latin America needs in order to further development. As Williamson himself admits, today it is at the centre of wide ideological debates.

The Philippine migrant labour situation is a symptom and consequence of this encompassing dilemma. While the state facilitates a broadening privatisation of public utilities, it enacts a corporate ethos by carrying out international ‘labour brokering’ of its people (Guevarra, 2009; Rodriguez, 2010). Rodriguez explains it as:

...a neoliberal strategy that is comprised of institutional and discursive practices through which the Philippine state mobilizes its citizens and sends them abroad to work... (2010, p. x)

As neoliberal capital requires flexibility in labour, the Philippine state restructured its economic development program to suit the needs of the global corporate market ruled by powerful states in confluence with the multi-national corporate elite. Rodriguez highlights how the state becomes a primary player in the export of its people to meet the requirements of large transnational corporate players. She cites, in particular, how the then president, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, visited the United States of America in 2003 and announced herself CEO of a global enterprise that provides the world ‘highly skilled, well-educated, English-speaking’ as well as ‘productive’ and ‘efficient’ workers (Rodriguez, 2010, p. ix). The former president’s actions indicate a view of Filipinos being lucrative commodities for labour export due to their possession of human capital – skilfulness and aptitude standards that also serve as basis for developed countries’ acceptance of migrants, whether as cheap labour source or permanent residents.

The human capital framework is based on the assumption that individuals can acquire skills, knowledge, and traits that would make them more viable, independent and profitable members of the economy (see critique by Gintis & Bowles, 1975; and Gintis, 2000). As a discourse, human capital theory is located predominantly in the labour market, but it also plays out as a neoliberal element in various interpenetrating spheres including the welfare state, immigration, citizenship, schooling, and the family (McLaren & Dyck, 2004, p. 42). The points-based system of finding the most apt immigrant by measuring an individual’s potential for contribution to the economy and society of the receiving nation-state is largely a product of this framework. First implemented in Canadian immigration policies and strategy in the 1960s, finding suitable immigrants by determining a set of criteria with corresponding numerical value, the general points-based framework is now being

practiced in countries like the UK, USA, Hong Kong, Singapore, Australia, and New Zealand (Papademetriou & Sumption, 2011). The human capital framework is not without issues, though. From the receiving nation's perspective, criticisms have sprung up questioning its ability to select the best people to be invited to the country (Papademetriou & Sumption 2011). Yet, from the sending nation's end, the depletion of its most skilled human resource has been a cause for concern among many developing countries (Nayyar, 2008).

The Philippine state, acting as broker in order to maximise the profits from labour export, is unique in the 'methodical' deployment of its people worldwide (Guevarra, 2009; Rodriguez, 2010). In performing this task, it needs to manage practices and discourses that eventually define the identity of Filipinos it sends abroad. To demonstrate the point, examine the words uttered by a government official who has held a position since the Marcos era in the 70s. Senator Juan Ponce Enrile, in providing reasons for his rejection of a reproductive health bill<sup>6</sup> (altogether a different but equally difficult issue), unequivocally and collectively objectifies Filipinos in the following statement (in Macaraig, 2012):

Ang pinakamalaking export natin is OFW (overseas Filipino workers). Export iyan eh, kaya ako kontra ako sa RH dahil diyan. Ang magpapalago ng bansa natin ay iyong excess population natin na sinanay natin na tumatanggap ng mga trabaho abroad that others don't want to handle. We have to accept that.

*Our biggest export is OFWs. It is our export, that's why I'm against RH. What will improve our economy is the excess population that we trained to do jobs that others don't want to handle.*

Notice that in the end, the good senator issues a statement that commands the Filipino people to concede to the fact that many of their fellow citizens are, indeed,

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<sup>6</sup> The RH Law or The Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Act of 2012 was first filed in 1999. It was revived in congress in 2010. The bill essentially ensures reproductive safety and education of Filipino citizens, especially of women and young people who are deemed most vulnerable. Since the beginning, it has been met with vehement opposition from the Catholic lobby and its political allies citing, inter alia, reasons of 'population control' (similar to genocide) that the bill supposedly advocates. In 2012, it was signed into law by President Benigno Aquino III. Its implementation was delayed by a Supreme Court petition in 2013. In 2014, the same court declared its constitutionality, save for some provisions.

commodities of high economic value. The imperative mood and the high conviction should, therefore, persuade us to take the matter as *realpolitik*. In other words, Filipinos, for the sake of their nation, are inevitably bound to *serve* humanity.

### **1.3 Rationale and significance of the study**

Although there is no denying the economic and political impact of the globalisation process, it is imperative we recognise its cultural significance as well. By the same logic, contemporary Filipino diaspora, despite being heavily characterised by its economic premise, also always involves active dynamics in cultural shifts. The present study focuses on this aspect of the phenomenon by specifically investigating the interaction of diaspora, identity, discourse, and new media with the assumption that individual lives are increasingly becoming networked with much help from emerging technologies of communication and connection.

Interconnectedness is the prime ethos of globalisation. But just as there is a persistent understanding of the current world as becoming increasingly ‘smaller’ because separate regions are being inescapably linked, it cannot also be denied that the spread of the outcomes of globalisation is not even. What is now more apparent is that as windows are opened in the name of globalisation, fences are constantly built (Klein, 2002), making the dream of a borderless world more of an unfulfilled desire than a present reality.

This is not to say that the state of interconnectedness is baseless, for evidence is clear that economic, cultural, political, and technological aspects of a ‘shrinking’ world are happening. The effects of globalisation, in fact, prompt us to revisit the way we do social theory as, Urry (2003) argues, we live in a world of *complexity* where linear metaphors no longer suffice and should be replaced by the metaphor of ‘connection’ in order to shift our analysis to the ‘relational’ character of systems of globalisation. ‘Relationality,’ he explains further, ‘is brought about through a wide array of networked or circulating relationships that are implicated within different overlapping and increasingly convergent *material* worlds’ (Urry, 2003, p. 122). Manuel Castells (2010) and Jan van Dijk (2012) contemplate the necessity of focusing on ‘networks’ since these have become the defining unit of today’s complex global relationships. Castells elaborates that networks, in fact,

have become the predominant organizational form of every domain of human activity. Globalization has intensified and diversified. Communication technologies have constructed virtuality as a fundamental dimension of our reality. The space of flows has taken over the logic of the space of places, ushering in a global spatial architecture of interconnected mega-cities, while people continue to find meaning in places and to create their own networks in the space of flows. (2010, p. xlv)

Filipino diaspora in New Zealand should then be seen as necessarily integrated in the wider movement of Filipinos around the world and, likewise, the overall shifts that constantly happen in many global systems. As shown by the history and trajectory of Filipino labour migration above, this movement of a considerable chunk of the population is, in no small part, propelled by national and global economic policies designed to push forward the neoliberal agenda. Of course, a fundamental component of this network of movements and relationships is the conflicted but nevertheless inescapable connection of Filipino migrants to the Philippines as homeland even as they undertake the necessary steps to find their own place in foreign soil. This is the very context that informs the management of their identities and their everyday acts of representation whether online or offline.

Social life in contemporary society is textually mediated (Smith, 1990) and new media act as vehicles for this mediation to transgress boundaries of space and time (Fairclough, 2010, p. 549). In this project, textual mediation is understood to go both ways: while Filipinos in New Zealand internalise a long-standing and prescriptive identity through various discourses, it is also through these discursive practices that they articulate the reproduction, and possibly the revision, of this identity. At the heart of the study is an analysis of the individual discourses of identity produced and consumed on platforms made available by new media developments. What the study enables, at the very least, is a venue for the voices of ordinary people to figure in the complex interactions of large and inescapable forces of change in society. Identity, after all, is a major area of struggle for dominance and resistance in the networked arena of globalised life. Castells maintains that –

In a world of global flows of wealth, power, and images, the search for identity, collective or individual, ascribed or constructed, becomes the fundamental source of social meaning...Yet identity is becoming the main, and sometimes the only, source of meaning in an historical period

characterized by widespread destructuring of organizations, delegitimation of institutions, fading away of major social movements, and ephemeral cultural expressions. People increasingly organize their meaning not around what they do but on the basis of what they are, or believe they are. Meanwhile, on the other hand, global networks of instrumental exchanges selectively switch on and off individuals, groups, regions, and even countries, according to their relevance in fulfilling the goals processed in the network, in a relentless flow of strategic decisions. (2010, p. 3)

In attempting to gain a fuller understanding of the social and personal contexts of migrant identity work, I had the privilege of immersing myself in the personal stories and thoughts of people who ‘must find their own place in the place they have chosen’ (Lippard, 1997, pp. 43–44). Taking a peek at their new media practice afforded me the opportunity to appreciate the ways by which they creatively employ semiotic affordances to work for their sign-making intents. It is in the intersections of *life-making* and sign-making that I hope to find spaces of resistance in their discursive work. This has been what is largely missing in critical analyses of discourses – the focus on the capacity of people for consciousness and action, creativity and imagination to confront and manage subjugating structures of conformity. In the face of the neoliberal scheme to exterminate any form of critical language and practice by ‘privatising’ all areas of the human condition (Giroux, 2004), students of language and culture have the responsibility to find gaps in the encompassing debilitating discourse of ‘personal choice’ as every citizen’s quintessence.

Teasing out the complexity and ambivalences of ordinary people’s stories is able to create openings for various forms of questionings and resistances. ‘The search for identity is’, indeed, ‘as powerful as techno-economic change in charting the new history’ (Castells, 2010, p. 4) of interconnected selves in the era of interconnected lives. Filipino diaspora and identity become a case that demonstrates an assertion of not an irrevocable essence but of a complex practice of managing the steady impact of decentring and insecurity. With reservations about their view on the significance of ideology in society, I reference Deleuze and Guattari (1987) at this point to underscore not just the ‘multicentredness’ (Lippard, 1997) of people’s experience, but the inescapable overlaps between each of our stories and the chance for change that these interconnections bring. In everything, ‘there are lines of articulation or segmentarity, strata and territories; but also lines of flight, movements of

deterritorialisation and destratification’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 3). Returning to Klein’s metaphors of globalisation presented above, I wish to ultimately contribute to the furtherance of efforts to ensure that with every ‘fence’ built to establish authority of systems and control people’s movements, ‘windows of dissent’ are created for renewed acts of opposition.

#### **1.4 Objectives and overview of the thesis**

Taking into account the personal and systemic background on Filipino diaspora I presented earlier and the necessity of looking at identity work in the networked context of globalisation just discussed, the main aim of the project is to understand how New Zealand-based Filipinos ‘get around’ with the question of identity through their writings in social media (‘social media’ is defined and discussed in the Methodology section). By identity, I refer to ‘diasporic identity’, as both a methodological and political choice (further discussed in the succeeding three chapters). For now, I explain it as the sense of being Filipino outside the homeland – understandings and interrogations of who they are and their sense of place in a society outside their place of origin, within a context of complex networks of material and symbolic flows.

Specifically, the objectives are the following:

1. Describe and unravel how Filipino migrants in New Zealand practice and signify their engagement in social media.
2. Gain insight into the meanings the participants themselves produce from the said activities and the resultant ‘texts’ of participating in such.
3. Understand the implication of both the practice and the texts in constructing, deconstructing, and reconstructing the participants’ sense of identity as Filipinos in New Zealand.

The ways I addressed these issues are discussed in the succeeding eight chapters, following this introduction. Chapter 2 is a review of the literature that focuses on past and related studies of diaspora and identity and the interactions of identity work, diasporic/migrant communities, and Internet-based platforms. Chapter 3 is dedicated to discussing the theoretical framework that outlined the contours of the project from beginning to end. I present here the theory of ‘liminality’ that defines the ambivalent

condition of Filipino migrants in New Zealand, the intricacies of textuality and textualisation of experience in writing, and the affordances of social media platforms as a unique space of identity-construction and determination. Chapter 4, on the other hand, discusses the methodological framework employed in the project. In particular, it presents the basic tenets of diversely labelled but philosophically related designs of virtual ethnography, netnography, and online ethnography. The chapter also includes a section on the analytic framework that guided the reading of the social media content generated by the participants. Chapters 5-8 are analytic – the results of the crossings of critical discourse analysis, multimodality, and cultural studies as I carried out my interpretive/hermeneutic exploration of the texts. Chapter 5 focuses on my analysis of official texts – state-sanctioned discourses on the identity of migrants – while Chapters 6-8 are centred on my reading of two cases of social media writings (Facebook and a blog) of Filipino immigrants in Auckland and the resulting discourses on their identities in diaspora. Finally, Chapter 9 offers a synthesis of the preceding discussions and analyses. I also conclude the thesis in this chapter and offer an understanding of what ‘textuality’ in new media might mean and its implications on identity work.

## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

### LOCATING IDENTITY IN THE NEXUS OF DIASPORA AND NEW MEDIA

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#### 2.1 Introduction

The review of related literature is divided into four parts. As a theoretical frame of reference to the preliminary discussion of Filipino diaspora in Chapter 1, I first present a discussion of the characteristics of Filipino diaspora in terms of its likeness to and distinctness from the classic understanding of diaspora, as explicated by William Safran and Robin Cohen, and the conceptual appropriations that have directed its trajectory towards a postmodernist contouring. In particular, I discuss here James Clifford's take on the subject and E. San Juan Jr.'s critique of his perspective. In his examination, San Juan proposes looking at Filipino labour migration as a unique form of Asia-Pacific diaspora that is entangled with the complexities and conflictedness of neoliberal globalisation.

The second section centres on studies of overseas Filipinos and their identities as a product of the intersection of material and symbolic practices and contexts that characterise their migrant situation. What is obvious is that most of these studies focus on overseas Filipino workers although they do not entirely comprise Filipino immigrants. This is not surprising since the OFW phenomenon has come to achieve a significant global presence that affects the understanding of the larger Filipino migration situation. What this means is, that any Filipino belonging to a different migrant category or any Filipino for that matter, would have to contend with the long-standing apprehension of Filipinos as global workers for hire and their vicissitudes.

The final two sections deal with the interaction of diaspora and new media. As the study is about the way Filipinos in New Zealand perform identity work through social media, I reference previous research on the role media – old and new – play in the lives of Filipino migrants. Notable works are those by Mirca Madianou, Daniel Miller, and Raul Pertierra as they are able to demonstrate how forms of communication mediate relationships that are marked by great geographic divides.

Although my project is centred on identity construction in discourse, their insights are invaluable foundations in carrying out my analysis. The final section of the chapter deals with research on the interconnection of diaspora, new media, identity, and discourse. Especially significant at this point are the studies that focus on Filipino migrant cases and other diasporic groups that exhibit similar practices.

## **2.2 Nuancing the Filipino diaspora**

Diaspora is defined, in general, as a dispersal of a people from a single original place – the homeland. Although all other permutations of the concept have centred on this, the specificities of its more contemporary application warrant a more complex understanding. Safran (1991, 2005) offers a defining model of diaspora that is largely based on the Jewish dispersion from the Holy Land. He describes it as follows (Safran 1991, 2005; Clifford 1997): ‘expatriate minority communities’ –

1. that are dispersed from an original ‘center’ to at least two ‘peripheral places’
2. that maintain a ‘memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland’
3. that ‘believe they are not – and perhaps cannot be – fully accepted by their host country’
4. that sees the ancestral home as a place of eventual return, when the time is right
5. that are committed to the maintenance or restoration of this homeland
6. whose consciousness and solidarity as a group are ‘importantly defined’ by this continuing relationship with the homeland

Clifford (1997) is wary of prescribing a limiting set of criteria for an ideal type of diaspora. It is worth heeding this position since the application of the concept in current history is no longer confined to the six standard characteristics that Safran espouses. In this regard, Cohen (2008) introduced four phases of diaspora studies that trace the development of how the concept has been theoretically viewed and methodologically employed in the social sciences and, to an extent, the humanities (pp. 1-20):

1. Prototypical or classical (mainly confined to Jewish experience)
2. Metaphorical use of the term (applied to different categories of people: refugees, migrants, expellees, etc.)
3. Social constructionist underpinned by postmodern readings (because identities are deterritorialised and constructed, the 'home' and 'ethnic/religious community' are abandoned as basic assumptions)
4. Consolidation (social constructionist critiques accommodated, i.e., identities are constructed, but retains key defining aspects such as the notion of home and homeland, which in some cases have become stronger)

The categories above effectively shed light on the specific theoretical positions that various critics have taken in the deployment of the concept that, in turn, have shaped and reshaped its form and usefulness. For instance, the postmodern and postcolonial slant of Clifford's 'polythetic' understanding of diaspora embraces a more fluid notion of the idea. Homeland, by his definition, does not necessarily pertain to a physical 'place of origin' that a people with an experience of dispersal long to return to. In fact, in this view, the diaspora discourse need not even be restricted to the idea of a symbolic homeland since a people's origin, a prolonged separation from it, and a resolute drive to come back are not the only elements that could characterise the phenomenon. Clifford elaborates on this point:

Decentered, lateral connections may be as important as those formed around a teleology of origin/return. And a shared, ongoing history of displacement, suffering, adaptation, or resistance may be as important as the projection of a specific origin. (1997, p. 249-250).

His diaspora paradigm provides some postmodern comfort in the assumption that a monolithic 'core' is not requisite in making sense of diaspora discourses. He frames the concept with a very appealing catchphrase, 'dwelling in displacement', summarising both the spirit of today's transnational subjectivity and a more generous version of diaspora as a conceptual tool. Opening up the diaspora discourse to a more varied and differently angled view to capture people's global movements in the twentieth century is the basic impetus for conceptual and terminological innovation such as 'transnationalism' and 'transmigrants' as outlined and theorised in Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton (1992) and Schiller (1995). The move to a new name is

fuelled by the objective of revising the idea that immigrants are ‘uprooted’ from the homeland since, in reality, they are able to ‘build social fields that link together their country of origin and their country of settlement’ in which activity ‘they develop and maintain multiple relations’ (Schiller et al., 1992, pp. 1–2). The greatest contribution of the framework is, perhaps, the release of immigrants or diasporic subjects from the rigid coupling of home and identity, since the premise is that they possess the creative capacity to manage and appropriate ideas and objects to establish their place in both the home and host countries.

A transnationalist perspective claims that immigrants can be firmly rooted even outside their countries of origin since they are able to maintain ‘many different racial, national, and ethnic identities’ (Schiller et al., 1992, p. 11). The contention reveals a global perspective in migrant identity formation and reconceptualises the limits and agency of the immigrant subject. However, it is important to remember that certain confinements in identity construction will always be in place since ‘it is in terms of these bounded identity constructs that migrants frame their individual and collective strategies of adaptation’ (Schiller et al., 1992, p. 19). In this light, the role nation-states play in regulating the movements of their population is at once affirmed and questioned in the context of globalisation and transmigration. Urry identifies this paradox created by the fluidity and complexity of today’s globalised set-up – the place of the state becomes more prominent rather than insignificant since the shifts towards global networks do not invalidate its power over certain territories and populations but only transform the space that it has to control and the means by which this control is executed (e.g. computer-based information flows) (2003, pp. 107–111) .

Turning to a ‘transnational’ standpoint is clearly influenced by the poststructural and social constructionist strands of thought in social science. But, as a dilemma charged against the postmodern enterprise, there is the danger of slipping into a pluralistic, yet nebulous, approach such that all analyses become receptive to a wide array of experiences and perspectives but at the same time deprived of any historical consciousness. The worry is not trivial. In fact it is Clifford himself who prompts us to remember that any study of diaspora should be rooted in a particular history of a people or group lest the diversity of its manifestation becomes, ironically, its

homogenising trap. San Juan (2000) agrees on those terms. In his discussion of Filipino diaspora, he particularly cites Clifford and his idea of finding consolation in being secure in impermanence or dislocation. Although he laments the fact that finding security in displacement seems to have become the mantra of Clifford's polythetic vision of diaspora, both assert that there should be rootedness in specific histories when attempting to understand a particular dispersal of a people.

San Juan's perspective could be considered as an example of the 'consolidation' phase in Cohen's classification – it is, as I am about to show, a freeing of the concept from its classical trope but also, importantly, a reassertion of the centrality of the 'homeland', albeit, in its deconstructed form. On the surface, the crucial dissent San Juan has from a polythetic diaspora discourse rests on the absolute essentiality of 'home' and a return to it. But he also claims that the Filipino diaspora is quite different from Safran's or the prototypical notion of diaspora that is anchored in the centrality of home and return. This difference does not actually derive from formulation of the 'home' as a necessary condition for a diaspora nor does it pertain to a homeland's insignificance in 'dwelling in displacement'. Rather, the identity of Filipino diaspora lies in the peculiar construction of the 'nation' in Philippine historical experience. To San Juan, Filipinos in dispersal could only long for a homeland that is not entirely *national* for the Philippines does not yet have a nation to speak of:

Diasporic groups are historically defined not only by a homeland but also by a desire for eventual return and a collective identity centred on myths and memories of the homeland. The Filipino diaspora, however, is different. Since the homeland has been long colonised by Western powers (Spain, United States (US)) and remains neo-colonised despite formal or nominal independence, the Filipino identification is not with a fully defined nation but with regions, localities, and communities of languages and traditions. (San Juan, 2000, p. 229)

The argument seems to sit very well with Clifford's 'lateral connections' being the diasporic element that, in light of the unavailability of a 'solid' homeland, might connect a people from one original territory or peoples from various origins but with similar (or familiar) experiences as dispersed groups. It appears that a polythetic take on diaspora need not be contrapuntal to a more 'historically embedded' one. This is especially valuable in the particular case of Filipino diaspora. If the desire to return

to the homeland is premised on an ‘incomplete’ (interrupted) construction of a nation, then surely, there must be other factors that bind these individuals as a people – factors that to an OFW, for instance, would carry more significance than the wholeness of its nation and validity of its national origin. San Juan recognises this as he provides the properties of, to him, a Filipino genre of diaspora (2000, p. 236-237):

1. The origin to which one returns is not a nation or nation-state but a village, town, or kinship network; the state is viewed in fact as a corrupt exploiter, not representative of the masses, a comprador agent of transnational corporations and Western (specifically US) powers.
2. Rootedness in autochthonous habitat or soil does not exert a commanding influence, or it exists as a faint nostalgic trace.
3. Alienation in the host country is what unites Filipinos, a shared history of colonial and racial subordination, marginalisation, and struggles for cultural survival through hybrid forms of resistance and political rebellion.
4. Some Filipinos in their old age may desire eventual return only when they are economically secure. In general, Filipinos will not come back to the site of misery and oppression. Overseas workers would rather bring their families in places of their employment, if possible, as long as there is hope or illusion of future improvement.
5. On-going support for nationalist struggles at home is sporadic and intermittent.
6. The Filipino collective identity is in crisis and in a stage of formation and elaboration. It is tied more to a symbolic homeland indexed by kinship or particularistic traditions which it tries to reconstitute in diverse localities...
7. They cannot be called fashionable ‘transnationals’ because of racialised, ascribed markers (physical appearance, accent, peculiar non-white folkways) that are needed to sustain and reproduce Euro-centric white supremacy every day.

The vagueness of a nation as home, the connections that locate sentiments toward an origin bereft of a rigid referent, the struggles of a people against an oppressive structure in the original and the receiving nations – these highlight the idiosyncrasy of Filipino diaspora experience. One can also easily detect the critical stance of San Juan in an attempt to formulate a unique type of diaspora. It is worth considering that the diasporic discourse in the context of the Filipino experience does not merely serve to challenge the ascendancy of the nation-state (as postmodern takes on the issue would have it) but is also an opportunity to redefine, revisit, revise and

eventually complete the creation of the nation. In other words, this discourse on Filipino diaspora is, at the same time, a project for providing a route for the Filipino nation to be problematised and eventually realised. The Philippine nation, it would seem, is *written* (or lived) by a people whose identification with it is not necessarily preemptive (given that the nation is unfinished) but rather, precursory. However, as San Juan (2009) reiterates on another occasion, the trajectory of Filipino diaspora could only provide a route to revise the history of the homeland not by being comfortable in 'dwelling in displacement' but by a conscious assessment of their place in the intersections of race, gender, and class in the interactions of the country of residence and origin within the wider network of global capitalism. Although he cites the case of Filipinos in the US, he makes a relevant point about the Filipino diaspora's crucial bond with the homeland in determining the future:

The trajectory of the Filipino diaspora remains unpredictable. Ultimately, the rebirth of Filipino agency in the era of global capitalism depends not only on the vicissitudes of social transformation in the US but, in a dialectical sense, on the fate of the struggle for autonomy and popular-democratic sovereignty in the Philippines. (San Juan, 2009, p. 121)

The question of the nation is crucial in this proposed study since the aim is to grasp Filipino identity construction on the Internet. But what is clear from San Juan's analysis is that defining a Filipino diaspora (or diasporas) is not possible without allusions to the notion of a homeland however problematic and deconstructed the nation-as-home is at its current state. This is precisely Cohen's point in describing the last phase of diaspora studies which, despite the valid contributions of a more complex and deterritorialised approach to identity construction outside the native land, rightfully brings back some key defining elements of the concept especially since it has gained a renewed relevance even in today's postmodern setting (Vertovec & Cohen, 1999). The view of not just returning to but reclaiming the home is undoubtedly a political vision, not confined to the subject of identity. But it is these political relationships that give shape to diasporas from its classical beginnings up to its more contemporary iterations. For the Philippines, in particular, the colonial past and the neoliberal embroilments at present is, as I see it, the most valid starting point of understanding identity work in diaspora.

### 2.3 Filipino identity in diaspora

Lowe (2003), in her study of Asian-American groups, identifies the following as three important concepts in relation to the study of identity (p. 138):

- Heterogeneity: differences and differential relationships within a bounded category (e.g. not all Filipinos are one and the same)
- Hybridity: formation of cultural objects and practices that are produced by the uneven and unsynthetic power relations (e.g. diglossic character of English and Filipino in the Philippine linguistic landscape)
- Multiplicity: social relations are determined by several different axes of power (e.g. the confluence and contradictions of neoliberal capitalism, patriarchy, and racism)

The importance of these concepts, as Lowe asserts, is not merely confined to the rhetorical potential of the terms but has more to do with their ability to name the specific material contradictions that characterise particular groups (2003, p. 138). The proposed project will benefit greatly from these related concepts since it aims to deal with the question of Filipino identity in very specific terms: these are online textual constructions of identity and these are by Filipinos in New Zealand. The concepts above remind us that articulations of an identity come from specific *positions*: ‘we all write and speak from a particular place and time, from a history and culture which is specific’ (Hall, 2003, pp. 234). Therefore, the effort to answer the question ‘what is Filipino’ presupposes that the category Filipino does not preclude the diversity and differences of individuals bearing the same name (heterogeneous); that these online articulations of Filipino identity are a product of a rich and conflicted negotiation of a particular culture and history of colonisation and neoliberal struggle (hybrid); and, that these Filipinos in New Zealand steer their way through a complex location that is characterised by varying relations of class, race, gender, and ethnicity (multiple axes of power).

On the other hand, some may view the question of identity as, simply, a hedonistic preoccupation by academics who are out of touch with the reality of people’s everyday lives, which are not centred on the matter at hand. Lawless (2005), for instance, argues that generally Filipinos do not have a problem defining their identity like ‘certain members of the Philippine intellectual elite’ do (p. 252). He further

describes this small coterie of unyielding individuals as ‘more deracinated than in-country’, ‘engaged in a considerable amount of self-conscious hand-wringing about their imagined identity crisis’, and concludes that their postmodernist pursuits are more concerned ‘with literary fashion than with reality’ (Lawless, 2005, p. 252).

The tragedy in terminating critical inquiry over issues of identity, by saying that ordinary men and women do not concern themselves with such ‘frivolity’ as a daily routine, is in the immediate eradication of the potential of identity politics to reveal the deeper historical origin and larger structural implication of an ‘identity crisis’ among a people. When generations of Filipino-Americans, as Lawless himself observes, ‘are oblivious to the history and culture of their parents’ and ‘few have any knowledge of the worldwide contributions that Filipinos have made’ (2005, p. 252), then ‘identity’ concerns actually become symptomatic of larger issues that run deeper than the surface – issues that would likely lead one to confront, intellectually and otherwise, an unavoidable dissection of one’s history, culture, and society. Lawless’ comments specifically pertain to identity dynamics in the Filipino-American context but without doubt, analyses and observations in this area contribute to the understanding of the larger identity issues involved in the lives of Filipinos in other parts of the world.

Disputing the accusation that thinking about identity is an indulgent affair are investigations that throw into sharp relief the complex and intersectional basis of identity formation among Filipino labour migrants. My focus on this group is not to deny the diversity of Filipino migrant composition but to recognise the important fact that Filipinos working abroad configure the character of Filipino migration in general. Also, for my specific study, though most Filipinos come to New Zealand with the ultimate aim of settling permanently, their primary means of doing so is as ‘skilled long-term migrants’, which, essentially, also capitalises on their labour potential. As such, the role of the Philippine state as their labour broker still warrants attention because its systematic global deployment of Philippine human resource involves configuring the identities of its citizens to become palatable commodities to the international market. But alongside this fact, the demand of receiving nations for ‘worthy’ newcomers contributes to the complexity of the cultural, political, and, economic intersections of constructing the ideal immigrant.

The works of Filipino scholars Filomeno Aguilar Jr., Vicente Rafael, Anna Guevarra, Rhacel Parreñas, and Robyn Rodriguez are some of the most noteworthy in this regard. Aside from revealing and contextualising the plight of Filipinos working abroad, mostly in low-skill, service, and temporary contract arrangements, they also take time to examine identity construction as a significant aspect of the Filipino labour diaspora discourse. In one way or the other, these studies put under close scrutiny how imagining and imaging the Filipino as global workers are caught up in personal and structural relationships that make up and are created by the neoliberal configuration of global connections.

### **2.3.1 Class divide and identity discomfitures in Filipino labour diaspora**

Aguilar takes up the issue of Filipino labour migration by going beyond descriptive analysis of facts and figures. His *The Dialectics of Transnational Shame and National Identity* (1996) not only provides a clear and complex understanding of Filipino labour migrant experience but frames it in light of the subjective position and identity formation that implicate elitist perception of national identity and nationalist sentiments. He locates the OCW (‘overseas contract workers’, the official terminology in the 80s that preceded the more politically acceptable ‘overseas Filipino worker’ or OFW) phenomenon within the discourse of *shame*. This was brought on by the ‘racialised’ inferiority complex made apparent in reactions and relationships built by the Filipino elite class (e.g. white collar professionals vs. manual labourers or domestic workers) with Filipino overseas contract workers. In so doing, he manages to show how even among Filipino migrants, a ‘class divide’ figures prominently. This division is the source of indignity felt by Filipinos, in-country and abroad, when citizens of receiving societies appear to homogenise Filipino-ness by employing the ‘OCW’ (maids, entertainers, mail-order brides, construction workers, to name but a few) as referent in signifying an entire race. The preponderance of the Filipino migrant worker as both actual bodies and dominant image has shaken up the imagined secure status of those in the upper echelons of the Philippine society. Most significant in Aguilar’s dissection of the ‘shame’ discourse is his assertion that this disposition exposes a flaw in the delusory formulation of the elite class about *their* privileged brand of Filipino identity and identification. In his

words, ‘for these elites to feel embarrassed is already a major accomplishment of popular nationalism’ (Aguilar, 1996, p. 130).

The divide within the Filipino migrant class was also taken up by Rafael (1997) but with a focus on the distinction between the *balikbayan* and the OCW. ‘Balikbayan’, from the Tagalog words ‘balik’ (return) and ‘bayan’ (nation) is a term coined during the Marcos era to lure overseas Filipinos (particularly those who had been residing in the US) to come and visit their motherland and contribute to the economy through their touristic engagements. The ‘balikbayan’ or returnee, as a concept, has gained an expanded contemporary meaning as can be seen in the Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO) programming that aims to attract overseas-based Filipinos of relevant professions and capacities to *give back* to the country by investing (see Chapter 5). However, in Rafael’s article, the ‘balikbayan’ was contrasted with the OCW because of the former’s relatively higher status in terms of economic and professional standing in their countries of residence.

He cited popular media discourse, attached to this differential positions, that depicts balikbayans as ‘ugly’ – they are defectors who tirelessly bemoan the sordid state of the land they chose to abandon – and OCWs as ‘heroic’ (*bagong bayani* or new heroes), for they sacrifice time with their family, their profession, and safety to labour in foreign territories in order to alleviate the plight of their loved ones and in the process, also render service to the country through remittances. In bringing up the tragedy of Flor Contemplacion<sup>7</sup>, Rafael makes a poignant observation in this statement:

Overseas workers could thus be reconceived as fragments of the nation whose travels and labors were not merely selfish acts of escape or betrayal, but reflections of the courage and willingness of a people to sacrifice and if need be, die for one another. Nationalist mourning sought

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<sup>7</sup> The execution of Flor Contemplacion in Singapore, a domestic worker who was convicted of the murder of her ward and fellow-OFW in 1995 amidst speculations of her own psychological state due to received abuse, has become iconic of the plight and perilous journeys of OFWs. It, in fact, even prompted the passing of a law— Republic Act No. 8042, the Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act of 1995— to protect the welfare of Filipino migrant workers and prevent similar cases from taking place (Quina, 2010).

to rescue OCWs from the realm of global capitalist production and resituate their bodies as the exilic incarnations of contemporary patriotism. (1997, p. 283)

Clearly, this illustrates how the lives, bodies, images, and memories of Filipino migrant workers become fodder for nationalist sentiments and have the potential to revitalise a critical standpoint against state abandonment under the neoliberal project. Flor's fate, in the end, was also a sentence passed on the nation. However, the projection of the image of 'new hero' as a means of placating ignited emotions and renewed consciousness has the tendency to cover up the state's incapacity to protect the welfare of its own citizens.

### **2.3.2 The gendered face of overseas Filipino labour**

Flor Contemplacion's case was one of the many harrowing stories that define the course of Filipino labour migration. Dead bodies of Filipina migrants arriving in wooden boxes have become a staple and lamentable symbol of the trajectory of Filipinos' lives as sacrificial instruments for a limiting version of national development (among many others, see for example, de Guzman, 2003; Parreñas, 2008; San Juan, 2009). The gendered contours of Filipino labour migration are apparent. The works of Parreñas (2008; 2001), Guevarra (2009), and Rodriguez (2002, 2005; 2010) centre on the topic of Filipinas and their subjection to global reproductive work. The 'feminisation' of Filipino overseas labour is tackled and dissected in these studies but what is of crucial importance is their effort at bringing in intersectionality to the understanding and interrogation of gendered oppression in migrant work. This is premised on how systems of power exist in and affect all forms of our daily lives and social relationships.

In *The Force of Domesticity*, Parreñas (2008) untangles the interwoven systems and practices that prevent Filipinas from gaining greater 'empowerment' potentially made available by the act of making independent professional choices and experiencing cultures and systems beyond their native ken. Through the lens of a multitiered, intersectional, and ideological framework, the 'paradoxical' relationship of women to the home is illustrated by the patriarchal-capitalist 'double burden' of urging them to work outside the domestic sphere while, at the same time, binding them to care for their household. This constrictive situation, to Parreñas, forms the

foundation of Filipinas' entrance into the global labour market (2008, p. 22) wherein their 'feminised' capacities for reproductive labour in their respective homes are translated into paid reproductive service to foreign employers and foreign nations. Parreñas' reference to a United Nations educational campaign statement, 'Migration has a woman's face', validates the claim about the significant impact and presence of Filipinas in the global service market arena. In large part, this is also a fact discussed in Guevarra's *Marketing Dreams, Manufacturing Heroes* and in Rodriguez's *Migrants for Export*. Although both works present a state of Filipino labour migration without limiting it to Filipina overseas workers, implicating neoliberal globalisation in concurrence with patriarchal, racial, and imperial hegemonic social structures in the analysis of Philippine labour diaspora serves as a connecting thread of all the studies. In light of the predominance of feminisation of Filipino labour migration, I would like to give recent examples of studies that endeavour to make the picture more encompassing by giving attention to Filipino male overseas workers around the world. These efforts could be seen as a revitalisation of the subject matter since the phenomenal volume of Filipino women regularly departing to labour abroad from the mid-80s replaced the male-dominated deployment of Filipinos to work in foreign soil in the 70s.

Studies on Filipino sea-based workers are notable, especially since 28 per cent of all seafarers are from the Philippines and 97 per cent of these are men (POEA 2011). Research done by Kale Fajardo (2011), Steven McKay (2011), and McKay with Don Lucero-Prisno III (2012) are some outstanding examples of work in the field. As a crucial component of all these studies, reframing and revising 'masculinity' is at the heart of the understanding of this particular strand of Filipino diaspora. Revealing the restrictions and contradictions of traditional male identity and role in performing the seafarers' economic personae, McKay, for instance, argues that 'heroic masculinity' remains 'fragile and contained', for –

...while seafarers' hybrid masculinity might be locally hegemonic, they are not necessarily dominant, either in their industry or at a regional or global scale. (2011, p. 15)

Fajardo frames the reconstruction of Filipino seafarers' masculine identity in a similar fashion but particularly accounts for it in 'a more expansive, inclusive, and queer understanding of Filipino masculinities/manhoods/lalaki-ness'<sup>8</sup> (2011, p. 156). It is important to make clear that the revision of masculinity in Filipino labour diaspora is not confined to the conditions and experiences of seafarers but has also been witnessed in what is categorised as 'land-based' occupations such as domestic care work (Haile & Siegmann, 2014) and the health service industry (Panopio, 2010). As with the intersectional and multi-layered analysis of the feminised face of Filipino labour diaspora, the studies on male overseas workers of today, likewise, shed light on disruptions in long-standing sexual and gender identity in its involvement with larger economic and political systems.

### **2.3.3 A discursive turn in constructing Filipino labour diaspora**

Notwithstanding the commonalities of the studies, it is important to reiterate the nationalist consciousness and post-colonial critique revealed in comprehending the character and politics of contemporary Filipino labour diaspora. Although I do not mean to suggest that such a stance is the only valid position, it is the direction I opt to take in the current study. I necessarily consider my participants' social media writings as *personal* musings of their diasporic lives in New Zealand. At the same time, it is imperative that I look at how these individual discourses become manifestations of a complex and conflicted understanding of the nation in its neoliberal and neo-colonial placement.

While situating the diaspora of Filipinos within a nationalist-transnationalist negotiated frame is, to me, a necessary step to a fuller appreciation of the matter of Filipino diasporic identity, I especially cite Aguilar and Rafael, along with Guevarra and Rodriguez because of their 'discourse-orientedness' in constructing their arguments. I say 'discourse-oriented' to refer to their sensitivity to the diverse discourse situation, media, and signification process involved in the overall

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<sup>8</sup> *Lalaki* means 'male' in Filipino. 'Lalaki-ness' could be considered an equivalent of 'masculinity' or 'maleness' but with particular reference to the cultural connotations of being male, which includes being the provider, the 'man of the house', and the protector.

configuration of Filipino diaspora. In particular, Aguilar and Rafael cite popular media texts (e.g., newspaper articles, ‘showbiz’ talk shows) as potent loci of discourse construction and dissemination of sentiments, attachments, and criticism of elitist sources of national identity that is brought to focus by events pertaining to Filipino workers abroad. In the same manner, Guevarra and Rodriguez reference, for instance, ‘officially produced’ texts that are able to propel into public awareness a racialised economic identity, care of the Philippine state. I have previously discussed Rodriguez’s critique of Macapagal-Arroyo’s corporate language to legitimate the business of peddling Filipino labour to the world. Guevarra’s work cited above is remarkable in this respect since she traces the deployment of discursive strategies in projecting an image of the Filipino in its diasporic situation to extract their possible contributions to the country’s economy. From the *balikbayan* discourse in the Marcos regime, the *bagong bayani* ethos in Corazon Aquino’s rule that was also adopted by the succeeding Ramos administration, up to the ‘great migrant worker’ as the Philippine’s contribution to the world in the corporatist image adopted by Macapagal-Arroyo, ‘technologies of information’, as Harvey puts it, have been effectively put in place to ‘maximise the reach and frequency of market transactions’ (2005, p. 3). As my study deals with the discursive construction of Filipino identity in diaspora – in both officially sanctioned texts and personal social media writings – the relevance of a discourse analytic outlook, broadly understood, in the studies mentioned above is apparent. Its necessary connection to the subject of the nation, on the other hand, is made clearer when we recall Anderson (2003 [1983]) and his thesis of the role of print capitalism in facilitating discourses that created, propagated, and imagined the nation-state as an established stable entity. In the advent of new technologies of information, what I aim to do is contribute to understanding the dynamic changes that new forms of media cause in imagining identity and the nation in diasporic settings, especially since new media purportedly allow more space for user-generated content and discourse (see for example Deuze, 2007; Rosen, 2006).

#### **2.4 Filipino diaspora, identity, and new media**

Asserting one’s identity in a foreign culture is not so much a product of intellectual fixation nor is it driven by a desire to be recognised as a special group or individual when it becomes a mere act of coping with life in a foreign (at times, hostile) land.

Añonuevo and Añonuevo (2002) bring together stories of women OFWs in Italy and Hong Kong in *Coming Home: Women, Migration and Reintegration* as a result of a year-long institution and community-based research. These narratives reveal that the Filipino women workers abroad bring to life *Pinoy* (a diminutive of 'Filipino') culture in their respective host countries to endure everyday life outside the homeland especially if it is a culture that looks down on Filipinos (Añonuevo and Añonuevo, 2002, p. 26-27).

Innocent social practices can also evince varying discourses of nation and national identification. Jonathan Ong (2009) explores identity construction of London-based Filipinos across the media of news and karaoke and observes that through and across these media, 'it is emotional, rather than rational, responses that direct migrants to the homeland...[and it is] in the most ecstatic moments of media consumption that they find themselves reflecting, and reflecting on, their Filipino-ness' (p. 178). This may also be the very 'emotion' that is packed along with all other 'imported' items in every *balikbayan* box (parcels sent from overseas) that Filipinos abroad send to their families in the Philippines. These packages – which may contain a box of Swiss Miss Hot Chocolate, 3 cans of Spam, 3 cans of Libby's corned beef, 1 bag of Hershey's Assorted Miniature Chocolate, 1 bottle Folger's coffee, 2 cans Pk'n'k, and sundry other items – are never really about their contents but a way of reassuring folks back home that relationships remained intact despite the distance (Rimban, 2005). This nearly romanticised way of seeing the *balikbayan* box practice is not necessarily devoid of truth. However, other readings of this phenomenon would take it to a more critical dimension by claiming that this seemingly harmless practice of 'state-side' gentrification reinforces colonial ideologies and Western glorification (Albuero, 2002).

These discrepant interpretations of the *balikbayan* box discourse only make apparent the layered, complex and divergent relationships that Filipinos have with the dynamics of diaspora. As with the stories of Filipino women in particular territories in Añonuevo and Añonuevo (2002), these practices as cultural trappings are indicative of particular traits that may give an idea of how Filipinos act, think, and feel, but they are also signifiers of very personal subtexts that are not entirely

unrelated to a conflicted understanding of the nation and its historical, political, and global entanglements.

The studies I just mentioned serve to highlight three things: first, revisiting, assessing, and expressing one's identity as a Filipino are common practices of overseas Filipinos; second, the medium to express such an identity need not be confined to conventional definitions of 'media' but could be any material 'object' that is able to act as a communicative carrier of messages and meanings (e.g. the *balikbayan* box); and lastly, mundane practices and objects, usually very personal and individual, can be sites of signifying issues and constructing discourses that go beyond the self and extend to larger matters, such as the nation (e.g. the *balikbayan* box as symbol of colonial attachments).

I consider Internet-based communicative media as one of the many modes of expression and connection that are available to the current generation of Filipino immigrants. Although I theorise new media (social media in particular) in the next two chapters with specific attention to conceptual and methodological implications, I am presenting here significant studies that shed light on the pragmatic role that these media forms play in maintaining relationships that are separated by distance. Moreover, the following sections illustrate that in the experience of diasporic subjects and embedded in the practice of sustaining ties with significant others are discourses, explicitly stated or as asides, that interrogate the identities of those who attempt to take root in both the former and new home.

#### **2.4.1 New media in the lives of diasporic Filipinos**

Perhaps, there is no need to point out the profundity of the impact of the Internet in our contemporary lives. At the very least, we are aware and appreciative of its utilitarian value in our social, political, commercial and educational pursuits. When Marshall McLuhan averred that 'the medium is the message', he was emphatic about the impact of emerging technologies on mass media and our methods of communication. His words made the world realise that it is not just the information we exchange but also the means of exchange that work to shape and perhaps, control our personal and public lives. With the advent of new media on the Internet, McLuhan's one other signature phrase, 'the global village', becomes more concretely

felt especially since new media afford those who choose to participate opportunities and possibilities that are previously unavailable – the dissolution of time and space, the breaking down of traditional barriers, a borderless exchange of ideas and an incredulity to metanarratives à la Lyotard (1984).

The definition of ‘new media’ is, of course, not so straightforward compared to its ubiquitous place in today’s common parlance. Although there is a general assumption, for example, that new media refers to ‘technologies’ that are digital, have the character of being manipulated, capable of being networked and are more interactive than traditional media (see Flew, 2008), full appreciation of the term or the concept is not complete without referring to the broader developments in society that underscore the contextual relationships of these technologies. Lister et al. (2008) predicate our understanding of new media upon other economic, social, and cultural changes, citing the following in particular (p. 10-11):

1. A shift from modernity to postmodernity
2. Intensifying processes of globalisation
3. A shift from an industrial age of manufacturing to a post-industrial information age (more evident in the West)
4. A decentring of established and centralised geopolitical order

What can be gleaned from this is that new media did not arise only to pose an antithetical theme to their predecessors but have gained wide cultural currency due to their established dialectical relationship with larger global events, institutional structures, and paradigm shifts. These transformations have not only afforded us a buzzword *du jour* but have reshaped our sensibilities and perhaps, our processing of social realities. Thus, despite the various forms of new media being commonly confined only to the ‘virtual’ domain of reality, there is no denying the fact that at the very least, they figure in the construction of everyday meanings that we hold valuable. Their implications ultimately play a role in how we see ourselves as well as the actions we choose to take.

The Philippines has been tagged the ‘Social Networking Capital of the World’ in a recent study by Stockdale and McIntyre (2011) comparing Internet penetration and

access to Internet-based social media namely Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. Latin American and Southeast Asian countries topped the list in the study and the particular case of the Philippines shows that despite a relatively low Internet use rate (29.7 per cent), Facebook penetration is at 93.9 per cent of Internet users (Stockdale and McIntyre, 2011 p.3). This may not be surprising at all since the country had also been labelled ‘Texting (Short Messaging System as locally known) Capital of the World’ in the past as evidenced by the 600 messages sent by each mobile phone subscriber per month in 2009 (Snow, 2010). There is no apparent reason for these trends in the use of technologies in particular territories. One could, however, conjecture that, among other things, it may have to do with the cultural background buttressing the popularity of certain technologies and media. In the Philippines’ case, it is arguably the oral cultural tradition, a dominance of communal or social sensibility, and primacy of preserving social and family ties that provide social media its sway over the majority (Pertierra, Ugarte, Pingol, Hernandez, & Dacanay, 2002; Pertierra, 2007).

For the transmigrant or diasporic person, it is safe to say that finding ways of communicating with significant people left behind is a fundamental aspect of life away from the homeland. This, of course, is not only true for Filipinos. Staying in touch with those who are left behind is a usual desire and practice. Madianou and Miller (2012), in their eye-opening ethnographic work, *Migration and New Media*, describe and examine the diverse means of maintaining connection that Filipino migrants employ with their families in the Philippines. From the ‘old’ ways of writing letters and recording voice messages on cassette tapes up to the more ‘modern’ affordances made available by mobile phones, computer and Internet-based methods (e.g., email, social networking sites (SNS), and blogs), they map the practice, function, and value of different media types available to communicate and maintain ties.

With a particular focus on the way distance and technology mediate parenting among families with members (usually a parent) who are based overseas mainly for work, Madianou and Miller propose the use of *polymedia* to refer to the various means of facilitating communication and connection in the continuance of relationships amidst separation. To them, this is the most appropriate term since it captures the ‘entire

range of media as a communicative environment', and furthermore, the concept gains currency because communication media today tend to come together in the specific contexts of their actual use –

Apart from being a new theoretical approach to understanding the uses of new and constantly proliferating communicative opportunities, 'polymedia' is also proposed here as a term to refer to these various, constantly changing media and the need for each relationship to create a configuration of usage generally employing several different media... We recognised that while analytically there were prior distinctions between application, platform, medium and technology, these have been superseded by media convergence which conflates them. Instead we need a term to refer to all these new communicative opportunities. (Madianou & Miller, 2012, p. 125)

While the viability of polymedia, as a theoretical approach, is based on the existence of diverse forms of communicative methods for people's specific needs, it is crucial to remember that it is merely a potential, subject to the fulfilment of certain conditions. Madianou and Miller are quick to issue this caveat and identify the conditions that determine the realisation of the polymedia thesis: a plethora of media choices that is affordable to the users, skills and confidence to use the available digital media, and accounting for infrastructural costs to realise media use (2012, p. 137). Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001) make a similar observation about how we actually talk of new media's potential when we describe what they could possibly allow us to do but not how they are actually currently used. It is with this background that media is framed as 'relational' within the configuration of polymedia, which means that one medium's value is determined by its *difference* from other available means in its use as a communicative channel for those who are physically separated, for instance (Madianou & Miller, 2012, p. 137). This view of technology is nothing new. Hine (2000), in outlining an ethnographic approach to Internet research, points out that 'elements of technology should not be taken for granted' because its meanings are defined not by itself but by the user – '...we can usefully think of technologies and media as having interpretive flexibility: ideas of their sensible use are developed in context (2000, pp. 9–10).

Preceding Madianou and Miller, Raul Pertierra (see for example Pertierra, Ugarte, Pingol, Hernandez, & Dacanay, 2002; Pertierra, 2007, 2012), likewise, sees the need to understand the relationship of emerging forms of (communication) technology and

the peculiarity of Filipino diaspora. In his work, he also describes the pragmatic place of ‘computer-mediated interactive communication technologies (CMICT)’ and even earlier means of digital communication in the lives of those who leave and those they have left behind (Pertierra, 2006). The role of Filipino migrant workers as a force of mobility in the globalising world is also highlighted in Pertierra, Ugarte, Pingol, Hernandez, & Dacanay (2002), which goes to show that their place in defining the Philippine nation is never to be disregarded:

In the Philippines, it is not the tourist that symbolizes transition and movement but the overseas worker. These workers embody the other side of global modernity. They represent its subalternness. Forced but also enticed abroad, overseas workers respond to the structures of desire instilled by the new economy. Trapped in its contradictions, they leave their children in order to be better (virtual) parents. While tourists seek otherness, overseas workers endure otherness to maintain their own difference. (p. 61)

What the excerpt above further suggests is the profound influence of new media technologies on the construction of identities in the lives of Filipinos who venture abroad not mainly as transnational tourists but migrant labourers. Identifying this specific trait of Filipino mobility is of consequence since it accentuates the necessity of understanding transnational movements of peoples as differentially enabled by the exigencies of ‘multitiered’ and ‘intersectional’ (to recall Parreñas’ approach above) realities of those who are able to cross territorial boundaries. Referring once again to Pertierra’s statement, tourists tend to have a different ‘mobility’ experience than overseas workers do. For that matter, Filipinos will ‘move’ and ‘be moved’ differently in the world relative to others, such as North Americans or Europeans, or even compared to those from other developing nations.

In *Transforming Technologies: Altered Selves*, Pertierra references the idea of ‘co-presence’ as one of the main contributions of new media technologies that becomes exceptionally relevant in situations where separation is difficult to overcome. Earlier discussed by Goffman (1963), co-presence ‘renders persons accessible, available, and subject to one another’ (p. 22). As experienced in earlier communicative means of the telegraph and telephone, it ‘expanded structures of communication beyond direct aural and visual contact’ (Pertierra, 2006, p. 40). Additionally, Pertierra’s articulation of ‘representation’ as an effect of ‘non-physical’ co-presence is relevant

in my own objective of probing identity discourses in social media texts. In effect, he is saying that these new forms of communication require that we engage in the business of *signifying* ourselves:

Much of contemporary life, with its spatial and temporal disruptions, would not be possible without electronic communication. In conjunction with the modern mass media, these new technologies weld together the notion of a common life-world, whose members inhabit otherwise dispersed and dissociated lives. But the basis for this common life-world is not what it used to be. The real has been replaced by its representation or simulacrum. Co-presence is virtual as much as corporeal. (Perterra, 2007, p. 40)

My study draws on these insights, as well as of the other works cited above. Particularly using the concepts of ‘polymedia’ in Madianou and Miller’s ethnographic work and Perterra’s extended cases that reveal details about ‘co-presence’ in the use of CMICT in different socio-cultural contexts in the Philippines, I see my particular study as a more limited but differently angled perspective on the subject of the relationship of new media and Filipino diaspora. While their studies consider an encompassing set of new media forms, I look only at social media platforms, specifically a blog and Facebook (a social networking site), and their place in the lives of my participants who are New Zealand-based. While a thematic analysis is able to identify the valuable place of new media in maintaining relationships in the globalised world and consequently, impacting identity formation for those who are involved, I am focusing on the ‘discursive’ construction of identity in user-generated new media content. This is in consonance with what Madianou and Miller assert themselves – that a new media format becomes relevant because of its difference to other forms in the context of polymedia. The telegraph and telephone are unique in their affordances as are mobile phones (e.g. texting), e-mail, and instant messaging (IM). All provide the means to communicate, thus facilitating the maintenance of personal relationships, but each offers different forms of ‘interactivity...temporality, as well as its replicability, storage capacity, persistence of content, searchability, mobility, reach, social cues, private/public nature and informational capacity’ (Madianou & Miller, 2012, p. 105). In the succeeding chapters, I will illustrate the uniqueness and similarity of blogging and Facebook as some of the options in the polymedia environment. Specifically, I submit that what they afford is space for extended discourse of the self, with multi-semiotic resources

of sign-making. Hence, what I explore more deeply is the role of these platforms of expression not only in fulfilling a communicative function in the sustenance of relationships amidst physical separation, but in their capacity to provide ‘stages’ of discursive performances of the self where identities are presented, seen, and circulated.

#### **2.4.2 New media, discourse, and online diasporic identity**

Studies of identity are not new to discourse analysis (see for example De Fina, Schiffrin, & Bamberg, 2006). From the nexus of linguistic/discursive practices and the construction of national identity (Wodak, Cillia, Reisigl, & Liebhart, 1999) up to the challenges and opportunities imposed on a sense of self by the destabilisation brought about by the neoliberal globalisation (Heller, 2003, 2010); from the identity dynamics generated in the educational setting (Fairclough, 2010) up to the shifts in subjectivities produced in diverse practices of tourism (Jaworski & Lawson, 2005; Thurlow & Jaworski, 2010, 2011), the interplay of language and discourse and the constant amendments in the way we understand the self is continuously examined.

Recognising the critical need to understand the significance of discursive practices in shaping identities within the context of diaspora and migration, the literature has given emphasis to the linguistic and discursive resources or repertoire that individuals make use of in negotiating their delicate position in societies outside their birthplace (see for instance De Fina, 2003, 2006; Krzyżanowski & Wodak, 2008; Meinhof & Galasinski, 2005). The notion of belonging and attachment, group membership, and the reproduction of ‘ingroup’ and ‘outgroup’ categories are, at least in part, ‘mediated by the discursive resources provided by the public or semi-public discourses, literacy materials, but also other sources such as oral tradition’ (Meinhof & Galasinski, 2005, p. 51). It is of utmost importance that Internet-based media be part of these sources of discourse and given due emphasis since they are, at the moment, indispensable aspects of the diaspora experience in terms of managing relationships from a distance, as previously shown.

The pragmatic contribution of new modes of communication in the migrant situation is but one dimension of the ever-changing technology. The Internet not only provides communicative functionality to individuals separated by distance, it also generates a

platform of self-expression and identity-formation. This is, in fact, Franklin's (2004) basic problematic in *Postcolonial Politics, the Internet and Everyday Life* – a study of the convergence of the Internet and identity construction in the case of Pacific islanders who reside in different parts of the world. In it, she frames the Internet as a setting with conflicted origins and evolving utility, a characteristic that may be taken advantage of by common users in making sense of their day-to-day social interaction. The participants in Pacific Forum and its specific discussion forums Kava Bowl and Kava Club engage in the discourse of reaffirmation and revision of long-held racial and ethnic identity construction within and beyond the 'Pacific Islands' as a geographical and ideational territory. Located in the broader contexts of international relations and international political economy, the study champions the claims continuously made by common users of the Internet amidst the increasing encroachment of commercialism and government intervention (Franklin, 2004). In a similar manner, Plaza (2010), through quantitative content analysis, illustrates how second-generation Caribbean migrants to the United States, Canada, and UK use student-designed web pages to revive and reinvigorate their connection to the Creole culture and origin. He utilises the metaphor of the 'bridge' to underscore the value of online media in closing both geographic and generational gap that characterise the participants' attachment to the homeland.

Of most use in the current project are the works of James Tyner and Olaf Kuhlke (2000), Jason Cabañes (2009), and Emily Noelle Ignacio (2005) as all specifically deal with diasporic Filipinos' identity representation through Internet-based media. Tyner and Kuhlke's *Pan-national identities: Representations of the Philippine diaspora on the world wide web* shows how online media are able to transform transnational identity into a pan-national identity by studying Filipino social networking on the Internet. They propose that the *tahanan* (home) becomes a master trope in realising the consolidation of this identity. Cabañes' *Pinoy postings*, on the other hand, is focused on blogs maintained by Singapore-based Filipino professionals. Through an 'autobiographical' approach, he unravels the cultural identity representations embedded in the personal writings of the participants and observes that they assert both a Filipino cultural pride, image, and attachment to the homeland and an image of cosmopolitanism. Meanwhile, Ignacio's *Building Diaspora: Filipino Cultural Community Formation on the Internet* is of particular

interest since it focuses on the implications of cyberspace in constructing Filipino diasporic identities in online forums. It examines how Filipinos in various parts of the world construct and interrogate shared identity in Internet-based media. However, de la Cruz (2006), in a review, contends that though the study underscores the significance of the Internet in identity and community formation, it fails to establish its radical contribution as a unique instrument of agency and analysis. Such criticism may also be relevant in Franklin's study. Though she accounts for the Internet's central role in revising notions of interaction, information exchange, and knowledge formation, her study also lacks sufficient focus on the formalistic qualities of 'online forums' as new media and their significance on the production and consumption of meanings. My study aims to bridge this gap since it works on the premise that different forms of Internet-based media effect new sensibilities that may bring about particular epistemological and ontological shifts in the construction of identities. Thus, there is a need to uphold the 'same level of specificity [required] by other objects one might theorize, such as literature, music, politics, globalization, or the relationship between time and space' (Sterne, 1999, p. 265).

Ignacio offers invaluable insights, nonetheless. The study confirms the importance of the Internet as an informational tool but more than that, it reveals how, beyond information, knowledge is created and circulated. In particular, it puts forward the premise that the Internet is a crucial instrument in learning and spreading identity (Ignacio, 2005, p. xix). By focusing on the site *soc.culture.filipino*, Ignacio was able to observe how 'images of the host countries and homelands [that] travel across boundaries through transnational networks...also affect people's lives' (2005, p. 42-43). The study delved into the experiences of Filipino-Americans, in particular, but its findings are probably applicable, in parts at least, in the lives of many other Filipinos who reside outside the country. Ignacio confirms the not-so-easy path to understanding one's 'identity' for these Filipinos who find in the Internet a chance at a discourse that does not necessarily give them an easy answer to the question of being Filipino:

To define Filipinoness, the participants on *soc.culture.filipino* have to negotiate culture. As this negotiation occurs, I show that they draw mostly upon images of the Philippines and the United States, common history, and lived and imagined experience to construct Filipino identity. (2001, p. 45)

Figuring out one's identity is a fraught affair as the participants in Ignacio's study expressed. The new media afforded by the Internet only makes it more 'tangible' since discussions, expressions and emotions have found an efficient way of being archived and being accessed repeatedly.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

The importance of new communication technologies and the advancement in Internet access cannot be denied in the lives of OFWs and their families. It is obvious that modern modes of communication and the versatility of new media in cyberspace make keeping connections across vast distances possible and necessary. Today there is an evolving phenomenon of 'virtual families' in which parents and children who are thousands of miles and several time zones apart are just a mouse click or a few keypad strokes away (Torres, 2005).

As demonstrated by previous studies on Filipino diaspora and the place of new media in the lives of the affected individuals, the pragmatic is always attached to the discursive and symbolic. That is to say, connecting with others is not the only contribution of Internet-based technologies of communication because new media allow a greater venue and more possibilities to express the self, narrate one's stories, construct subjectivities, and question (or reaffirm) identities. In the next chapter, I theorise the intersection of Filipino diaspora and new media further with particular emphasis on the 'in-between' quality of the diasporic situation and the 'textuality' engendered by these emerging forms of discursive engagement.

# 3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

## LIMINALITY AND TEXTUALITY IN DIASPORIC SOCIAL MEDIA WRITINGS

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### 3.1 Introduction

This study is an exercise in interpretation. My concern with the intermingling subjects of diaspora, identity, and new media is addressed by taking the angle that meaning is produced in situated discourse. At the heart of every interpretive undertaking is the recognition of the individual's inescapable bond with the social context – the only way by which we can approximate a deep understanding of the phenomenon under question. In particular, Sayer (2000) asserts that ‘...knowledge and social phenomena are socially constructed but that doesn't mean that external phenomena (including existing material social constructions) cannot influence our interpretations’ (p. 91). It is important to stress that interpretivism, as often applied alongside constructivism (Creswell, 2007, p. 20) ‘sees knowledge of what others are doing or saying depends upon some background or context of other meanings, beliefs, values, practices and so forth’ (Schwandt as cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 312). In other words, interpretivism and constructionism, though privileging realities as understood by the individual subject, deny the charge of idealism and acknowledge the existence of the real world independent of their constructions (Sayer, 2000, p. 92).

Interpretive understanding, *Verstehen*, is the epistemological basis of my work, as opposed to the positivist inquiry that seeks causal explanation, *Erklären*, which conventionally characterises research in the natural sciences (a serious challenge against this opposition is presented below). I do not have any claims to ‘objectivity’, in the sense of assuming a single true meaning that I ought to find buried in the universal structures of language in which the people I engage with frame their reality. The study, after all, is an interpretive inquiry not only because it focuses on how the participants in the study redefine their own identity, but because I, as the researcher, am part of the community. Although this fact may pose some issues that relate to objectivity, defined as the distantiating of the inquirer from the object of inquiry, I resolve to be guided by Harding's concept of ‘strong objectivity’ that

requires ‘strong reflexivity’(1993, p. 69). This stance takes researchers as well as those researched as the focus of critical, causal, and scientific explanations (Olesen, 2011) in constructing a relative position within the project.

I generally situate my study in the practice known as discourse analysis and more specifically, critical discourse analysis. In saying this I acknowledge the robust history of the field that does not only aim to research the use of language but examine its relationship with larger structures of power in society. This means that as I do my analysis, there is reference, implicitly or explicitly, to the insights garnered by earlier efforts and more recent projects of furthering the field.

Notwithstanding the vast and diverse perspectives within the discourse analysis practice itself, I would like to focus my discussion at this point on a basic, yet consequential, issue of ‘naming’. Allan Bell (2011) proposes that the field that has come to be known as ‘discourse analysis’ should be renamed ‘Discourse Interpretation’ as the latter reflects more appropriately both the main activity and ultimate goal of any discourse work. It will be recalled that Teun van Dijk (2009) had a similar sentiment when he expressed preference for the label ‘Discourse Studies’ in lieu of Discourse Analysis as a way to better project the ethos of ‘discipline’ as opposed to just ‘method’. My discussion of Bell’s arguments, in particular, conveys the direction that I take in fulfilling the objectives of the project. In a way, the Interpretive Arc is the encompassing framework that structures the main activity that I do in the study – reading. Referring largely to Paul Ricoeur’s writings on hermeneutics, Bell emphasises the need to remember that the actual task of any discourse project is not to describe the workings of codes but understand meanings, gain insights, and most importantly, render the self ‘changed’. This is, generally, what I refer to in saying that my most important job in the research is to ‘read’.

Further discussion of discourse interpretation follows immediately. The rest of the chapter is divided into sections on specific concepts and theories that make up the foundation of the research. This framework is composed of four parts, aside from the discussion of the Interpretive Arc, with each focusing on the different dimensions of online identity construction of Filipinos as diasporic subjects:

- The concept of *liminality* as the context of identity work in the diasporic situation; where making sense of ordinary life and an interrogation of social connections and relations of power necessarily intertwine.
- The relationship between discourse and identity where positionalities are constructed and practiced within social relationships
- The interactions of new media and textuality in situating the translation of experiences into texts, thereby opening avenues for multiple, negotiated, and oppositional interpretations
- The analytic avail of critical discourse analysis in unravelling discourses of identity in the texts and the meaning-making practice of diasporic subjects.

### 3.2 The Interpretive Arc as hermeneutic route

Ricoeur figures prominently at this point, and in succeeding sections of the chapter as well, because of his fundamental hermeneutic argument for the ‘text’s liberation’. Writing, to him, results in a three-fold autonomy of the text (Ricoeur, 1981) in that ‘it is uncoupled from the writer, from the original readers, and from its original social context’ (Bell, 2011, p. 528). Barthes’s declaration of the ‘death of the author’ as well as New Criticism’s idea of ‘intentional fallacy’ come to mind, as aptly indicated by Bell. The immediate effect of writing is distancing from all the ‘shackles’ identified above. Meanings are, following the logic of a three-fold liberation, ultimately determined by readers who actively choose to engage the text. Barring criticisms of dismissing the relevance of original intent, such as Foucault’s principle of ‘author function’, the meanings that could be made out of reading are not necessarily entirely inexhaustible. There are readings that are more valid than others based on evidence the text itself presents (Ricoeur, 1976, 1981). In Bell’s words, texts limit their own meanings. What is more, he issues a reminder that the uncoupling of the text in an absolutist sense may not automatically be the best idea if the goal is to gain a fuller understanding of what we read:

My own view is congruent with this but less radical: that it is best to regard author intention as a factor in interpretation but not the determining one. That is, the author’s intention is not the final arbiter of a text’s meaning, but it may cast light on meaning – as may (*pace* Ricoeur) the interpretations made by the first readership and, especially, the social situation of the text’s production. (Bell, 2011, p. 535)

The interpretive arc as first outlined by Ricoeur and re-interpreted by Bell hinges on this idea of the text's relative autonomy. The most important lesson from Ricoeur's proposition is claiming the possibility of meanings without being limited by an authorial intent that, in the first place, is not even possible to recover. What hermeneutics, at least Ricoeur's kind, requires is a constant dialectical and complementary exchange between *Verstehen* and *Erklären* (Ricoeur, 1981). This calls for a reconstitution of the oft-dichotomised paradigms of 'explanation' and 'understanding', what Bell prefers to call 'analysis' and 'understanding' (2011, p. 533), as conventionally understood in the conduct of academic research. The interaction of these two approaches to engaging a text is the crux of the hermeneutic process that is illustrated in the metaphor of the interpretive arc.

Bell's formulation of the Interpretive Arc has six phases. I provide an explanation below along with the relevance of each phase to the current study:

**1. Estrangement** is the starting point of all encounters with texts. A text's existence is a mark of the separation of the author and the reader. This distancing is the reason for a text's uncoupling, as discussed above, and eventual meaningfulness. 'The text takes on a new situation in the act of being read' (Bell, 2011, p. 528). Such is the case in my readings of the social media texts that were produced by the participants in the study. Written on new media platforms, they become open to readings outside the intent of their authors, original audience, and social context. However, Bell's position on this matter, as presented previously, allows me a necessary 'sidestep' in order to exercise prudence over pertinent methodological issues. It is not wise nor is it practicable to abandon the fact that the texts I read have original authors with whom I have engaged and built relationships in the course of the research. Their backgrounds, aspirations, and insights are valuable inputs in my own interpretive work. The value of uncoupling the text from the encumbrance of its origin lies in the possibility of submitting it to a close reading as defined by the last three phases.

**2. Pre-view** refers to what 'we bring' when we first encounter a text before even enacting the initial reading. We do not approach a text as *tabula rasa*. This phase speaks of our positionalities within intersections of social relationships that give character to 'our state of knowledge or opinion in that moment just before we engage

with a text' (Bell, 2011, p. 530). As introduced by earlier chapters, my venture into understanding the dynamics and politics of diaspora and identity construction implicates my personal background and academic leanings, that is, they figure importantly and reflexively in my interpretive work.

**3. Proto-understanding** is 'a pre-analytical state of impressionistic reading, which is in practice where all hermeneutics – and all discourse analysis – begins' (Bell, 2011, p. 531). As with the 'pre-view' phase, our initial reading of a text is already informed by what we bring in as social, cultural, and political subjects. Ricoeur (1976, 1981) calls this phase 'guessing' – a crucial step in building up a more robust analysis and interpretation. In the succeeding chapters, Chapter 5 in particular, I explicitly mention 'guessing' as one of the first steps that aided in my eventual deeper analyses and interpretation. In many instances, my proto-understanding of the texts are derived from prior experiences and perspectives about the persons who authored them and the larger issues that define the current contour of Filipino diaspora.

**4. Analysis** is, of course, that phase where we become more conscious of our intent for reading the text so that we employ particular methods or tools that are able to scrutinise the parts and workings of language or discourse. Critical discourse analysis provides different methods of analysing texts, for instance, each with its own principles and merits.<sup>9</sup> It is important to note that the distinction between these last three phases dissolve in recursive practice, as one would tend to affect the others in a dialectical manner. As such, I discuss the relevance of these phases in the study at the end of this section.

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<sup>9</sup> Proponents of Critical Discourse Analysis follow different approaches to textual and discourse analysis. Some of the most prominent are Fairclough's 'Dialectical-Relational Approach', Reisigl and Wodak's 'Discourse-Historical Approach', and Van Dijk's 'Sociocognitive Approach' (see Wodak & Meyer, 2009). With the advent of new media as a significant factor in its development, Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001) outline 'multimodality' as an approach to studying the diversity of semiotic resources involved in the production and consumption of texts. Machin and Mayr (2012) bring together the principles of multimodality and CDA.

**5. Understanding** is the domain of *Verstehen*, where developing ‘insights’ takes more prominence than ‘decoding of codes’, which is performed in the previous stage. Bell elucidates Ricoeur’s position on the primacy of understanding over explanation,

Analysis is the means, and the end is understanding. This situates – rightly, I believe – the weight and value of hermeneutical work, and of discourse analysis, in the interpreter’s insightfulness more than in their analytical skills. Analysis is prerequisite to understanding, and the more skilful the better, but in the end it is not interpreters’ analytical cleverness but the quality of their insights that determines the worth of their contribution. (Bell, 2011, p. 534)

**6. Ownership** is, as a fitting counterpoint to estrangement in the beginning, the phase where the reader and the text, to borrow Barthes’s term, have become *scriptible* – rewritten in the event of reading (1978). ‘We ‘own’ a text when it is actualized as an event in its own right’ (Bell, 2011, p. 522). Echoing Ricoeur, Bell writes that in the interwoven dialectics of ‘analysis and understanding’ and ‘understanding and ownership’, it is not only meanings that are changed, but ultimately, the *self* (Bell, 2011, p. 552). One aspect of this phase that is pivotal in the study is the emphasis on ‘ideological critique’ as a path to owning the text (Bell, 2011, p. 553). In the end, what we hope to achieve in attempting to understand is to gain a view of our positionalities in complex and imbricated social relations that indicate structures of power in society. In addition, a further aim would be to put into forms of action the insights that we have gained and ideological revisions that we have realised as a result of engaging with texts and discourses.

The interwoven practice of ‘analysis – understanding – ownership’ is a fundamental philosophy and methodological parameter in the project. These aspects of the interpretive arc form the core of a hermeneutic task set against the premise of *textualisation* of the diasporic experience in my participants’ social media writings. The first three phases, important as they are, are ‘givens’ – I cannot evade them. The final three phases are a deliberate course of action. They are, ultimately, political choices – from the critical discourse analytic approach I apply, the sociological and cultural perspectives I call on, and the ideological positionings I render challenged.

### **3.3 Liminality and the diasporic situation**

Diaspora is an experience, a ‘condition of subjectivity’ (Cho, 2007). Filipino diaspora in New Zealand is a specific engagement of individuals in personal and systemic relations. It is a situated experience – a process of *living* in a period of moving out of the homeland to settle down in a new place. It always starts out as an attempt and envisioned to be resolved by gaining legitimate status in the new community both by official and interpersonal standards. This vision is hoped for although the achievement is not necessarily guaranteed. What is certain is that the process of this diasporic existence is characterised by episodes of uncertainty and ambiguity caused by being ‘in-between’ two nations, two histories, two rules, two systems, two structures. The duality is more layered and complex than what the words present it to be. In truth, the duality may be ramified constantly on both ends. One thing remains, however: being caught up in between – the *liminal*.

#### **3.3.1 Defining liminality**

Generally understood as the transitional phase between places of established positions in a social structure, ‘liminality’ is seen in this project as the conceptual tool that will bind all the other elements of diaspora, discourse, and new media. As the context in which Filipinos in New Zealand discursively construct their identity, liminality underscores the ambivalent process of moving in and out of the former and new home.

Liminality connotes an ‘in-between’ status. In this transition process, the migrant person is in a state where s/he is no longer in the original place, yet not truly belonging to a new one. The relevance of the concept is undeniable when attempting to comprehend the process of online identity construction of Filipinos in New Zealand. Liminality is especially important in the project as it provides a mode of viewing diasporic identity construction in new media as a discourse event. It is, indeed, a highly discursive phenomenon as Turner explains in *The Ritual Process*:

Liminality, marginality, and structural inferiority are conditions in which are frequently generated myths, symbols, rituals, philosophical systems, and works of art. These cultural forms provide men [sic] with a set of templates, models, or paradigms which are, at one level, periodical reclassifications of reality (or, at least, of social experience) and man’s

relationship to society, nature and culture. But they are more than (mere cognitive) classifications, since they incite men to action as well as thought. (1982, p. 52)

In Victor Turner's (1982) elaboration of the concept originally identified by Van Gennep (1960) in *The Rites of Passage*, he stresses the point that the period of liminality is an ambiguous stage where structure is held in abeyance. This may mean that the 'initiate' is temporarily not confined to normative sets of rules, either of their former status or their (supposed) new one, thus, giving them a certain amount of privilege in terms of deconstructing former identities, exploration of possibilities, creative liberty to redefine dominant meanings in society, and recreate selves. This, by and large, is 'anti-structure'. However, as Turner reiterates, the purpose of anti-structure is to always revalidate societal structure when, finally, the initiate accomplishes the period of liminality and is accepted into the new status.

Aguilar (1999), in seeing temporary labour migration as a form of 'pilgrimage', also employs the lens of liminality in explaining the 'in-between' status of overseas Filipino workers. 'Relative to the society where they find employment,' he contends, 'the labour migrant is an alien excluded from locally imagined communities' (Aguilar, 1999, p. 103). Making full use of Turner's observations of the liminal subject, Aguilar further describes temporary overseas workers as 'no more than a passing stranger whose individuality does not matter' (1999, p. 103). The image of the 'melting pot' comes to mind in relation to immigrant communities 'blending in' with the host society. Brubaker (2001) argues that there is a revival of the concept of assimilation in Europe and US in recent years, although one that is more *multidimensional* and devoid of an 'arrogance' that drives a dissolution of all diversity into one 'core culture' (pp. 543-544). Still, the path towards 'integration' is clear – there is a need for newcomers to eventually belong, be part of the melting pot, and be within the designated structure.

### **3.3.2 Liminality in a post-industrial setting**

Turner's use of liminality is founded on studies of *rites de passage* that exist in all societies but tend to be more pronounced in relatively more stable and cyclical communities (1982, p. 53). He, however, also identified the significance of the

concept even in more advanced, post-industrial societies. Coining the term ‘liminoid’, he applies such ‘anti-structural, in-between’ states in the contemporary social milieu. Below, I present the four contrasting points (mainly from Turner, 1982) that distinguish ‘liminoid’ from the strictly ‘liminal’ and a further elaboration, specifically related to the significance of the concept in theorising new media engagement, is found in section 3.5.2:

1. Liminal rituals are compulsory, liminoid activities are optional
2. Liminal rituals maintain social structure in the end, liminoid acts exist outside structure, they are a break from normality
3. Liminal rituals are communal, liminoid acts are individualistic
4. Liminoid acts, compared to liminal rituals, are more likely to create social critique

Thomassen (2009), however, urges readers to exercise caution regarding a ‘simplistic’ dichotomy separating true liminality from the liminoid based on the purported disparity in ‘symbolic systems’ of traditional and modern societies. In particular, he asserts that Turner’s distinction forgoes the key feature of liminality, which is *transition*, by saying that the liminoid is confined only to the ‘breaks in normal culture’, and further, limits the value of liminality to cultural and leisurely activities whereas it is equally present in social and political transitions (Thomassen, 2009, p. 15). Accounting for these caveats makes the concept more germane to the understanding of diaspora as a particular experience. At a metaphorical level, liminality provides a tool for situating diasporic lives as characterised by ambiguity, possibility, insecurity, and change in the period of transition. Theoretically, liminality is relevant in its specific discussion of the event as a discursive (meaning-generative) situation and the postulation of the ‘liminoid’ as post-industrial moments of subversion through *ludic* engagements in different forms of cultural production within dominant social structures.

### **3.3.3 Diaspora, transnationalism, and binary nationalism**

The three concepts forming the title of this section are not necessarily oppositional. Vertovec and Cohen (1999), in fact, see the relationship between diaspora and transnationalism in contemporary migration. Vertovec (1999), in particular, observes that in the literature on transnationalism, a considerable discussion of dual or

multiple identifications, often construed as indexes of diaspora consciousness, is present. The main difference between these concepts lies in the specific aspect of the phenomenon each appears to address. While, for instance, diaspora is configured by dispersal and return to a home, transnationalism cites the same instances of ‘in-between’ consciousness but asserts, at the same time, migrants’ creative agency enabling them to take ‘root’ in multiple placements (as argued by Schiller, in a previous chapter).

As a core assumption that particularly sees diaspora as a production of subjectivity caught in an in-between status, I am keen to refer to ‘binary nationalism’ as conceptualised by Camroux (2008) from his own scrutiny of Filipino diasporic movement relative to other forms of diaspora. The value of his thesis, which points to the duality of attachments and identifications, rests on its concrete formulation of the diasporic experience as a clear instance of liminality.

Binary nationalism pertains to the dual *bond* and bi-directional allusion diasporic subjects make to both the ‘homeland’ and the resident nation. Camroux makes reference to Filipino-American communities as the most salient form of Filipino diaspora at present in postulating that this diasporic formation is characterised by imbricated nationalist views and feelings that, in particular, ‘involves both juxtaposition and synthesis between identification with a Filipino homeland and an American homeland’ (2008, p. 17). Binary nationalism, then, implies that migrants build sentiments, meanings, and actions as a response to the calls of both the original and the adoptive nation – the places of simultaneous displacement but also the sites of contemporaneous location.

However, there are details about the realities of Filipino displacement/dispersal that remind us that even binary nationalism may be too simplistic a formulation of the Filipino diaspora experience. This is especially true if it becomes an issue of evoking the name of the nation as ‘home’, as illustrated by San Juan in earlier chapters. Camroux accepts the fact that Filipinos in exile do trace their roots in a varied fashion: their region, their locality, their ethnic groups, their families. The Philippine nation, as an overall signifier of the reason for return, is just one of the many versions of home:

Back in the Philippines, their sense of roots and identity would be much more locally defined in regional or linguistic terms. Overseas, the host society, reinforced by the state apparatus, disregards linguistic, regional and other differences to reify these individuals as one people, Filipinos. (Camroux, 2008, pp. 24-25)

What San Juan argues is that the making of Filipino diaspora should be understood from the complexities of the creation of the Philippine nation stemming from its colonial past and more recent history of subsumption in a globalised neoliberal politico-economic structuring. Camroux, on the other hand, seeks to construct Filipino diaspora from the place of their current dwelling, where they are usually and automatically seen as homogenous with respect to their provenance and reasons for coming over. Considering these arguments, there is greater reason to establish a way of looking at diaspora as situated in local (binary) contexts despite the vision of fluid mobility in a transnational field.

Diaspora could be viewed as avenues for resistance of minority groups in a resident society by appropriating for themselves a sense of belonging that is beyond the confines of their current location (see Parreñas & Siu, 2007). This refers to a place, imagined or otherwise, that offers better positions in the social structure than being merely relegated to the peripheral corners of the current societies in which they try to fit themselves. From a transnational migration framework, this empowered status is a given:

By maintaining many different racial, national, and ethnic identities, transmigrants are able to express their resistance to the global political and economic situations that engulf them, even as they accommodate themselves to living conditions marked by vulnerability and insecurity. (Schiller et al., 1992, p. 11)

The empowering and celebratory stance, although at times valid and necessary, has the tendency to deny that migrants confront actual systems that in many ways stop them from achieving ordinary daily goals and more profound encompassing aspirations such as the return to their homeland or finding a home in the new place. Satzewich and Wong (2006), echoing Vertovec (1999), insist that there is potentially a darker side to transnationalism hiding behind the celebratory veneer – when the deterritorialisation of nation-states and rise of transnational identities, linkages, and

relationships are made to appear as limitless and absolute (p. 298). It is, then, worth remembering that the transnational paradigm, although interrogating the formerly unquestioned control held by the nation-state does not deny its power altogether.

Acting as a counterpoint to a transnationalist framework that places Filipinos in diaspora as fluidly traversing national boundaries, binary nationalism brings our attention back to the reality that the sending and receiving states, for example, become prominent actors in the achievement of a settled life. For instance, contract labour migrants are in a state of ‘double liminality’, using Aguilar’s terms, because while they are marginalised in the receiving countries, they are of an undefined status from the perspective of the homeland until after they have gone back home as successful individuals fulfilling a ‘journey of achievement’ (Aguilar, 1999, p. 103). The end of the pilgrimage and, hence, the liminal status, is determined by this culminating moment: the migrant returns to the native land, *home*, and s/he is markedly transformed in terms of economic, social, and symbolic power. Although Aguilar (1999) acknowledges that there are countries that allow foreign workers to eventually gain the right to permanent residency, this does not guarantee them a secure future.

The state builds and executes the limits and parameters for the possibility of entering an official territory and in many ways, even provides or obviates the channels to being fully integrated or accepted in the community (e.g. citizenship). They are, in short, the official primary determinants of the ‘in-between’ status of diasporic communities despite a transnational assertion of the elision of the nation-state. As I mentioned earlier, my choice of referencing the concept and label ‘diaspora’ is one of politics and methodology – it is a reminder, at the least, of the limits and pitfalls of transnationalism’s proposition of fluidity in moving across boundaries.

‘Diasporic communities rarely escape the state-orchestrated parameters that both limit and mobilize their energies’ (Camroux, 1008, p. 17). As discussed previously, overseas Filipinos have to wend their way through the intersectional and multitiered relationships of power, such as the state and the mutable mechanisms of control and regulation it imposes on its citizens in a globalised setting. The experience of attempting to build a settled life in another land puts individuals in an insecure,

marginal position almost automatically. Walls are never broken down, they are leaped over at times, maybe. Otherwise, official passages are given and acquired. Filipinos who have decided to build an established life in New Zealand find themselves in circumstances where locating their exact place in life is not a straightforward task.

### **3.4 Identity and Discourse**

Binary nationalism also concerns itself with the identity question as it attempts to explain the dual loyalties and identifications of diasporic subjects to the countries of origin and residence. Camroux employs the idea of a ‘double-mirrored identity’, which reveals the dependence of one’s idea of an identity on a sense of the other thereby producing non-exclusive loyalties (2008, p. 26). In other words, the diasporic situation gives its subjects a unique position within the socio-cultural landscape of the two national boundaries that they inhabit. Insofar as they are bound by, but at the same time *spill over* these two confinements, their resources for processing, inscribing, and performing identities or identifications become less rigid, more complex, and more ‘transparent’. In other words, they gain greater awareness of *how* they have been constructed as subjects by the socio-structural forces of their country of origin while being re-constructed in their country of residence. Ultimately, there must come a realisation that their identity as Filipino, among others, is never permanent; the identities that they carry as part of a diaspora in a specific nation is always up for constant revisit and revision.

#### **3.4.1 Contrasting positions in understanding identity**

Addressing the identity question is, of course, never straightforward. But in the effort to gain understanding of the formation of a selfhood, we often find ourselves in a tense situation: an essentialist – anti-essentialist tug of war, to be precise. Stuart Hall (2003) highlights the two different ways of ‘thinking about cultural identity’ that employ this premise. He identifies the first position in terms of a ‘collective ‘one true self’ hiding inside the many others while the second position he claims as being characterised by ‘critical points of deep and significant *difference* which constitute ‘what we have become’ since history has already intervened (Hall, 2003, pp. 234–236). We are immediately reintroduced to contrasting poles although we also

recognise that the poles are not uncomplicated in themselves. This becomes evident in threshing out the concept of national identity, for instance, because even when we say that it is a product of construction rather than brought on by an essential 'true' self, everyday practices would indicate that we *instinctively* call upon our national identity in appropriate, opportune, or necessary moments in a manner that makes identity appear as something natural (e.g. mutual recognition, aid and commiseration of fellow Filipinos in a foreign land despite the lack of a 'true' nation). Referencing Spivak's 'strategic essentialism' (1999), people are wont to have recourse to a shared, one 'true' self in practical and mundane acts of everyday living. Strategic essentialism, of course, has more to do with a conscious and critical position in the attempt at political emancipation than with mere pragmatic quotidian affairs. It is, nonetheless, premised on the possibility of mustering fundamental *substances* that might form a recognisable core in achieving specific objectives. The nation and national identity then, though easily seen as a construct, an artifice, or an imagination, transforms into an 'essence' in times of need to serve a particular purpose.

The counterpoint of essentialism, in this instance, Hall would rather call 'strategic' and 'positional'. The proposed research also takes this standpoint on identity. In specific terms, identity in the study is considered as 'never singular but multiply constructed across different...discourses, practices and positions; are subject to a radical historicization, and are constantly in the process of change and transformation' (Hall, 1996, pp. 3-4). Being positionally constructed and historically contingent, the making of identity is seen in the liminal phase as a time-bound process. In classic liminality, the end is spelled by the consummation of the transition where the initiate becomes a person of new status. But, the process of 'becoming' is not as easily conceived and enacted in the diasporic situation. In some cases, the liminal period may be prolonged, or permanent (see for example Szokolczai, 2000). In the study, the juncture of diaspora (the liminal status) and identity (its positionality and historicisation) results in a process of *transition*, which, to reiterate Thomassen's stand, is the key element in the deployment of liminality as a conceptual tool. The liminal period is 'temporary' and all acts are time-bound and supposed to pass away. In the liminality of the diasporic situation, identity is submitted to a process of change or reconfiguration. van Gennep's metaphor of the

liminal person as ‘passenger’ is apt at this point. It allows us to imagine that as the migrant travels from one place to another, his/her identity and identifications also undergo new instances of *becoming*.

### 3.4.2 Identity, discourse, and timescales

‘Identities are constructed within and not outside discourse’ (Hall, 2003, pp. 233–234). Discourse in this sense refers to both the larger social structures that mediate the understanding of our realities and the specific meaning-making practices that people engage in within their social relationships. In the study, it pertains to the specific moments and products of symbolic or textual activity in new media platforms and also, necessarily, refers to bigger *discourses* that form the systems of relations that bring people into ‘being’. Identities are, then, *made* by our personal/interpersonal discursive activities in its reciprocal exchange with larger dominant structures.

Although the main data in my analysis is comprised of individual social media writings, I see the *texts* as particular manifestations of a social practice that creates possibilities of forms and meanings in discourse. We do not see meanings we are not taught to see, Lemke maintains, and adds that the way we use discourse is revealing of the way we are constructed as subjects within socially defined identities:

Our *discourse*, what we mean by saying and doing, deploys the meaning-making resources of our communities: the grammar and lexicon of a language, the conventions of gesture and depiction, the symbolic and functional values of actions, the typical patterns of action that other members of our community will recognize and respond to. In different historical periods, in different cultural traditions, for people of different ages, genders and social positions, both these resources and the typical, recognizable patterns in which people use them are different. (2008, p. 19)

It is within the practice of social media that I read discourses of Filipino diasporic identity. The label ‘diasporic Filipino’, in itself, casts an instant designation of traits or character that, although not without basis, is rigid and limiting. As a liminal object, the attention is on the transition that discursive constructions of identity undergo as seen on new media platforms. The transition is best understood by heeding Lemke (2000, 2008) as he urges an understanding of identity as

differentially time-bound. He opts to see identities across timescales because there is a fundamental difference between identity-in-practice or identity-in-the-moment and identity-across-events or identity-across-lifespan (Lemke, 2008). He summarises the distinction between these two timescale-differentiated identity formations by describing the interaction of contingency and permanence in the making of our identities.

*Structural or positional determination* – pertaining to a relatively permanent identity – is more predominant at longer timescales, while *agency* – implying individual action to influence or change one’s identity – is more predominant at short timescales (Lemke, 2008, pp. 23–24). These two dimensions of identity exert mutual influence on each other and the dialectical relationship shows how identities are not static although they may be perceived or interpreted as *essential* by being experienced as overpowering and unconscious predispositions over long periods – it is as if they do not change. Lemke borrows Bourdieu’s concept of the *habitus* to illustrate further how the long-term identities and short-term identities intersect:

If these dispositions are positional and structural, similar for persons of the same social-class background, gender, and so on, it is because of the similar life opportunities, access to situation types, expectations of others, and so forth that we encounter repeatedly in living the kinds of lives typically in our caste, generation, and the like. We are more likely to have certain choices in clothes, foods, discourses and not others presented to us or available to us, and to consistently choose within this range of choices, developing a habitus which distinguishes us in later ‘spontaneous’ choices from those whose life trajectories led them to develop dispositions in a different range of opportunities. (Lemke, 2008, pp. 24-25)

Diasporic identity is bound in time and space. All identities are, since identity is always positional and contingent. However, the diasporic situation makes it quite obvious how our identities defy permanence or rigidity while still holding on to some presumed *essences* that are premised on the new and old structures. In the diasporic subject’s life, one’s identity is questioned and affirmed at the same time. The Philippines and New Zealand as political national boundaries and as settings for individual and social enactments of identities are two different material and meaning-generating environments. They present situations in which actions are ‘generated by the encounter between opportunities and constraints’, the key to

understanding how the concept of habitus is fundamentally a recognition of the interaction between individual agency and larger social structures (Swartz, 1997, pp. 290–291).

Following Lemke's timescale differentiation of identities, momentary makings of one's identity are more open to change compared to longer-term enactments – it is in the former where an individual's agency becomes more obvious (Lemke, 2008). Identities-in-the-long term become references for making momentary identities, although the latter can potentially revise the former if these catch on. Diasporic identity can be framed similarly: diasporic subjects bring with them an identity or identification developed in the long term through repeated practices and sign-making prior to their settlement in the new place. In tiny moments, however, the elements that make the diasporic identity what it is become subject to more possible radical shifts. These two processes, of course, happen across longer events within a very complex system of relations that go beyond the specific experience of Filipinos in New Zealand, for instance. There are actions and significations, choices and decisions that have been made in history that constitute identities in the longer timescale. My aims are smaller in scope and quite specific: Internet-based, momentary constructions of identity relative to a dominant discourse that characterise long-term identity constructions of Filipinos in diaspora (e.g. as economic bodies in the neoliberal market). Nevertheless, the view of discursive engagements with the Internet I take is premised on the dynamic interaction of structure and agency outlined by Bourdieu (1977) in his formulation of the habitus and developed by Giddens (1984) in his theory of structuration – 'structure is not to be equated with constraint but is always both constraining and enabling' (Giddens, 1984, p. 25)

Building a life in a new country is an identity-forming event in which the intersection of identities-in-the-long term, or instantiations of it, and identities-in-the-moment provides both limits and opportunities to revisions in ways one understands the self. Experiences of identity-formation in this particular instance become occasions for meaning-making when lives of diasporic subjects and their nations are opened up to a wider interpretive environment. The project is focused on an environment that is Internet-based, possessing its unique spatial and temporal configuration while

reconfiguring the way individuals conceive their own space and time. It is within this form of environment where meanings are generated by the conflation of modes of expression and connection, and where texts transcend conventional boundaries of production and consumption.

### **3.5 New media and textuality**

New media in the study is situated in what has been dubbed as the ‘Web 2.0’ environment that promotes interaction and production rather than just consumption. Web 2.0 platforms offer the user greater opportunities for creating their own content in contrast to Web 1.0 venues, which are more defined by their offering of information in a unidirectional, top-down structure. In the particular case of the study, blog sites, and social networking sites as Web 2.0 environments afford users more access to technologies of content generation, interaction, and multi-semiotic production while home pages of the Web 1.0 category merely become sources of information for the users. And important as they are, control over the extent of information that a Web 1.0 platform holds is concentrated on a single locus of power – the web master, content creator, or moderator. One of the more defining and significant differences between Web 2.0 and previous other technologies is, indeed, the blurring of the boundary that separates production and consumption and the concomitant authority and agency in them. In the project, I see the Internet as both a container and vehicle of these Web 2.0 creations. These cultural products in new media are taken as texts whose linguistic and semiotic elements index the whys and wherefores of identity construction.

If the primary units of my analysis are texts produced by people who narrate experiences and postulate ideas about what it is to be Filipino living in New Zealand, the following questions arise that necessarily implicate the inevitability of *textualisation* on the Internet:

- What does writing (where writing is a catch-all term for linguistic and semiotic modes of production) do to the experience?
- And, what does the Internet do to the writing that does something to the experience?

The first question I ask in a manner that echoes Ricoeur's queries about the transformation of events into meaningful texts as these undergird my own understanding of the *nature* of the textualising act. The second question frames my hypothesis regarding the uniqueness of textualisation and textuality on the Internet.

### 3.5.1 Ricoeur and the text

As discussed previously, Ricoeur's hermeneutics plays a central role in building up the interpretive foundation of the project. Bell's recasting of the interpretive arc to elucidate the actual task of discourse analytic projects introduced the 'nature' of the *text* as uncoupled from its author, original context, and original audience.

Ricoeur (1981) asks what writing does to a discourse-event and provides a response by going back to the characteristics of discourse as an instance of language-use. In contrast to studying language as a system of *static* structures, seeing discourses as particular language-events makes one realise how each instance of discourse involves unique appropriations of abstract rules. The specific characteristics of the discourse as event shown below explain why it is a distinct occasion of making meanings (Ricoeur, 1981, p. 198):

1. Discourse is always realised temporally and in the present
2. The 'instance of discourse' is self-referential – it has a speaking subject
3. Discourse is always about something. It is in discourse where the symbolic function of language is realised
4. It is only in discourse where messages are exchanged

These are, obviously, characteristics of standard *spoken* situations of discourse. The language-events in focus are those of discourse as 'talk' thus, a focus on the temporality or the transience of the event and the specificity of reference in terms of the source and receiver in the exchange of messages. The privileging of 'speech' over 'writing' is Ricoeur's take-off point in unravelling the intricacies of the text. Aristotle's claims, in *On Interpretation*, that 'written marks are symbols of spoken sounds' implies that the written form is secondary in class as an instance of discourse

as it merely represents what is said – the ‘symbols of the affections in the soul.’<sup>10</sup>

Writing, however, does not merely attempt to represent *sounds* that form the basis of speech. Ricoeur asserts that writing transforms discourse-events by making temporal actions *fixed* in time and this fixing opens up the whole eventuality of the discourse situation to a radical shift in its references, meanings, and audience. There are four actions writing does to an event that defy the confinements attributed to speech, essentially, releasing the event from the bounds of its ‘origin’(Ricoeur, 1981):

1. The *fixing* of events as meanings;
2. The autonomy of meaning from the intention of the author or source;
3. The freeing of references to a wider world; and,
4. The creation of an audience unknown and potentially infinite.

These speak of the three-fold ‘uncoupling’ of the text (see section 3.2) that expands meaning-making in the interpretive act. Transforming an actual event into a written text transcends ephemerality and ‘freezes’ actions that would otherwise ultimately disappear in a discourse-event. It has to be emphasised though, that what writing fixes in time is not the *actual* utterance in speech, but ‘it is the meaning of the speech event, not the event as event’ that is inscribed in the writing; what is imprinted is the ‘said’ of the speaking (Ricoeur, 1981, p. 199).

When events are inscribed in writing, they become untangled from their author, original context, and original audience. When experiences are translated into texts, references become possibilities of extending the world instead of restricting our interpretations to limiting and limited environments. In Ricoeur’s words:

Reference offered is that of possible modes of being, as symbolic dimensions of our being-in-the-world. For me, this is the referent of all literature; no longer the *Umwelt* of the ostensive references of dialogue, but the *Welt* projected by the non-ostensive references of every text that we have read, understood and loved. (1981, p. 202)

The unshackling of references is significant in another way. Ricoeur cites Heidegger in this matter when he explains the value of *Verstehen* as a core concept in the

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<sup>10</sup> Excerpted from the translation of Ackrill (1963).

paradigm shifts that redefined epistemological practices and philosophical stances in the study of the human condition. In transforming the event through the act of writing, the subject is, apparently, also transformed because ‘what we understand first in a discourse is not another person, but a project, that is, the outline of a new being-in-the-world’ (Ricoeur, 1981, p. 202). The subject who speaks, thus, becomes a construct – only made real and significant by the event of reading, the conscious act of interpretation – and is capable of being re-constructed for as long as it is re-read or re-written. The subject, as a product of textualisation, gains existence only because of its *making* in writing.

‘Textualisation is the pre-requisite to interpretation’, contends Clifford in explaining what constitutes ethnographic research (1988, p. 38). Filipino diaspora, as experience, is inscribed in writing on the Internet wall so that it becomes ‘exterior’ to the subject who experiences and writes. This exteriorisation makes inscription in writing possible (Ricoeur, 1981, p. 199). However, as a consequence of the process, what is preserved, what is frozen, what is fixed is not the experience per se, but the *meaning* of the experience of diasporic living as seen by the particular inscriber – the Internet actor, the Filipino in New Zealand. Textualisation ‘is the process through which unwritten’ events and experiences ‘came to be marked as a corpus, a potentially meaningful ensemble separated out from an immediate discursive or performative situation’ (Clifford, 1988, p. 38). Meaning here, following Ricoeur’s model of the text, does not have a tenacious connection to its author nor is it confined to the direct references the text contains (although as Bell reminds us, these original attachments help in understanding the text), but becomes open and vast by virtue of the potentially diverse audience made by the text itself. Filipino identity in diaspora becomes one of the potential meanings of these inscriptions, whether intended or not by the originator.

The increasing mediatisation of life (Fairclough, 2010; Giddens, 1991; Harvey, 1989, among others) requires all to develop an aptitude for *representation* (Papacharissi, 2011; Pertierra, 2007). This is hard to deny especially when we look at the pervasive presence of new media in our daily lives. All forms of media act as mediators of our realities and they play a significant role in the meanings we make of our situations and the relationships we are in, both the personal and systemic. New media,

however, are unique because they provide average users ways to not only gather information but create products of culture as well, one of which is a representation of the self that instantly transcends boundaries of time and space, and limits of dominant social systems.

### **3.5.2 New media as liminoid practice**

Online engagement and the attendant production of texts is a perfect instance of the *liminoid*. Framing Internet texts within the liminoid concept underscores not just the implications of textualising experiences but its overall relationship to structures in society that determine an individual's proper place within the system.

Previously, I have discussed what makes the liminoid distinct from the liminal, as outlined by Turner. Also, I have presented countervailing points made by Thomassen warning against simplistically differentiating the two concepts in the post-industrial context. To recall briefly, the liminoid is a non-required practice in society as opposed to the compulsory nature of liminal events (Turner, 1982, p. 53); liminoid acts are a 'break' from normality as defined by the prevailing structure of society; where the liminal event is communal, liminoid experience is individualistic; and, liminoid acts have more capacity for social critique.

Turner cites literature and the arts, sports and recreation as examples of the liminoid as these demonstrate activities that 'develop apart from the central economic and political processes' (Turner, 1982, p. 53). Internet engagement, as a site of identity reconstruction in the diasporic subject's experience, is a liminoid process since it exists outside the parameters set by 'official' norm or protocol, aside from it being non-compulsory and usually practiced individualistically. For instance, putting up a personal blog can be seen as a break from one's 'normal' position in social relationships. To an extent, an individual can construct an entire character on a blog that is not sanctioned by official, dominant, or legitimate structures. The same is true when immigrants connect with the family through social media and in the process possibly enact a 'life' that defies the limiting identity set by the category 'skilled long-term migrant', which gives particular attention only to one's economic currency in the neoliberal scheme of things.

‘Liminoid activities tend to be more idiosyncratic, quirky – they compete for general recognition and are thought of at first as ludic...’ (Turner, 1982, p. 53). Taking as liminoid objects the online texts produced by Filipinos in New Zealand, I wish to emphasise that new media platforms, relative to traditional forms of cultural expression and production, are potentially available to anyone who chooses to participate and produce discourses that go against ruling ideologies even when these user-generated contents, on the surface, bear the characteristics of ‘play’ – the ludic. This notion of ‘play’ or ‘playful meaning’ is considered by Lemke (1995) as a mode of subverting the meaning system since –

Play is the unspeakable source of the possibility of praxis because it creates the possibility of a meaning-space outside the meaning system, beyond the limits set by the system of disjunctions, from which that system can become visible to us in its effects on our practice. (p. 184)

As a liminoid act, social media practices engage in the process of play, that is, a meaning-making activity that defies the boundaries of prescribed ways of looking at one’s reality. My participants’ involvement in different social media formats are instances of ‘playful’ meaning-making – outside their designated role within the politico-economic structure and potentially generative of an opening to re-appraise their circumstances in the interstices of their diasporic realities.

Turner contends that liminoid phenomena are often parts of social critiques or even revolutionary manifestos (Turner, 1982, p. 53). The ‘anti-structure’ (in both liminal and liminoid events) has the possibility to ‘generate and store a plurality of alternative models of living’ or ‘serve as instruments of political control’ (Turner, 1982, p. 33). When my participants inscribe their experiences, insights, knowledge, and memory in writing, they do not merely *retell* the diasporic experience as it is lived but re-construct it in such a way that potentially sets alternative, reflexive, involved, and even oppositional readings of the Filipino identity-in-transition. Considering the complexity of people’s entanglement in power relations of material and discursive structures, radical shifts in consciousness and action are never guaranteed. The Internet texts examined in the project are seen as occasions of the capacity of individuals to change and realise a kind of consciousness that is aware of the contingency of their subjectivities and cognisant of their own power and agency to reject and revise subjugating discourses. This provides a compelling reason to see

even personal writings, such as those in the study, as more than solipsistic practices. They go beyond exclusively subjective, random, and deeply individual thoughts without relevance to contexts outside their reality.

### **3.6 Critical discourses and power in sign-making**

In order to examine social and power relations that serve as contexts for identity construction, the study uses critical discourse as analytic lens to go beyond mere description of the texts that Filipinos in New Zealand produce online. The premise is that online activities are primarily an engagement with language. As such, the study relies on an emphasis on language and discourse that is traced to the founding principles of ‘critical linguistics’ (Van Dijk, 2008, p. 85). In the seminal work *Language and Control*, Fowler and Kress (1979) elucidate the necessity of a kind of linguistics that is conscious of the ways linguistic activities are ineluctably situated within larger social systems of power so that it becomes ‘...a powerful tool for the study of ideological processes which mediate relationships of power and control’ (p. 186).

#### **3.6.1 People as sign-makers**

This project is ultimately a study of signs and meanings. Although I do not particularly employ *social semiotics* as the mode of analysis, I am indebted to the basic principles of the paradigm as outlined by Hodge and Kress (1988), Van Leeuwen (2005), Kress (2009), and Lemke (1995) especially in their view of the *sign*. They all share the belief that meanings are not inherent in an object but are *made* within social relations or societal structures. The analysis of meanings, therefore, ‘should not be separated from the social, historical, cultural and political dimensions of communities’ (Lemke, 1995, p. 9). Van Leeuwen prefers to call signs ‘resources’ to veer away from the connotation conveyed by the former that meanings are inherent in objects (2005, p.3). A necessary aspect of this basic stance as applied to the project is to view my participants’ online textual production as an instance of making meanings by using ‘resources’ that are available to them as members of particular groups and as users of the Internet.

Kress (2009) puts it best when he asserts that people are not sign-users but are *sign-*

*makers*; the focus should then be on the making of signs and not the use. In a similar vein, Lemke (1995) underscores the active and deliberate process of meaning-making by calling it a ‘kind of *doing*’ within a social context. This perspective implies that people are not merely consumers and recipients of meanings bestowed by higher authorities in society for social structures and the agents of social action are involved in a ‘*dialectic of control*’ (Giddens, 1984, p. 16). In this relationship, structures built into social institutions do not necessarily dominate ‘docile bodies’ for even the subordinate(d) can exert influence, perhaps change, on the superior (Giddens, 1984).

The theoretical ability of resources or signs for making meaning Van Leeuwen calls ‘semiotic potential’, which –

is constituted by all their past uses and an actual semiotic potential constituted by those past uses that are known to and considered relevant by the users of the resource, and by such potential uses as might be uncovered by the users on the basis of their specific needs and interests. Such uses take place in a social context...(2005, p. 4)

In the project, I account for the linguistic and semiotic resources put into use by my participants in their sign-making endeavours in social media. These resources are themselves carriers of a history of sign-making whose potential relevance to the diasporic experience is only revealed by the specificities of the social context of the individuals involved in the practice of making signs. They are semiotic resources that are at once distinctly available within the spatiality and temporality of Filipino diaspora experience in New Zealand and as affordances of Internet-based media.

### **3.6.2 Power and agency in making signs and meanings**

The concept of meaning-potential is fundamentally an analysis of power in society in general and power in the making (or holding down) of meanings in our signifying practices in particular. When the meaning-potential of a possible resource is restricted, there are those who benefit from the occlusion of change. The fact that these resources or signs have no fixed meanings does not mean that meanings are made equal or on equal terms. Van Leeuwen explains that ‘in social life people constantly try to fix and control the use of semiotic resources...to justify the rules they make up’ (2005, p. 5). Certainly, there are sectors in society that will gain from

the maintenance of the *status quo*. Considering the project's central issues, an opportune inquiry at this point would be: If identities are meanings, how is the Filipino defined in New Zealand? What aspects of the Filipino's identity are articulated and what are silenced? Who benefits from this fixing of meanings that the Filipino in New Zealand might embody?

We are immediately drawn to the fact that the presence of Filipinos in New Zealand is generally officially sanctioned. This makes it not difficult to realise that confining the Filipino as economic body, physical capital or labour subject would be advantageous for both the sending and receiving countries. We are re-introduced to a consequence of neoliberal policies that implicate complex issues of race, ethnicity, and nationality, among others, in global labour migratory practices. It is not difficult to comprehend this particular interaction of political-economic systems and individual identity formations from an *ideological* point of view, which emphasises the role of power in restricting meanings during the construction of discourse.

Exposing the *myth* of certain prevailing meanings being natural and universal is the main task of critical discourse analysis. To Mouffe and Laclau (1985), the politics in discourse lies in the *artificial* cessation of making possible meanings. Jørgensen and Phillips (2001) explain this stance:

A discourse is established as a totality in which each sign is fixed...This is done by the exclusion of all other possible meanings that the signs could have had...Thus a discourse is a reduction of possibilities. It is an attempt to stop the sliding of the signs in relation to one another and hence to create a unified system of meaning. (pp. 26–27)

The more important facet of this premise, however, is in its implication of the process by which certain 'fixing' of meanings become more recognised than others and how these form the dominant discourses that rule over the ways we make sense of our lives. Mouffe and Laclau remind us further that a critical stance towards discourse means that we should endeavour to 'map out the processes in which meanings of signs are fixed' and the process by which 'some fixations of meaning become so conventionalised that we think of them as natural' (in Jørgensen and Phillips, 2001, p. 25).

To be 'critical', however, is not only limited to the act of demystification or making transparent otherwise opaque connections that exist among discursive and non-discursive aspects of the social structure. In so far as these connections are related to issues of control and an imbalance in power relations, it is imperative that those engaged in the practice of *critique* forward analysis that unravels, at the very least, the capacity of the 'ordinary' individual for agency.

Various research have demonstrated that people read or signify beyond what is expected of them by the implied purpose of the text (in its liberal sense), or the overall discursive structure that promotes assumptions of what an audience, receiver or user of a particular *genre* of cultural text must be (among others, see Barker & Galasinski, 2001; de Certeau, 1984; Fiske, 1991; Hebdige, 1979). These studies enable us to see that people are by no means completely subjugated in structures of power, as explained earlier in the context of the mutual constitution of social structure and individual agency. On the contrary, these tend to affirm that 'texts are polysemic...and that cultural understanding of texts...must concern itself with the processes involved in the realisation of meaning by readers' (Barker & Galasinski, 2001, p. 7).

Critical analysis of discourse likewise takes this analytic path. CDA research, for instance, includes as method in-depth interviews and focus groups to complement textual data in interpretive work (see for instance Wodak, Cillia, Reisigl, & Liebhart, 1999). Similarly, Fairclough (2010) pays attention to this aspect of the discursive situation. In a study of globalisation and language, he was able to identify the means by which ordinary people, taken as passive receivers of the changes brought about by geo-politics, 'make do' with what is offered them by constructing their own local meanings of aspects of the globalisation discourse commonly viewed as a one-sided transmission from West to the rest of the world. There is a clear stress on and investment of more energy in understanding the *active* role of ordinary people to negotiate not just their survival but also their engaged discursive practices.

What CDA offers is an alternative way of reading *texts* that matter (explicitly or implicitly) in the lives of those who are assumed to be not necessarily uncritical, but perhaps, temporarily unaware. The 'anti-structural' practices opened up by the liminal situation of Filipinos in New Zealand create possibilities of a counter-

hegemonic reading of discursive productions that influence and are influenced by their daily lives in the diasporic experience.

### **3.7 Conclusion**

In developing the theoretical framework to guide the research, I have sought to describe the diasporic experience as a liminal – in-between – event and the ‘writing’ of the diasporic life in Internet-based media as a textualisation of experience. In both accounts, my attempts were centred on defining the construction of diasporic identity discourses in new media as primarily an engagement with and of persons whose creative capacity for signification necessarily confronts structures of control and domination both within and beyond personal contexts.

Power, after all, is not a fossilised substance that remains in a particular location in the intricate system of social relations. Individuals are ideological constructs but they are also ideological agents. In the specific situation of sign-making, they possess the capacity to decide (at least, in large part if not in absolute terms) the resources to use in order to accomplish the meanings they aim to construct based on their interests at a particular moment of signification. Kress believes that the individual act of choosing in the event of making signs is what makes the semiotic practice political: ‘It is the sign-maker’s decision as to what is to be taken as criterial – with any sign. The different ‘angle’ indicates different positioning: we are in the realm, however mildly, of ideology’ (2009, p. 68).

The Internet (new media) is at once a representational and interactional medium. In it, we create and produce. Through it, we connect and link with ease. This dual capability, simultaneously enacted in the process of engagement, makes the Internet a unique venue for transforming an experience into texts. The general textualisation of experience as a result of producing on the Internet is understood well using Ricoeur’s explication of how acts become meaningful with its inscription in writing. Further, new media textual production, as liminoid practice, has the potential to produce meanings that counter dominant discourses in society. The distinct semiotic resources made available by the Internet, in the specific sign-making practice of Filipinos in New Zealand, offer possibilities for making meanings where the Filipino diasporic identity is potentially always in the process of *re*-making.

## 4 METHODOLOGY

### THE ETHNOGRAPHIC AND THE DISCURSIVE IN ONLINE RESEARCH

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#### 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I present the design of the study starting with a discussion of the ethnographic approach to Internet research, particularly adopting the procedures of *discourse-centred online ethnography* (DCOE) outlined by Jannis Androutsopoulos (2008). In assuming this outlook, I reference the various efforts to apply ethnographic principles and methods to studying the Internet that ‘maintain a dialogue with the established tradition of ethnography’ (Domínguez et al., 2007). For instance, Christine Hine (2000) in choosing to label her approach ‘virtual ethnography’ cites as rationale not only the Internet’s supposed *disembodiedness* but also the way the term captures the character of a kind of ethnography that may be ‘simulated’ at best but sufficient for the specific moments of its application. In her words, ‘virtuality’ carries the connotation of ‘not quite’ [but] adequate even if not exactly the ‘real thing’ (Hine, 2000, p. 65). Robert Kozinets (2010), on the other hand, appears to be comfortable in treating online environments as social worlds with an attendant analytic process that looks at websites as texts to be interpreted. Calling his approach ‘netnography’, he highlights inductiveness and hermeneutics as chief processes that render online content meaningful.

My main aim in appropriating an ethnographic stance is the same as that which motivated Miller and Slater (2000) to adopt such an approach to understanding Internet use in Trinidad, which was to veer away from treating it as an intractable ‘placeless’ space but rather, to see the Internet as a product of the interaction of various technologies and the diverse ways people in diverse real-world contexts use them. I would like to explore how Internet-based technologies and media forms (or particular kinds of these) are ‘being understood and assimilated somewhere in particular’, with full awareness of the complexity of that ‘somewhere’ (Miller & Slater, 2000, p. 1). The Internet in this study is primarily considered as human engagement, thus, what I expect to reach in the end is an appreciation and understanding of the diasporic experience of Filipinos in New Zealand, the place of

new media forms in fulfilling their goals and aspirations, and their ownership of new forms of technologies the meaningfulness of which is derived from how these are used by people who integrate them in everyday life.

Immediately following this opening is a further discussion of the specific relevance of the DCOE approach in fulfilling the objectives of the research. The next section explains the process and basis for my choice of Internet sites to include in the study. I also address here the significance of understanding the meaning of ‘social media’ and the arguments surrounding its apprehension. As the cases I finally focus on are forms of social media, it is important to put forward my particular understanding of the matter. What I present afterwards is my particular application of the procedures of DCOE as a method of acquiring the data. Specific steps include observing the online environment, choosing the specific websites as ‘sites’ of research, multimodal capture of Internet-based data, and contact with Internet actors. I incorporate in this discussion putting up a thesis blog as a practical way of maintaining connection with participants and the importance of data triangulation in gaining a layered understanding of the topic. Next, I spell out the mode of analysis I employed in the study. Specifically, I present the intersection of multimodality and critical discourse analysis in fulfilling the analytic phase of the interpretive arc, citing the works and approaches developed by Kress & Van Leeuwen (2001, 2006) and Van Leeuwen (1996, 2008) as guides to my own analytic work. Finally, I account for ethical concerns in the last section.

#### **4.2 Online identity and Discourse-Centred Online Ethnography**

Internet ethnography is multifaceted (Androutsopoulos, 2008). With each venture, we are bound to discover both restricting boundaries and promising openings. Common among these different approaches is the contention that websites are not merely Internet-based versions of conventional published texts. They are, on the contrary, complex constructions of linguistic and semiotic elements that are imbued with equally complex production and consumption practices by virtue of their principal features – being digital and being networked.

DCOE, admittedly, is a limited approach to doing ethnography of the Internet. As it is primarily focused on the discursive aspect of engaging with new media forms and

acquiring background details that contextualise these *texts* by hearing the side of the authors/producers, there are aspects of the experience that will be missed. However, as discussed in more detail in section 4.4 along with the particular steps I took in the practice of DCOE, I was privileged enough to live in Auckland while doing the research. I consider my everyday life then as a form of immersion into the social milieu of my participants in the study. At the very least, establishing a life with my family in the city and engaging with Filipino migrants on different occasions (offline and online) have enabled me to get a glimpse of their actual experience living in New Zealand. What is more, the discursive dimension of the research gives me a chance to take up the challenge that ethnographers of the Internet face – developing a new set of skills and data collection methods that incorporate not just ‘verbal’ but multi-semiotic data as well (Garcia, Standlee, Bechkoff, & Cui, 2009). This challenge, I believe, goes beyond the issue of method, as it requires a reconfiguration of standpoint and framework in understanding texts, textuality, and the multimodality of actual experience.

DCOE primarily figured for me as an apt approach to understanding Filipino diasporic identity construction on the Internet since it is emphatic about the centrality of linguistic and semiotic elements as objects of study in online media. Fundamentally, DCOE, as an approach that enables the understanding of online discourse events, is premised on the ‘textuality’ and the ‘actuality’ of these instances – aspects that are not so much an opposition as they are a concomitance. Textuality on this occasion refers to two distinct but equally crucial attributes of new media production on the Web. It obviously refers to the form taken by discursive events on social media, as they are most easily construed as *texts* that are linguistic and multi-semiotic. Textuality also alludes to the *virtuality* of these events, as they are after all produced and consumed on the Web – a fact that leads many to consider Internet-based *realities* as either inferior to ‘real-life’ realities or at best, anomalous versions of them. Virtuality leads us to the second aspect of online media productions that it immediately contrasts with – *actuality*.

Discourse events in the offline world are aspects of the entire online-offline dynamics that DCOE investigates. The ‘actual’ in this instance points to the fact that events relayed in online media are (or were) *real* constructions of an actual person, at

least in this particular study and the cases that serve as basis for DCOE research. It is the individual – subject – who owns the knowledge or experience of events that happen in life outside the Internet, which could arguably be considered as the sources of what they say online. The need to understand the whole online event from the perspective of the (actual) individual is crucial in order to fulfil an interpretive goal. This is not to limit interpretation, as pointed out by Bell (2011) in the previous chapter, but to establish a context for understanding.

Actuality, in a second sense, also directly comments on the validity and value of recognising online discursive acts for what they are: first, as texts or textual constructions that are produced and consumed online; and second, more importantly, as *realities* that happen somewhere discrete from but ineluctably connected to everyday (offline) social life. Therefore, ‘paying *ethnographic* attention’ to them as one would an offline, actual, ‘real-life’ situation, community or event is necessary if one is to have a grasp of the intricacies commanded by the assemblage of images and words on the Internet. Further, as these various elements of an online text are seen as processes rather than objects, they are dynamic, moving, and active as opposed to being merely artefactual.

What do these notions of ‘actuality’ mean for the study? These require me to scrutinise not just what is said on the websites as sources of themes, narratives, and insights but also connect to the *actors* who create content that readers consume on the Internet. It was likewise necessary to account for the means through which these discourses are made manifest. What I ultimately aim to accomplish in this regard is to grasp the possibilities and realities of identity construction online (its themes and politics) and the *affordances* offered by new media forms to individuals in terms of the various tools and opportunities for re-viewing their particular subjectivities. In this specific objective lies the premise that Internet-based new media offer ways of constructing meanings and representations that possess both affinities to traditional media and distinctions from it. The pre-eminence of the discursivity of identity and the diversity of sign-making resources for self-expression are some of these similarities. The blurring of production and consumption processes, however, is one aspect of the discursive process in online new media engagement that makes it distinct from traditional media, especially when we speak of the latter’s

institutionalised context. Internet-based media production affords users greater possibility to flatten hierarchies of design, production, and consumption, offering an individual more control, agency or power in constructing and relaying style and content that potentially include identity discourses. This shift in control in media production is the impetus to regard people ‘formerly known as the audience’ (Rosen, 2006) not only as consumers or users of media forms but ‘producers’ (Bruns, 2008), able to simultaneously consume and actively produce content in a variety of online environments

### **4.3 Between breadth and depth: Deciding on the cases for the study**

Sampling of websites was purposeful through the use of online search tools, a strategy that has been used in several studies that select Web pages with targeted constraints defined by the study (see Snelson, 2005 as an example). The search engines Google and Yahoo were used for this purpose, the two having the largest index with the greatest coverage of the indexable Web (Gulli & Signorini, 2005). As a result, several websites were identified using search engine research with the keywords ‘filipino new zealand’. The following comprised the initial pool of potential websites to be included in the study, categorised by type:

1. Filipino-themed websites
  - Filipinos in Auckland
  - Diario Filipino
  - Filipino Migrant News
2. Filipino online magazine
  - Mayanz
3. Filipino Internet forums
  - nzpinoy.com
4. Filipino blog sites
  - Watson/ a blog on Filipino Life in Wellington, New Zealand
  - Mga Kuro-kuro ni Ka Uro
  - Adobongblog
  - For Gooding Sake: a Filipino-New Zealand Family Blog
  - YLBnoel’s Blog
5. Filipino social media accounts (mainly on Facebook)
  - Auckland Pinoy
  - Individual (personal) social media accounts

There was no assumption of the exhaustiveness of the list. In identifying websites that would form the body of work to be read and analysed, I have always considered the listing to be incomplete since new sites are assumed to be constructed at any point in time. In addition, the only ones that would have come to my attention were those that have been set up to be searchable via the search engines. The items that I included in the initial list also underwent very little filtering, i.e., the only criteria I used in the selection were that the websites are by or indicated to be by Filipinos and that they are currently residing in New Zealand. In order to further limit the sample of new media sites, I then selected only the ones that have been in existence for at least one year with their authors/creators having resided in New Zealand for that same length of time. I deem that these criteria would provide a certain amount of historical import and richness in terms of the ‘in-between’ experiences of the authors in their diasporic journey and the insights that they have been able to manifest through their online engagement.

As with Hine’s foray into virtual ethnography (2000), I did not know exactly which specific websites to look at in the beginning. What I had for certain was the subject of my research. The ethnography was exploratory on many different levels and even that frame of mind was something that I had to constantly re-learn – bracketing pre-suppositions, recognising theoretical and personal baggage, and dismantling set notions of Internet practice. Initial exploration of the online environments was, therefore, made up of regular visits to the identified websites and familiarising myself with the different elements that make them up and their relationship with one another. Field notes and reflective notes, along with some data capture, were important complementary tasks of the scoping phase. I was conscious of including the personal experience of being a ‘participant’ in my own online engagements. That is why I consider myself to be a participant in the overall online experience in the study since I myself have been an Internet-user since its introduction in the Philippines in the mid-90s and have actively been involved in the creation of my own content in blogs and social networking sites (SNS), in particular. The experience and insights gained from exploring the prospective websites served as basis for finally settling on specific websites to include as cases in the study.

I initially set out to include all the new media sites in the above list with the aim of gaining an understanding of the breadth of the themes and issues pertinent to the general question of identity construction of Filipinos in their diasporic lives in New Zealand. However, I have also always desired to go beyond describing the goings-on in particular websites in favour of a deeper analysis of two dialectical relationships that are relevant in any Internet activity in general and online identity construction in particular. First, an active online engagement and offline everyday life practices unceasingly inform and interrogate each other so that each becomes both the source and outcome of an identity construction. For this reason, I am one with DCOE in its attempt at recognising the contiguity of online and offline events in an individual's engagement with the Internet by going beyond the screen to reach out to the 'person' behind (or in front of) every online creation. This is done by hearing out the individual whose creations we only usually see on our screens with every moment of online engagement. Second, there is also the inexhaustible exchange that happens between the meaning-making repertoires of the individual who creates on the Internet and the linguistic and semiotic utilities offered by online new media platforms for producing content. In any given instance of online creation, the expression and communication initiated by an individual creator is potentially vast in what could be represented. But immediately, it is restrained by the very limits in one's capacity (e.g. technical know-how or material resources) to access and fully utilise the Internet and its tools.

Many Internet-based platforms for expression and communication dramatically innovate not long after a piece of technological and technical improvement has been introduced in response to market demands for greater access, control, and interactivity. Again, this will, of course, result in people finding a way to quickly adapt to seemingly unrelenting changes. In short, qualities and necessities of form are both in the interest of the user and the medium. Only their continuous interaction leads to on-going evolution in the way the Internet and the individual determine each other's activity and perhaps, identity. As we continue to make meanings of our online activities and demand more of the technology and medium, we are also faced with the task of unending adjustment and learning (unlearning and relearning) which thus forms a symbiotic relationship between the user, the technology, and new media formats.

#### 4.3.1 A blog and a Facebook account: Filipinos in New Zealand online

Multimodality and the dissolution of the divide that usually separates different processes of production and distribution of media forms or products are two of the most salient and crucial traits of online engagement. As an object of research, it opens up to wider, but obviously more complex and demanding, possibilities of reading. Considering that one of the primary objectives in the study is to map the convergences and contradictions of content and form as well as meanings and medium, the breadth of seeing must give way to the depth of understanding. That is, after careful consideration, I opted to focus on just two cases of social media content creation from among the websites in the list presented earlier. It is my hope that in limiting the ‘sites’ of research, I will get a deeper sense of the intersections of discourses on diasporic identities of Filipinos in New Zealand and the practical and semiotic affordances of social media that contribute to the realisation of the ‘networked self’ (Papacharissi, 2011) in the ‘informational society’ (Castells, 2010).

The social media accounts that constitute my study sites are a personal Facebook account (an SNS) and a personal blog. Aside from their potential for comparative analysis (e.g. both are personal media but in different formats), these social media formats were favoured because of specific qualities that are uniquely relevant to their case and the potentials they possess vis-à-vis the objectives of the project. Firstly, the two have a history that make for a rich and diverse source of insights and narratives regarding being a Filipino attempting to build a life in another country. Secondly, these websites were put up with different motivations that are, overtly or indirectly, pointing to the situation of Filipinos as a diasporic group in New Zealand. They were created with different purposes due to the personal vision of the authors and the nature of the platforms. But whether or not they were put up in the beginning to explicitly *talk* about identity, they have eventually become writings on the vast Internet wall containing statements and sentiments, answers and questions, contradictions and negotiations about who a Filipino is in New Zealand.

I present in Table 4.1 the two cases with specific reasons behind their inclusion. In sum, I included the blog *Mga Kuro-kuro ni Ka Uro* because of its role as an important resource for Filipinos wanting to migrate to New Zealand. The choice of the Facebook account has more pragmatic grounds. Since accessing the full content

of ‘private’ websites is a delicate matter (see section on Ethics), I deemed it best to include in the study a personal SNS account of someone (‘Amy’, a pseudonym) I already have a history of relationship with. At the very least, having a connection eased the challenge of building trust. There is no doubt that my personal knowledge of the participant affected my reading of her Facebook writings. This situation is, however, an aspect of the research that I fully embrace since my intention from the beginning was to get to know the authors behind the texts to the extent that will allow me a more nuanced understanding of their work. What I know about them, apart from the texts on their social media accounts, are necessary aspects of my interpretive work in the study.

In addition to the main social media sites, two sets of data were also included to serve as sources of official discourses on Filipino identity in New Zealand. I reached this decision during the phase of data gathering when I realised that hegemonic discourses about Filipino diasporic identity should also be made explicit aside from discussions presented by related literature. In line with my use of the concept of *liminality*, the ‘in-between’ position of Filipinos who moved to New Zealand could be seen as being discursively constructed by official texts that exist and preponderate in both the country of origin and country of destination. As previously discussed, this is the premise of Camroux’s cautiousness about the ‘transnational’ lens in looking at Filipino diaspora when he claims that the nation is never transcended or evaded in Filipino migration since migrants are officially defined by both the sending state and the receiving one. The following texts were identified to comprise *official discourses* on diasporic Filipino identity in New Zealand:

#### **Philippine official texts**

- 2009 Philippine Overseas Employment Agency (POEA) report accessed from the official website
- Commission on Overseas Filipinos (CFO) audio-visual brief accessed from the official website

#### **New Zealand official text**

- Video testimonial of *John Evangelista* accessed from the New Zealand Immigration website ‘New Zealand Now’

**Table 4.1 Social media cases in the study**

<b>Case</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Brief profile</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Significance in the study</b>
<b>Mga Kuro-kuro ni Ka Uro</b>	Blog site	2005-2010 200+ entries on varying topics  Blogger is male, in his late 40s, an IT professional	Initially to document personal and family journey of settling in Auckland	One of the most accessed Filipino in NZ blogs as evidenced by the number and regularity of comments  Transformation from being a personal blog to one that caters to the larger Filipino community in NZ and those wanting to go to NZ  Has become a resource of practical and technical information about migrating to NZ  No new entries since 2010 but is continually accessed by Filipinos wanting to go to NZ, literally becoming a ‘first step’ to migrating
<b>Personal Facebook account</b>	Social network account	Since 2008 when still in the Philippines up to the present, in Auckland  Account owner is female, in her mid-30s, with postgraduate education	Personal documentation of life events  Connecting with people  Sharing with family in Philippines the changes in their lives (especially the children)	A social networking site is a social media format that primarily creates and maintains connection and network with others  Its affordances are primarily very personal and documentary, but has potentials for many other representational and interactive meanings  The particular Facebook account chronicles the life of the person from when they were still in the Philippines up to when they moved to NZ

### 4.3.2 Social media as personal media: Making the private public

Since the cases I focus on in the study are two different forms of social media, it is necessary to allot space on matters of definition and theorisation. This section provides a basic understanding of social media as an Internet-based communication format and an exploration of their value for expressing identity claims by virtue of their signifying potential.

There is no one agreement on the meaning of social media as reflected by its use in popular and specialist parlance (Lomborg, 2011). However, there are common ways of construing the term with particular attention to the characteristics that make these different from traditional mass media and general new media. There is no form of media that is not social, clarifies Lomborg (2011), but ‘social media’ are distinctly social because they are based on interpersonal communication, interactive content creation, and personal purpose (p. 56). The pragmatic usefulness of social media as a communicative mode is quite obvious. What is more important to highlight is the argument that social media are used for personal purposes. Being ‘personal’ refers both to content and authorship – social media generally contain ‘personal’ topics and are authored by an individual (or individuals) whose subjective *voice* is what is represented in the content. Creating interactive content is, of course, accomplished on Internet-based platforms made available to users. Therefore, it is also important to remember that talking about social media necessarily involves understanding both the process of content production and the creation and distribution of technologies (e.g. software or applications) that enable active participation by Internet users. Lomborg, thus, chooses to define –

social media as communicative genres, constituted at the interplay between interactive functionalities configured in software and the distinctly social purposes that users orient to in their communicative practices. (2011, p. 57)

Social media facilitate the creation of a new communication landscape where mobile and web-based technologies allow for highly interactive platforms (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011, p. 241) and the possibility of creating both an ‘egocentric’ space and a sense of community (Baym, 2007). Control given to users is not limited to creation and modification of content but also includes the

diversity of choices of particular formats that have their specific traits and functionalities. Social networking sites (SNS), such as Facebook and LinkedIn, focus on facilitating connection and relationships; media-sharing sites, like YouTube, allow users to create and distribute multi-media products online; weblogs (blogs) provide space for authors to easily maintain presence on the Web; and, microblogging services, such as Twitter, capitalise on real-time updates of compact messages. Among the basic functional components of creating web presence, facilitating relationships, and sharing content, constructing an identity remains ‘core’ to many social media platforms (Kietzmann et al., 2011, p. 244). This assessment is no surprise since the ‘personal’ ethos of social media builds on the capability of a user to project a *self* on a chosen format through its expressive and connective affordances.

Despite social media catering to personal purposes, however, the possibility of having an audience beyond oneself and one’s immediate interpersonal relationships alters the way we consider the reach and significance of an individual user’s personal content. Due to the digitalised and networked property of new forms of media, social media cease to be purely personal and increasingly blur lines of distinction from traditional mass communication (Lüders, 2008). Before the advent of digital modes of interpersonal communication, Lüders (2008) argues, people had a clear sense of who is at the other end of the communication process. She goes on to explain that with ‘blogs, private homepages, message boards and newsgroups’, people are no longer able to identify and specify who ‘consumes’ the content they generate and for what purpose (Lüders, 2008, p. 689).

The estrangement of the content (text) from its originating context is again witnessed in this instance. It is not just the technology of writing *per se* that enables this uncoupling of the text, but the particular qualities of the media technology that provides platforms of content production, distribution, and consumption. The cases of social media use by Filipino migrants in my study follow this dynamic. What I am particularly interested to see is how the potential of social media as personal media is harnessed so that when my participants ‘speak’ through their chosen format, they speak not only of the personal but of larger issues, such as Filipino identity, as well.

## **4.4 Acquiring the data**

I conducted two methods of gathering data adapted from the DCOE approach: 1) online environment mapping, which is limited to textual production in new media sites; where ‘textual’ pertains to varying forms of output such as written, visual, audio, and audio-visual materials on the Web; and, 2) contact with Internet actors, which is limited to semi-structured interviews. I describe the process of data gathering in detail below.

### **4.4.1 Online Environment Mapping**

The first stage is mapping of the online environment. It was a recursive activity that was done starting 2010 October up to 2012 October (although I constantly revisited the sites even beyond that period). At this point in DCOE, systematic observation of the online site is the primary task. Seeing new media sites as particular environments allowed the study to consider their components in detail (Androutsopoulos, 2008). I prefer to label this phase ‘online environment mapping’ since it connotes and requires not only the systematic and meticulous identification of the elements that make up an Internet site but the careful plotting of the positions of the elements relative to one another. This was the main activity at this stage where online sites were examined as being comprised of ‘relationships and processes rather than [just] isolated artefacts’, per Androutsopoulos (2008), who added that, ‘in considering online environments in this way, movement must be from core to periphery of a field’ (p. 5-8). When visiting a blog site, for example, the blog entry is the central object of interest with linked websites and reader comments gaining secondary, but equally important, attention. For a Facebook profile, the status posts (whether verbal or visual) are central elements followed by surrounding features such as owner’s profile, photo gallery, and friends list, among others.

Repeated and systematic identification of elements in detail and plotting their relationships to one another were the main steps considered at this stage. It was directed by an ‘online environment mapping guide’ (see Appendix A), collected by multimodal data capture, and supplemented by observation and reflective notes. Multimodal data capture refers to the gathering and storing of text-based, visual, audio, and audio-visual data that were deemed relevant to the study. Generally, these

were saved electronically as text files, doc files, photo or video files, audio files or a combination, and retrieved for data analysis. Alternatively, in circumstances that prohibited the electronic capture of data, manual note-taking was employed. Archival functionality in the social media sites proved helpful in tracing the content production history. This provided not just a record of previous materials but a means to trace the development of certain relevant issues or ideas.

I did not aim to interact or participate in the activities that exist in the new media sites that have become part of the study, at least not in the beginning of the online environment mapping process. A minimal obtrusion on the regular online dynamics in the sites has always been aimed for despite the fact that my presence as researcher-lurker in the websites was eventually made known to interested parties not just as standard ethical procedure but for cultural considerations as well.

#### **4.4.2 Contact with Internet actors**

My approach to accessing the social media sites, whether they are open-access, semi-public or private, was to introduce my presence in the websites as an academic researcher with particular interests, objectives, and stances on certain issues that might prove significant at a later stage. Although there was a need to make known to account owners that I have been engaging or have engaged with their sites (e.g. read their blog entries) even prior to doing the study, it had to be made explicit that I was consciously doing research. This also created an opening to ask them to grant me permission to include their social media in the study (for semi-public or private websites) and subsequently participate in an interview or, favour me with their ‘acknowledgment’ to gather data from their sites (for public, open-access sites) and essentially, treat their engagement with new media and the resulting textual production as rich data sources and assure them of the confidentiality of their participation. ‘Acknowledgment’ as just mentioned is not the same as permission or consent since these are not required to study clearly publicly open sites. However, it was best to make my introduction as soon as sufficient assessment of the websites had been done during the mapping of the online environment. This act of making my presence as a researcher known was a sign of respect, provided opportunity to build rapport, and created an opening for asking them to participate in the interview. Finally, invitation to participate in the semi-structured interview was accomplished

by sending them an e-mail that contains an introduction about myself as the researcher, a brief background of the study, an invitation to join the interview, and a closing that took the form of sharing some personal details about my family and the reason for being in New Zealand. I composed this initial e-mail with a casual tone and specifically indicated that if they agreed to participate, I would send them more detailed documents about the project (see Appendix B for samples of introductory letter and information sheet). Interviews were commonly scheduled after the second round of e-mail exchanges.

Contact with Internet actors was limited to semi-structured interviews and these focused on their online textual production (see Appendix C for interview schedule). Prior to contacting them to schedule an interview, I saw to it that I already had enough knowledge of their websites from the initial experience and analysis in the first stage (Androutsopoulos, 2008, p.7). For this project, it was ideal to conduct the interview face-to-face since it allowed for more ease of interaction and openness of dialogue that is especially helpful in topics that are better explained extemporaneously or candidly. Also, it is culturally more appropriate and desirable to meet the participant in person and build rapport before proceeding with the interview proper. The interviews were accomplished between 2012 July to 2013 April. The sessions lasted for an average of 1.5 hours for each of the participants and were conducted at a time and in a place they preferred.

I should underscore the greater philosophical impetus that undergirded conducting the interviews despite the fact that there was no intention at all from the beginning to ascertain the meanings of pertinent social content by asking the creators directly as to their original idea – the *intentional fallacy*. This was, in fact, articulated by one of the prospective participants in the initial correspondence that we had. He expressed that he would not be able to answer questions pertaining to the meaning of the content of his websites but instead would ask me, as a reader, what I think they meant. It was exactly what I had in mind and hearing that from a participant validated the fact that the interpretive process in this project is achieved by careful and critical consideration of the boundedness of the text to the author. So, was there ever a need to have that talk with the authors of the blogs, websites, and Facebook accounts in the first place considering that they have no complete authority over the meanings

their works might generate? Certainly, and for three most valuable reasons: first, there was a need to hear the person behind the text, not to gauge the validity of an interpretation, but to have a glimpse of its history. And texts, like all other entities, must have a meaningful history. Second, their interpretation of their own texts may not be the one and only valid meaning to be generated, but they certainly are plausible ones like all other plausible meanings. And third, the death of the author signifies the birth of a 'new' text (Ricoeur, 1981) as new interpretations are made by a new reading of the text which we could also see as its 're-writing'. Following this logic, we could suggest then that the death of the author paves the way for the birth of new ones. The interview process was one way through which texts are rewritten when their original authors become one of the readers who enact their own interpretive practice.

#### **4.4.3 The thesis blog**

Studies of the Internet over the years have resulted in an engagement with the medium that enables researchers to realise that online content creation and consumption are not only objects of inquiry, but could also be incorporated as ways through which certain aspects of the research could be facilitated. Many Internet scholars have recommended that those who study online engagement should put up their own research website that is linked to their institutional affiliation. This not only helps in terms of practicalities but also serves as a claim to the warrant that the Internet has as a legitimate field of study.

Aside from the initial introduction, consent form, and information sheet that were provided the participants, I created a blog for the research project. This served as the online hub of the study where researcher-participant interaction was concentrated. Kozinets (2010) recommends doing such because providing a load of information may be disruptive to an online forum or environment since particular details that are specific to the study may not be appreciated in the same way by different participants in one online setting. For example, some posters in a forum or readers of a blog may find additional information about the research or the background of the researcher interesting or significant while others may just see the same as excessive – adding unnecessary chunks of data to an otherwise 'uncluttered' or already busy environment. This will be more beneficial to both the participants and researcher

since it avoids unnecessary disturbance to the ‘normal’ flow of information exchange in the actual site being studied. The research website can act as the focal point of all concerns that are related to the project, a forum of exchange of opinions and insights regarding theoretical and methodological issues, and a site of sharing preliminary results (i.e. member checks). Consistent with the principle of participation that the I endeavoured to adopt, the research website aimed to facilitate a dialogic atmosphere where negotiations about various issues are undertaken.

In the end, the blog, with URL [www.diasporicpinoy.wordpress.com](http://www.diasporicpinoy.wordpress.com), facilitated two major tasks. First, it served as a practical link between myself and the participants – the authors of the social media cases in the study. Second, it opened up for me the opportunity for the reflexive understanding of engaging with the Internet by using new media as both content-creation medium and meaning-generating practice – the very experiences that my participants have.

#### **4.4.4 Data triangulation**

Data triangulation is one of the ways to make research not only more valid but richer and more layered. Looking at different sources of information opens ways to a deeper understanding of the subject matter in focus.

I initially (falsely) assumed that what I was dealing with in the project were objects in the form of texts. That my main subject of study was writings and that was all there is to it. That I was to engage in a discourse analysis of texts *tout court*. I almost failed to realise that the ‘uncoupling’ of texts (in Chapter 3) does not absolutely apply here because my main objects of interests, along with the texts, are people – as participants – whose textual productions in new media are only a portion of their everyday individual and social practices. I do not deal with artefacts but with live texts and lives of people who, incidentally, are constructing their own ‘person-ness’ online. Thus, the three interconnected sources of data in the study are:

1. Texts: social media creations/productions in the form of a blog and a social networking account
2. Human participants: the people behind the social media texts whose thoughts were gathered through semi-structured interviews

3. Field work: as participant in a) new media engagement as social practice; and, b) the ‘appropriation’ of the migrant experience by being a student and at the same time an employee, raising a family in a new land, and attempting to settle in a foreign place.

My research was, in the final analysis, an attempt to *grasp* particular experiences and practices of people. This was a study of human individuals and the symbolic acts that they do as they engage in social discourses. I have to come to realise through this research that it is so easy to lose sight of that truth. It was perhaps even made more automatic by the fact that the field of my study was the Internet, where bodily connection and face-to-face interaction are not the norm. However, what we are dealing with, even on the Internet, are human persons behind the screens and beyond the virtual networks. Whether the truth of their existence and truth of their writings are ascertained or not, what we read on the Internet are presumably products of human minds, emotions, and actions. These ‘texts’ become a testament to their desires and fears. At least for the time being, for the present assumption I opted to carry, for the specific project I had to do, these texts would not have had any meaningful existence without the individuals who had particular interests and motivations in producing meanings in particular ways with particular forms. What I attempt is to grasp their identity so that I may be able to converse with them or be a conduit of a certain form of understanding of the human condition: the Filipino identity, the condition of Filipino identity in New Zealand, and interpret them as I *find my feet* – as Geertz (1973) would have it – within the complexity of this particular social world.

#### **4.5 Mode of analysis: Multimodality and CDA**

In addition to the main principles and procedures of DCOE, problematising the relationship between social media participation and its accompanying construction, deconstruction, and reconstruction of identity could be better realised only through a more critical and political examination of the interaction of the various aspects of social media production and consumption. Achieving critical scrutiny in the study requires a mode of inquiry guided by critical discourse analysis since it explains the manifestation and play of power present in discourse events.

Though I practiced inductive analysis in the research, it should be made explicit that I took an ‘interpretive’ stance in making sense of gathered data to fulfil the specific objectives. This became all the more relevant in the research as I endeavoured to achieve the basic goals of taking into account the historical and social contexts of Filipinos’ diasporic experience in New Zealand and their implications on the way identity is constructed in social media content creation. Also, as an integral aspect of critical discourse analysis, it led to the demystification of the relations of power involved in the participants’ discursive production and its concomitant influence on online identity construction.

In accordance with the general principles of CDA, power must be seen not only as being in the possession of the dominant, but must be recognised also as existing within the territory of the ordinary, the subjugated or the ruled (see for example Fairclough, 2010 and Van Dijk, 2008). This was central, for example, in Foucault’s treatise on locating power and was discussed in his methodological admonition pertaining to the analysis of how people and power in society actually interact: ‘they are not only its inert or consenting target; they are always also the elements of its articulation’ (1980, p.98). The matter was also cogently exemplified by de Certeau’s study of everyday life practices of common people and the resulting challenge to the imposition of the ‘proper’, as strategies of powerful structures, by tactical practices to ‘outwit’, which he calls the *art of the weak* (1984, pp. 36-37).

#### **4.5.1 Social media as a multimodal site of analysis**

I situate the critical understanding of identity construction on social media within the conjunction of multimodality and critical discourse analysis. Specifically, I adopt the basic scheme outlined by Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001) in performing multimodality as an overarching analytic tool.

The primary aspect of this framework is the notion of ‘stratum’ in the making of meanings whether as author or reader, producer or consumer. There are two strata of creation in multimodal analysis: 1) the stratum of content that is comprised of discourse and design; and, 2) the stratum of expression that is comprised of production and distribution. These four components of a ‘text’ are composed of a diversity of modes that enable the simultaneous realisation of different discourses

and actions. A mode is defined as the semiotic resources available to us via the culture that makes ‘materials’ legitimate resources for making signs. In detail, Kress and Van Leeuwen provide the following definition of each element of the strata (2001, pp. 20–22):

*Content stratum: Design and discourse*

Meaning is premised on the materiality of texts (in its various forms). For an object to be meaningful, it has to take on a form that is rendered ‘readable’. *Design* refers to the conceptualisations of ‘form’ that semiotic objects eventually take. Three things are simultaneously implicated in the level of design: 1) a formulation of a discourse or combination of discourses that is to be conveyed; 2) deciding on a particular (inter)action in which the discourse is embedded; and, 3) a particular way of combining semiotic modes to effectively impart a message using a designated (inter)action.

If *discourse* refers to the socially and historically situated ‘constructions’ of how the world is to be perceived or conceived, finding a way to successfully express the message is a fundamental task. Sign-making is a matter of *making* choices as to *what* to say and *how* to say it. Ultimately, what is made to exist is that aspect of reality that is rendered material by modes of expression we choose to privilege.

*Expression stratum: Production and distribution*

The *production* aspect of a multimodal work is the ‘realisation’ of design and the ‘materialisation’ of ideas. This level refers to the concrete expression of concepts in forms that are either prototypical or final and ready for distribution or consumption. *Distribution*, on the other hand, is the technical ‘re-coding’ of semiotic products and events for purposes of recording and dissemination.

It should be emphasised that meaning is generated in all strata, not just in the level of content where discourse and design are in focus (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001). This is one of the most crucial reasons why multimodality as framework proves to be an indispensable perspective in this project. The aspects of production and distribution commonly thought to be technical, but not meaning-generative, processes could become focal venues for signification. We do not have to go too far to illustrate with

an example. In accomplishing this thesis, I use an apparatus to make my thoughts (discourse) ‘readable’ as I express them through words in a style that suggests a certain level of scholarship (design). I can only imagine the different impression it would create in the reader if I disclosed that I use a Smith-Corona to type a thesis on the Internet’s role in identity construction. The process of *typing* on a typewriter is not intended to produce meanings in itself since it is generally a technical process, the final goal of which is to reproduce or preserve my thoughts. I reckon, however, that the image of me working on an outdated machine with that distinct tapping/typing sound is capable of imparting a meaning beyond the intent of technical production. Otherwise, I could choose to use this typeface instead of what I have been using to prove the point that another meaning would instantly be conveyed.

In contrast to traditional media, social media, such as the ‘sites’ included in the study, offer greater opportunity to flatten hierarchies of cultural production. Where the processes, for instance, of design, production, and distribution are conventionally thought of as separate procedures handled by different individuals of distinct expertise and responsibilities, social media content creation is commonly accomplished by a single person thus, immediately breaking down production barriers and increasing agency (and power) of the individual.

Having the four components of the content and expression strata as the basic multimodal framework, the following questions serve as guide in understanding the interaction of Filipino diasporic identity discourses and the ‘forms’ of their articulation in the social media formats in question:

Discourse:

1. What information, knowledge, truths about the Filipino diasporic experience in New Zealand are presented, claimed, and constructed by the new media sites?

Design:

1. How does the social media format ‘organise’ content so that particular meanings about the Filipino diasporic experience in New Zealand are articulated while others are concealed?
2. What were the semiotic and linguistic decisions made and how were they employed in the attempt at forming particular discourses?

Production:

1. Considering that social media sites in the study are Internet-based, what ‘materials’ were used in ‘realising’ the expression of content?
2. What were the ‘signs’ used to articulate discourses of Filipino diaspora? What were their origins and how is that relevant in the ways they were used in the websites?
3. Speaking of ‘materiality’ of the semiotic resources, how relevant is the experience of engaging with/in the Internet with the purpose of expressing or understanding Filipino diasporic experience in New Zealand?

Distribution:

1. How relevant are Internet-based new media in recording, preserving, and spreading content and meaning of experiences of Filipinos in New Zealand as a diasporic group?
2. What meanings were generated in the process of recording and dissemination to the audience?

#### **4.5.2 Textualisation of experience, recontextualisation of social practice**

Filipino diasporic identity in New Zealand is a potential meaning in the social media sites’ content and expression strata. Its temporality is founded on two facts: 1) the making of discourses is realised at the moment of Internet engagement when event or experience becomes textualised; 2) Internet engagement is encouraged by living in New Zealand while being, necessarily, attached to the Philippines as the country of origin – an event that forms the liminal in the diasporic existence. The meaning-potentials of the ‘signs’ or texts must be understood within these two frames of time otherwise they lose their significance. This means, therefore, that words, photographs or videos posted on social media sites become generic in character if not for the social context of their construction. The meanings that are specific to the diasporic experience and identity of Filipinos living in New Zealand are fulfilled only by the *operation* of translating actual experience into texts that could be read by others through the semiotic resources offered by the Internet and availed of by the participants in the study.

The textualisation of events I outlined earlier using Ricoeur’s explication of the attributes of a text is similarly developed by Van Leeuwen (2008) using Bernstein’s concept of ‘recontextualisation’ (see for instance Bernstein, 1981). The premise of

recontextualisation of social practice is straightforward: there is a difference between social practices and representations of social practices; there is a difference between ‘doing it’ and ‘talking about it’ (Van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 6). Recontextualisation of practice, in this sense, is what I incorporate in formulating a framework to understand New Zealand-based Filipinos’ social media writing. Ultimately, the Facebook status posts and blog entries of my participants in the study become representations – performances – of actual events or practices that characterise their life in New Zealand. Diasporic identity as potential meaning rests on the ‘plurality of discourses’ that could possibly render ‘readable’ the social practices that were ‘reconstructed’ in a particular way among ‘the many different possible ways that the same social practice can be represented’ (Van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 6).

The process of recontextualisation ‘transforms’ the social practice in various ways, maintains Van Leeuwen. The following transformation schemes he initially identified serve as guide to my analysis of both the official and social media texts (Van Leeuwen, 2008, pp. 17–21):

1. Substitutions: replacing elements of the actual practice with semiotic elements, creating new meanings depending on intent. For instance, for the country’s head of state to say that ‘Filipinos are highly skilled, well-educated, English-speaking’ as well as ‘productive’ and ‘efficient’ (as shown in Chapter 1) *generalises* the character of the entire people and racialises an ‘ideal’ worker identity.
2. Deletions: recontextualisation involves *de-articulating* certain elements in the practice or event, such as a participant, so that they become invisible. The quote from a Philippine senator also presented in Chapter 1, ‘Our biggest export is OFWs’, ‘deletes’ concrete participants or actors in the event of ‘exporting’ by the use of the pronoun ‘our’, thus, minimising accountability.
3. Rearrangements: if a practice is characterised by a necessary order, it may be rearranged in recontextualisation. The second part of the senator’s statement, ‘What will improve our economy is the excess population that we trained to do jobs that others don’t want to handle’, is a clear example of the necessity of ordering elements in discursive representation of practice or reality. By

pronouncing the objective of exporting OFWs first, a ‘common good’ is established ahead of a potentially exploitative context deliberately set-up for these people – training them to do unwanted jobs – thus, possibly lessening the enormity of the practice.

4. Additions: elements can be affixed to the recontextualised practice resulting in change in meanings. For example, one can add a ‘purpose’ to activity sequences in discourse or ‘legitimations’ – the *why* – in representations. ‘Economic improvement’ is a purpose for training excess Filipino population to accept unwanted jobs. ‘Excess’ in population legitimises the act of exporting one’s people.

Further, Van Leeuwen has developed a ‘sociosemantic’ inventory of how *participants* in social practices can be represented in (English) discourse although he also contends that these categories can be seen as ‘pan-semiotic’ (Van Leeuwen, 2008), which to my understanding is a prelude to a ‘multimodal’ outlook in analysing discourse. Choosing a ‘sociosemantic’ approach over a ‘grammatical’ one, he adds, recognises that ‘there is no neat fit between sociological and linguistic categories’ and ‘that meanings belong to culture rather than to language’ so that they ‘cannot be tied to any specific semiotic’ (Van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 24). The value of this premise in the analytic work I wanted to pursue is indispensable, as I have always made it a point to treat the subject – social media discourses of Filipino diasporic identity – as, first and foremost, a form of human engagement even when it is a linguistic/ discursive and technological practice. I endeavoured to explain Van Leeuwen’s categories in the succeeding chapters in accordance with their relevance to specific analyses.

The meanings I was able to generate from the new media production included in the study are not ‘representative’. On the contrary, they are very deeply personal, negotiated, and inevitably ideological. Kress and Van Leeuwen are quick to foreground the centrality of ‘ideology’ as a mediating concept in the arrangement of discourses via multimodal choices – it accounts for both the articulation of particular discourses and the decisions to express them in particular ways (2001, p. 34). The choices made in these articulations are evinced by the social media contents that I examine in the study. The fact that they are consumed in a form presented to us

points to the actuality of decisions that have been made in the pursuit of creation or production. This act of choosing is a political one. For every act of inclusion, there are more that are excluded. A decision to articulate is also, at once, an act of silencing.

The new media texts included in the study are themselves instances of *anchoring* meanings. Laclau and Mouffe (1985; also in Jørgensen & Phillips, 2001), in an apparent evocation of Marxism as a poststructuralist take on discourse, put forward the idea of *fixation* of meanings of signs by different social actors for the purpose of domination. The task of discourse analysis is, therefore, to scrutinise the ‘ways in which the meaning of a sign is fixed, and the process by which some fixations of meaning become so conventionalised that we think of them as natural’ (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2001, p. 25). In the question of identity that Filipinos in New Zealand construct through the Internet when they translate their diasporic experiences into texts, my assumption is that they perform an interrogation of meanings bestowed upon them by economic, social, political, cultural, and even personal structures that dominate both in their countries of origin and destination. This ‘in-between’ status is an inescapable part of their decision and action but more importantly, the structures that define their liminal state are the sources of attempts at fixing their identities as ‘meanings’.

#### **4.6 Ethics: *Kapwa* as ethical framework and conviction in Internet research**

Although there is no absolute or even standard ethical online research practice, various scholars and researchers tend to agree that any Internet research project should adhere to the basic ethical foundation of offline or pre-Net research (see for instance, Anderson & Kanuka, 2003; Kozinets, 2010; McKee & Porter, 2009), that is, there should be strict emphasis on honesty, respect, and protection, first and foremost. However, it is also true that applying it to the particularities of Internet research does not always define a clear operational path due to the nature and foundational characteristics of the Internet and new media. In particular, issues of privacy and sensitivity become ‘sticky’ or ‘fuzzy’ issues in online research since they do not appear as straightforward at all times (see for example Sveningsson in McKee & Porter, 2009). The Association of Internet Researchers (AoIR), an international research and support network for scholarly and critical Internet research, provides

broad consideration when deciding the extent of protection that should be applied in relation to the degree of privacy that the online environment purports to possess: the greater the acknowledged publicity of the venue, the less obligation there may be to protect individual privacy, confidentiality, right to informed consent, etc. (AOIR, 2002). Despite such guidelines, there are still grey areas due partly to the rapid development of the Internet (Markham & Baym, 2009, pp. 72–73). Nevertheless, the AoIR guiding principles provide researchers a way to frame their research interests relative to online ethical accountability.

My study adopted a dialogical approach that sees ethical practice on the Internet as a process that is constantly negotiated among the different actors or stakeholders in an online research community. McKee and Porter (2009) prefer to call this approach ‘rhetorical’ and ‘casuistic’, which in the main suggests that ‘the individual researcher should not make ethical decisions in isolation but should include in ethical deliberations a number of audiences – regulatory board, fellow researchers and, especially, those affected by research decisions, i.e., the participants’ (p.15). Thus, among other steps in the process, the research blog also aimed to serve the purpose of providing a venue for continued discussion and deliberation between the researcher and the participants concerning issues that relate to ethical research behaviour as the project was being conducted.

One of the most challenging areas of Internet research is the ethical decision-making process regarding the blurred boundaries of ‘public-private’ and ‘sensitive-non-sensitive’ data. Indeed, the categories ‘private-public’ and ‘sensitive-non-sensitive’ can be seen as a continuum (Sveningsson in McKee & Porter, 2009). This emphasises the unique character of online interaction and textual production that cannot be rigidly placed in a ‘box’ that usual offline interactions and cultural productions would fit easily into. For instance, the ‘public-private’ divide that may be clear when considering offline environments (e.g. a marketplace is clearly public) may not be as easily applicable to online settings (e.g. is a blog an open environment just because it is open access?). Markham and Baym, thus, formulated a more nuanced way of categorising online environments (2009, p.74-75):

1. A public environment: open and available for everyone with Internet access, no membership or registration (e.g. blog sites)

2. Semi-public: available for most people; requires membership or registration (e.g. Facebook accounts)
3. Semi-private: available only to some people; membership or registration required with restricted formal requirement such as belonging to the organization that created the site (e.g. company intranet); may not be applicable to the study
4. Private: unavailable to most people; restricted to creator and invited guests (e.g. “friends” list in Facebook accounts)

Accepting the fact that a more nuanced approach to comprehending how interaction and textual production happen in online environments encourages researchers to adopt an equally nuanced and adaptive approach to ethical practice. Particular to the research project, there was clear adherence to the basic principles of ethical online research practice as proposed by other researchers in the field. For instance, I applied the procedures for ethical Internet research outlined by Kozinets with reference to various other practitioners in the field (Kozinets, 2010, p.147-148):

1. Openly and accurately identify self, avoiding all deception
2. Openly and accurately describe research purpose for interacting with community members
3. Provide an accessible, relevant and accurate description of research focus and interests
4. Research webpage dedicated to the project is recommended

However, the study dealt with different types of online environments (e.g. blogs are not entirely the same in character as Facebook accounts). This required ethical decisions to cater to the unique requirements of each social media type when gaining permission or consent, for instance. Thus, the following guidelines were observed (Kozinets, 2010, p.148-152):

1. Informed consent is not necessary when making field notes of the way members of an online environment normally interact.
2. For asynchronous or persistent communication such as postings or comments on a blog, quote according to guidelines of direct quotation.

In using commercial sites such as Facebook, aside from getting explicit consent from account holders, sending a message to the appropriate group (e.g. Facebook management) is advised. The message should include the purpose and scope of research and provide description of the research activity. Though commercial sites have terms of use that users must adhere to, accessing such sites for scholarly research is generally allowed (citing Allen et. al., 2006 in Kozinets, 2010, p. 151). Also, online pseudonyms should be treated as real names. Pseudonyms of pseudonyms should, therefore, be used in quoting or citing when writing the research report.

To be emphatic about the ethical framework of the project as being located within the ambit of dialogue and negotiation among different audiences in the study, I was open to the specific changes that participants were keen to suggest. This was not only consistent with the main ethical framework of the project, but was also practical (e.g. it builds rapport and trust between the researcher and participant) and culturally relevant. For instance, Filipinos recognise the value of the concept *kapwa*, which literally means ‘fellowman’ or ‘others’. Accounting for cultural connotations, however, the concept refers to ‘shared identity’ or ‘shared inner self’. It is seen as being at the core of Filipino social psychology and largely figures in Filipino social interaction (Enriquez, 1978, 1979, 1992). *Kapwa*, therefore, serving as the primary guiding principle in dealing with other people, is the root of concepts and behaviour related to issues of respect and fair treatment. Further, to be *walang pakikipagkapwa*, or ‘have no sense of others’ is one of the most injurious or negative character ascriptions one can receive. As applied to the research, it was best to receive the participants’ ‘blessing’ to access the contents of their social media as part of a formal research not for the purpose of securing permission, but for the mere respect that the act bestowed on the person. By current standards, open-access sites (such as public blogs) need no formal consent to become part of a study, but the practice of making known to the relevant individuals one’s real intentions in engaging with his/her online environment goes beyond adherence to good research behaviour. It evinces the way human relationships are seen and valued. This conviction echoes Kozinets’ realisation in his own online research practice: ‘If we don’t ask, then others cannot refuse us permission. We can just take. However, we must consider carefully the ramifications of this ethical stance. This was a powerful personal illustration that not

everyone who posts a message on a bulletin board wants it used in a piece of research, even if it will be used anonymously' (Kozinets, 2010, p. 138).

#### **4.7 Conclusion**

I wanted to present in this chapter the specific steps I took in choosing the cases in the study, the means of acquiring necessary data and the analytic lens I opted to use to make sense of the richness of my participants' social media content production. I have also elaborated on the ethical hurdles that I encountered especially since the field of Internet research is only starting to gain ground and develop its own standard of practice. My hope is that by putting forward my methodological steps and the principles that served as guide in making such decisions, the reader is able to see the earnest attempt at striking a balance between respecting my participants' work and point of view in the subject matter and my own analytic commitment and prerogative. The ultimate task at hand is, after all, to achieve a Bakhtinian sense of dialogism in which I am in continuous conversation with other authors in making meanings of what I read. Among them are the participants in the study.

The succeeding chapters reveal how I have put the design into practice. Chapter 5 is an analysis and interpretation of official texts that carry discourses about the Filipino migrant in general and the Filipino migrant in New Zealand. Chapters 6 to 8 are my discussions of the personal social media cases, which could be seen as having a dialogic relationship with the previous one. That is to say, concurring, interrogating, confronting, and perhaps, revising what is *uttered* by the voices of authority.

# 5 DESIGNING A DIASPORA

## OFFICIAL TEXTS, DOMINANT DISCOURSE, AND LEGITIMATE IDENTITY

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### 5.1 Introduction

Three sets of official texts, all accessible online, are the focus of the analysis in this chapter – two represent the Philippine perspective and one is from a New Zealand viewpoint. The first set of Philippine official texts pertains to the 2009 annual report of the Philippine Overseas Employment Agency (POEA) produced under the presidency of Gloria Macapagal Arroyo. I particularly focus on the front cover image and portions of the message by the POEA administrator – Jennifer Jardin-Manalili. The second Philippine official text is an audio-visual presentation (AVP) of the Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO) that highlights the agency’s mandate and programs but in the process also legitimises official meanings of the Filipino diaspora. Finally, the New Zealand official text is a video testimonial of an immigrant Filipino family in Auckland. This is available, along with other materials, on the New Zealand Immigration website New Zealand Now under the Video Resources webpage.

By treating these as official texts, I recognise that they were designed and produced to represent the fundamental points of view and, on a deeper level, the ideological stances of the state through its designated stand-ins. Because language is a site of power and a means to reinforce hegemonic social relations, these seemingly ordinary texts have the potential to legitimise particular ways of understanding Filipino labour migration, Filipino diaspora and, the Filipino migrant/diasporic subject. Although there is no absolute certainty about the intent of the producers of the texts, my premise is that these are products indicative of social and discursive practices that are undergirded by a prevailing system of beliefs in the culture and society where they are created and consumed. As these are texts that embody an official voice, I take the meanings that they attempt to impart as devised in order to serve the desires of the *status quo* within the neoliberal global context. The fundamental task, therefore, is to unravel the intricate management of discourse in the aforementioned texts and its implication in the wider system of power relations.

## 5.2 Export-quality national goodness: Representing the OFW in official reports

In 2009, the Philippine Overseas Employment Agency (POEA) released an annual report with a cover image that is of utmost interest if one desires to have an idea what Filipino migration and diaspora is like today (accessed from [www.poea.gov.ph](http://www.poea.gov.ph)). This particular report is distinct because it came on the heels of the 2007-2008 global financial crisis – a context of crucial significance if one attempts to understand the way the discourse on Filipino migrant workers was managed in the document. Interestingly, the basic structure of the front cover image was seen again in the 2010 report (see Appendix D), which was already under a new government, although by the same agency administrator. This illustrates the point that the two sets of images were potentially culled from a dominant *nodal point*, to borrow the term used by Laclau and Mouffe (1985), or discursive master tropes in the construction of Filipino migrant subjects that, even under different leaderships, there remains the tendency to depict Filipino labour migrants as a particular type in the service of the neoliberal global market economy.

Although the Filipino diaspora in recent decades is not entirely designated by labour migration, the Overseas Filipino Worker (OFW) has become an enduring international category of people, as claimed by San Juan.<sup>11</sup> The images in question are obviously not intended to depict the entire OFW scenario but a basic consideration of the semiotic elements could offer some indication of the complexity of the issue and serve as a critical introduction to the Filipino migration phenomenon. The cover design of the report, assembled under the direction of a government body that has the specific mandate to protect the interests and welfare of the Philippines' primary economic buffer for three decades and running, could perhaps be construed as a rightful representation of the overseas worker dynamics by 'official' discernment. In other words, these assembled images that possess the capacity to epitomise the situation of contemporary Filipino workers abroad, and by

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<sup>11</sup> The Commission on Filipinos Overseas uses three categories of overseas-based Filipinos: *permanent*, whose stay in the resident country is not dependent on employment; *temporary*, who are expected to return to the Philippines at the end of work contracts; and, *irregular* or those with no proper documents. In 2012, there were more permanent overseas Filipinos (46 per cent) than temporary ones (40 per cent) (CFO, 2012).

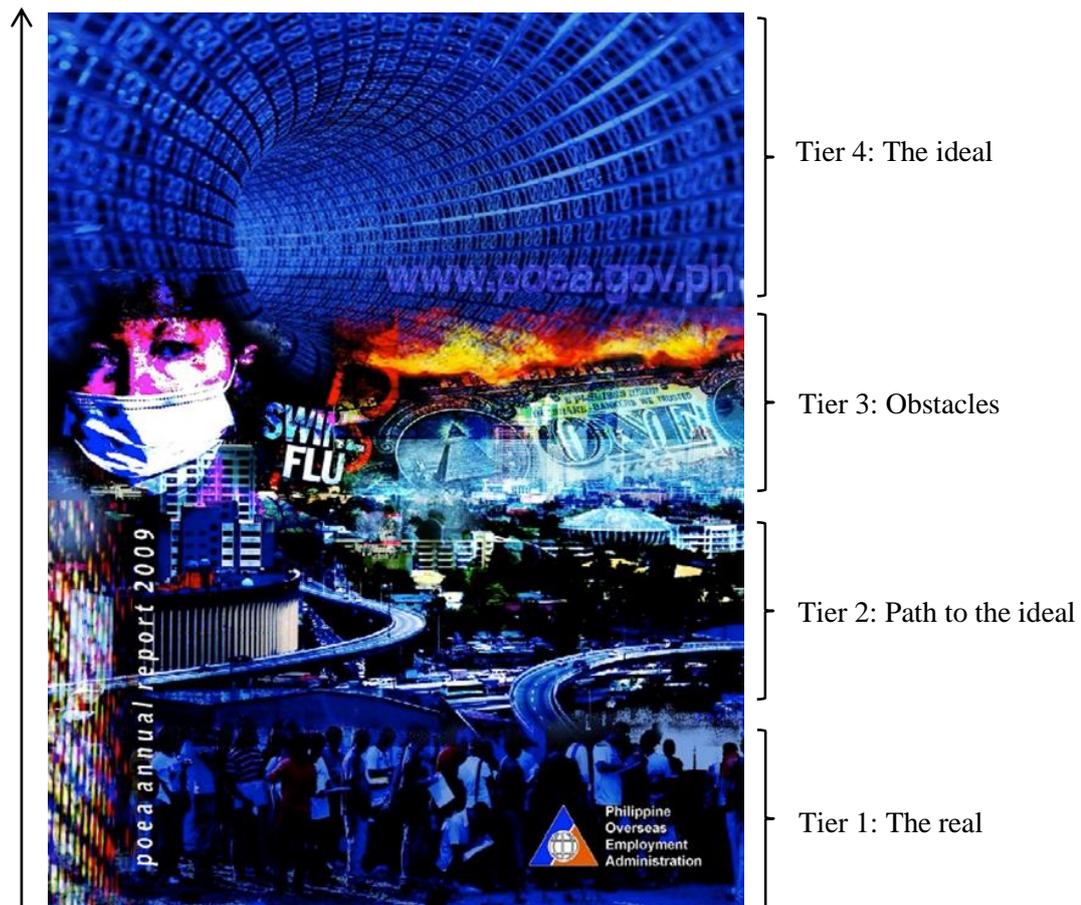
extrapolation, the Filipino diaspora of today, are legitimate, established and privileged discourse.

### **5.2.1 Imagining the future, imaging the now: The OFW as economic object**

Paying attention to how the images are laid out on the page, there is significance to the way they seem to have been chosen to appear in four tiers (see Figure 5.1):

1. Lowest tier: Filipino applicants for overseas employment (foundation of path to goal; ‘the real’)
2. Second to lowest: urban and modern landscape (path to goal)
3. Second to highest: swine flu and global financial crisis (obstacles)
4. Highest tier: the future as modern and digital (the goal or ‘the ideal’)

Seeing the cover image through a grammar of visual semiotics outlined in particular by Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006), the top-bottom arrangement of images confirms the current state of Filipino migration as an official economic policy of the Philippine state in its attempts at reaching its development goals. They argue that the way elements of a text are ‘arranged’ or positioned on a page (or in this case, on a screen) connotes a meaning that goes beyond mere personal ‘taste’ or individual design decision. The bottom-top positioning of elements is one such arrangement that merits closer scrutiny especially in the case of the POEA report cover. The compositional significance of this visual cue could be determined by the images that make up the bottom and top positions where the former represents what is ‘real’ while the latter, what is ‘ideal’ (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2007; also in Machin & Mayr, 2012; Van Leeuwen, 2003). As conveyed by the images in the cover design, what is real is the fact that up to this day, a significant portion of the nation’s workforce leaves the country for better opportunities abroad. On the other hand, the top element, as representation of the ideal(ised) discourse, symbolises a modern, technological, and highly advanced national status – the imagined future.



**Figure 5.1** POEA 2009 annual report cover image with different layers, from bottom to top, highlighted (original image retrieved from <http://poea.gov.ph>).

If we take, for instance, the apparently tiered composition of the cover design as a simplistic narrative that tells the journey of the country from its present state up to its desired status, the story would be quite elementary: Filipinos labour outside the country; this is the way to achieve economic progress; there are obstacles along the way; but they will be overcome (this is somewhat implied) and a brighter tomorrow is reached.

The images on the cover of the POEA reports are reminiscent of a fundamental Marxist dictum concerning the base and superstructure. When the numbers show that the country owes a considerable degree of economic security to overseas Filipino workers, it is not difficult to understand why the POEA annual report cover reveals that leaving is such a typical and encouraged component of a people's psyche. About 10 per cent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) is accounted for by OFW remittances. In 2010, a year after the release of the POEA report in focus, OFWs sent

US\$18.76 billion to their families breaking records and forecasts previously set (Esmaquel, 2011). Again, this makes it not hard at all to understand why the state sponsors such an unbalanced policy of continually sending out its people to labour in other territories rather than develop national industries to generate local employment. These people serve as inexhaustible (and dispensable) fodder for immediate response to dire economic situations. Filipinos who leave their home to find livelihoods in foreign countries become a significant fragment of Philippine society's economic base. Yet, there is no indication when they will be given the chance to finally return and be able to work at home or earn while being with their loved ones. This discourse of return is precisely the mantra of the current Aquino administration, as discussed below. At the moment, however, deliberately or otherwise, there stands a sad truth about migrating Filipinos that the cover image brings to the fore: they bear the brunt of leaving that is both personal and national.

### **5.2.2 Nationally/naturally made: The Filipino as ideal labour migrant**

While Enrile (in Chapter 1) was frank in his description of OFWs as an export commodity, the POEA administrator in the 2009 report chose to couch their economic identity in an *essentialising* discourse that constructs the Filipino person as 'naturally' built for overseas labour. It is a prudent manipulation of language since it veers away from sounding callous and unsympathetic. Though both Enrile's words and the POEA administrator's remarks are similar in their intent to promote and justify the role of the Filipino worker as the recipient of jobs that 'others don't want to handle', they employed language differently in the attempt to *regulate* the portrayal of the Filipino worker abroad. The government, of course, appears to acknowledge the crucial role that these people play in sustaining the Philippine economy but as expressed in the words of Jardin-Manalili in the report, Filipinos stand out because their exemplary work habits derive from their ingrained national ethic. Thus, we can see how the *essential* character that allows the Filipino to be more employable than other nationalities is constructed by the conflation of a discourse of *natural* characteristic and *national* trait. In the words of the administrator:

Filipinos are usually the first to be hired and last to be fired. They are preferred over the rest not only because they are multi- talented and

multi-skilled, or they easily learn new languages and adapt to different cultures but mainly because they do not shirk from work. The ability to endure long grueling hours of work for the sake of others is the uniquely Filipino value which makes the OFW superior, in the eyes of employers abroad and the families they leave behind. (POEA, 2009, p.1)

Never forgoing allusions to the following important figures, the administrator was speaking of certain facts that could not be denied: deployment of almost 4000 OFWs daily, 10.5 per cent increase in deployed new hires, 15 per cent increase in rehires, 23 per cent share of Filipino seafarers in ocean-based vessels, US\$17.34 billion in total remittances making up 9.5 per cent of the country's GDP (POEA, 2009, p. 1). The government was, at least, not oblivious to the fruits and national contribution of the labourers' toil. In fact, Jardin-Manalili's entire opening remark was redolent of pride in the resilience of Filipino workers in the middle of a huge global financial crisis – a precarious economic situation the country was able to weather by the sheer 'innate' greatness of the Filipino worker.

Examining the linguistic character of the excerpted address, the natural/national discourse of the OFW employability is evidenced by *collectivising* Filipinos as possessing a laudable character that wins the favour of overseas employers: 'they are multi-talented, multi-skilled, easy language-learners, culturally adaptive and most importantly, they do not shirk from work' (sic). This last trait is emphasised by the inherently sacrificial and selfless disposition of the Filipino worker when they 'endure' long grueling hours of work – apparently, a Filipino's distinct ability. Collectivisation here means that the text attempts to present what it peddles as a 'unique' value or character to be a national/natural trait that is found or expected of every individual Filipino especially when involved in foreign labour. This is achieved by choosing to nominate the category 'Filipino' to signify the entire race as endowed with the specific value that makes them naturally built for severe labour demands where other foreign workers fail.

This generalised depiction of the Filipino worker identity is coupled with *overlexicalisation*, resulting in a vague and abstracted wording that references the mix of 'formal-corporate' and 'personal-intimate' vocabulary. To Machin and Mayr (2012) (and I agree strongly given the text in question), 'overlexicalisation gives a sense of over-persuasion and is normally evidence that something is problematic or

of ideological contention' (p. 37). For instance, the use of the terms 'multi-talented' or 'multi-skilled' that transition to statements such as 'enduring long grueling hours for the sake of others' is perhaps an effort to construct an OFW résumé that captures the idea of selling a people as a product with reduced objectification. This is not dissimilar to the idea of 'selling oneself' as part of the corporate/business parlance in today's highly competitive labour market where job seekers are urged to pitch their 'selling points' to prospective employers. Only, in the case of the POEA administrator's 2009 address, an entire race is put up for hire.

Bestowing on the Filipino worker an identity that is inherently sacrificial and selfless, and multi-talented and multi-skilled, underscores the OFW's perfect fit for any kind of job that foreign employers require. This comes at the expense of unmasking valuable information to gain a more accurate picture of the actual labour migrant experience. For instance, by framing the Filipino workers' tolerance for long punishing hours of work as a 'unique racial capacity' for altruism, the statement leaves out so many crucial details to facilitate a comfortable level of understanding. It hides the fact that certain work conditions may be a result of unfair labour practice forced upon the many workers, Filipino or otherwise, who have no choice but to comply with abusive demands and 'slave-like' conditions as cited by numerous studies and reports on the precarious status of temporary foreign workers and diasporic communities (see for instance Castles, 1998; Chamberlain, 2009; Huang & Yeoh, 2007; Parreñas, 2001).

The sense of over-enthusiasm in foregrounding the reasons why there has to be no doubt about the OFW's status as the employee of choice becomes suspect because the 'pitch' is overworked. Promoting Filipino labour to the global market is one thing, it is another matter to convince a nation's people that deploying their countrymen and women to toil in other countries is a sound economic policy. Evidently, the task requires a different discursive manoeuvring.

Reading the concluding parts of the POEA Administrator's address, it is not difficult to notice the *metaphorical* turn in the attempt at convincing the audience of the inevitability of the Filipino worker's foray on to foreign soil. Where in the excerpts above the natural/national discourse of the ideal labour migrant is aimed at internationally 'selling' the Filipino as the best choice for an employee, this time, the

sacrificial ‘nature’ of the OFW is presented to their own family and to their own people lest *we* forget the sacrifices they have made:

Etched in the heart of every OFW is the duty and dedication to remit home their hard earned income amidst economic dislocations that they face in their host country. They double-up on work, scrimp, and save to improve the quality of life of their folks back home... (POEA, 2009, p. 1)

The idiomatic device ‘etched in the heart’ is yet another step at making the act of leaving to work abroad a logical result of the Filipino worker’s innate goodness to sacrifice oneself for the sake of others. At this juncture, it is all about the family – ‘folks back home’. This is a crucial aspect of the official discourse because of the use of the image of ‘home’ as shown by the excerpt. ‘Home’, in this instance, acts as a dual metaphor – it pertains to both ‘home as country’ and ‘home as family’. The interesting facet of its use in the statements is in its *reduced* status as a representation of the country compared to its use as a representation of the family. This is illustrated by the pronominal choice *their* to emphasise that the ‘home’ spoken about in ‘improving the quality of life of *their* folks back home’ is specific to each OFW. This point is of absolute importance since, as we shall see in the succeeding analysis, there is an effort by the state, to a large extent, to make it appear that working abroad is solely a matter of personal choice made by individuals.

Defining the ideal qualities of a worker as intrinsically Filipino may on the surface sound as a positive estimation but the specific context of Filipino overseas labour reveals another purpose to such a naturalising discourse. It seems to argue for the position that Filipino emigration for employment is ‘a given way of life’ by virtue of the Filipino’s inbuilt dispositions. This representation of the OFW exemplifies how leaving has been ingrained in a people’s worldview so that it has become bereft of any history and politics when the fact is that Filipino diaspora as it is seen today has a very specific root in Philippine history (see Chapter 1).

However, the OFW sector does not solely comprise the Filipino diaspora. Different categories of Filipinos who are based outside the country (e.g. for permanent residence, partnership with foreign nationals, or further education) define the configuration of overseas Filipinos. Although the Filipino as labour migrant makes

up a distinct unit of Filipinos abroad, those that have chosen to leave for varying reasons experience life outside the native land in ways that are distinct from being primarily a worker. Another Philippine government agency tasked to provide service to this equally diverse group is the focus in the second official text.

### **5.3 The ‘I’ aspora: Characterising overseas Filipinos in official presentations**

The Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO) looks after the interests, rights, and welfare of Filipinos residing abroad – whether short or long-term – and ensures their continued connection to the country. It was created through a national act in June 1980 and operates under the Office of the President.

The official website of CFO ([www.cfo.gov.ph](http://www.cfo.gov.ph)) is a rich source of information if one wants to learn more about its mandate and programs.<sup>12</sup> Along with basic facts about the agency’s responsibilities and projects, there are regular news updates, links to individual websites of the new programs, and archived documents pertinent to issues concerning overseas Filipinos (e.g. statistical data and speeches by the President).

One of the smaller but, nonetheless, interesting elements that is available on the website is a downloadable audio-visual presentation (AVP) – produced in 2012 and running for eight minutes – that summarises what the commission is all about. In fact, due to its comprehensive presentation of the agency’s profile, it could be considered the CFO website in a nutshell as far as acquainting the public with the kind of government entity it is. Table 5.1 below provides a thematic outline of the AVP. Appendix E is a more detailed transcript containing the time code and

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<sup>12</sup> During the course of this research, the CFO website had changed dramatically in content and form. It was in late 2010 that I started visiting the website as part of the online environment scoping of the project. That time, it was rather underwhelming and uninviting in terms of design and lack of available information. Visiting it again in 2012, it had significantly improved. Although still purely an information source (i.e. as a Web 1.0 format, there is no element of interactivity with the audience), the new website sports a more dynamic design, more visual content, and offers more comprehensive information than in the past. I presume the commission has begun to realise the importance of web presence as a means of disseminating core information, promoting its programs, and reaching its intended audience, especially because they are located in multiple sites. This only gives credence to the necessity of new media at a time when people have more access to technology that significantly affects their views of reality and evaluation of certain issues.

description of specific audio-visual elements used, such as characters (texts and symbols) generated onscreen, video clips, still images, spoken lines, and music.

**Table 5.1 Thematic outline of the CFO Profile AVP produced in 2012**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Theme</b>	<b>General content</b>
00.00	1. Introduction/Opening	Migration in the world and in the Philippines
00.41	2. Migrant profiles	Filipino migrants in different countries and their reasons for going abroad
01.25	3. Commission on Filipinos Overseas profile	Presenting its history, mandate and programs
05.50	4. Social costs of migration	Negative effects of emigration in the Philippine society
06.15	5. Financial issues of Filipinos who go abroad	Helping Filipino migrants handle their earnings wisely
06.29	6. Aquino government speech on Filipino migration	Making the decision to go abroad a choice and not a necessity
07.14	7. Conclusion	Reiteration of the thrust of the CFO

The first five sections of the AVP are covered at this point (i.e. from the Introduction to the Financial issues) while the last two are discussed in the penultimate section of the chapter, where they serve to exemplify the shift in discourse the Aquino administration (from 2010) attempts to take on the Filipino migrant issue. Despite its formal label on the website, the ‘CFO AVP’ becomes more than an easier method of providing basic information about the commission to interested parties. In the process of describing its *raison d’être*, the AVP also reinforces a particular construction of the identity of Filipinos as diasporic subjects.

### **5.3.1 Feeling/thinking migration: Power and agency in representations of the Filipino migrant**

The CFO AVP opens with lines and images that frame the general migration phenomenon as an unproblematic universal eventuality. As the first step towards the presentation of what the commission is all about, it gives the audience a

contextualising framework of worldwide migration as a *naturally* occurring circumstance and more importantly, of the Filipino emigration as a result of the predisposition of Filipinos to leave their birthplace because, just *like* many people in different parts of the world, they *naturally* find themselves in countries outside their origin.

Shown below, these lines illustrate the linguistic repertoire employed to fulfil a representation of a certain aspect of reality that, in this particular case, pertains to the reality of Filipino migration. My analysis is focused on the meaning of migration as a process or action engaged in by ‘participants’ or ‘agents’. I particularly reference the framework provided by Van Leeuwen (1996, 2008) in representing social actors in discourse, especially in revealing how migrants’ agency is defined and how certain actors in the migration situation are concealed.

1. Today, 214 million international migrants live or work outside their country of birth.
2. The world is experiencing an ever-increasing movement of people.
3. 10 Million Filipinos in more than 200 destinations

Reading the statements closely, the phenomenon of migration is depicted as largely migrant-centred (i.e. ‘international migrants’, ‘Filipinos’), which is to say, that no other agent or participant is articulated in the presentation of the migration situation except for the ‘world’ in line 2 which, as a form of personification or *personalisation* (to use Van Leeuwen’s term), is abstract, the effect of which is a further masking of the actual participants in the complex scenario. Ironically, the process that centres on migrants as sole identified participants appears to treat them with limiting identity and low agency, as exhibited by the linguistic details. Focusing on lines 2 and 3, the power of the actors to be active players in and initiate an effect on their reality is diminished by the *nominalisation* of the act of ‘movement’ around the world (line 2) wherein their participation in the process is passivised; and, the ‘verb-less’ description of the ‘10 million Filipinos’ in many global destinations (line 3), which serves to project their migration as a natural state of existence without them having any active intervention in their placement outside the homeland.

These lines are also characterised by *aggregation* (i.e. representing actors as numbers) – 214 million international migrants, 10 million Filipinos – which is important in instilling in the audience a sense of the magnitude of migration as a worldwide phenomenon. Adding to this feeling is a montage of images that conveys an overwhelming, highly active, and virtually uncontainable character of people’s transnational movements. By displaying airport scenes and shots of the city in different countries – mostly in ‘wide shot’ and ‘extreme wide shot’ – in a monochromatically red hue, the tone of a fast-changing urban landscape is set. As a semiotic choice, these are not high in information value but are high in sensory value – they connote an *affect* rather than deliver facts. The red hue, for instance, makes the images salient by grabbing the immediate attention of the audience and compelling them to *feel* – by means of prior (culturally specific) experiences of the colour ‘red’ as expressing life, activity, crisis, or extremity – a sense of immensity and urgency.

The projection of unstoppable movement is the semiotic potential of the images that are confirmed and mutually reinforced by the substantiation of the opening lines. If this is not enough, the potential meanings of these words and images are extended by the use of a fast-paced, energetic, and exciting electronic music that, once again, is high in sensory modality. This has the effect of engaging the audience by capturing their attention through sheer visceral components – big numbers, busy images, and vigorous music.

A craftily designed integration of multimodal elements is, indeed, successful in underscoring how huge and prevalent a phenomenon migration is while veering away from other aspects of its actuality such as the role of states in labour migration or the dismal conditions of many temporary foreign workers. The AVP, however, also utilises at this point a ‘scientific’ presentation of data as a sensible method of allying with logic and facts alongside emotions and impressions. In an effort to categorise ‘types’ of overseas-based Filipinos, the CFO chose to represent such basic information through a pie chart that, of course, instantly conveys an idealised classification that is tantamount to the truth *qua* scientific. In visual grammar terminology, this way of pictorial representation is ‘analytical’ in structure (as opposed to a ‘narrative’ one) since it does not aim to tell a story or depict a scenario

but is concerned with capturing a vital piece of essential construct or idea (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006). As it provides an air of scientific rigour or truthfulness, the pie chart, as an abstracted representation of migrant identities, has the potential effect of legitimising certain subjectivities while dismissing others that do not fit the ideal mould. And since its modality or claim to truth is projected as based on the ‘real’ or the scientific, there is a tendency for the audience to accept it as a ‘given’ or even as common sense thus, uncomplex and unproblematic. Of course, these categories are abstract because it is the medium’s necessity – pie charts, like all other visual representation of data, will always be incomplete. And lest we forget that there is always more to the story than the graphic depiction is able to offer, the AVP is quick to point us to the direction of the individual telling of experiences that gives a human face to the abstracted information. The next line in the presentation asks: *Why do Filipinos leave the country?*

### **5.3.2 The ‘I’ in leaving: De-articulating participants in migration process**

The question precedes the presentation of individual voices that renders authenticity to an otherwise collectivised and genericised identity. This is a significant point in the analysis since it begins to unravel how the CFO AVP, as an official voice of the state, endeavours to give prominence to the notion of emigration as a purely ‘individual’ decision and the migration process as a volitional act while softening the articulation of the role of the state in people’s decision to leave. It clearly begins with the question *why do Filipinos leave the country* because while the use of ‘Filipinos’ makes it appear that everyone in the country is leaving, it places the responsibility on the individuals themselves. To phrase it in a way that ties with the analysis of the AVP opening, it reinforces the evocation of migrants being the only clear participants in the migration process. As a response to the question, a series of brief testimonials of Filipinos who have migrated to other countries is showcased. Curiously enough, there is no representation of a Filipino permanent or labour migrant in an Asian territory except for one from the Middle East. This is remarkable considering that Southeast Asia is one of the most popular destinations of Filipino overseas workers (based on POEA reports, for instance). This detail becomes more significant when viewed as a move to make invisible particular characteristics of the Filipino diaspora, as we shall see later.

Table 5.2 gathers the reasons why Filipinos leave as 1) identified by the video (voice of CFO, presumably) through the actual ‘texts’ that are generated on the screen (first two columns from left); and, 2) as narrated by the actual migrants through the clips of their interview supplemented by shots of them at work/in action, pertinent still images, and other ambient shots. These testimonials are to be taken as actual cases that exemplify the identified reasons for migration. In an instant, this feature gives credibility to the purported reasons through the ‘authentic’ voices of the individuals telling their own stories. In the analysis, I focus, again, on the representation of the process or act of migration and its participants or actors through the discursive strategies that make up this particular section in the AVP.

There is a prominence of the subject ‘I’ and this is understandable since the individuals shown in the video clips are talking about themselves. This, however, gains a specific meaning when viewed relative to the overall discourse on Filipino migration that the AVP outwardly conveys and the ideological underpinnings that it does not express explicitly. The ‘I’ becomes a central signifier because the *sign complex*, to use Kress’ terminology (2009), at this particular juncture in the text revolves around the projection of the ‘I’ as the main actor in the process of migration. As a response to the question ‘why Filipinos leave’, the testimonials of individuals referring to themselves and their reasons for going abroad provide suitable and quite expected answers: greener pasture, family unification, better opportunities, marriage. In recognising the various reasons for engaging in the act, the subject ‘I’ becomes central, therefore, in identifying which actors or participants are involved in the migration process by favouring its immediate presence while suppressing that of others.

**Table 5.2 Represented Participants in the Process of Migration as Shown by the Testimonials of Filipino Migrants in the CFO AVP**

	<b>Text on the screen</b>	<b>Migrant testimonial</b>	<b>Represented participant/actor in the process/event</b>
<b>To find greener pastures...</b>	Sammy de Hitta, USA	I'm in this country for greener pasture. Although I have a good job in the Philippines but I like it better here.	'I'  *Actor is nominated and individuated; Country is likewise identified (same for the rest)
<b>Destined to live abroad...</b>	Grace Manuel, USA	I never dreamed of coming to this country pero (but) I think God has other plans for me.	'I' God
<b>Family unification...</b>	Chuck Lapus, USA	I'm in this country because my parents brought me here for a better life.	'I' Parents
<b>Professional advancement...</b>	Eduardo Rodriguez, Saudi Arabia	Nagsimula ako bilang, ah, field salesman at kalaunan ay na-promote ako bilang spare parts manager.  (I started as, ah, field salesman and eventually got promoted as spare parts manager).	'Ako' ('I')
<b>For better work opportunities...</b>	Wilfred Tua, Australia	Yung isang brother in law ko, nauna siya rito sa Australia and then nagsabi sa akin na mas maganda raw dito sa Australia. So, sinubukan naming mag-apply.  (A brother in law, he came here to Australia first and then he told me that it is better here in Australia. So, we tried to apply).	Brother-in-law 'We' (presumably his family)
<b>Marriage to foreign nationals...</b>	Susan and Malcolm Conan, UK	Susan: Nung nakilala ko siya...ayun...nagkapamilya...  (When I met him...we had a family...  Malcolm: Filipinos are caring and an...fantastic people [sic].	'Ko' ('I')  Filipinos (collectivised)

However, though there is a ubiquity of the ‘I’ in this section, other participants are *nominated* as also involved in the final decision to leave. Personal relations were mentioned such as parents (for Chuck Lapus) and the brother-in-law (for Wilfred Tua). Also, a very interesting supernatural category could be considered as another actor in the process. This is exemplified by Grace Manuel’s attribution of her being outside the Philippines as a consequence of ‘God’s plan’ – an attitude not difficult to understand considering Philippine society’s religious underpinnings.<sup>13</sup> Taking into account the mention of these other participants in the migration process, it can be argued that the text attempts to represent the act of leaving as either a volitional choice or a providential move made by the migrant.

As a response to the question ‘why Filipinos leave’, it was a prudent move to supply answers that appear personal, actual, and truthful. This was achieved primarily through the use of video testimonials that are high in naturalistic modality – what the audience see are real people speaking about their real experiences. The level of believability is high and nomination of each individual migrant pushes the thrust of the text to project an honest and authentic voice. The positioning of the audience is, thus, achieved when they are made witness to a *sharing* of ‘real’ people and when they develop a sympathetic regard for what the series of testimonials imply about the (f)actors that impel migration. In addition, the generated onscreen texts that synoptically highlight the themes of what each featured migrant say (first column on left of Table 5.2) perform a legitimation of the purposes for each decision to leave. Such utterance constructions are what Van Leeuwen calls *moralised actions*, which are realised by means of abstractions that reference moral qualities or values underpinning the identified action (2008, p. 126). ‘Greener pasture’, ‘unification’, ‘advancement’, and ‘better opportunities’ are immediately perceived as desirable purposes without careful scrutiny as to what each actually means. A deeper account of specific cultural and social undercurrents explains how ‘following god’s plan’ and ‘marrying a foreigner’ also become something ‘good’. While the former is hinged on the religiosity of many Filipinos, the latter is based on the stereotype of a better life

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<sup>13</sup> The Philippines inherited its Christian religious practice from Spain in the colonisation of the islands from the 16<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century. Today, over 90% of Filipinos belong to any one of the Christian dominations, most of them Catholics. Five per cent are Islamic, and a small minority practices other religions (NSO, 2012).

with a foreign partner. While both are premised on arguable assumptions, their prevalence cannot be dismissed.

The CFO AVP up to this point is still silent about the role of the Philippine state in realising the current condition of Filipino migration. My mention of the ‘Philippine state’ as an actor in the process of the exodus of its people is, admittedly, an example of *collectivisation* and *impersonalisation* – the former results in non-identification of particular social actors in a process while the latter acts as a form of their non-human representation (Van Leeuwen, 1996, 2008). Although both have the tendency to reduce accountability by agglomerating and abstracting individuals who make the decisions that result in profound consequences, my use of the term in this case, to refer to a de-articulated participant in the migration process, is more a way to metaphorise ‘power’ involved in governing the course of a people’s welfare and development.

But, perhaps, therein lies the potency of the power of the state – its ability to mythologise what it is and what it actually does so that its existence (through its various arms) is readily accepted as common sense and naturally logical. This locus of power and authority becomes present only after the serial exhibition of the Filipino migrant testimonials, when it was time to disclose the actual thrust of CFO even as it claims legitimacy as the government arm that rightfully deals with Filipino migrant issues:

To look after the needs of migrant Filipinos worldwide, the Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO) was established...

In the entire CFO text, power is demonstrated by the invisibility of the state in the migration process until it recognises itself as the *custodian* of Filipinos who are outside the homeland. From that point forward, the CFO becomes more vocal about the place of the state in realising migration. Also, it makes more apparent a favoured construction of Filipino diasporic identity. Stating its perspective as to what reputation a community of overseas Filipinos should have as a definable group, the CFO ventures into overlexicalisation, as with the POEA administrator’s words above, to prescribe an identity:

CFO envisions a community of well-respected and proudly competitive Filipinos overseas who contribute significantly to the productivity and well-being of the countries where they reside or work while maintaining strong political, economic and cultural ties with the Philippines.

Words such as ‘well-respected’, ‘proudly competitive’, ‘productivity’, and ‘well-being’ are lumped together to describe a *preferred* character of the overseas Filipino. Despite the fact that the words are quite vague in spelling out what exactly the prescribed characteristics entail and how they are going to be appraised to ensure that a person is able to measure up to the standards, these become monolithic premises for judging which actions, situations, and individuals do not fit the template. A dogmatic view of the ‘ideal migrant’ becomes part, then, of the discourse of Filipino diaspora and since the given standards are made apparent only in opaque terms, many Filipinos abroad run the risk of failure. This premise makes more understandable the choice of testimonials that lead up to this presentation of the CFO vision. Featured migrants fit well the template: they have solid professional backgrounds (e.g. Sammy de Hitta), they are able to climb up the social and corporate ladder (e.g. Eduardo Rodriguez), or they successfully portray the image of ideal partner to a foreigner, with the latter’s appraisal of ideal national identity traits being vocalised (e.g. Susan Conan and her ‘caring’ and ‘fantastic’ people).

It is also in this part of the AVP that the *liminal* condition of the diasporic subject becomes perceptible. When the migrant is expected to perform a significant role in the ‘productivity and well-being’ of the host country *while* ‘maintaining strong ties with the Philippines’, the in-between status of the individual is unequivocally affirmed. In this particular instance, that liminal position is ‘state-sponsored’. Additionally, an ‘economic identity’ of migrants becomes the prescribed status as exemplified by the foregrounding of the ‘competitive’ trait of the Filipino as contributor to the resident country’s coffers. This valuation of the Filipino migrant is taken a step further when the CFO’s mission statement is announced in the AVP. Here, a collocation of two terms shows how the Philippine state views the migrant as an economic subject:

CFO’s mission is to be the Philippines’ premier institution in promoting policies, programs and projects with migration and development as a framework for strengthening and empowerment of the community of Filipinos overseas.

The juxtaposition of the words ‘migration’ and ‘development’ is also found in other parts of the AVP (see transcript in Appendix E) and is a salient feature of the CFO website itself. The header or banner that announces the name of the commission, with its logo (depicting a globe) on the right of the screen and a stylised Philippine flag on the left, includes a motto that summarises its major responsibility: ‘Responding to the Challenges of Migration and Development’ (see Appendix F for image). What this proves is, if the main task of the main government agency that handles affairs concerning Filipinos who are abroad is to make certain that the interaction of ‘migration and development’ produces a desirable outcome, constructing the migrant Filipino as an economic tool becomes paramount.

It should be noted that this economic identity could still be read as ineluctably connected to the individualisation of the migration process. Again, what this accomplishes is to safeguard the state’s presence as a participant. Even in its economic identity, the official text asserts that migration is only a matter of the person making choices that result in nationally significant consequences. In stating the motive to launch financial programs for overseas Filipinos and their families, the CFO AVP identifies the effects of long-term massive migration that prove harmful to the nation. See the following lines (letter case retained):

1. 3 decades of large-scale migration shows little evidence of poverty reduction.
2. High social costs of migration include
3. BRAIN DRAIN
4. FAMILY BREAKDOWN
5. OVER DEPENDENCE ON REMITTANCES
6. FEMINIZATION OF LABOR MIGRATION
7. Overseas Filipinos still end up without savings
8. Cycle of labor migration continues
9. While remittances constitute 10.7% of our GDP
10. Few initiatives were being carried out to channel remittances for development

The first eight lines evoke a realisation of the state regarding the damaging outcomes of sending its people to labour or find better lives outside the country. They recognise that, perhaps, it has been too long since the government started encouraging the exodus of its human capital given the effects of an undermanaged and unabashed emigration policy. But alas, the two final lines bring us back to a neoliberal discourse of the individual as sole agent of his/her lot in life. Regardless of

a collectivised identification, the ‘person’ is still seen as the source of a (national) economic problem (line 7: ‘ending up without savings’).

Even in its economic subjectivity, therefore, the individual migrants are constructed as the bearer of the burden to uplift not only the lives of themselves or their kin, but also of the entire Philippine nation. The discourse of the state as custodian continues to be projected. Representing authority in texts may be ‘implicit’ or ‘unspoken’ (Fairclough, 2010, p. 117). Withholding or pronouncing social agents is largely dependent on the social and political interests that surround the production of texts. At this point in the CFO AVP, the state’s role is *allocated* strategically by insinuating its intervention in resolving the economic incompetence of the migrant as economic subject. In the same discursive move, the state evades, yet again, its ‘shortcomings’ as the passivisation of action in line 10 obscures the identity of those who are actually responsible to carry out the identified task. Since the state has begun to recognise and reveal its place in the migration process, it is only doing so in a way that sheds light on its munificent capacity as keeper of its people (even absentee ones) while at the same time, pre-emptively parrying questions about its accountability in their continued exodus.

#### **5.4. The *lawn* is always greener: Romanticising the family in New Zealand**

My encounter with this text was serendipitous. Like the CFO website, New Zealand Now ([www.newzealandnow.govt.nz](http://www.newzealandnow.govt.nz)), a New Zealand Immigration-managed site, had also undergone a notable change during the data-gathering period resulting in a more engaging and dynamic website for current and prospective immigrants to the country. While mapping the site on 15 October 2012, I noticed a photo of a family of four featured as one of the images on the dynamic banner (seven different ones running in a loop) that headlines the home page. The photo apparently indexes the section ‘Family-friendly’ that is under the page ‘Live in NZ’. The family photo had a curious impact on me, or, expressed more accurately in Filipino, *may ibang dating*.<sup>14</sup> The expression in this case may be equivalent to ‘intuition’ or ‘gut-feel’. Speaking

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<sup>14</sup> Bienvenido Lumera (1999) has initially developed the concept of *dating* (dah-teeng) to understand, explain, and theorise Filipino aesthetic analysis and criticism.

through the hermeneutics of Ricoeur (1981), it could be taken as ‘guessing’, the first step of *Verstehen* in the sense of hypothesising meanings.

There was no direct information on the homepage that identifies them as Filipinos. However, the thought of that possibility prompted me to scour all the other parts of the website until I landed on the ‘Video Resources’ section. Among others, it featured an interview with a family that came to Auckland in 2010. The title of the video was *John Evangelista*. A thumbnail image of the link to the actual video showed a medium close-up shot of a middle-age man in a black suit. This was the same man (albeit in a more casual clothing) standing with his wife and two children in the photograph that initially caught my attention.<sup>15</sup> Below the title was a caption – *From the Philippines, now living in New Zealand*.

Excerpts of his interview appear in other videos with specific themes. Bits of his testimonial are included in the videos *A Warm Welcome*, *Family-friendly*, and *New Zealand Now*. Some of these contain parts of the ‘John Evangelista’ testimonial while others are composed of unique clips. Such is the one titled ‘Family-friendly’, which featured parts of John’s interview not included in the eponymous video. It focuses on the friendliness of their neighbours and the deep relationship they have developed with them since the time they arrived in Auckland.

My analysis in this section is centred on the *John Evangelista* video, which is about one family’s testament to a fulfilling migrant life. In consonance with previous analyses, I recognise the multimodality of the text. As such, the attention is on the interaction of the linguistic, visual, and aural elements with special focus on the way it constructs the migrant narrative as the actual, the given, and the real through the production affordances of video-recording technology and distributive promise of online video streaming (see Appendix G for full transcript of the video).

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<sup>15</sup> It should be noted that when I checked on 21 January 2103, the image on the section ‘Family-friendly’ has been replaced. At least among all the other sections of that particular webpage, that was the only image that was changed.

#### 5.4.1 Making the scene: Ideal migrant identities and the politics of place

In 3.35 minutes, the video is able to capture the account of a family that has just recently moved to Auckland to establish a new life. The story is basically told from the point of view of husband and wife, John and Tina, although shots of the two children, Felicia and Nico, are indispensable in pushing forward the point about the conduciveness of New Zealand to raising a young family. It is John, however, who has the most talk and screen time. The video started and ended with him. His first and last words were the main binding themes of the narrative and formed the primary locus of the ideological representation of immigrant life and identity formation. It is worth noting that the choice of privileging John as the authorial voice is made at the expense of hearing the narrative from the woman or children's point of view. While I do not intend to elaborate the point, I believe it is tied to the goal of representing a conventional middle class, heterosexual, immigrant family as an ideal type.

John is represented in the opening in terms of a mix of *functionalisation* – what he does – and *classification* – where he comes from. This is accomplished by showing the subject himself speaking about these main identifying attributes:

I am Dr. John Evangelista. I am a medical doctor by education. I originally came from the Philippines. I started work here in New Zealand in October 2010 as general manager of East Tamaki Healthcare...

This self-presentation 'triad' is a consistent feature of the opening in all the other videos of the same category – it starts with people saying their names followed by, in varying order, the country of origin and work or profession. A superimposed text also appears at this moment and it reiterates not only the name but also a territory-based identity of the speaking subject. Below John's name, for instance, we see a repetition of the video's caption on the Resources webpage: *From the Philippines, now living in Auckland*. This is important because the website is viewed as the official persona of New Zealand's attitudes toward immigration and as one targeted for prospective migrants. As an immigration policy strategy introduced in 1986 aimed at projecting a colour-blind preference for worthy migrants to the country, New Zealand removed the legacy of the 'White New Zealand Policy' (Zodgekar, 2005) and opened its doors to non-traditional country-sources of immigrants (i.e. setting aside partiality for British nationals) in favour of 'quality migrants' (Ip,

2012). Therefore, as the mouthpiece of the state, Immigration NZ is somehow expected – obligated – to flaunt the diversity of places of origin of those who chose to come to the country in order to project an image of openness to peoples of varying roots.

The iteration and reiteration of geographic movement as a way of introducing the subjects has a curious side effect, though. In foregrounding their location, the liminality of their condition is also alluded to by suggesting a dual sense of belonging: they are not only defined by their nation of origin but also by the new host nation. At this point, however, only a probable claim to a physical place is warranted as a legitimate proof of the latter. This situation places these subjects in an ambiguous spot in terms of their sense of belonging as a crucial component of their identity (Fortier, 2000; Krzyżanowski & Wodak, 2008). On the one hand, they are defined by both where they came from and where they are presently. But, on the other hand, a hint that they are not yet (or not anymore) of a definite and specific national belonging is felt when judged by the way they are identified in terms of their peripatetic acts. The statement's construction exemplifies a clever strategy as it, in fact, avoids a commitment to naming, thereby successfully dodging any precarious turn that might be seen as wrongfully labelling the subject.

To illustrate, while John's transnational mobility is played up, a nationality that encompasses an ethnic or national identity is watered down. It would seem that the emphasis on John's country of origin, in particular, reduces the significance of his national identity as Filipino when his 'original' location only becomes meaningful as a former place of residence. Nevertheless, the phrase *From the Philippines* could easily be construed as 'being Filipino' in John's case and thus, becomes a way to presuppose an identity or identification for that matter. This presupposition comes easily despite the possibility of contesting the immediate association of a location with a definite identity – perhaps not all who come from the Philippines identify as Filipinos. In John's case however, his nationality and belonging as Filipino could still be strongly implied by an emphasis of his place of origin along with his physical traits, with the way he speaks, and with what he speaks about.

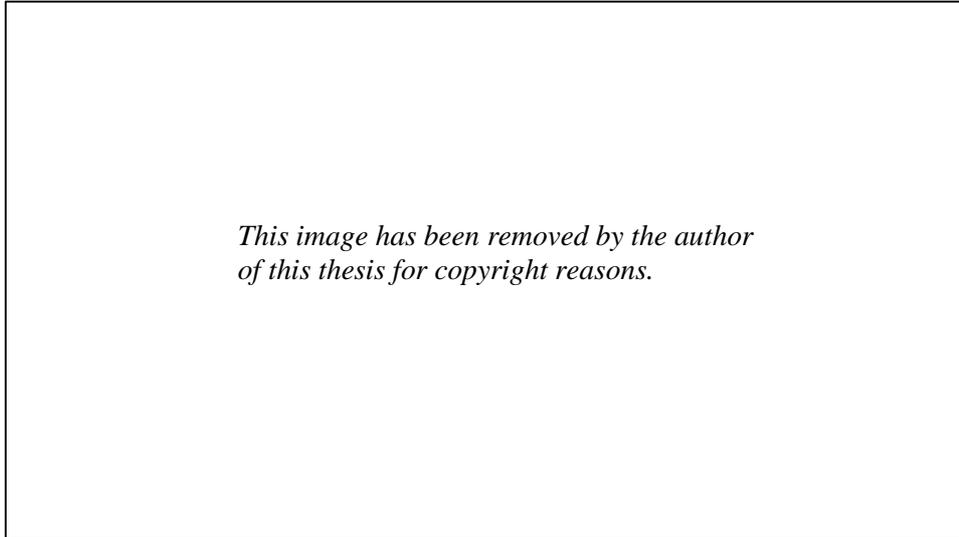
In contrast, this could hardly be said of the articulation of his present placement where any reference to owning a particular and definite national belonging is all the

more downplayed and averted. The statement depicts him in the ‘existential process’ of merely being located – *now living in New Zealand*. Typically, a projection of this kind of action is considered as a representation of the social actor’s lack of agency and power – he only exists (Barker & Galasinski, 2001; Halliday & Matthiessen, 1994; Machin & Mayr, 2012; Van Leeuwen, 2005). At this juncture, this power may pertain to the ability to define oneself since that is being put into question by the text’s insistence that New Zealand taking this speaking immigrant as its own is not guaranteed. Not yet, at least. Somehow, a persisting subtext confirms he will always be Filipino by mentioning his origin. But the question is, will he be New Zealander or Kiwi, too? If so, when and how?

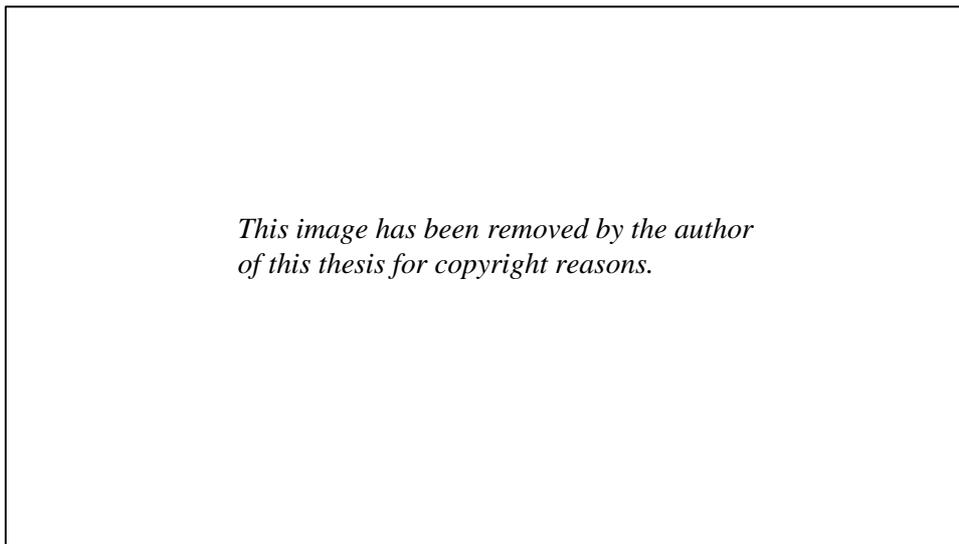
The answer may be found in the text itself as the discourse on migrant identity takes another spatial turn. Leaving one’s country in the attempt to build a life in another inevitably takes away the security of knowing that one belongs and has a space to own somewhere. A migrant could leap out of the indefinite status of placelessness by affording him/herself a positionality that is sanctioned by the new society. Although increasingly being contested (Krzyżanowski & Wodak 2008), citizenship remains one of the most assured ways of achieving a legitimate status in a country and acquiring a rightful sense of belonging.

It is not clear whether the Evangelistas have been granted citizenship at the time of filming but they do exhibit factors that the literature would consider indicators of feeling settled in a new resident country – secure employment, a pleasant home, and an accepting community (see for example Butcher, Spoonley, & Trlin, 2006; Henderson, 2004; Sobrun-Maharaj, Rossen, & Kim, 2011). In John’s case, he literally was able to secure a definite enough ‘position’ through his profession and his family: a managerial level occupation in the health sector and a comfortable middle class lifestyle for his wife and children. In the video, these actualities were deployed by the interspersed locations shown to be where they spend their daily life: John’s office (East Tamaki Health Care) and the family’s home in Auckland. The physical contrast of the two locations is quite obvious and, somehow, expected – the former was monochromatic, stiff, and formal while the latter was quaint, vibrant, and relaxing (see Figure 5.2 and 5.3). Both, however, aim

to accomplish the same task: to represent what New Zealand has to offer potential immigrants.



**Figure 5.2** Screen grab of *John Evangelista* testimonial where John introduces himself. The setting, ‘Interior of office’, is used multiple times in the video.



**Figure 5.3** Screen grab of *John Evangelista* testimonial where John introduces his family and shows their home in Auckland for the first time in the video.

John makes mention of his education and present job designation while being enclosed in a space that privileges professional status and values a functionalised identity. The office, as basic part of the narrative, is more than just the place of John's work, however. In conveying his story, the office becomes part of the conceptual structure that symbolises his status in the host country. Although it was clear from his own words that he holds a managerial position in the company he works for, the specific configuration of space that is shown onscreen also projects that stature. Due to the nature of the shot that was chosen, there is scant detail shown of the space. Aside from the black leather(ish) chair he is in, the white walls where portions of the name of the company could be seen (e.g. Healthcare), a medium close-up shot allowed no other aspects of the office be in the frame. The minimalism of the *mise en scène* – the black and white colour scheme of the furniture, walls, and John's suit; the bright white lighting; the logos on the walls – gives off a very corporate, formal, straightforward, and almost unemotional atmosphere. There were no other shots of the office to complete our picture of the space. No scene was utilised that could have provided an image of the workplace dynamics and spatial politics, such as cutaway shots of John in action. Extending the space to its full expanse and character is then made a task for the viewers to perform. Considering the details that are provided, the composition of the scene makes it appear that he possesses a relatively distinguished place warranting his own spot in the scheme of (spatial) things. At this point, and bearing in mind that the purpose of this section in the video is to present John's professional persona, the arrangement of the attributes of the space achieves its goal of functionalisation with distinction – he is made significant by the type of role he plays in the economic structure of the country and is set apart from the rest by highlighting his professional status.

Not surprisingly, the scene changes setting when John introduces his family and they are seen standing together with their house in the background. The video, then, fundamentally anchors the general themes of John's testimonial to the setting of the scenes: office for functionalisation and the home for relational identification (i.e. the family as an identifying marker of John). Appendix G shows the topics of John and Tina's narrative and the corresponding setting depicted when a particular topic is articulated. Along with these, cutaway shots – scenes that are not part of the main shot – are also indicated where they are used. From this, we can see that John's

professional identity was made more palpable by the depiction of his ‘actual’ workspace. His image as a husband, a father, and a family man is made more apparent when the setting quickly shifts to the Evangelista residence as he introduces his family to the audience. Their lifestyle as a Filipino immigrant family in New Zealand is further articulated in the projection of the home. I refer, at this point, to the physical structure – both interior and exterior – that sets the family in a definite location and gives them a physical positionality that fits well with the ideal construction of the desirable migrant life. John’s is truly an image of a model middle class, heterosexual family. At home, he is represented as more relaxed but still smartly dressed. He is not seen wearing a suit (although the long-sleeved shirt and trousers is still indicative of a professional status) and plays with his children. The uncanny fact that they have one girl and one boy makes it appear all the more ideal.

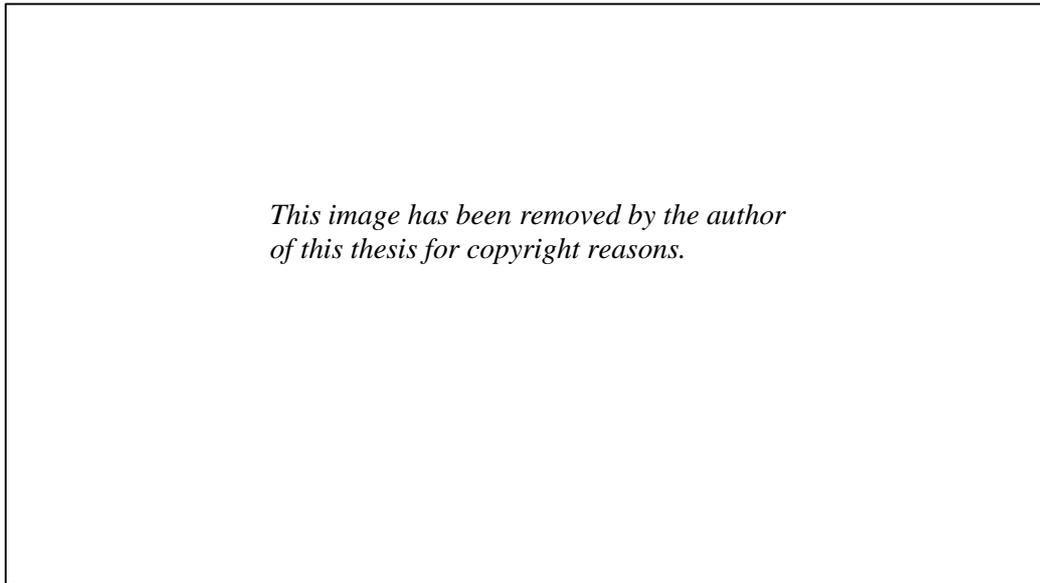
The Evangelista house could be described as a typical Kiwi home. It is a white, timber, detached, low-rise house with a porch and a lawn. The type is more popularly known as *bungalow* in the Philippines and is the pervading image of an idealised home for most Filipinos. The typicality of the Evangelista house potentially marks their immersion and inclusion into Kiwi culture and society. Structurally, it fits the mould of a generic Kiwi home as typified by the New Zealand Now website itself (“Things you’ll notice in NZ homes,” n.d.):

Most are stand-alone single storey residences with their own garden (or ‘section’ as we call it).

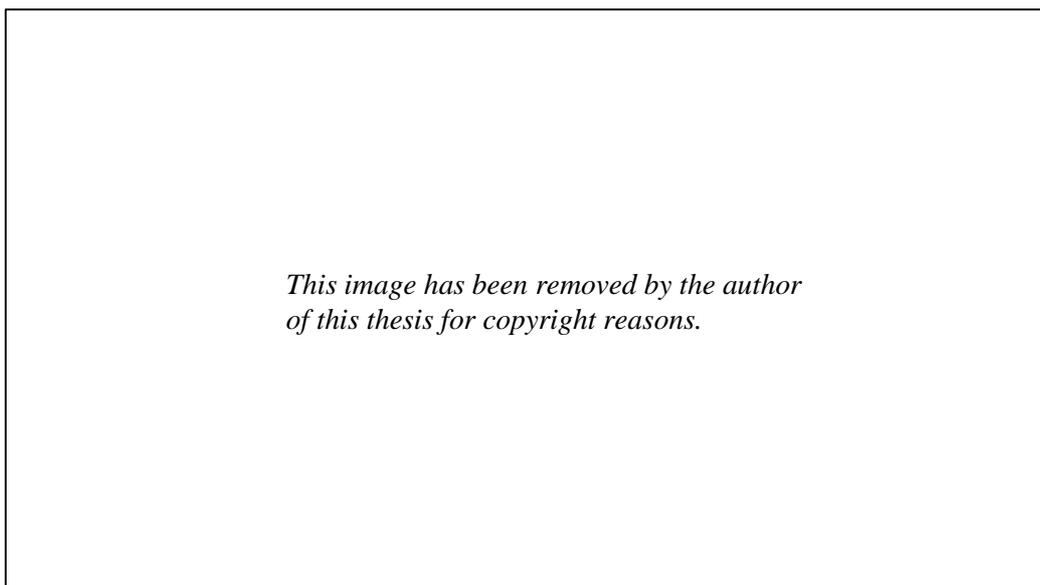
New Zealand homes are generally built to make the most of the light (ideally north facing) and the outdoors. We prize this ‘indoor-outdoor flow’ especially suited for barbecues and summer living.

The above description of a representative house in New Zealand could have been written with the Evangelista home in mind. Figure 5.3 above shows a snapshot of the section in the video where John first introduces his family – an exterior day shot with their home in the background, bright green yard, and some foliage colour that is not typically characteristic of a Philippine urban residential environment (i.e. yellow leaves). Succeeding exterior shots of the home focus on the lawn and were taken from various angles that capture all or some members of the family spending enjoyable time outdoors (see Figure 5.4 as an example). The ‘indoor-outdoor flow’

concept is also exploited even when shots are done in the interior of the house. The interviews of John and Tina together as they talk about their move to the country were shot in one location – most probably the living area – with a window to the (conspicuously green) lawn in the background (Figure 5.5).



**Figure 5.4** Screen grab of John Evangelista testimonial showing an exterior shot of the Evangelista residence



**Figure 5.5** Screen grab of John Evangelista testimonial where exterior is shown in the background of an interior shot.

As natural as it may seem, the setting becomes an idealisation of the longed-for life of a Filipino who is departing or thinking of departing his/her country to find better opportunities – a life that has all the basic trappings of material success made possible by venturing into a foreign land. The matter of class figures prominently in this economic configuration of a diasporic subjectivity. This issue is quite important in ways that are rooted in both the sending and receiving country's respective construction of the migration experience as ineluctably linked to a wider economic and cultural logic. Firstly, the projection of the Evangelistas as a successful and well-placed middle class family is exactly the stuff that makes up the Philippine national imaginary. A secure, well-off, and ultimately gentrified lifestyle marks the ascendancy of an individual to a higher economic standing. For Filipino families that bet on the success of their migrating members, a regular remittance makes possible the acquisition of things that indicate their rise in Philippine society. At times too, the increase in economic power is perceived to come with all the accompanying excessive consumption practices that this class of *nouveaux riches* is criticised for (Abella, 2007). Secondly, New Zealand's introduction of a points-based immigration system, that actively recruits people to fill in the gaps in the economic market, gives rise to a sharply differentiated Filipino migrant population. By being particular about the set of skills or qualifications of would-be migrants, the composition of immigrants from a particular sending nation is likely to distinguish people by class – they would probably come from a segment of the sending country population that is of higher economic status, higher educational achievement, and higher symbolic and purchasing power.

As a potential representation of the Filipino migrant class of New Zealand, the Evangelista case is an example of the 'permanent category' overseas Filipinos whose stay in the receiving country is not dependent on contractual work. Their experience diverges from the more popular narratives of OFWs who leave their families behind since they came to Auckland to permanently reside, they came over as a family, and John is a high-ranking professional who is able to defy stereotypical notions of the Filipino as, for instance, an overseas nurse or caregiver. As a way of imparting to a potential audience the enticements of moving to New Zealand, fronting the family – concretely represented by the Evangelista residence – as being together, being whole, and being in one place clearly strikes a chord with prospective migrants of similar

situations and sentimentalities. Foregrounding John's professional status, on the other hand, panders to the white-collar ambitions of many Filipinos searching for more lucrative opportunities that their country could not provide. While the video appears to do nothing else but show the 'actual' life of a single Filipino family that made the choice to start a life in Auckland, Filipinos who have been playing with the possibility of leaving and chance upon it would be profoundly affected by the way the material postures the Evangelistas as happily settled in their beautiful home, in a friendly neighbourhood in another country, complete and whole and together.

This is precisely what the video aims to do – to present what New Zealand has in store for migrants. This is expected of a material that aims to encourage immigration and attract the most suited people. But what is interesting is that by so doing, it also articulates what it requires of individuals to be considered as rightful acceptors of the opportunity. This family's telling of their story becomes a channel to imply the state's definition of the desirable immigrant: someone who could be economically beneficial for the country and one who is able to independently support him/herself (and the family) by being financially capable and professionally competitive so that no extra burden would be imposed upon the systems of the state. Ultimately, this would mean the person who possesses the most desirable traits that fit the criteria imposed by measures of the 'human capital' principle and complies with the subjectivity of 'human as capital'.

McLaren and Dyck (2004) see a disparity in the oppositional dualism constructed within the immigrant class as a consequence of human capital standards:

The narrative of the "ideal migrant" – who deserves to become a citizen and belong to the nation state and the counterpart "deficient immigrant" who does not – contributes to the construction of an "imagined community" of belonging... (p. 42).

At its most fundamental core, the human capital framework at once presumes and creates a split that distinguishes between who is and is not worthy of the right to belong, to develop a secure sense of belonging, and to rightfully have a permanent space in the new place. It is as if fulfilling the expectations of the human capital criteria would amount to a clear end to the ambiguous position, transitory status, and

indefinite period of the liminal experience as a migrant. In contrast, all others who fail to measure up become dispensable failures.

From the literal beginning to the end, the setting was an exploited element that framed not only the narrative of the family but their identities as well. John, in particular, began by introducing his name and occupation while sitting in his chair in the office; he ended by speaking about settling in as a family while he sat with his wife Tina in the living area of their house – *This is a place that we could really call home.*

Place, therefore, connotes belonging and develops a sense of belonging in the migrant. Place and having a sense of owning a place for oneself, ultimately, facilitates the appropriation of power and the process of identification (Rakoff, 1977). John's video shows that having a place to call home spells the end of a migrant's travails. But claiming that legitimate space is also sanctioned by the neoliberal standards perpetuated by the notion of the best and fittest individual as economic capital. It should be remembered that John proved himself worthy of the label 'ideal migrant' first by an economic yardstick. In human capital standards, he certainly fits the bill of the ideal immigrant, thus, absolutely deserving the opportunity to categorically lay claim to his own place in the current country of residence.

#### **5.4.2 Obscure objects of desire:**

##### **Symbolising ideal Filipino migrant life in New Zealand**

*Nothing can happen nowhere.* This quote from the British novelist Elizabeth Bowen might be a case of stating the obvious but it is always the obvious that gets away with illusory projections of social reality. The choice of locations in John's testimonial would appear reasonable and logical. The two locations may *obviously* be the most important places in their lives at the moment and these could be considered as the places where they 'naturally' exist. However, any element of a text is a *sign*, with its own meaning potential that likely fulfils an ideological goal. Taking the setting as focal point, the spaces that figure in John's video are anything but givens. They do not just provide a backdrop for the scenes, but were elected to 'communicate general ideas, to connote discourses – their values, identities and

actions' (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 52). As an outcome of choices that were consciously and actively made by the producers and designers of the text, the elements that make up the video transcend their *formalistic* function to convey meanings that could potentially reveal the complex and conflicted character of the migrant discourse – whether these were intended or not.

Considering that one of the most prominent elements of the video is the presentation of the Evangelista family being well-settled here in New Zealand, their home in Auckland becomes a focal point of analysis since technically, it is the setting that has the most screen time in the video (71 per cent or more than 2.5 minutes) and conceptually, its potential meaning allows it to go beyond its materiality to become a *sign* the meaning potential of which encompasses the individual desire for economic mobility, the transnational act of migration, and the national construction of the good life.

Indeed, the 'house' for a Filipino is more than just a physical dwelling. It is a dream that engulfs an entire national psyche. Private corporations capitalise on this Filipino fantasy so much so that, Filinvest, one of the biggest real estate development companies in the Philippines, for instance, has as its catchphrase *We Build the Filipino Dream*.<sup>16</sup> While not the sole property of the Filipino psyche, the currency of this ever-present desire and its cultural implementation in the Filipino experience is notable as it lies in its attachment to the migration phenomenon and its concomitant origination from and impact on the national neoliberal agenda.

In a study of the current real estate boom in the Philippines and its consequent implications for the use of urban space, Ortega (2011) asserts that the flourishing of the housing industry despite recent economic crises is undeniably due to the financial contribution being maintained by overseas workers. The striking proliferation of gated communities is in response to the perceived needs of a market of new economically able individuals and families that gain purchasing advantage through the support of members that toil abroad. As a result, aside from the unceasing residential construction projects brought on by business competition, a new class of Filipino economic subjects is also created whose goals, tastes, and standards in their

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<sup>16</sup> See the company website <http://www.filinvestcity.com/about#>

choice of dwelling are at once personal and market-induced. This subjectivity is, of course, tied to the neoliberal glorification of the OFW productive body that is able to occupy transnational labour opportunities as willing national capital.<sup>17</sup>

Idioms of the Filipino dream lead us to consider the literature on Philippine migration that, not surprisingly, lists the future of the family and children as one of the major reasons for choosing to work overseas (Añonuevo, 2002). Ironically, the breakdown of the family and its inimical effects on a migrant worker's children are at the same time cited as some of the most glaring social costs of migration as parents leave their family behind to gain a chance at a better life (Alcid, n.d.; Alunan-Melgar & Borromeo, 2002; Parreñas, 2005; Reyes, 2008). This is the reason why, even though they rarely uttered lines in the video, the Evangelista children occupy a critical space in the representation of the Filipino migrant's life in New Zealand.

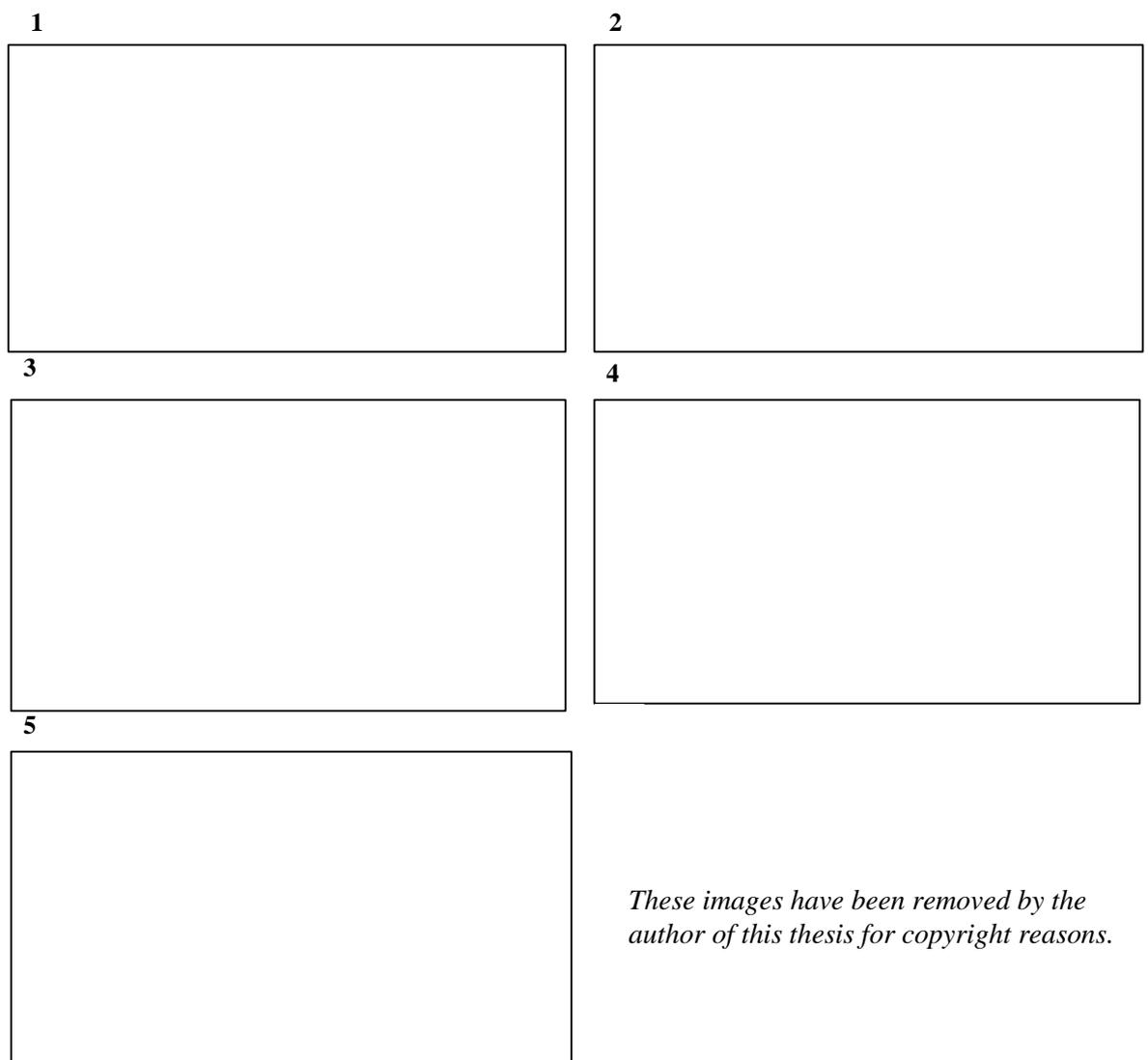
Felicia and Nico appear 11 times for a total of 61 seconds (roughly a little less than a third of the entire video) either together or with their parents. They appear for the first time when John introduces the family and the rest are scenes inserted to break the monotony of shots (cutaway) as John and Tina talk about their experiences of moving to Auckland. They appear five times on/with a trampoline (almost half the total number of shots where they are depicted), either together or with their parents. The trampoline, then, must be an object worthy of a special focus due to its curious use in the video (Figure 5.6 shows the trampoline scenes of the two children).

Van Leeuwen (2001) acknowledges the usefulness of Barthes' second order signification process as a social semiotic tool in investigating representation in images. This approach is premised on the conviction that images possess meanings deeper than what is shown on the surface. This surface that is 'unproblematic' and 'unencoded' Barthes calls the denotative level while the second layer of meaning, called *connotation*, is that which contains broader concepts, ideas, values (Van

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<sup>17</sup> But, as Ortega (2012) adamantly points out in the study, corporate triumph undergirded by idealised bodies of economic men and women – the Overseas Filipinos and Overseas Filipino Workers – comes with the creation of other surplus subjects – the landless farmers, indigenous peoples, and slum dwellers stripped of lands that formerly locate their place.

Leeuwen, 2001, p. 97). The connotative meaning is termed *myths* as they pertain to the ideological substrate that tends to legitimise the status quo (Barthes, 1972; Van Leeuwen, 2001). Turning to a Barthesian analysis of the formation of *myths* through the process of secondary signification or connotation, the trampoline in the video ceases to become just a plain depiction of a plaything for the children. It becomes ‘iconic’ as a defining feature of the Kiwi childhood experience. Its absence from the typical Filipino child’s environment, however, holds the key to its usefulness in reading the image as a vehicle that transports ideas of Filipino diasporic desires.



**Figure 5.6** Screen grab of Felicia and Nico scenes with the trampoline. Each image is numbered according to when they appear in the video.

Objects are frequent carriers of connotation (Van Leeuwen, 2001, p. 97). The trampoline as shown in the video proves this by being a crucial element of the outdoor *mise en scène*. It is where the Evangelista children manage to show happy, carefree, and active personae. It is also where the whole family is shown to converge, each time displaying smiling and fulfilled faces. As the video is a documentation of an immigrant family's life in New Zealand, the trampoline has the potential to connote 'Kiwi-ness' in illustrating what childhood is 'really' like in the country: it is active, happy, and perhaps, secure, considering the 'conduciveness' of the outdoors as space to roam, play, and live as children are *supposed* to. In direct contrast, Filipinos' reasons for leaving their country include worries about raising a family in a volatile environment replete with economic and social insecurities. The trampoline as a connotational object is, therefore, a reiteration of the ideal migrant life and the idealised Kiwi life perpetuated by the nation-state through its website presence. This time, however, there is emphasis on the migrant's children and their future, which expectedly is a good allurement for Filipinos, in particular, who are contemplating moving abroad. Of course, the said opportunity is only open to those who are deemed desirable by neoliberal, human capital standards.

The trampoline is an important object in reading the ideological subtext of the video. It is a somewhat easy target for close reading due to its distinctive depiction. There are, however, other objects in the text that are not as conspicuously featured, thus, are taken for granted and considered as just a 'natural' part of the projected environment. It is actually the case that these objects naturally exist in the locations where the shots of the Evangelistas were taken. Based on this logic, then, they are not to be given any further attention in establishing meanings. However, it is also crucial to remember that the angles of visualisation of the Evangelista home go beyond mere capture of the natural setting. The time it was shot depicts a virtually perpetual brightness of day; the yellowish leaves represent climate quite foreign to the Filipino reality (e.g. autumn foliage); the garden or lawn are iconic to the Filipino imagination of a middle class home; the trampoline is an established carrier of images of the idealised Kiwi childhood experience. These are all products of the design process where semiotic and ideological choices are simultaneously made. But,

is it possible that some objects depicted in the video are free of any other significant meanings aside from their denotative order?

Are the purple flowers in 2:52 that foreground Tina and Felicia as they walk together, or the green leaves in 3:15 foregrounding the family as they gather around the trampoline not carriers of other meanings aside from what they literally depict? Likewise, are the framed photos in the background at 1:05 as John and Tina share their story supposed to be considered as just ‘naturally’ existing parts of the environment and nothing more?

Referencing Barthes (1986) once again, textual features that seem to resist meanings and appear to limit their presence as just concrete details are indicators of the ‘effect of reality’. As a tool to project an interpersonal metafunction or audience positioning, these seemingly innocuous objects define the naturalistic modality of the Evangelista testimonial and thus, project the material as nothing but what is real. The flowers and leaves in the foreground or the framed photos in the background are just some of the objects that defy signification by refusing to be *signs* in their denial of any relation to a ‘signified’. Recalling the basic structure of the sign in Saussurean semiotics, the signified is the mental counterpart of the physical signifier; the thing that comes to mind when an object as sign is perceived. In Barthes’ explication of the ‘effect of reality’, the object as sign becomes wanting of a signified, thus, accomplishing an illusion of merely being what is: a given, a natural element of the environment, the real. It is, therefore, crucial to bear in mind that ‘just when these details are reputed to *denote* the real directly, all they do – without saying so – is to *signify* it’ (Barthes, 1986, p. 148).

Photographs are good vehicles for this task because images get naturalised instead of appearing concocted (Van Leeuwen, 2001, p. 97). Video recording and documentary films obviously up the ante by incorporating the capture of not just images but also time, thus, evading the temporal flattening in the still image. These various techniques developed in contemporary times to ‘authenticate the ‘real’ all show that the ‘real’ is supposed to be self-sufficient’ in depicting nothing but ‘the *having-been-there* of things’ in a text (Barthes, 1986, p. 147). Imagine the consequences of this triumph in sign-making. When objects are capable of resisting meanings by denying the reader of possible interpretations outside the realm of the *having-been-there*, the

ideological pursuit of cementing imaginary relations as the only reality becomes unchallenged in textual production and consumption. As the *John Evangelista* video allows the audience to see their actual story and actual life in New Zealand, it leads the viewer to forget its naturalising and idealising effect. We fail to realise that, though realistic and based on real life stories, it is a concatenation of various multimodal elements pieced together following conventional rules. The effect of reality is, therefore, one of the text's most profound ideological achievements.

### **5.5 Owning the new home: Legitimising the liminal in diaspora**

As a particular instance of binary nationalism fleshed out by state-manufactured discourses, the Philippine texts (i.e. the POEA Annual Report and the CFO AVP) construct the Filipino diasporic subject as an ideal worker and eventually, an ideal *balikbayan*<sup>18</sup> by alluding to the substance of the Filipino identity as an economic tool. Meanwhile, the New Zealand text (i.e. John Evangelista video) constructs the Filipino as the ideal immigrant by playing up the conformity of his identity to human capital criteria. I maintain that this double construal of the Filipino migrant identity is easily propelled by the notion of 'home' itself as the characteristic desire of diasporic Filipinos. In order to illustrate this claim, I am presenting the rest of the CFO AVP and one more section of John Evangelista's testimonial. The goal in this final exercise is to uncover the contradictions of the quintessential migrant trope of home, the attainment of which ultimately comes with a price.

The silence of the CFO discourse over the role of the state in parting with many of its citizens was first broken by emphasising its efforts at managing the economic inadequacies of the Filipino migrant worker. In the final section of the AVP, the state – usually an invisible locus of power – is not only given prominence but also *personalised* through Aquino's voice and image. Used as parting words, the CFO

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<sup>18</sup> *Balikbayan* is a compound word from *balik* – return and *bayan* – nation. Literally, the word implies a return to the nation. As used, it pertains to overseas Filipinos who return to the Philippines for long or short term. It could refer to overseas Filipinos in general but there exists an understanding of the concept that makes a distinction between OF and OFW. This dichotomy also creates a hierarchy between the two where the former gains higher status for being residents of foreign nations while the latter are only able to stay abroad by contract employment.

brief ended by excerpting the President's speech delivered at a ministerial gathering in the Middle East:

Working abroad should not be a necessity, but a choice.

Our countrymen shouldn't have to leave the country to live good, comfortable lives.

They shouldn't be forced to sacrifice time they could spend visiting their parents or playing with their children and watching them grow up.

This is precisely why our reform efforts are focused on attracting more investments...

Creating more jobs, and giving our countrymen reason to believe that...

That a good life awaits them here at home.

Essentially, it is the President's invitation to Filipinos who have been 'pushed' to find better luck outside the country to come back and enjoy the things that they have missed by leaving. The inclusion of the speech in the CFO AVP is designed to simultaneously give a human face to the nation-state and assert its authority and stewardship over Filipinos' affairs. The fourth line is an example of such where the pronoun 'our' collectivises and abstracts the actors in the state but also indicates the President – as proxy of his entire administration – arrogating the efforts at making the overseas Filipinos' lives better. Arguably, the most significant aspect of the speech is the last line where the word 'home' is actually used.

As lines from the speech are simultaneously heard as voice over and seen as texts generated onscreen, the message undergoes a clear reiteration. The multimodal workings in designing a discourse is made evident as the word 'home' in the speech is juxtaposed with an image that is conceptually structured to project a modern, urban, and corporate landscape, as shown in Figure 5.7. In framing the idea of returning home, the Filipino migrant is further enticed by images of the nation that is contrary to the more familiar perception of its failure to provide sufficiently for its people. The text, then, manages the discourse of the migrant by defining what the Philippines is as 'home'. In using images with high naturalistic modality to drive the point of authenticity, this revamped portrait of the country is the 'home' that is

potentially *re-claimed* by the returning migrant while at the same time, *re-claiming* the migrant Filipino as its own once again.



**Figure 5.7** Screen grab at 7:06 of the ‘image of Philippines as ‘home’ from the CFO AVP.

What the President’s speech defines is the most obvious way of coming back home, which, in reality is not without complications. The idea of re-establishing oneself in the homeland is not as straightforward as it seems and the invitation to come home, although certainly sentimental, only becomes a ploy to construct a particular ideal of the Philippine nation. Prior to this closing segment, however, the AVP imparts one other way of migrants’ ‘return’ that makes sure overseas Filipinos maintain strong connection to their country of origin.

This route is hinged on the Filipino’s sense of *duty* to give back to the nation in order for it to achieve its goals of development. By devising the acronym ‘D2D’, that stands for ‘Diaspora to Development’, the CFO implements its formula for harnessing the potential contributions of Filipinos abroad through various projects that act as tributaries to the grander dream of a developed Philippines (perhaps, as imagined in Figure 5.7). D2D certainly functions as a rhetorical device with its alliterative effect. In addition, it turns ‘D2D’ as the metaphor of the condition and process of being a Filipino diasporic subject, wherein one is instantly constructed as an instrument of national economic development.

Driving home the point of the campaign, the CFO text uses intervening visual devices to direct the *route* taken by overseas Filipinos. As the AVP introduces D2D, the global summit logo (Figure 5.8) shows the Philippine map being circled by a blue arrow that appears from the top and goes counter clockwise around it before finally stopping at the mid-part with a red arrow head pointing inward. As a symbolic structure, the signification of the diaspora movement that the CFO strives to achieve becomes apparent.

Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001) are emphatic about the value of ‘experiential meaning potential’ in fulfilling a multimodal analysis of texts. Visual cues, in particular, work only because they are based on actual prior experiences that potentially make material associations to the signifying text or element. Red may effectively connote ‘war’ because literally, there is bloodshed in battles. The circling arrow in the global summit logo may be quite abstract, but its significance lies in the general experience of ‘going out’ and inevitably ‘coming back’ full circle – the direction that the CFO programming endeavours for overseas Filipinos to take.



**Figure 5.8** Screen grab at 3:45 of the ‘D2D’ initiative logo from the CFO AVP.

Overseeing the path the Filipino diaspora must follow, the CFO becomes more stern in projecting its mission when, at the final stage of talking about D2D, it encapsulates the whole program through a slogan that possesses an imperative mood

(see below, literal translation provided). As a result of wordplay, the slogan segments the term *balikbayan* and utilises the ungrouped components to prescribe an act apropos of the state's objectives (only works in the original Filipino).

Be more than a BALIKBAYAN  
Ang Kaalaman at Kakayahan  
iBALIK sa BAYAN!

(Be more than a BALIKBAYAN  
The Knowledge and Skills  
Bring back to the country!)

The lexical manipulation resulted in the unravelling of the meanings that make up the concept of *balikbayan* and an elaboration of the *balikbayan* discourse that cements its significance beyond just being a 'returnee' to an emphasis of the act of giving something back. Though noble, the slogan becomes problematic in its depiction of the overseas Filipino as someone who ought to 'return' to the nation that which s/he has taken away by leaving. The slogan may generally pertain to a citizen's duty to the homeland, but the connotation declares that Filipinos have selfishly deprived the nation by going away. Suppression of reasons, both personal and structural, for going abroad still abounds as do the suppression of the actual participants in facilitating the exodus of a people. What is articulated is that a *balikbayan* has taken away something from the nation and that s/he should give it back. The collectivised overseas Filipinos are at fault and the state, finally making its presence felt, exerts every effort to manoeuvre their return and the returning of that which they have run off with as key to the nation's development. In essence, at the core of the call is a discursive strategy to encumber the migrants with the responsibility of realising the 'home', as imagined in Figure 5.7, that the Philippine state has in the first place enticed them with.

On the other hand, the testimonial of *John Evangelista* eloquently expressed New Zealand as a veritable home for the Filipino migrant. Although the New Zealand Now website is circumspect in representing the migrant subjects' actual national identity and belonging, it was able to fend off the said complicated matter by displaying the diasporic subject himself naming the new country of residence as home. This appears to be the most important task of the Evangelista family's testimonial since a deconstructive reading would tend to reveal that a migrant's right

to call New Zealand home is preconditioned by an economic subjectivity that determines the ideal immigrant. Constructing the identity of the migrant this way opens up the text to an oppositional reading that shows that however tightly a text may appear, it is not hermetically sealed. Although the attempt was to recognise John (and his family) as proper immigrants from a human capital perspective, outlining his subject position via the setting, his appearance, and his words glosses over certain facts that potentially challenge the promises of the human capital projection of the 'ideal migrant'; his narrative belies the promises of New Zealand as an ideal migrant's destination.

Recalling the lines in his introduction: *'I am John Evangelista. A medical doctor by education...'* would lead us to hints that the ideal migrant construct is not so simple after all. Although it is quite clear from these words that he is (was) a medical doctor, it becomes ambivalent as to the issue of whether he is able to practice his medical training in the country. Rejecting migrants' qualifications as medical doctors because they are foreign-trained is, in fact, one of the more perennial sources of anecdotal discontent in New Zealand among the migrant community. Aside from personal stories, though, the numbers would show that high level of skills and educational attainment of immigrants (including doctors) are not guarantees for certainly escaping unemployment and underemployment in the country (Mpofu, 2007).

A downgrading in one's professional status is clear in this situation. Its acceptance and practice is quite a common migrant experience in receiving countries with similar immigration policies. Barber (2008) terms it 'performances of subordination': the migrant's practice of undergoing re-training in order to get a qualification that better suits the receiving country's labour demands even when it means drastically altering, and even lowering, their professional status. The occurrence of 'performances of subordination' is, ultimately, an indicator of the failure of the human capital framework to fulfil its promise. This only shows that no matter how the individual is able to *score* highly on the criteria that outline who the perfect immigrant is, there will be opportunities to somehow always fall short. In John's case, attaining the perfect new home did not come as a reward for being an ideal immigrant, it is the recompense of sustaining dispossession.

## 5.6 Conclusion

In my analysis of the official texts, I further the idea that the concept of binary nationalism, as formulated by Camroux, should be approached with the premise that discourses emanate from differentially positioned sources within the intersecting relationships that define the migrants' former and new locations. This way, a more critical assessment of the dynamics of the various complementary and competing discourses would be possible since although no single discourse exists at a given time and place, not all of them prevail on equal terms.

Judging by the official texts analysed in this chapter, there is no escaping the idea and imagination of the 'home' in looking at diasporic identity. Finding or establishing one may be both the basic and ultimate desire of those who have departed their places of origin, but it is imperative to see this oft-romanticised construct as a discursive object pliable enough to be used in ways that serve particular interests.

'Home' is polysemic: it is physical, emotional, and socio-cultural (Case, 1996; Mallett, 2004). At the same time, it also implicates the structural boundaries imposed by powerful social relations and institutions to which everyone belongs (Mallett, 2004; Rakoff, 1977). The concept is a repository of meanings that substantiate the liminal state in the experience of diaspora. Although a big component of understandings of 'home' is most certainly subjective, the analysis of the above texts show how official discourses in the employ of powerful structures in society (e.g. the nation-state, state arm, and the corporate sector) deploy and propagate dominant narratives of diasporic and immigrant subjectivity. This is how the construct 'home' also becomes a gauge for bestowing legitimacy to the identity of the diasporic subject. As an overseas Filipino, the 'Philippines as home' defines the ideal migrant worker and the ideal *balikbayan* as development tools, thus, reinforcing the role of the nation-state as a supranational custodian of Filipinos abroad. As a migrant in New Zealand, establishing a 'brand new home' requires concordance with the accomplishments implied by the ideal immigrant status to gain a chance at securing a proper place in the new country of residence. Home, then, becomes a strategy to appropriate the power to legitimise an end to the insecure transitional status that often characterises the life of migrants. Only, it implies that the rightful trajectory of

the diaspora is for it to swing towards gaining or *re-gaining* a home by sheer compliance with an economic subjectivity.

In one way or another, the next three chapters go back to the examination of ‘home’ as an indispensable aspect of the lives of Filipino immigrants in New Zealand. Since these focus on the two cases of personal social media use, the viewpoint shifts significantly from the position of power and authority to the complex positionalities of individuals attempting to negotiate their place in the web of relations that characterise their diasporic situation. It is important to note that my particular interest necessitates paying attention to the discursive opportunities opened up by Internet-based media in my participants’ reflections and interrogations of their identity as Filipinos building a life outside their country of origin. This, of course, is not to diminish the importance of awareness about the specificities of daily ‘offline’ life in New Zealand. The Internet I am talking about, after all, is an Internet of my participants’ *here and now*.

## 6 REGULATING MIGRANT LIFE ON FACEBOOK

### PERFORMING AND ASSERTING IDENTITIES IN SOCIAL MEDIA

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#### 6.1 Introduction

Amy<sup>19</sup>, her then four-year-old son, Ben and husband, Ted, moved to New Zealand in 2009 with a work-to-residence (WTR) visa. They arrived in Wellington at a time when personal and external circumstances were insecure. It was the height of global recession, and immigration policies of the period allowed WTR visa holders only six months to find employment that, based on New Zealand Immigration's assessment, matched their training, or else leave the country. To top it all, Amy was four months pregnant with their second child. Today, she could only laugh about it as she admits in the interview that their departure from the Philippines did hit some snags: *So, medyo nakakakaba yung pagpunta namin dito* (So, our move here was a bit nerve-racking). Ted found suitable work five months into the job-hunting, which allowed them to apply for a Permanent Resident (PR) status. One and a half years later the family had their second big move when he landed another job in Auckland. As of this writing, they are only a few months away from being eligible to apply for citizenship.

I became friends with Amy as an undergraduate in the Philippines around mid-90s. She was one year ahead. Coincidentally, her husband (whom she met not long after her graduation) and I were in the same high school batch. In the latter part of 2008, she told me of their plans to move to New Zealand. Writing this brings back to mind the reasons she gave for their decision to move permanently overseas: *Kapag wala pa kayong anak, ok pa, kaya pa. Pero once magkaanak na, mararamdaman mo na mahirap na* (It's manageable when you do not have a child. But once you get to have one, you will feel how really hard it is). I most probably asked the question since even up to now I still sometimes grapple with the idea that they had been driven to take a leap of faith. They are relatively well-to-do, highly marketable in terms of

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<sup>19</sup> All names in this chapter and the next are pseudonyms.

skills, and highly educated individuals. As far as I know, they were working on internationally funded development projects, owned a home in one of the upper middle class gated communities in the city, and, along with their (then) only child, were enjoying a comfortable lifestyle.

In the Philippines, there is a prevailing idea that people who take the road of migration are from the low socio-economic sector and become blue-collar workers or domestic helpers in certain countries. Either that or they become nurses or caregivers who will have better opportunities abroad considering the overwhelming demand for healthcare service professionals in more developed nations. This group may not necessarily be of the low economic demographic and data would show that the middle class has become a considerable facet of the Filipino diaspora since the end of the Marcos era. Middle class attrition in the country has been on the rise – a trend that forebodes its eventual collapse (Urbanski, 2009; Virola, 2009). Disillusioned at state mismanagement and lack of opportunities, an increasing number of professionals and the educated class continue to find their way out of the country (Carandang, 2004; Perlez, 2002). The invocation of the migration trope by uttering personal stories of departure from the homeland and building a new life in another is, in any case, always an act that begs for an understanding of the life and the trajectory of the Philippine nation itself. Amy and her family are now part of the Filipino diaspora tale – continuously re-written in narratives of personal and national experiences and imagination.

In this chapter, I present Amy's use of Facebook – both as a practical communication medium and a signifying platform – to write of their new life in New Zealand. Analysis and discussion of identity discourses in her social media content is divided into two chapters based on the categories 'everyday (ordinary)' posts and 'special (extraordinary)' posts. These generally refer to the kinds of events that become topics of interest in her social media engagement. As will be explained later, meanings and significance of everyday events and special events are necessarily related – one cannot be understood without the other. This current chapter focuses on ordinary events. In particular, I focus on Amy's Facebook posts about her children, Ben and Sarah. The subsequent chapter discusses special events.

Prior to analysing diasporic identity discourses in pertinent posts, I first deal with basic information about Facebook as a social networking site (SNS) with particular focus on its basic features and functionalities (e.g. the ‘Timeline’) relevant to the study. I also explain in this section the role the SNS plays in Amy’s navigation of the immigrant condition, first, in practical, and then in ideational terms. In order to aid in a deeper understanding of identity construction on Facebook, I explore the relevance of the ‘interaction order’ and ‘impression management’ outlined by Goffman (1971) in his thesis on the presentation of the self. Having accomplished these preliminary discussions, I then proceed to examining Amy’s representation of her children in her Facebook posts. In particular, I focus on how she highlights their growth and development as ‘Kiwis’ and their acquisition of particular linguistic behaviour in recent years. Using the principles of multimodality and socio-semantic system of actor representation, I aim to demonstrate how the images of the children act as ‘signs’ of national identification and belonging in the immigrant situation.

## **6.2 Amy and Facebook: Plotting personal history in social media**

A social network site is a *networked communication platform* in which one can have an identifiable profile, can publicly display connections, and can consume and produce user-generated content (Ellison & boyd, 2013). In general, new media and communications technology have become an indispensable aspect of the lives of Filipinos abroad since these perform the basic function of maintaining precious lines of connection with their families in the Philippines (Madianou & Miller, 2012; Pertierra et al., 2002; Pertierra, 2007; Torres, 2005). At the very least, they have replaced the slow and inefficient modes of communication that were in use prior to the introduction of mobile phones and the Internet – letter writing, overseas landline-based phone calls, and telegrams. The use of mobile phones, especially for text messaging, has always been high among the Filipino general population but it is not difficult to imagine the specific value of this basic functionality to overseas Filipinos and their families (Pertierra, 2007). Social networking sites, with Facebook currently being the most popular (Duggan & Smith, 2013), could be seen as yet another way of keeping personal relationships flowing amidst geographic separation.

Facebook is a SNS that was launched in 2004 to a limited Harvard University audience but was eventually offered to anyone with an email address in 2006. It is

worth mentioning that in the Philippines Facebook was preceded by other SNS that were embraced with enthusiasm by a large portion of the Internet-using population. This, in fact, is Amy's reason for being apprehensive about being on Facebook in the beginning – *Ano ba naman yung Facebook, may Friendster naman?* (What is with this Facebook when there is already Friendster?). Friendster was, indeed, the most popular SNS in the Philippines prior to the birth of Facebook. As a reaction to the rise of the latter, Friendster had undergone a radical reconfiguration. It is now known as a social gaming site. The Philippines has always ranked among the highest country, if not the highest, in terms of SNS penetration in recent years (Mcintyre, 2011; Universal McCann, 2008). As in many other countries at present, Facebook is the most popular social media platform in the Philippines, so much so that in various listings the country has been dubbed the Facebook capital of the world.

### **6.2.1 Timeline: The face of Facebook**

As of 2012, the Timeline has become a Facebook member's profile page. It is what others see and basically the space where one's musings could acquire a *certain* amount of finality and publicity (unless deleted, hidden, or modified) – it is where one shows and tells. The other significant page on Facebook is the 'Home' to which only the account owner has access. It is where the 'Newsfeed' is found, which shows the activities of other users connected to the owner or those that s/he chooses to receive updates from or subscribe to.

Home is also the place where one could become part of other people's postings through options that appear after each post: Like, Comment, Share, or Tag. 'Liking' showcases the number of people that, literally, 'liked' a particular posting. 'Sharing' has the potential to broaden the audience of a certain post since one could place it on one's own Timeline, another account's Timeline, or, in a group page. The 'Comment' function allows one to write something about a particular post that would appear below the text, photo or video along with other comments from other people. As of this writing, Facebook is experimenting with a 'Reply' button that enables users to post a response directly under a particular comment whereas currently, one has to specify the name of the person whom one wishes to address within a comment thread. Finally, 'Tagging' allows one's Facebook profile to be *attached* to a particular object – photo, video, or status update. When someone is tagged, a link is

created to that person's Timeline so that anyone who sees the particular post will also see a link to a tagged profile.

Amy accesses her Facebook daily and makes use of its various features regularly. Judging by her Facebook activities since she started an account in 2008 (data included in the study is up to the middle of 2012), many of the functionalities of the site have been utilised. The data I am focusing on in the study are elements within Amy's Timeline. This is where her thoughts about different issues are seen and where photos and videos of the family's ordinary and special days are witnessed by her Friends or those whom she allows access. I am not currently concerned with her 'Home' page where updates of her Friends' activities are deposited. If any of these activities are relevant to her in whatever way, she could always 'Share' it on her Timeline for people to see.

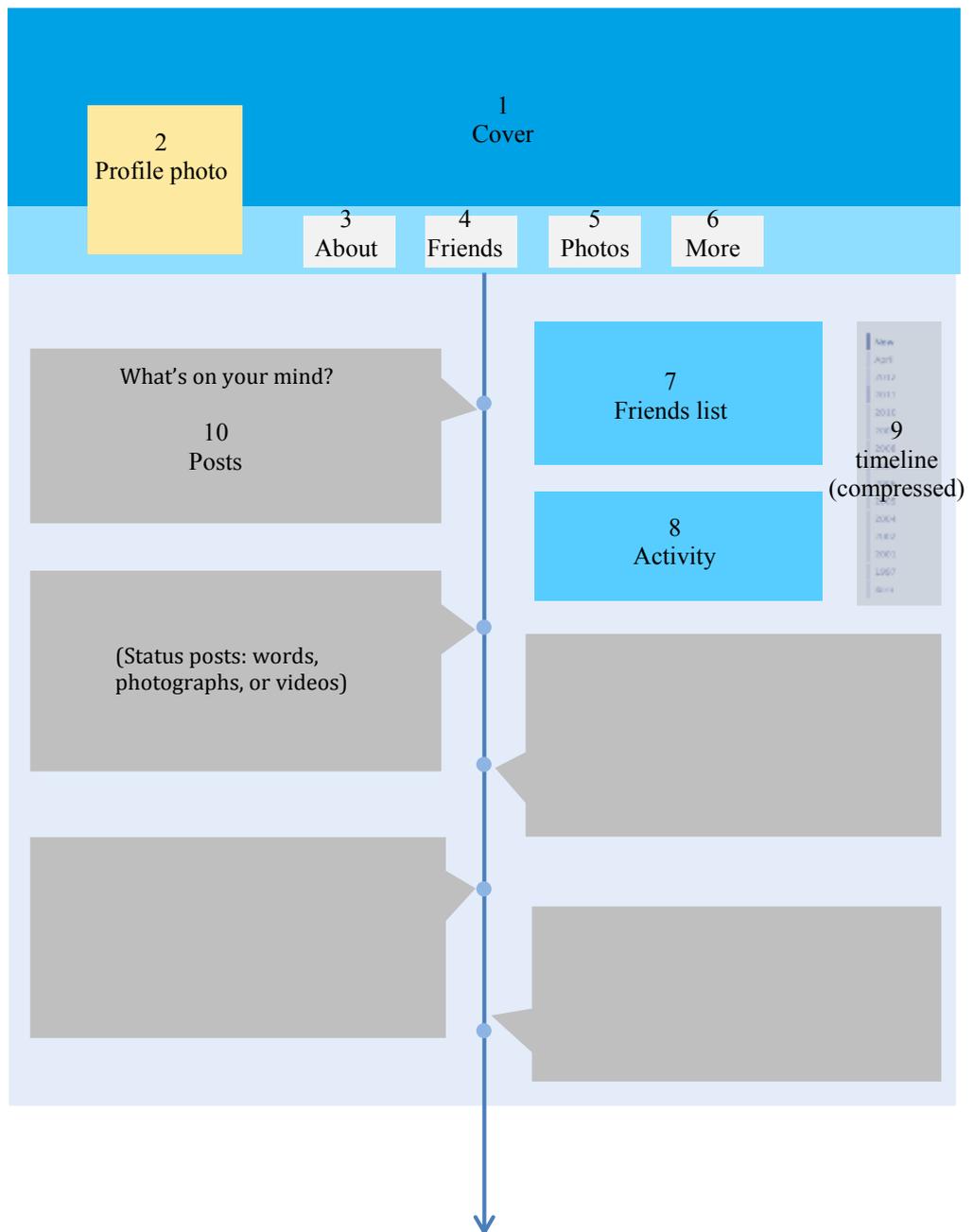
### **6.2.2 Navigating the Timeline environment**

The Timeline's basic structure during the time of data gathering is shown in Figure 6.1.<sup>20</sup> The 'Cover' (1) heads the page and its image is customisable but not the size, position, or shape. Within the cover is the profile photo (2) of the account owner and as with the former, its dimensions and placement are fixed.

The bottom side of the cover features links to the different information pages of the profile owner: the 'About' link (3) contains basic demographic information, 'Friends' (4) leads to a roster of other Facebook accounts that the profile owner added as 'friends', 'Photos' (5) refers to a collection of photos – individual or collected as albums – that the owner uploaded on the Timeline, and various other links that might offer clues about the interests of the owner, such as Music, Movies, or Books, that all appear under the umbrella link 'More' (6). This also includes the link 'Likes' (Facebook pages that the owner has 'liked' by clicking the 'Like' button) and 'Notes' (longer textual content, e.g., essay).

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<sup>20</sup> At the time of writing, Facebook has implemented another change to the Timeline format. Posts are no longer displayed on both columns but are now all on the right side while personal information, 'Notes', for instance, are on the left.



**Figure 6.1** The Facebook 'Timeline' environment (as of data gathering).

The main body of the Timeline is composed of two columns that display the ‘activities’ owners initiate on their profile (e.g. posting a status, uploading a photo, sharing a link). However, there are a few exceptions to this. First, on the right column, a partial ‘Friends’ listing (7) and an ‘Activity’ log (8) appear below the cover.<sup>21</sup> Beside these, a compressed version of the Timeline appears (9), showing only the months and years since the beginning of the Facebook account. This is a useful navigation tool since one can just click on a month of a specific year to view all posts under that period. A box appears above the most recent post that seems to prompt the owner to do an activity on Facebook, that is, make a new post by an evocative question: *What’s on your mind?* (10). If the owner is in no mood to engage in words, there is always the option to upload a photo or video.

Posts on the Timeline appear in reverse chronological order – earlier posts can be viewed as one scrolls down the page. And, for as long as the owner does not ‘alter’ any of his/her past postings (e.g. deletes them), anyone who views the Timeline is certain to discover that texts or images are as they were at the time of posting.

### **6.2.3 The place of Facebook in Amy’s immigrant journey**

It was the move to New Zealand that changed Amy’s lukewarm acceptance of Facebook. On 15 October 2008 she posted the status ‘just received a semi-good news’ on her Wall (pre-Timeline). The message might have been exciting for those who were familiar with their plans but ‘cryptic’ enough to those who were not in the loop. Amy confirmed that the post was about the decision of Immigration New Zealand to grant them a Work-to-Residence visa. In the ensuing days, her status updates mostly centred on the impending move. This spelled the beginning of her lively relationship with the said social media. She herself declared that if not for their resettling, Facebook might have not had the same degree of importance in their lives:

Iniisip ko baka kung kunwari nasa Pilipinas kami baka hindi ganun ka-ano yung gamit ko with Facebook. Kasi yun, e. You have to get in touch with friends. Parang may expectations din yung mga friends and relatives from the Philippines na mag-upload ka ng pictures para ‘O, kamusta na kayo dyan? Pakita ng pictures kung ano na ang nangyayari’ - so talagang

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<sup>21</sup> More recently Facebook has placed ‘Activity log’ as a small icon within the right side of the Cover. To its left is the ‘Update info’ link.

ayun, nagamit siya talaga. Parang ‘pagka matagal ka na hindi naglalagay ng status or nag-a-upload ng pictures parang magmi-message sila, ‘Ano na nangyayari sa inyo?’ Yung ganun. LAUGHS (From interview)

*I think if we had stayed in the Philippines I may not have used Facebook that much. That’s it. You have to get in touch with friends. Your friends and relatives from the Philippines also expect you to upload pictures like, ‘Hey, how are you all there? Show some pictures of what’s going on’ –so it’s really that, it was really used. It’s as if when you haven’t posted a status or uploaded pictures for a long time they would send a message, ‘What’s happening to all of you?’ Something like that. LAUGHS*

Amy’s use of Facebook is primarily practical as it acts as a convenient communication tool that helps maintain connection with significant people in the Philippines: it is cheap (free to create an account), efficient (personal messaging can be synchronous), and dynamic (multimodal features and multimedia functionalities). However, Facebook’s communicative value in Amy’s migrant life was not confined to keeping contact with family and friends in the Philippines. Its identity as *social media* and as platform for *networking* was affirmed in her early days in New Zealand. Amy describes quite vividly when she was trying to cope with a new environment that the city of Wellington provided:

So, nasa bahay lang ako. Sinabi ko talaga sa isa kong friend na, ‘Pambihira! The only social life I have is Facebook.’

Kasi nga lalo na kasi sa Wellington ang hirap lumabas kasi malamig, maginaw, hahanginin ka, iyong ganun. So, parang hindi ako masyado lumalabas ng bahay. So, iyon na iyon. Iyon na talaga iyong social life ko. Doon na iyon. Iyon na iyong kinakausap kong mga kaibigan. So iyong mga first few years talaga, iyon lang! Umiikot lang doon iyong buhay ko. (From interview)

*So, I stayed at home. I really told a friend, ‘Incredible! The only social life I have is Facebook.’*

*It’s just that, especially in Wellington, going out of the house proved to be a challenge since it’s cold, too cold, the wind blows you away, like that. So, I didn’t usually get out of the house. So, that was it. That really was all of my social life. It was there. It was where I talk to my friends. So, the first few years it was just that! My life revolved around it.*

She did not have work, had not yet developed a set of friends, and had not yet found for herself a community to belong to. She was spending the greater part of her day at

home and Facebook became a way for her to be included in a social network and have a life *beyond* the confines of her immediate family. What Facebook afforded Amy was more than a medium to communicate but a way to achieve a sense of *others* in a setting where seclusion was initial reality. By engaging with social media, she created for herself an interstitial space – no longer fully attached to her place of origin but not yet completely defined by her new place of residence. The Internet allowed her what Soja (2009) calls *third space*: ‘a meeting point, a hybrid place, where one can move beyond the existing borders’ (p. 55). In a way, networking with people on the Web, virtual as it was, allowed her to experience a ‘state’ alternative to, but in co-existence with, one that was more restrictive and limiting.

Having *others* by one’s side even when their presence is only made real by texts and images on a computer screen is a workable enough concession for someone in an isolating situation. Amy clarifies this point further by shedding light on the *therapeutic* potential of Facebook as a viable sounding board:

Siguro parang ano din therapeutic, ba LAUGHS. Alam mo iyon? Na parang since ayun, iyon nga, ilalagay mo iyong mga thoughts mo, ganyan-ganyan. Tapos parang may psychologist na...parang nakakatuwa na malagay mo doon. Tapos parang may personal album ka din na nandoon lahat. (From interview)

*Maybe it’s also somewhat therapeutic LAUGHS. You know, since you could, like, post your thoughts and such. Then it’s like there’s a psychologist...somehow it’s satisfying to be able to put your thoughts there. Also, it’s like you have your personal album where everything is there.*

She adds that the possibility of *feedback* for one’s posts is an appealing aspect of using Facebook. Compared to the more traditional and earlier new media modes of communicating with family and friends, such as text messaging or phone calls, the set-up of social media carries the potential to create a wider set of audience that goes beyond one’s kin. In Amy’s case for instance, her updates regarding the family’s life in New Zealand, although intended mainly for relatives who are in the Philippines, are potentially available to others who may or may not have any immediate interest in the matter. As she uploads photos of her children so that their grandparents in the Philippines get a glimpse of how they have grown, it is not only the grandparents that are able to witness this important event but also ‘Friends’ who are not barred from

doing so. Through the ‘comment’ and ‘reply’ features, a conversation sequence among those who express their thoughts commonly ensues. At the very least, posting on one’s Timeline is premised on the constant possibility of an interpersonal communication and an interactional event.

The ubiquity of Facebook in Amy’s life since her family moved to New Zealand is clearly brought about by the social media’s practical functionalities especially in terms of maintaining communication and mediating relationships. However, it is also necessary to look at Facebook not only as a pragmatic medium but at the same time, because less obviously so, a signifying one. Ricoeur’s notion of what becomes of events when they are transformed in ‘writing’ and Van Leeuwen’s take on what transformations happen to a social practice when it is *talked* about, both discussed previously, become relevant. ‘Fixing’ of events or experiences as textual objects, their autonomy from a restrictive meaning, and the possibility of a wider set of audience are all evident effects of social media engagement.

When Amy writes about her New Zealand experiences via different signifying modes available on Facebook, she automatically *rewrites* these life events based on her intentions at the moment of rendering them readable by others. It is in this discursive practice that I situate the construction of Filipino diasporic identity – in enunciations of ‘belonging’ and ‘attachment’ (Fortier, 2000; Krzyzanowski & Wodak, 2008) within an in-between state through the sign-making possibilities of a new medium of self-expression. Preceding this particular analysis is a discussion of Goffman’s dramaturgical framework that sheds light on the dynamics of self-presentation.

### **6.3 Presenting everyday life on Facebook: Goffman and identity performance**

In a more conspicuous manner, life as presented or represented on social media possesses the characteristics of a theatrical performance from which Goffman borrowed concepts heavily in developing his own brand of sociology. Presenting everyday life on Facebook becomes more manifestly ‘staged’ and at times more highly ‘dramatised’ (dramatic even) as the individual’s involvement in making his/her performance to others successful becomes highlighted by the very architecture of the said media format. For one thing, engaging with Facebook puts a

person in an immediate position of performance or presentation since there is no other way of being on social media but to present a self or activate a 'front'. One's presence on Facebook necessarily means that one is co-present with others – there is always the possibility of an audience so that interaction is potentially in order. There, of course, are times when nobody seems to be present to make contact (e.g. zero comments on a posted photo) but the potential of connecting with other people who are also on the social media site is what is always present. In other words, whenever one engages with Facebook, one has already internalised an audience.

This, of course, is not true only of social media situations since, as Bakhtin (1986) propounds, the style of our *utterance* depends on the speaker's sense of the addressee. 'Word is a two-sided act...determined equally by *whose* word it is and *for whom* it is meant' (Vološinov, 1986, p. 86). The difference that social media makes is the way they transgress the limits of physical togetherness in realising interaction and the efficiency of feedback mechanism for one's uttered 'words'. In effect, what the person who uses social media has in his/her 'inner world' is not just a 'social audience' (Vološinov, 1986, p. 86) but also the expectation that he/she is likely to get 'something' (e.g. positive comment) out of an *utterance* on the platform or a performance on the social media stage (e.g. status post).

### **6.3.1 Fronting a self: The Timeline as stage**

Fundamental to Goffman's dramaturgical formulations of daily interaction is the concept of 'regions of behaviour' in actual life, and this is also germane in understanding online engagement. The 'front stage' is where the performance takes place as it is the region that is accessible to the audience, whereas the 'back region' is where no one else other than the performers is allowed for 'it is here that illusions and impressions are openly constructed' (Goffman, 1971, p. 115). Goffman further explains the actuations of a routine on the front stage:

...when one's activity occurs in the presence of other persons, some aspects of the activity are expressively accentuated and other aspects, which might discredit the fostered impression, are suppressed. (1971, p. 114)

My analysis is focused on the Timeline as an obvious site of staging a performance since it possesses the various linguistic and semiotic elements that could potentially pertain to a particular persona that a person – as performer – wants to project. In other words, it is an online front stage that showcases a person’s self-presentation. In Amy’s particular case, the Timeline is where she gains the chance at projecting a life in New Zealand in a way that manifests specific aspects of it while, at the same time, concealing other facets of the same reality.

### **6.3.2 Managing a character: Identity performance on Facebook**

In *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* Goffman defines ‘performance’ as: ‘all the activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serves to influence in any way any of the other participants’ (1971, p. 26). I refer to this understanding in my interpretation of Amy’s Facebook activities as it clearly sets up the premise that her Facebook profile and the particular content she generates somehow make people see her and her life – *inter alia*, as a Filipino migrant in New Zealand – in a particular way.

Making a profile on Facebook with particular aims as to the *character* to be portrayed is an example of ‘impression management’, another basic concept Goffman postulated. Managing impressions in the presentation of self underscores the idea of intentionality. Rogers (1977) summarizes Goffman’s explication of intentionality in social interaction by emphasising that it zeroes in on three elements namely, some conscious awareness on the part of the actor, presence of interactional goals, and a conscious choice to employ certain modes of behaviour to shape specific outcomes (p. 89). In this study, it refers then to the notion of being on Facebook to deliberately create a presence, facilitate interaction, and regulate meanings. At the minimum, the very decision to create an account and construct a consistent character and narrative on one’s Timeline exemplifies intentionality.

I have been using the terms *performer* and *character* freely as if they were straightforward. Goffman himself used them to name the two components that make up an individual in his/her involvement in interactive rituals. The performer constructs the impression and the image while the character is the embodiment of the constructed impression and image (Goffman, 1971). These two elements always co-

exist and seeing that an individual is potentially always in interaction with others, the performer and the character are inseparable dimensions of a performing self. There are circumstances, however, where we become more conscious of and more consciously involved in donning a particular character. Under normal circumstances, this does not necessarily pertain to practices of deception but on the contrary, to the accentuation of certain 'truths'. We become more involved because there is more at stake in the attempt at pulling off the act to make it look 'real' and 'natural'. This notion of naturalness is what will become the linchpin of my analysis of Amy's Facebook self-presentations. I argue that Facebook, being an interaction of a *textual* order, makes apparent the factitious *nature* of the self. Although Goffman himself contended that social interactions mediated by technology 'provide reduced versions of the primordial real thing' (1983, p. 2), I doubt very much whether the term 'reduced' still applies to new technologies of communication that serve to characterise today's daily transactions and interactions. Goffman himself used his dramaturgical lens in reading mediated interactions such as his 'Radio talk' paper (1981). 'Physical' co-presence is no longer the only meaningful impression management game of our time (Jenkins, 2010). Indeed, specifically for Facebook, and perhaps in variable ways for other social media, social interaction is *re-ordered* by transforming bodily co-presence into a *textual* and digitised interface.

Facebook is a means to present oneself or a particular aspect of oneself to an audience using the sign-making 'equipment' made available by the platform and made meaningful by the *performer's* intent along with a technical and signifying repertoire. Aside from teasing out the significance of Amy's Facebook activities in her life as a migrant in New Zealand, my second goal in this chapter is to unravel the discourses of diasporic identity in the content she generates. In the succeeding sections, I pay particular attention to the way she transforms 'images' of her children as signifiers of an identity-in-transition. Two sets of texts compose the object of analysis. The first one, comprised of uploaded photographs, is a visual representation of Ben and Sarah in various contexts while the second one, more *text-based*, consists of Amy's status posts concerning a particular aspect of her children's behaviour that, through their mother's *re-telling*, potentially give off impressions of their emerging national identity.

#### 6.4 Growing Kiwis: Digital portraits of a sense of becoming

From 2008 to 2012, Amy's status posts about her two children, Ben and Sarah, totalled 143 (out of 634). Of the 549 photos uploaded and distributed over 87 albums of varying themes, they (either independent of each other or together) appear to be either the main subjects or, at least, present in some ways (e.g. holiday albums feature them prominently although they are not specifically the subject matter). Ben and Sarah's salience in their mother's Facebook profile demonstrates their significance in Amy's content management. This is not surprising considering that she has endeavoured to update her family (e.g. children's grandparents) on any developments in their lives, which would not be complete without a regular dose of posts concerning Ben and Sarah. What is more, Amy makes sure that significant people would be aware of any news about the children by *tagging* them in the posts. She notes the importance of this practice:

So, gusto namin malaman nila na 'O! Ganito na yung itsura ng mga kids.' 'O, eto yung ginawa namin nung isang araw.'

Kasi parang since yun nga, hindi naman nila nakikita kami regularly so parang to get in touch...Kasi kami lang yung wala e, sa Pilipinas. (From interview)

*So, we want them to see that, 'Hey! This is how the kids look now.' 'Hey, this is what we did the other day.'*

*It's like, since they don't get to see us regularly, so, it's like getting in touch...Since we are the only ones who are not in the Philippines.*

Relationships are intrinsically mediated (Madianou & Miller, 2012, p. 3) but new media have created a significant impact on the way families separated by distance sustain connection, involvement, and intimacy. Facebook has made it possible for Amy's family in the Philippines to be part the children's lives by, at least, seeing the things they do and the changes they go through with every status update and photo/video upload. As their relatives also have their own Facebook accounts and have access to the various features of the site, they interact through it in different ways that are beyond the scope of the study (e.g. chat, video conference or private messages). Still, Amy's Facebook Timeline, as the foremost stage of self-presentation, is a central information source and signifying space for those who wish to know how the family is doing since being away from the Philippines.

Uploading photos is among Amy's regular activities on Facebook. It is one of the best means of documenting her children's lives in New Zealand to ensure that family and friends get to share in their overseas life by having access to the images. I am focusing on two albums that Amy herself created and a set of photos from her husband's Facebook account. The choice of these texts is based on their claim to the two children's identity with explicit invocation of their national belonging, racial character, and ethnic identity. The first of the albums created by Amy bears the title *Growing Kiwis* and the other is *My Ben Through the Years* – both act as documentation projects of how the two children's lives unfold in New Zealand. The third album is named *filipiniana pix*, a compilation of photographs that was made by Ted on his own Facebook but was deliberately appropriated by Amy when she made it visible on her profile.

#### **6.4.1 To see/read is to believe: Portraying Kiwi identity**

*Growing Kiwis* possibly expresses the most obvious claim to a particular national identity among all of Amy's albums in the sense that it explicitly uses the label 'Kiwi' to refer to the children. It becomes especially significant when considering their position as migrants in New Zealand and the internalisation of a particular subjectivity this entails. The collection of photographs has Ben and Sarah together as the sole subjects with the first set uploaded on 16 August 2010. These were all taken in New Zealand and most were set at their home in Auckland. The album has 28 photos in total with the last set uploaded on 13 November 2012. In contrast to the rest, this latest set could be considered 'professional' quality studio shots that utilise more props, proper lighting, and a crisp plain white background. All other photos in the album are 'domestic' photographic work – family snapshots – that were taken by either Amy or Ted in their home. This is by no means a statement about the quality of the product. Personally, I see the photos as relatively well-crafted: creative effort is evident in executing the theme and adequate photographic skills are demonstrated by the composition, lighting, and colour grading in the pictures. For what it is worth, my layman's assessment of the standard that the photos meet speaks of the parents' intentions and *intentionality* in presenting a certain image of their children to their presumed audience. For instance, having the children dress up in matching colours

on almost every ‘photo opportunity’ is an indication of careful and deliberate planning.

Appendix H presents an analysis of the photographs in the album based on the Representation and Viewer Network outlined by Van Leeuwen (2008, p. 136ff). This particular analytic system relates the depicted persons to the viewer and pertains to the conveyance of distance and power reproduced in the act of looking. I have also employed an analysis of the Visual Social Actor Network (Van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 141ff), which deals with how persons in an image are depicted although I have complemented it with *connotative* analysis (Barthes, 1972, 1977; Machin, 2007, p. 21ff) to further enrich the reading of the representation of the children in the photographs. In particular, I focus on objects, setting, and pose of the subjects in the album.

The majority (23 of 28) of the photos in the collection are ‘close shots’ (either medium shots, medium close-up, or close-up), that is, Ben and Sarah are tightly framed, rendering ‘closeness’ or ‘nearness’ of the children to the viewers. They are mostly seen from a ‘frontal angle’ (all photos) and ‘eye level’ perspective (23 of 28) as well, suggesting that they should be regarded as ‘engaging’ with the viewer; not powerless objects to be looked at or looked down upon but ‘present’ and ‘actual’ subjects to interact with. Their ‘direct gaze’ in almost all the photos reinforces the projection of their active presence – they ‘demand’ that viewers become involved in the reality of their portrayed moments and not just treat them as ‘spectacle’ of distanced scrutiny (Van Leeuwen, 2008). As a matter of relating the subjects of the photographs to the viewer (or the representation and viewer network), the album clearly encourages that Ben and Sarah be taken as if they were close to those who are looking. This probably is especially true for the intended recipients of their images – their family and friends, specifically, their grandparents who are not able to spend time with them because of distance.

As a necessary component of their visual representation, the other dimension of Amy’s representation of her children pertains to how they are depicted (the visual social actor network). In other words, understanding how people are depicted and how their relation to the viewer is projected are always co-present in realising visual representation (Van Leeuwen, 2008). In almost all the photos in the album (24 of

28), Ben and Sarah are together, wearing a big smile, and sharing endearing moments. As a matter of involvement in action, Ben is depicted as more ‘active’ (agent) than his sister (patient, or receiver of action). It is Ben who hugs, kisses, or puts his arms around Sarah’s shoulder. The reason for this may be practical since she was too young at the time the photos were taken to easily follow instructions for poses, although there is no doubt that she was always ready to put on a smile. Another potential meaning is worth considering though, one that is more consistent with the ‘gendered’ connotation of the children via the ‘teddy bears’ and the ‘black tire’ in the final photographs (27 and 28) in the collection. The stereotypically heterosexist representation of Ben and Sarah may be a function of staging a ‘normative’ ideal – one that is standard, status quo, and easily recognisable. I do not mean to comment on the values in which they are raised, as I have no way of accurately knowing such. However, as a matter of staging an image of the children, there is an apparent consistency to the privileging of social ‘norms’ in their representation. Aside from depicting stereotypical gender roles, Ben and Sarah also potentially represent an ‘idealised’ childhood through the actions they portray and objects they are seen with. The sweet and cheerful disposition they display, the bright solid colours of their clothes that are, for the most part, matching in every photo, the teddy bears and the black tire (that could be construed as toys), and the ice lollies they show off for the camera all evoke a feeling of ‘carefree’ innocence redolent of an ideal childhood construct. Additionally, most of these photos have the home as setting, accentuating, once more, another ‘ideal’: the nuclear, heterosexual family. The concept of childhood, a time of innocence and a stage with specific needs and values, developed in the nineteenth century alongside the notion of domesticity and ‘home’ as a space of warmth and spontaneity, a centre of privacy and order, and a refuge from the outside world (Holland, 2004, p. 57). If Ben and Sarah’s images entice the viewers to partake in their current reality, the reality might be that in New Zealand, where they are building their lives at present, an ideal childhood is being realised in an ideal home within an ideal family structure.

As with any endeavour at portraiture, the images in the album tend to be conceptual in structure, opting to show a compact and impactful idea rather than depict a narrative. The said photographs are also not unusual – parents, generally, do have a predilection for taking images of their children in happy settings or poses, bearing a

cheerful expression on their faces, and showing them off to others or keeping them for posterity. This is the main reason why I claim that they are both ‘specific’ and ‘generic’ in terms of categorisation (Column 6 in Appendix H). While they no doubt depict specific individuals, the images of the persons are ‘genericised’, that is, they could be considered specimens of ‘routine’ family snapshots. As far as the name of the album is concerned, there is nothing distinctly ‘Kiwi’ about the children’s images.

My attraction to the title is in the straightforward tone with which it characterises the subjects of the photos. Declaring Ben and Sarah’s identity as Kiwi is captured in two simple words but its implication is far more complex. Ideationally, the title represents a process of change that the two children are undergoing. This change has something to do with their national identity and it appears to be happening as we speak. The title performs a *classification* – categorising the two through a particular cultural label that in turn leads to expectations of concrete indicators that would make readily observable what exactly the term describes. As an ascription of a character through a category name, one would expect some perceptual realisation of the concept of being *Kiwi* in the images.

Looking at all of Ben and Sarah’s pictures in the album, however, one realises that the promise of the *name* is not visually fulfilled or, perhaps, intentionally ignored. The change in their age is evident, as each successive picture in the series would show differences in their physical appearance resulting from their natural physical development. But as far as making visible signs that would lead the viewer to realise that the children are, indeed, turning Kiwi, the images seem insufficient. On the other hand, maybe this is too tall an order. Measures to verify that one possesses a particular identity could be limiting if taken as absolutes. However, bearing in mind that the images in question were thoughtfully and creatively put together in terms of, for example, having a theme or showing the children’s happy and comfortable state, it is, therefore, not unreasonable to expect that the label attached to them would exhibit its indications – *symbols* – especially since there are examples of such in other contents of Amy’s Facebook.

The album *My Ben Through the Years* is one clear case of displaying performative elements of being Kiwi. Also, it has the potential to illustrate identity as a process of transformation from being one character to another if viewed as a staging of the self.

The album has 33 photos with the first few bearing a caption that tells Ben's age when the picture was taken. Uploaded on 1 October 2008 (they were still in the Philippines), the first photo in the collection shows him at four months old. There are some candid shots or those where he engages in an activity in a particular setting but most look as though he was prompted to execute a pose. No distinct thematic element defines the collection aside from the fact that it documents the boy's image at different stages of his life in terms of age, set in various locations. Some photos were taken in an amusement park while others show him in a karate studio. Some portray him wearing a costume (e.g. Halloween) while others are pictures with his friends. There is a feel of randomness to the selection and the only connecting thread is the seeming chronological arrangement of the images if one looks at them one-by-one from beginning to end. The last set of photos was uploaded on 21 December 2012. In the photos, Ben was nine, shots were taken in their Auckland home, and he is seen picking lemons with two friends. Appendix H also demonstrates the deployment of the analytic scheme used in the previous album for this particular set of images. I am focusing my discussion, however, on photos 28-30, as they form a set that unequivocally signifies Ben's national attachment.

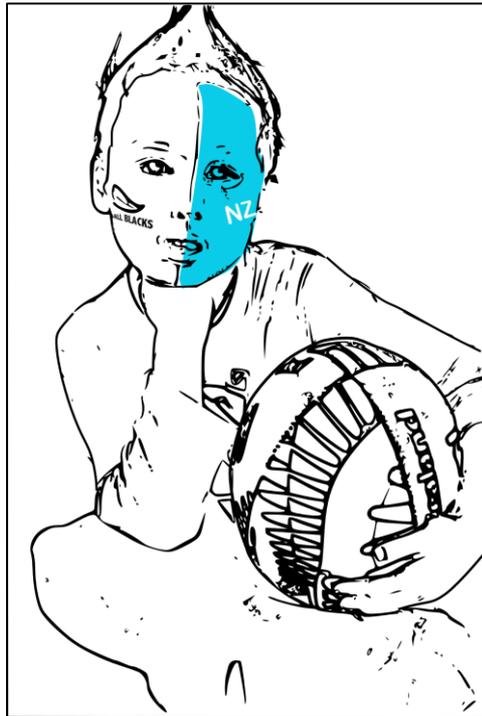
Uploaded on 9 October 2011, the three photos fulfil the goal of declaring Ben's national identity and, consequently, Amy's performance of their migrant subjectivity. Coinciding with the Rugby World Cup 2011 (RWC 2011) that was held in New Zealand, this series of photographs depicts Ben with the All Blacks (the national team) emblem painted on his left cheek while the entire right half of his face was painted blue to highlight the letters 'N' and 'Z' that are in white. Photo 28 is a close-up shot, front angled, eye-level, and addresses the viewer with a direct gaze. As with many of the photos in the previous album, it is an invitation for those who look to share in Ben's reality – to accept it as palpable and true. But more than this, the tight shot of his face emphasises the symbols that he proudly displays – symbols that have the capacity for connotation, which, as Van Leeuwen notes, potentially determines an identity by standing for a particular classification, a standard categorisation, a

state of 'being' (2008, p. 49). This identification is reinforced further in photos 29 and 30 in which Ben is revealed to be holding a rugby ball close to his body while deliberately posing for the camera. Figure 6.2 is a representation of photo 30. To protect Ben's identity, an outline drawing showing the major elements of the photo is provided.

Compared to the first album that claims the children turning Kiwi, Ben's 'biographical' photographs more obviously exhibit a transformation that peaks at the exhibition of his 'RWC' pictures. Performing Kiwiness is more easily witnessed in this collection although there is no title that blatantly labels the child as a particular identity. Still, it was able to utilise other means of expression with more visual impact. The symbols painted on his face and arm, and the rugby ball he displays act as effective signifying objects. Further, in terms of Kress and Van Leeuwen's visual grammar, the way albums are designed to be viewed on Facebook adds interest to the depiction of Ben's *becoming*: first, as a growing young child and, second, as a carrier of a particular sense of national belonging and cultural association. The arrangement of elements from the 'left to right' side of a page may be seen in the same way as verbal language is made whole *textually* based on the Hallidayan structure of the 'given' and the 'new' (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2007; Machin, 2007; Van Leeuwen, 2003). Being a Web 2.0 site, Facebook's features surpass the interactivity of static pages so that elements of the left and right side of a layout would need to be seen differently. When a particular album is accessed, a set of *arrows* is provided at the left and right side of the image that acts as a navigational control for seeing the next photos or going back to the previous ones. The 'given-new' structure is, thus, modified by the affordances of the medium although it still possesses the same basic principle: clicking on the right-pointing arrow signifies a movement forward, enacting a transition to the 'new'. As one progresses in viewing Ben's pictures in the order determined in the album his transformation becomes evident.

Any New Zealander would likely recognise the *signs* on/with Ben in the photos. The symbol of the All Blacks, composed of a fern leaf above its name, and the iconic rugby ball he clutches to his side signify an expression of solidarity with the country at a very important period in its (sports) history. The NZ emblazoned on the other side of his face is a clear giveaway, even to non-locals, not only of the fact of his

residence in the country but also of an association with the nation's aspirations. National symbols, waved and flashed in our daily lives, shore up wide-reaching sentiments of solidarity with one's purported nation and compatriots. Ben's display of a presumably 'fervent' support for the national team is a good example of what Billig (1995) terms *banal nationalism*, made 'corporeal' by no less than the symbols inscribed on and objects close to his body.



**Figure 6.2** An outline rendition of a photo of Ben, from the Facebook album *My Ben Through the Years*

#### **6.4.2 Invisible symbols: Asserting an essential Kiwi self**

Butler (1990) argues that identity and subjectivity gain an imagined 'internal core' only through *performative* means such as acts, gestures, enactments, and other discursive equipment that through repetition *fabricate* what we believe to be our inner substance or essence. Performing an identity is evident in the album *My Ben Through the Years* as it does not only show important symbols that are recognised as part of a wider New Zealand national cultural practice but also, it suggests how one can exhibit a change in oneself through performance. This is the exact opposite of the first album *Growing Kiwis*, which upon inspection reveals that no explicit

signifying element indicating a national identity is presented. The apparent nonchalance is curious. If identity is announced by performative means where an imagined essence is made real through externally oriented embodied performances, Ben and Sarah's images in the said album seem to be unsuccessful. However, the claim to an identity may be hinged on the viability of a different aspect of its performativity in this case.

When Amy posted the images and attached the label 'Growing Kiwis' to them, she may have been staking a claim to her children's identity not through a profusion of popular signs but by specifically appropriating the power of naming usually monopolised by those in authority, such as the state (Bourdieu, 1991). The album name *anchors* (Barthes, 1977, p. 38) a preferred meaning to the images. Kress and Van Leeuwen's idea of *classificational processes* in realising conceptual representations – depicting essences versus narratives – is also similarly relevant (2006, p. 79ff). In the album, Ben and Sarah are related to each other as a specific 'kind' of a larger category, essentially placing them in a 'taxonomic' structure where they are 'subordinates' (i.e. samples of) to the 'superordinate', *Kiwi*, as announced by the title of the album.

Amy and her family's duly recognised status in New Zealand as Permanent Residents may be legitimate enough to *name* the children as 'official – i.e. explicit and public' – members of the New Zealand nation (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 239). There may be a lack of visible signs for the claims about Ben and Sarah's Kiwi identity in this particular album but, at the same time, it unequivocally imagines (i.e. names) them as just that: Kiwis. By categorically claiming something in the same instance of excluding any externalised evidence, it is as if Amy, through the images, claims that her children's *Kiwiness* is a given, whether seen or not, for it is *essentially* what they are (or will eventually *become*). Interestingly, the lack of obvious manifestations of identity performance in the images works to make the claim stronger. The imagined 'internal core', per Butler, now becomes more real even without *staging* some proof. However, just when such an assertion seems to stabilise the children's identity and make their national belonging definite and secure, Amy's other semiotic endeavours on Facebook open the door to inquiring or even contradictory construction of the situation. The album, *filipiniana pix*, is a case in point.

### 6.4.3 *Digging for the roots: Displaying the Filipino in New Zealand*

Uploaded on 14 July 2012, the collection is composed of eight photographs that show Ben and Sarah wearing traditional Filipino costumes. Sarah is in a ‘baro’t saya’, a set of white, collarless, embroidered blouse and a plaid skirt, while Ben is seen in a ‘camisa de chino’, a long-sleeved top made of light fabric, and loose pants. Figure 6.3 shows one of the pictures in the series that in total has four solo shots of Sarah, one solo of Ben and two shots of them together. As with the *Growing Kiwis* album, Amy and Ted’s creative intent is, again, apparent in the collection.



**Figure 6.3** A photograph of Ben and Sarah wearing traditional Filipino costume from the Facebook album *filipiniana pix*

As a particular presentation of an identity, it is obvious what the album aims to display. These are clear performances staged for the specific purpose of showcasing Filipino traditional culture enacted by the children who, in other instances, are carriers of a purported Kiwi identity. Garbing them in clothing that no one ordinarily uses in present times (not even in the Philippines from where the tradition hails) and putting their images out on a platform where others could see are arguably caused by

a desire to build up characters that exude a Filipino *substance*. Although on the basis of the angle of the shots and the directness of their gaze in the photos (see Appendix H), Ben and Sarah are shown to demand an active interaction from the viewers, their passive stance (i.e. they are uniformly just standing in almost all the photos) portrays them as mere conduits of a traditional Filipino image construct. This representation is in consonance with the album name that centres on the ‘object’ rather than the subjects of the images. Choosing to give the title ‘Filipiniana’ puts emphasis on the items that characterise the culture instead of the persons who use them. In other words, their activation in the album as social actors is *instrumentalised*, that is, they are ‘objectivated’ by reference to the cultural items they ‘carry’ (Van Leeuwen, 2008, pp. 46–47). In contrast to the album *Growing Kiwis* that directly asserts Ben and Sarah’s national identity, *filipiniana pix* attempts to transpose the connotative relevance of objects (i.e. costumes) to the children’s cultural attachment.



**Figure 6.4** A ‘vignetted’ and sepia photograph of Ben and Sarah wearing traditional Filipino costume from the Facebook album *filipiniana pix*

Aside from the national clothing, colour treatment is another powerful signifying mode in the photographs. This semiotic affordance relies on the cultural *associations* (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2002; Machin, 2007, p. 69) that the sepia tone has in half of the photos in the album, see Figure 6.4 for reference. Additionally, ‘vignetting’ also becomes a crucial feature of the images. Combined with the monochromatic

treatment and traditional costumes, it gives off a vintage feel and reinforces the projection of early colonial iconography. Vignetting is the fading of the edges in a photograph caused by failure of the lens in older cameras to focus light at the centre of the image. However, as could be seen in the children's pictures, the effect was no accident and was deliberately applied through digital means. The potential for meaning of this signifying mode is based on its 'provenance' (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001, pp. 72–73), the time and place of its origin become the reference for the relevance of its particular employment in constructing Ben and Sarah's images that appear to simulate eighteenth-century Philippine cultural landscape.

In order to show what it is to be Filipino in New Zealand, Amy uses images of their children as embodiment of widely recognised symbolic references. What is more, the images also depict the ideally sanctioned values and sentiments of society, in consonance with Goffman's characterisation of performances in interaction. In *My Ben Through the Years*, the child shows off a passionate regard for a well-loved New Zealand national team and identity-defining sport; in the Filipiniana photos, there is a harking back to a nostalgic past, a period portrayed as necessarily more old-fashioned or ancestral and perhaps, more ideal(ised). In what appears to be an atavistic reference to a Filipino national identity, the *exposition* of Ben and Sarah's images fulfil Amy's desire to speak to New Zealanders about her cultural origins and also, as a prime instance of binary nationalism, to demonstrate to her Filipino compatriots that they have not forgotten who they are:

I think hindi lang sa akin, pati doon sa mga post nung...mga friends ko na andito...sa New Zealand, sila din, e, nagpopost! *Ah*hm, siguro parang iyong identity - sila din may friends na sila din na Kiwi so para malaman ng friends nila na Kiwi siguro parang, 'Eto iyong identity namin talaga. Eto iyong nation namin, ganito kami.' At the same time parang iyon, parang masabi mo doon sa mga relatives mo sa Philippines na kahit nandito na kami parang concerned kami sa Philippines meron parang, iyong roots namin dyan pa rin... (From interview)

*I think it's not just mine, also the posts of my friends who are here in New Zealand, they do have posts! Ah*hm, perhaps it's for the identity – they also have their own Kiwi friends, so that their Kiwi friends would know that, 'This is our real identity. This is our nation, we are like this.' At the same time it's for, it's like telling the relatives in the Philippines that even though we are here, we are concerned about the Philippines, it's like, that is still our roots...

The *banal* exhibitions of national/cultural belonging from two different poles exemplify Camroux's idea of a double-faced national identification that symbiotically fosters a 'diverse sense of rootedness', making more meaningful the complex exigencies of attempts at belonging in the former and the new home (Camroux, 2008, p. 24). The expression of this binary sense of national identification is, of course, contingent upon the daily historical specificities of each unique diasporic experience.

Ben's display of New Zealand identification was a result of participating in an actual national event where their current community and location had the capacity to spur in them (Ben and the family) a sense of solidarity with the country. In the particular presentation of Filipinoness, it seems that Amy and Ted had to dig deeper – literally and figuratively. A short description accompanies the album, which gives us an interesting and most apt metaphor to underscore the *deepness* of the source of re-Filipinising their children: *we found some filipino costumes in our baul (aka as luggage) (sic) during our mid-winter cleaning. Baul (ba-ool) is more accurately translated as old wooden chest that is commonly thought to contain long-forgotten items. The word befits the images of Ben and Sarah as they were made to re-enact a particular customary practice in the past.*

The three albums illustrate a polyvalent display of identifications resulting in a multi-centric location of identity in both space and time. This largely shows that identity, as they are products of performances and re-enactments, and of namings and re-namings, is a *character* imbibed by an individual that is contingent with the position one occupies in the structures of social relationships and not necessarily stable and inherent in the person. The understanding of identity created by the discourses of *being* and *becoming* is, truly, oftentimes contradictory. In the next section, I illustrate more clearly how they co-occur in Amy's performances of Filipino/Kiwi subjectivity, still through her children's images, and the necessity of doing so.

### **6.5 Out of the mouths of babes: The body as circumscription of identity**

In this section, I focus on Amy's verbal posts about her children that give off impressions of their process of *becoming* a particular identity through a not so unexpected aspect of migrant life. There is particular focus on Ben because,

apparently, he had been learning new ‘things’ after over a year of being in New Zealand that are remarkable enough to warrant some Facebook posts, as shown in the following three instances in 2009:<sup>22</sup>

**Table 6.1 Amy’s Facebook Status Posts about Ben’s acquisition and practice of New Zealand English (English translations in parentheses)**

1. July 16, 2009

ben just said, ‘Isn’t it a lovely day.’  
Pambihira, may pa-lovely-lovely na tong batang to.  
(Incredible, so now this kid uses ‘lovely’.)

2. November 13, 2009

heard ben counting..  
‘five, six, SI-VIN, eight, nine, TIN.’  
oh no, kiwi accent na.  
(oh no, kiwi accent already.)

3. November 23, 2009

talking to Ben after dinner:  
AMY: You have a new classmate tomorrow – Emma!  
BEN: Oh, IM-MA! (pambihirang accent yan.. hehe)  
(incredible accent..hehe)

The posts about Ben with explicit connection to the particular issue of identity noticeably have something to do with language. But it is not completely surprising. Heritage language maintenance of migrant families has always been a critical issue in studies of migration. Based on Amy’s status posts above, they seem to be experiencing such a process. Adding to the complexity of this language dynamics, however, is the fact that they come from a country that is characterised by contentious and conflicted linguistic politics. Possessing pre-migration English proficiency, it is equally unsurprising that Ben was able to acquire the language easily and is now mainly using it with just some retained knowledge and production of Filipino that is manifested only when prompted to speak it. As an indelible vestige

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<sup>22</sup> Similar posts about Sarah have appeared recently. These, however, occurred after the formal data-gathering period.

of American colonial rule, English, as an official Philippine language, is taught from the earliest levels in school and has been considered a prestige language bestowing status and class to those who are able to wield it. Local popular culture has always had to contend with foreign counterparts, especially Hollywood products, and Philippine elite culture, inaccessible to the majority of the population, is *worded* in English. The great cultural divide in the Philippines is easily observed through the distinctive standings of the colonial (English) and the national (Filipino) language (also often referenced, but inaccurately so, as Tagalog) where upper class taste is denoted by the former while low brow (mass culture) sensibilities are attached to the latter. It is, thus, not uncommon for Filipino children of at least a middle class background to belong to a household where speaking at least some English is deliberately practiced since it is a sign of affluence, education, and pedigree. As a fundamental aspect of the Filipino linguistic *habitus*, the hierarchies constituted by the unequal regard for the different languages in the Philippines – especially highlighted by the *diglossic*<sup>23</sup> relationship of Filipino and English – translate to conflicted understandings of individual selfhood and, more complicatedly, of national identity. Thus, it is typical to hear laments about the loss of Filipinos' English-speaking ability, especially as a potent economic resource, in official national discourses since national development is constructed with an 'English-dominant core' (Lorente, 2013).<sup>24</sup>

Ben's English proficiency, in other words, is somewhat assumed. Since they had clear plans of migrating, Amy confirmed that they had been speaking to Ben in English in preparation for their eventual move. Her status posts in 2009, therefore, were not so much about the child's language acquisition as they were about his

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<sup>23</sup> In defining 'diglossia', Ferguson (1959) refers to the divergent status of two related languages used in one language community wherein one has high 'prestige' compared to the other. Fishman (1967), on the other hand, applies the use of diglossia to unrelated languages (e.g. unequal status of Filipino and English in the Philippines).

<sup>24</sup> In 2003, for example, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo ordered the restoration of English as medium of instruction in schools as a step towards global competitiveness. The rationale behind the order was that Filipinos are fast losing their English literacy and reinstating the language in schools was seen to protect the competitive edge of the Filipino labour force in the international market.

adoption of a burgeoning identity by means of a linguistic variation that seems alien to the Filipino experience: *oh no, kiwi accent already!*

Traced back to the country's colonial experience, Filipinos' bias for a specific brand of English, albeit unfortunate, is understandable. The breadth and depth of American influence in Philippine politics, education, and culture is a testament to the imperial handiwork carried out under the guise of *civilising* a race through benevolent assimilation. The fruits of the colonialising labour are still visible up to this day. The idea of a Filipino identity often contends with such historical encumbrances brought on by the white man's burden, hence, our penchant for anything American that could sometimes be equivalent to anything Western. This extends to the dominant views on language that is simultaneously constituted by and constitutive of the prevailing language ideologies I explained above. In practice, the prestige bestowed upon a particular language still has nuances that stem from legacies of the colonial past. For Filipinos in general, it is not enough that one is able to speak English to benefit from its stature, one also has to be able to speak it with an *American twang* – or appropriations of it. Of course, not everyone believes in such setting of standards but, nonetheless, the thinking is normalised. For many Filipinos, American English is the standard by which all other varieties are measured and eventually, found lacking.

The deeply entrenched notion of a standard way of speaking English could explain the source of Amy's concern. At the very least, for her, New Zealand English is *different* from what she has been used to. I do think, however, it is safe to assume that her concern is not entirely serious. This could be most easily observed in the use of the written representation of laughter (*hehe*) in the November 13 post that worked to dissipate any sign of the situation being dire. Aside from this, being a native speaker and personally knowing Amy allows me to have intimate knowledge of her language and how, even in written utterances, her sensibility exudes from her choice of words such as *pambihira* (incredible) – a favourite expression of hers – that she often uses in light-hearted casual conversations. This seemed to have the same effect on other people – her audience – judging by their comments on the particular posts. Two general categories of comment could actually be created based on whether the commenters were from New Zealand (or Australia, to an extent) or from the Philippines (or Filipinos elsewhere but not New Zealand). The first group confirmed

Ben's acquisition of the unique Kiwi accent while the second group, who appears to be not familiar with NZ English, likened it to the often denigrated Visayan accent due to the distinct pronunciation of the vowel 'e'<sup>25</sup> – yet another dimension of language ideologies and attitudes in the Philippines but this time, one that is based on the central position of Manila Tagalog relative to the periphery (outside Manila) where the Visayan region is included. All commenters appeared to have taken Amy's post as tongue-in-cheek and posted retorts in a similarly casual vein.

What, to me, is more interesting because more difficult to pin down is Amy's exact sentiment about Ben's linguistic behaviour as a marker of the child's changing identity. The format of the posts provides clues as to the goal of this particular presentation. Each post is divided into two parts: one, the reporting of an incident or scenario; two, Amy's reaction to or opinion about what has transpired. Ideationally, the retelling of the scenario where Ben's NZ English was manifested aims to represent an unadulterated version of the event – it was a mere reporting of what had happened that is achieved by the direct quote format (e.g. Ben said...). It also fulfils a basic interpersonal function – to give the audience/reader a piece of information. This piece of information is crucial in setting up Amy's own expressions of amusement about her son's speaking behaviour. Looking closely at this structure, the information offered the audience represents Ben as the sole agent of his actions – in this case, speaking with a Kiwi accent or expression. Imagining the scenarios described in the short posts *qua* re-enactments, the setting may be the home where Amy overheard or had a conversation with her son. Since these are simple reports, we can safely assume that these are truthful retellings of the events. They are 'semiotic actions' (as opposed to 'material' ones) – projecting meanings rather than material effects (Van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 59). In particular, Amy's representation of Ben's statements are 'embedded representations' that commonly take the form of direct quotes – the exact wordings – and not just their meanings, potentially signifying action that 'enhances the credibility of the embedded representation' (Van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 61) by appearing to assert that 'it is what it is' and nothing more.

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<sup>25</sup> What Amy was referring to in the noticeable shift in Ben's pronunciation was probably the *DRESS* vowel in New Zealand English ('short e') that moves closer to the vowel in *KIT* so that *red* sounds like *rid*. In the post above, Emma was pronounced by Ben as 'Imma'.

The way the situations were represented depicts Ben as an active agent in the shifts in his speaking behaviour and since no other participants were implied, we are drawn to view the child as the centre of the process. Of course, influences on these changes are varied and the process more complex than what short recaps are able to provide. However, as far as the above status posts are concerned, Ben is imagined to be the one who is speaking naturally with a Kiwi accent and expressions. The *natural* or spontaneous character of Ben's Kiwi English appears to be an important point in Amy's three posts. They essentially attest to the fact that Ben would eventually talk the Kiwi way. And if language is one manifestation of a certain identity shift, it would also seem that to Amy, her son's smooth adjustment to the Kiwi way of saying things is a sure sign of his becoming Kiwi in identity. The Filipino (or Tagalog) enclitic particle 'na' in the statement 'kiwi accent *na*', for instance, functions as an adverb of time and denotes the completion of a process. If the process referred to was the acquisition of a certain accent and if this linguistic shift proves to be a major aspect of a person's identity, then the acquisition of another identity may, indeed, already have been completed (based on Amy's assumptions).

Adopting or acquiring another identity is, of course, only assumed drawing on Amy's standpoint. Her statements denoting the fulfilment of an activity or action are not even absolute references to the real situation especially because identities are never easy to grasp fully. What we can gather for sure from the posts is Amy's ambivalence about the changes in her son's speech, in particular, but perhaps, on a grander scale, his identity as Filipino in New Zealand. Her reactions were mostly *emotive* as shown by the expressions 'oh no' and 'pambihira' (incredible). In representing social action, Van Leeuwen argues, cognitive and rational reactions, rather than affective ones, connote greater power of actors (2008, p. 58). In the case of Ben's acquisition of new linguistic traits, it is not so much Amy's power that is at issue but her role in the changes her son is undergoing. There was no real shame to be traced nor was there pride as she recounted the instances of Ben's Kiwiness. Her feelings about the event were effectively veiled by ambivalence. What was there, for sure, was a recognition that their son (or children) will eventually change in his identification and sense of self by living in a different country. The expression 'oh no' may not necessarily be an intimation of dread or worry. Considering that Ben's speaking style was even made a subject of Amy's Facebook content, there is reason

to believe that she wanted family and friends to see how well her son had been adjusting and having them see his linguistic performance of being Kiwi may convey that message. As opposed to the anxiety denoted by the expression ‘oh no’, there is an unsaid sense of relief that her son is actually doing quite well amidst the changes in his environment (Ben came to New Zealand when he was four). She chose, however, to water down this expression of reassurance by constructing statements that portray a feigned disbelief. The ambivalence in terms of claims that have to do or might be interpreted as expressing assertions about their lives as Filipinos in New Zealand is, still, a product of a multicentric location of identity-building that needs to be constantly negotiated and refashioned. The vacillation may be a consequence of internalising a double sense of taking root in both New Zealand and Philippine *soil*. For migrants like Amy, this is inevitable since the reconstruction of their subjectivity is propelled by their very positions as diasporic subjects.

Similar to Ben and Sarah’s photographs that demonstrate *being* and *becoming* Filipino and/or Kiwi but through a visual grammar, Ben’s acquisition of an accent, remarkable to his mother, necessarily performs for others a particular declaration of an identity. The difference lies, however, in the way these performances have been deployed on the social media. The photographs in the albums discussed above are obvious constructions of an author who is distinct from the depicted subjects. The characters they portray in the images are realised by the configuration of the originator through available expressive *items* both offline and online. Ben’s demonstration of solidarity with New Zealand in the Rugby World Cup through the symbols painted on his face and the two children’s expression of an unflinching attachment to the Filipino homeland by getting dressed in traditional costume are instances where their images were transformed into signifiers of an identity as a crucial part of Amy’s staging of their New Zealand life. In contrast, Amy’s status posts of Ben’s adoption of a Kiwi accent attempt to represent a truthful account of the boy’s changing identity but one that emanates from the (body of) subject himself and not effected by performative means external to him. This appears to present an instance of becoming that is natural because it cannot be eluded, much like the *Growing Kiwis* images. In other words, Ben and Sarah are bound to become Kiwi given that they are fulfilling a life in New Zealand. Interestingly, the representation of a national identity as inescapable is also expressed as dually located. Binary

nationalism is, once again, summoned even when, or because, the view of identity seems to conform to an essentialising outlook.

In the following status post dated 23 September 2011, Amy once more says something about her children's accents. This time, however, she also issues an assertion that would trump the allusion to a Kiwi identity. Commenting about food and its discourse on selfhood, Amy posted:

Ben liked our breakfast this morning – sardines and pandesal.<sup>26</sup> My kids may grow up with a different accent or a different view of society but they will always have pinoy<sup>27</sup> tummies.

Note that the children in the statement are objectivated – they are represented by metonymically referencing objects to define their identity. In particular, Ben and Sarah are *instrumentalised*, represented by instruments or objects that are attached to them (i.e. sardines and 'pandesal'); and *somaticised*, represented by reference to a part of their body (i.e. tummies). What these modes of representation achieve is a racialisation of particular acts (i.e. eating habits as a function of their Filipino nature) where an identified cultural practice is transformed into an essential (i.e. natural) characteristic. The inescapability of a particular identity – *essence* – is, in this case, veered towards the other direction. Whereas the adoption of an accent *speaks* about Ben and Sarah naturally becoming Kiwi in character, their taste (in food, specifically) is depicted as originating from their naturally Filipino bodies. Whereas in Ben's rugby performances, identity is literally inscribed on the body, in the above post, the body circumscribes the development and expression of particular identities.

Grammatically, the modality of the second sentence at once reflects the duality of identity references in line with the idea of binary nationalism and the level of certainty Amy has about her children's selfhood. Turning Kiwi is always a clear possibility as shown by the modal 'may' but Filipino is ultimately what they *will always* be.

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<sup>26</sup> 'Sardines' is typically fish canned or bottled in oil or tomato sauce. It does not necessarily pertain to the kind of fish. 'Pandesal' (or *pan de sal*) is local bread that is typically part of an idealised Filipino breakfast.

<sup>27</sup> *Pinoy* (pee-noi) is a diminutive of 'Filipino' that is generally neutral in connotation.

The ambivalence towards the children's national identity is rejected and re-affirmed at the same time. Equivocation concerning their Kiwiness and Filipinoness will always be present but this is reassuring. Echoing Camroux's symbiotic take on the binary location of national attachments and belonging, Amy provides reason for accepting the dichotomy:

...parang second class ka pa din kasi Asian ka. Parang dito mas ok kung Pacific ka. Kasi mas nakaka-identify sila dun compared with Asians...So may mga instances na parang ang hirap dahil Asian ka at mas Pacific iyong orientation nila or Maori, pero at the same time parang medyo accepting din naman sila. Hindi ko alam kung dahil iyon lang iyong perception...or iyon talaga iyong reality, so iyon. Although since Pilipino ka naman, Pilipino naman madali mag-adjust and you're here for your family not for anything else, sige-sige lang. (From interview)

*...it's like you are still second-class citizens because you're Asian. Here, it's like better to be Pacific. They identify better with them compared with Asians...So there are instances where it's difficult since you're Asian and their orientation is more towards Pacific or Maori, but at the same time, they seem to also be accepting. I'm not sure whether it's just a perception or it's the reality, so that's it. Although since you're Filipino and Filipinos adapt easily and you're here for your family, not for anything else, you just go on.*

Notice that in Amy's processing of the diasporic experience in New Zealand, a similar ambiguity is felt in her perception of its society's attitude towards migrants. Seeing herself and her family as *second-class citizens* at best, the need to belong is tempered by the knowledge of such not fully happening. It is interesting to note that Amy's immediate assessment of their low status as Filipino (and Asian) migrants is in reference to Pacific Islanders and Maoris – groups that may have a relatively greater presence in New Zealand society but, nonetheless, continue to experience racial prejudice, inequalities, and exclusion as other minority groups do, including immigrants (New Zealand Human Rights Commission, 2012). This may be the reason for constantly negotiating their position in the already conflicted racial relations characterising their new home. As shown by Amy's portrayal of her children, the most comfortable place in their current situation is the space provided in between Filipino and Kiwi attachments with occasional reference to a natural *ethnic* disposition, as she claims in the interview, *Filipinos adapt easily*.

## 6.6 Conclusion

The two albums, *Growing Kiwis* and *My Ben Through the Years*, are re/presentations of images of Amy's children as carriers of an ostensible Kiwi identity, while *filipiniana pix* depicts their Filipino cultural identity. What they provide the viewer is a discursive substantiation of identity claims. In the first album, a label insinuates at the subjects' Kiwiness; in the second and third, the subjects become a site of display of nationally recognised symbols. There is, of course, no substantial description or argument that would indicate a guaranteed attestation of the claim. As an everyday experience, identity is, at any rate, beyond the enumeration of evidence that supports the declaration of who we are because any set of proofs will always be incomplete, although not necessarily inadequate. Goffman reminds us that any staged performance of the self is characterised by a lack in information, thus, *misrepresentation* (1971, p. 71ff). This is the main reason for relying on *signs* because they are hoped to compensate for missing relevant details. Using signs is the only available means through which a sense of self is externalised, thus, performed for others to see and for the self to constantly remember.

Being Filipino and Kiwi is always a process of becoming. Semiotic practices make this more apparent and online performances of such make it more pronounced. In documenting her children's lives in New Zealand for the benefit of family and friends, Amy's notion of who the Filipino is in New Zealand is ultimately *given off* since she is actually the one performing a particular identification by invoking the images of her children as *props* in the staging of a sense of self. When Amy's children, Ben and Sarah, appear on Facebook in status posts or photo uploads they become the focal point in the particular moment of their mother's performance, and the locus of meanings to be made by the potential audience – intended ones and accidental. Making them wear certain clothing and recreating their personae through words transform them into signs of, in many specific cases, Amy's take on the family's identity as Filipinos and Kiwi.

The children become Amy's proxy, then – an embodiment of the hopes and goals of having a full life in a new land. They also become signifiers of a binary belonging and attachment because they have the capacity to externalise the process of becoming which is also a possibility of belonging. Since the children are the main

reasons for moving overseas, they should also be the manifestation of the realisation of their migrant goals. In the act of displaying them as symbols of life as a journey and identities as a process, Amy may not only be documenting their lives for those who were left behind to see but also, for themselves, as the ones who chose to move away, to act as reminders that the decision they made was good.

In the next chapter, I continue my analysis of Amy's Facebook content. It is still my aim to illustrate how the social networking site's signifying affordances aid in the projection of life in New Zealand and construction of Filipino diasporic identity. However, my focus will be on 'extraordinary' events that Amy chose to make salient on her Facebook profile. As opposed to, but in necessary conjunction with, the 'everyday' lives of Ben and Sarah as New Zealanders, I demonstrate how 'special' occasions become openings for an assertion about their belonging and identification.

# 7 BIG EVENTS IN A SMALL WORLD

## EXTRAORDINARY DAYS AND MIGRANT BELONGING ON FACEBOOK

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### 7.1 Introduction

Miller (2011) argues that Facebook has spelled the ‘death of time and distance’ in the way it enables people to come ‘closer to the sense of the family as a whole group in constant interaction with each other’ (p. 194). This proves to be true in Amy’s case, as shown in the previous chapter. But as with other social media, using the platform is more than pragmatic for it ‘fulfils a variety of private and public purposes’ (de Zúñiga and Valenzuela, 2010, p. xxxv). The Internet, in general, not only provides communicative functionality to individuals, it also generates platforms of self-expression, representation, and identity-formation.

The previous chapter was focused on the way Amy presented her children on Facebook. Keeping family and friends in the Philippines abreast of how the children have been doing also becomes a way to impart meanings that go beyond mere sharing of information. Ben and Sarah have been at the centre of the family’s migration. Not only are they one of the most important reasons for moving but now, as children growing up in the newfound home, they appear to inhabit the important role of exhibiting New Zealand identity even as they continue to represent their Filipino roots.

This chapter, on the other hand, concerns extraordinary events. As opposed to the everyday situations featured previously, the attention this time is on the special occasions that Amy chose to highlight on the social media stage. Specifically, I do a close reading of two sets of her Facebook content that coincide with ‘big’ events the family celebrated in 2011: the Rugby World Cup (RWC) and their second-year anniversary as residents in New Zealand.

Special events and daily life are distinct experiences and occurrences in any society and people tend to ‘observe’ them differently. Ordinary, regular, and routine affairs are executed almost automatically while extraordinary events are marked by

activities and emotions that recognise their separation from the diurnal rhythms of life. The distinction notwithstanding, there is a process of ‘co-constitution’ involved in the realisation of this difference, as Lewis (2013) explains:

That is, special events are created to illuminate and intensify aspects of daily life, and daily life is often grasped or experienced in the light of reflections and formulations derived from special events...Insofar as daily life is routine, habitual, even boring, it may go unmarked or unremarked: it may recede from awareness. Special events are designed not to recede but to stand out, to excite and to stimulate, and therefore they tend to engender more salient experiences and more memories. But these excitements and memories return to enliven daily life again, to charge extraordinary routines with traces of ordinary experience. (p. 6)

The conduct of our daily lives is characterised by the intersection of everyday and special events. One is embedded within the other and their presence, though distinct, cannot be entirely separate. Amy’s presentation of the binary national attachment of her children exhibits snapshots of day-to-day living – an aspect of their lives that is necessarily connected, makes more meaningful, and is made more meaningful by the foregrounding of special occasions tackled in this chapter.

In the analysis of these events that Amy chose to feature on her Facebook Timeline, I focus first on her posts during the RWC. These were produced from early September up to the end of October in 2011 and they range from short verbal posts, uploaded images, to sharing external *texts*. The second special event that I wish to discuss is an audio-visual presentation (AVP) of their second year in New Zealand that Amy produced herself and uploaded on Facebook in February of the same year, before the rugby posts were created. For practical reasons, I am presenting the RWC activities first since I will be using the same mode of analysis for this set of texts as I did in the previous chapter, specifically, the social actor network developed by Van Leeuwen and applied to both texts and images. What I hope to demonstrate in this section is the confluence of mega sporting events and social media – how both the inter/national affair and personal social media engagement created an opportunity for national belonging for migrants like Amy. The second-anniversary text, on the other hand, centres on privileging particular aspects of migrant life over others in piecing together different multimodal elements into one coherent *text* that projects the idea of the ‘good life’ in the process of place-making. For this section, I opt to refer to a

distinct, but related, analytic scheme that is concerned with ‘composition’ as a multimodal semiotic system, likewise outlined by Van Leeuwen (2003) with reference to earlier work (see Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1997). The decision to use this particular mode of analysis is the identity of the text itself. Among all of Amy’s Facebook content presented in the study, the anniversary AVP is illustrative of her creativity and intent in ‘composing’ a specific ‘representation’ of their migrant life by utilising different semiotic modes at her disposal.

## **7.2 Crossing the gain line: National belonging in sports and social media**

In rugby, the *gain line* refers to an imaginary line that divides the territories of the competing teams at any period in the game. It essentially marks the boundaries that must be crossed in order to gain partial advantageous positions or territory. Points are not usually scored as the result of a straightforward move down the field. The value of the gain line is that it indicates where a team stands in the attempt to reach the target. Crossing it means a team has gained an advantage and moved closer to the objective, the opposing team’s goal line. Amy, as I show below, seemed to have crossed the gain line as displayed by her Facebook RWC performances. The mega-event had become a way for her to traverse the borders of migrant identifications so that, in keeping with the liminal conditions in rites of passage, she had somewhat undergone a process reserved for an ‘initiant’ in her quest to travel the path in between a former and new self. By using the different online and offline signifying resources available to her, she was able to represent her status as a *passenger* in the ephemeral moments of being part of the collective. This simultaneous engagement with the sport and new media paved the way for her inclusion in the country (or, a *textualisation* of it) as a legitimate citizen who fulfils what is desired by a totalising discourse of nationhood.

### **7.2.1 A small nation making big claims**

New Zealand’s bid to host the 2011 Rugby World Cup was won by the campaign ‘A stadium of 4 million’ (Bruce, 2013; Jackson & Scherer, 2013). Immediately, we are drawn to the cleverness of the pitch and the rhetorical manoeuvrings that it accomplishes. The four million obviously represents the population of New Zealand

and this aggregation seemingly makes everyone who considers him/herself a New Zealander complicit in the affair.

In recounting the whole saga as the country's most compelling and memorable venture in recent memory, the CEO of RWC 2011, Martin Snedden, claims that the World Cup success is a New Zealand story made possible only by the ineluctable link between being Kiwi and the sport of rugby. He argues that the latter is not only a significant aspect of New Zealand society but more fundamentally, a major component of its very *essence*. This is, apparently, the reason why the World Cup could not have happened elsewhere. Snedden explains further:

No other country has such a widespread and comprehensive love and awareness of rugby as do the people of New Zealand...I am not wishing to denigrate any other country where rugby is played but rugby is part, a vital part, of our country's DNA. The 'stadium of four million' concept, the embracement of the event by the whole country, is not possible anywhere else. (2012, p. 283)

Not everyone accedes to imagining rugby and the RWC as the determinants of a natural national core but to *go against the grain* is unlikely to be recognised as also a legitimate expression of belonging to the nation. Bruce (2013) alleges that the fervent desire to depict New Zealand as the rightful location of the world's biggest rugby event prompted the silencing of dissenting voices and rendered invisible the perspectives that did not support the dominant discourse. In attempting to convince the world and the country that the unity of New Zealanders is as organic as the unity of the RWC story line, disruptions in the *plot* must be dearticulated. In other words, only one great tale must be written and heard and to Snedden, who proclaims that '*it is a great story of New Zealand and New Zealanders*' (2012, p. 282), this treats the success of the RWC as the undeniable peak of this New Zealand narrative.

As a sport mega-event<sup>28</sup> that saw its realisation on New Zealand shores, RWC 2011 was a chance for the small and isolated nation to show the world that it has 'arrived' on the global stage and prove its mettle by taking on the serious task of delivering to

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<sup>28</sup> Jackson & Scherer (2013) and Roche (2000) define mega-events as large scale cultural events that has dramatic character, popular mass appeal, and international impact.

an international audience the best rugby experience since the inaugural World Cup held in New Zealand in 1987. But even as the country was getting into the thick of preparations, there were sectors that had been opposing the hegemonically peddled absolute good that the RWC was to herald. Some had argued against it from an economic perspective saying that it was not a sound venture given the greater losses that the country would eventually incur. Others opted to question the cultural and symbolic integrity of the project especially since it further romanticised the coupling of the sport and the national sense of being.<sup>29</sup> Though its local and global impact is largely beyond doubt, there is still a need to recognise the diversity of voices that dispel the *regimes of truth* that the RWC 2011 called upon and constructed for itself.

At an institutional level, the dominant idea of the RWC being absolutely beneficial to the country was made real by the media and the state playing it out (see, for instance, the report of Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment, 2012 on the economic impact analysis of the event). On a more personal level, there were those who were incredulous about the capability of the country from the start, those who were just not interested in rugby, and those who were more critical of its lasting cultural value but might have been silenced or eventually persuaded by the almost ‘rabid’ sense of participation as a sign of being true Kiwi (Bruce, 2013). The multiplicity of voices that is needed to get a more holistic picture of the experience is not the same as Snedden’s statement, though, when he pushes further the rhetoric of the RWC 2011 as a New Zealand story: *It was a story that crossed and broke down boundaries. People could approach the world cup from all sorts of angles but with a common purpose* (2012, p. 284). While it is true that different people in the country could see the World Cup from different angles, I am doubtful about the uniformity of the purpose. Even when that purpose might pertain to the country being one and united, the diversity of backgrounds and experiences of those who comprise New Zealand prevent the meaning of RWC 2011 to be narrowly constructed.

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<sup>29</sup> For an analysis of RWC 2011, the journal *Sport in Society: Cultures, Commerce, Media, Politics* came out with a special issue in 2013 dedicated to the event. Volume 16 Issue 7 contains six articles discussing and dissecting the World Cup from multiple perspectives.

### 7.2.2 Facebook, sports, and liminality

Amy, like many migrants, is a good case for illustrating how one national event is signified differently by a people who are supposedly constituted by a single governing discourse. While the World Cup had become an opportunity for New Zealand to present to the world what it is capable of achieving, holding the mega-event in the country had also become an opening for Amy to apprehend the sport in ways that are seemingly in line with the reinforcement of claims to a homogenised national identity. This is not to imply that her processing of the event conforms to the dominant discourses of nationhood, nationality, and national identity as designed by the state and its corporate counterparts. Rather, I argue that the migrant status is a precarious one and seizing moments to revise the marginality of one's place in the receiving society could be accomplished by the creative, and necessary, pursuit of managing discourses of the self. I illustrate this claim by showing how Facebook had occupied a unique place in Amy's internalisation and performance of being a legitimate part of the nation as she was taking part in the event.

The value of RWC 2011 as a window of opportunity to appropriate a national belonging is effectively explained by Turner's elucidation of *liminality* in ritual events, as explained in chapter 3. To recall, Turner qualifies that true liminality is only seen in less stratified, cyclical, and more stable societies where participation in rituals is communal. In post-industrial contexts, he developed the concept of the 'liminoid' or liminal-like experiences where the in-between status is approximated in individualistic activities of cultural production. He gives as an example literature and the arts, and sports and leisure. Participation in them is a temporary escape from the impositions of the daily grind, i.e., as 'free time' separated from work (Turner, 1982, p. 36).

Getting on Facebook is an example of a liminoid activity. If we go with Turner's classification, the RWC becomes another instance of a liminal-like event. Rowe (2008) asserts, however, that modern sports should be considered as true liminal occasions since they fulfil the classic conditions of traditional tribal rituals – the sources of Turner's exemplars of the transitional experience of moving from one status to another. Sports events, Rowe argues further, are characterised by the quality of true liminal experiences in smaller traditional societies in the sense that, aside

from being an ‘in-between’ experience, they are communal, obligatory, and undifferentiated in practice of the sacred (work) and profane (leisure). Liminoid endeavours, on the other hand, are post-industrial carry-overs of traditional rituals that are individualistic pursuits, voluntary, and dichotomised in terms of their view of work and leisure. Rowe points out that unlike other liminoid examples such as literature and the arts, sport exhibits the traits of a true liminal experience.

At the heart of performing a ritual is the indispensability of the *collective* since it is the community structure that makes meanings in a ritual legitimate and it is also against the backdrop of the community structure that meanings become destabilised during the liminal phase. In consonance with traditional rituals, sports or sporting events are liminal performances since they are realised only through the premise of the collective: they emerge from the collective as opposed to being a product of one individual, they possess and profess the collective spirit of the community of their origin, and they attract the collective to them (Rowe, 2008, pp. 135-136). RWC 2011, then, served to become a cultural performance in a post-industrialised setting akin to the *social drama* enacted by a traditional ritual. It fostered a sense of *collectivity* by cultivating oneness with the country in support of one’s national team and by transcending national boundaries in extending *esprit de corps* to the entire international sport community. The ascendancy of the collective could not have been expressed more obviously by the rugby anthem, *World in Union*, particularly in the following lines: ‘Gathering together/One mind, one heart/Every creed, every colour/Once joined, never apart’.<sup>30</sup>

For Amy, being *in union* seemed to have taken a more specific turn as attested by her Facebook activities at the height of the event. As the RWC was projecting a world united by the common goal of camaraderie amidst competition in sports, Amy was professing an emerging identification not only with the sport that was alien to her up until the mega-event, but also with the nation where her family chose to begin a new life.

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<sup>30</sup> The anthem had a significant part in the opening ceremony of the RWC 2011. The finale in the elaborate visual spectacle featured the Eden Park grounds as stage and screen for gigantic visual projections, traditional Maori performances, the All Black legend Jonah Lomu, an oversize rugby ball suspended in the air, and an oversize replica of the Webb Ellis Cup.

**Table 7.1 Social actor network analysis of Amy’s RWC-related Facebook activities during the event (September to October 2011)**

Excerpt number	Date	Activity	Content	Translation	Socio-semantic actor representation
1	9 September	Status post	I'm happy for the Kiwis. We've never seen them so excited like today (Rugby World Cup kasi). Feels like Pinoy christmas. Parang everybody in last-minute shopping mode.	...(It's because of the Rugby World Cup). Feels like Filipino christmas. As if everybody is in last-minute shopping mode.	'I', 'We' <i>activated</i> 'Kiwis', 'them' <i>collectivised</i> 'Pinoy christmas' <i>activated</i> 'everybody' <i>indetermined</i>
2	9 October	Status post	Yey! Go All Blacks! That was an exciting game! Muntik na ko matulog sa nerbyos! See you next week Australia!	I was so nervous I almost went to bed!	'All Blacks' <i>nominated</i> 'I' <i>activated</i> 'Australia' <i>spatialised, collectivised</i>
3		Status post	Go All Blacks! Let's send Argentina home!		'All Blacks' <i>nominated</i> 'us' <i>activated, collectivised</i> 'Argentina' <i>spatialised, collectivised</i>
4	16 October	Status post	Go All Blacks! Let's do this!		'All Blacks' <i>nominated</i> 'us' <i>activated, collectivised</i>
5		Status post	Di naman horror pinapanood ko pero nagtatakip ako ng mata. Ano ba ito. Go All Blacks! we love you Weepu!	I'm not watching horror but I'm covering my eyes. What is this.	'I' <i>activated</i> 'All Blacks' <i>nominated</i> 'we' <i>collectivised</i> 'Weepu' <i>nominated</i>
6		Status post	Amazing win All Blacks! Atin na to!	This is ours!	'All Blacks' <i>nominated</i> 'ours' <i>associated</i>
7	23 October	Change of profile photo	(Changed profile photo to All Blacks emblem, see Figure 7.11)		'All Blacks logo' <i>instrumentalised categorised</i>
8		Status post (with photo)	Here we go! Go All Blacks! (with photo of children watching the All Blacks game on TV; Ben wears an All Blacks jacket)		'we' <i>collectivised</i> 'All Blacks' <i>nominated</i> 'All Blacks jacket' <i>categorised</i>

Table 7.1 continued

Excerpt number	Date	Activity	Content	Translation	Socio-semantic actor representation
9		Status post (with photo)	Cinnamon rolls & flat white at half time (with photo of food mentioned, see Figure 7.1)		'flat white' (text and photo) <i>categorised; instrumentalised</i> 'cinnamon rolls' <i>instrumentalised</i>
10		Status post	1 min to go.		
11		Status post	A fantastic win! Congratulations All Blacks! You made NZ proud!		'All Blacks' <i>nominated</i> 'You' <i>personalised</i> 'NZ' <i>spatialised; collectivised</i>
12		Status post	So proud and so happy for this place we now call home. God bless New Zealand.		'I' (presupposed) <i>activated</i> 'God' <i>activated</i> 'NZ' <i>spatialised' collectivised</i>
13	25 October	Status post (with video)	Just one of the reason why we love this country (with link to the YouTube video link 'all ours. again' <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DFUUuEFmKGY">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DFUUuEFmKGY</a> )		'we' <i>collectivised</i> 'this country' <i>specified. collectivised</i>
14	27 October	Share (with video)	We were not at the fanzone but the emotions seen here are about the same as what we felt at home. :) (with link to the video 'Our World Champion All Blacks!' <a href="http://vimeo.com/31010288">http://vimeo.com/31010288</a> )		'We' <i>activated, collectivised</i> 'fanzone' <i>spatialised</i>

Table 7.1 shows Amy's status posts in 2011 September and October – the period of intense activities leading up to the finals. I am only showing her posts that are pertinent to the World Cup although during this time, her Facebook content production mostly concerned the event. My use of the Social Actor Network analysis to examine the posts is reflected in the final column.

Most of these Timeline posts were status updates except for the change of profile photo on 23 October and 'sharing' a video found on the video-sharing site Vimeo<sup>31</sup> on 27 October. Of the 14 posts, nine were purely (verbal) status updates while two had accompanying photos and one had a linked video<sup>32</sup>. My analysis at this point focuses on Amy's own produced content and although the two videos she chose to feature are interesting and significant in their own right, I will not be doing a close reading of them. I am, however, implicating the act of linking external texts or items to the Facebook profile and the productive, distributive, and semiotic dynamics of this functionality that characterise social media. I also still view Amy's RWC posts through the concept of self-presentation but one that is uniquely configured by the connection between the diasporic experience (itself characterised, in many ways, by being in-between) and the liminality of the sporting event wherein the collective becomes paramount. In a way, I am summoning the dramaturgical perspectives of both Goffman and Turner in making sense of Amy's social media performance.

### **7.2.3 The migrant as *passenger*: Positioning the self within the collective**

The subject who is in transition during a liminal period is imagined as a 'passenger' (Turner, 2009). In a situation that is marked by ambiguity in terms of social structure and meaning, a liminal event, such as the RWC, is constituted by subjects who are to

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<sup>31</sup> The said video could also be found on YouTube and on its creator's own website. It was also recognised by Martin Snedden (2012) in his book *A Stadium of 4 Million* and made mention of the remarkable way it was able to capture the whole spectrum of emotions expressed by the people during the finals game that ended in an All Blacks victory.

<sup>32</sup> The YouTube link in the 25 October post is a congratulatory video by Adidas to the All Blacks. The company is also the team's official sponsor. Jackson and Scherer's (2013) article on the RWC 2011 dissects the implications of this corporate relationship on the practice and reception of the game and sees this commodification of the sport as a contested terrain in the neoliberal sphere.

undergo a journey and perhaps, change. In traditional rituals, such as rites of passage, the initiand is bound to acquire a new status after going through the transitional period. But while participating in the ritual, they are temporarily transported into a reality that escapes the strict ordering of ordinary life. The liminal stage places people ‘in between distinctions’ (or in between the former and new status), which is essentially a process that transforms them into ‘beings-in-transition’ (Rowe, 2008, p. 128).

Turner coined the term *communitas* to refer to a sense of heightened togetherness which people might feel with one another once the ‘superficial clothing of age, status, occupation, gender and other differences had been removed’ during a liminal period (Rapport & Overing, 2000, p. 233). It was the experience of *communitas* made possible by the temporary suspension of all rigid structures in the liminal performance that made Amy, and perhaps, others who are in a similar marginal status in New Zealand, find a way to own and perform an identification during the RWC that on ordinary days would have been more difficult to achieve. I would like to call attention to her journey as a ‘passenger’ in this liminal period as revealed by the developments in her Facebook activities.

On 9 September, she made her first rugby-related post for the period. The pronominal choice (‘we’, ‘them’) and use of classificational labels (Kiwis, Pinoy) reveal an ‘in-group vs. out-group’ identification. Amy’s words immediately enact a sense of a specific belonging and acceptance, of being one with a particular collective or ‘being aligned alongside particular ideas’ (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 84). Using the labels ‘Kiwis’ and ‘Pinoy’ is an obvious representation of her own ethnic non/belonging. In an instance of *collectivisation*, she admits being ‘happy for the Kiwis’, lumping them together as a group with presumably homogenous characteristics and attitudes relevant to the situation being represented. Coupled with the use of a third person personal pronoun, *them*, she completely separates herself from the particular ‘collective’ that she may feel ‘happiness’ for but still considers different from her or her own belonging. What is more, the *activation* of herself (‘I’) and her ‘group’ (‘We’) in the first two sentences of the post suggests not only distance but a position of an outside observer that sees the *other* as subjects of interest and curious scrutiny (‘We’ve never seen them...like this’).

The act of distinguishing between what she is and what she is not, however, should not be considered as an antagonistic move or an expression of a denigratory othering. On the contrary, her next statements reflect a bifocal perspective in the experience of another culture wherein one sees others against a background of oneself, and oneself against a background of others (Fischer, 1986). This bifocality is a necessary mode of 'looking' in today's environment where transnational and transcultural mobility is the norm; where one constantly needs to confront objects, images, ideas, and practices that heretofore were unfamiliar or in some cases, unreal. Using the *indeterminate* 'everybody', perhaps signifying a more generous level of 'inclusivity', Amy's take on the 'unusually ecstatic' atmosphere during the RWC was coloured heavily by one of the most important occasions for Filipinos: 'Feels like *Pinoy christmas*'. Christmas celebration, indeed, becomes the lens through which she attempts to comprehend the sporting event not least in relation to the widespread consumerist exercise that goes with the mentioned season. Still, the sympathetic juxtaposition of two entirely different occasions in two entirely different contexts illustrates Amy's desire to bridge the gap that will only get smaller as her immersion in the games becomes more intense and her vision of an identity becomes entirely reformatted.

The second set of status posts, coming a month after her initial RWC commentary, marks the beginning of a reevaluation of her position in her new country. Not only is there a remarkable intensification of emotion in relation to an All Blacks game, there is also a noticeable shift in the manner with which she regards the team and, more importantly, herself in relation to the team as a carrier of national identity.

The 'All Blacks' is specifically named or *nominated* in all verbal status posts from 9 October up to 23 October, the day of the Finals (Excerpts 2-6, 8, 11). This should be no surprise as Amy expresses support for the national team. Its greater relevance, however, becomes more evident if coupled with her pronominal choice that, once more, is able to portray a sense of being part of a collective (see Excerpts 3-6, 8). For example, in emphatically saying 'Let's send Argentina home!' (Excerpt 3), the 'Us vs. Them' dichotomy is once again referenced but this time, in an instance where Amy finds (or presents) herself as being part of the All Blacks, Kiwis, and New Zealand pitted against the 'other', that is, Argentina – the 'them'. This status post,

along with Excerpt 2, also illustrates a case of *spatialisation*, where the persons comprising the teams are not only collectivised but represented as the countries they play for. As a semantic move, it only strengthens Amy's claims of identifying with her own collective – the New Zealand team and the nation itself.

Framing her relationship with the team and nation with the use of an inclusive pronoun was repeated in other instances (16 October – 'Let's do this!'; 23 October, Excerpt 8 – 'Here *we* go!') and in one case it took on a possessive form expressed in Filipino: *Atin na to!* (16 October). 'Atin' (*ah-teen*) means 'ours' and by this declaration, Amy was *associating* herself with the final victory in claiming that the championship will be *theirs* – the All Blacks, New Zealand, Kiwis, and herself included. At this point, the transformation of a sense of belonging from a bifurcated lens (by simultaneously citing Filipino and Kiwi realities in comprehending Rugby), as expressed in the initial status post, to a brazen claim of not just the championship but the *fact* of being part of the New Zealand nation has become evident.

The emergent character of this identity has a visual analogue in Amy's Facebook enactments. One of her status posts on 23 October – the day of the Final – signifies the change she is undergoing. Her status says: '*Cinnamon rolls & flat white at half time*', and as with all photo statuses on the Timeline, the image follows immediately below the text. Figure 7.1 shows the said photo that, although clearly pleasurable to look at, is nevertheless nondescript. It could have been one of the many banal iterations of the same genre of vernacular images (e.g. food photos) that comprise Amy's Facebook until we notice how the two items in it played a significant part in her World Cup spectatorship.

In the interview, she explained that part of the family's plan to enjoy the final game on television was to have lots of food as they sit and watch. Preparing also became her way to buffer against the anxiety of awaiting the results. Putting the photo on display on her Facebook profile is, however, another matter as it was an act that had an entirely different performative effect. In showcasing the image, she was also referencing a distinctly Kiwi object. 'Flat white' (a coffee beverage) is locally recognised as a New Zealand creation/construction, and invoking its name and image as something that is attached to one's set of habits could facilitate an evocation of a particular attachment and identity. This is a case of *objectivation* – an

*impersonalising* procedure that was able to achieve, in this instance, not a ‘de-humanisation’ of Amy but a projection of the connotative meanings important to her, i.e. ‘being Kiwi’, when she posted the image.



**Figure 7.1** Image accompanying status post (excerpt 9) on 23 October

While it was easy to realise the cultural significance of ‘flat white’, the other item, cinnamon rolls, is not redolent of Kiwiness. Although not iconically Filipino either, they are quite popular in the Philippines with multinational franchises making them available as an upmarket food item. This explains Amy’s familiarity with it but it is still incapable of immediate reference to a national identification or attachment unlike ‘flat white’. The relevance of the image is only revealed as one reads the short conversation that ensued between Amy and another Facebook friend when the latter commented that she used to ‘hate’ cinnamon rolls. To which Amy replied: *‘Parang rugby lang yan. From knowing nothing to a fan. hehe’*. The first phrase translates as ‘it’s just like rugby’ and by this we realise how a simple object gains new meaning when used as a sign in particular instances and with specific interests.

This illustrates once more the value of ‘experiential meaning potential’, introduced in Chapter 5, which refers to how objects are utilised to signify meanings derived ‘from what it is we *do* when we articulate them, and from our ability to extend our practical experience metaphorically and turn action into knowledge’ (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001, pp. 20–22). Cinnamon rolls, an unlikely choice of metaphor, had become the

carrier of Amy's experience of transformation in the way she views herself and her interests. The object, although bearing no obvious value as a recognisable cultural symbol in the particular way it was used, acted as an indicator of how a new identification and identity are emerging. Just like her pronouns, this gives us a specific instance of her transition, of travelling from one point to another, and eventually obtaining a change in herself. What she presents is a specifically acquired habit (e.g. watching rugby and drinking a flat white) that could be classified as normatively Kiwi. In the process, what she was able to display was a moment of assertion regarding her rightful place in New Zealand society as a culturally conformed erstwhile outsider.

#### **7.2.4 Playing the part: Belonging as discursive performance**

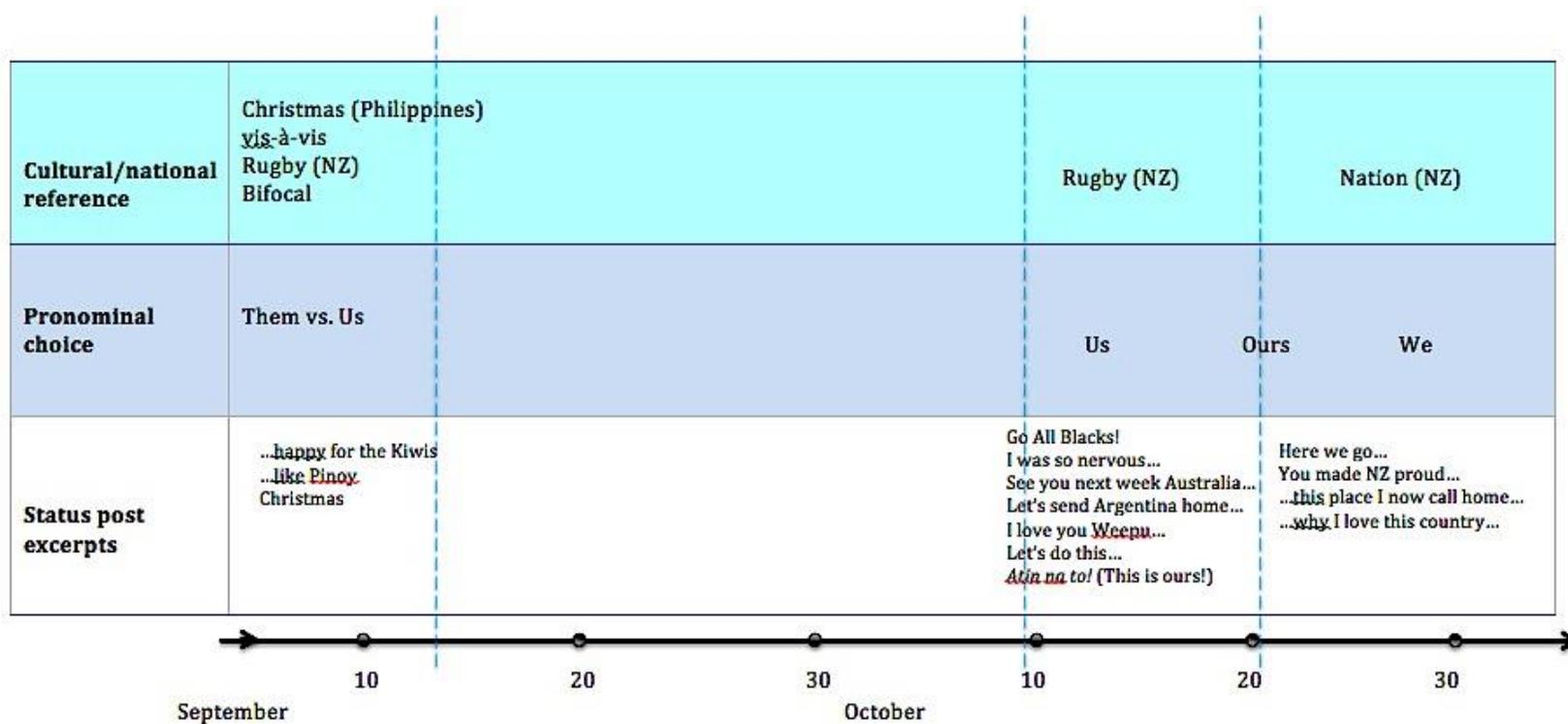
Considering that these posts had been created over a period of almost two months of following the RWC games and related activities, it can be surmised that the development in her self-representation coincides with an intensifying involvement in the events. Amy's emotional investment in the team is quite palpable as shown by her own re-enactment of what was transpiring as she was watching the games at home. It is also worth noting how her sentiments were reflected in her linguistic choices. Using the Filipino word *atin* (instead of the English 'ours'), as discussed above, most likely signals her growing attachment not only to the games but also to the idea of becoming 'one with the country' in the said occasion. Further, this intersentential code-switching between English and Filipino also becomes more apparent in highly emotionally posts on Facebook during moments when she seemed to be utterly preoccupied with the games. Excerpt 2, *Muntik na ko matulog sa nerbyos!* (I was so nervous I almost went to bed!) and Excerpt 5, *Di naman horror pinapanood ko pero nagtatakip ako ng mata* (I'm not watching horror but I'm covering my eyes.) illustrate this. Although the relationship between emotions and multilingualism plays out in different ways at different levels within different environments (Pavlenko, 2005), Amy's code-switching behaviour in the particular cited occurrences appears to exemplify the 'emotional primacy of the first language' (Pavlenko, 2004, p. 201), where one's base language (Filipino, in her case) ultimately becomes the language of emotion since it is deemed more natural.

Her display of emotion in this particular case gains more significance when seen in the light of efforts to become a participant in a national event. As her linguistic and semiotic choices clearly manifest a transition in terms of a sense of belonging, so too do the objects of her intense emotional outburst. In her 16 October status post (Excerpt 5), she unabashedly declares her feelings, albeit as part of an indeterminate group, for a particular footballer after delivering a cheer for the whole team: *Go All Blacks! we love you Weepu!* This language is not at all uncommon in fanspeak and the parasocial interaction<sup>33</sup> fans or supporters of, in this case, sports generates other similar lines (e.g. *Name of player, will you marry me?*). The next time, however, she would use the word ‘love’ to express a sentiment concerning the games she would be pertaining to a different object, one that is larger and more encompassing than just a single player or even the entire team. On 25 October, on the heels of the All Blacks victory, Amy professed her love for New Zealand through another status post: *Just one of the reason why I love this country [sic]*. This one links to the video ‘all ours. again’ that acts, in a way, to specify the actual motivation for the statement. At the same time, this intensifies the emotional attachment to the country by saying that there are many other *reasons* that warrant her love of it. Her emotions doubtlessly transformed from being directed (inter)personally to one that possesses national import.

The transitory quality of the whole RWC experience appears to have spurred Amy into generating Facebook posts that curiously follow a conventional dramatic structure. This should, however, come as no surprise since the whole event builds on the finals game as the climactic point. If these status posts, indeed, potentially signify her efforts to belong to her new country, 23 October seems to be when the threshold of her identity transformation had been crossed. It was the day of the Final game and it was also when she had the most Facebook activities of the most varied kind that concern the RWC. In this series of posts, Amy expresses a more adamant internalisation and exhibition of her affinity for and commitment to New Zealand.

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<sup>33</sup> Horton and Whol (1956) introduced the term parasocial interaction to explain ‘intimacy at a distance’ enacted when, for example, television hosts look at viewers directly in the eye. The parasocial performer, to Meyrowitz (1985), paradoxically is able to establish ‘intimacy with millions’ (p. 119).



**Figure 7.2** Progression of discourses of belonging and attachment as reflected in Amy’s Facebook posts for the period 2011 September to October of the Rugby World Cup.

Looking closely at the set of her Facebook activities during the entire RWC, there are two clear categories that could sum up a performance of shifting from one status to the next. The first half of her posts (9 September to 16 October) concerns the rugby matches while the second half (23 October to 27 October) veers towards allusions to New Zealand as a nation. Teasing out this grouping further (Figure 7.2) we will see how the intersecting discourses of the self, the sport, and the nation are distributed throughout Amy's RWC postings on Facebook. This is able to spotlight the role of constructing words and images in finally leading to a concluding performance about where she belongs and her rightful attachments at present. She began by locating a binary position where being Filipino informed her understanding of Kiwi culture then followed it with identifying herself as being one with the people. When the time came for the national team to grab the chance at ultimately proving their calibre, her semiotic and linguistic pronouncements also cemented a selfhood that dispels any doubts about her convictions of being a New Zealander. This is even manifested in her unusual indifference to what she has always considered her primary Facebook audience. She admits in the interview that she did not mind whether her friends and family in the Philippines would understand what the World Cup is about, as long as she could express her feelings for New Zealand during the games:

Nakakatawa kasi parang, kasi most of my friends Pilipino, so wala naman sila paki kung ano iyan di ba? LAUGHS So parang 'yan siguro iyong mga times na wala ako paki na di nyo alam iyan. So, sasabihin ko talaga na, 'I'm happy. I'm proud of this country'. Sasabihin ko na kunyari 'o, one minute to go,' ano na naman yang 'one minute to go' na yan sa Pilipinas?

*It's funny because most of my friends are Filipino so they don't give a damn what that is, right? LAUGHS So, it's like, maybe those were one of those times I didn't care if you don't get it. So, I'm really going to say that I'm happy, I'm proud of this country. I'll say for instance, 'hey, one minute to go,' that 'one minute to go' didn't even mean anything in the Philippines.*

Amy's RWC story, self-written on a social media platform, articulates a larger journey she is taking as a diasporic subject wanting to establish a solid place in her chosen nation. If her Facebook sign-making endeavour is any indication, her desire for a national belonging is coupled with a willingness to undergo change in her

habits and practices as these are actually where an identity is found (Billig, 1995). The weight of this desire and the value to Amy of portraying a shared pursuit with the country is perhaps best evidenced by her decision, during the most crucial moment of the event, to fully inhabit a virtual persona that is signified by a familiar symbol. In the throes of the championship match, she changed her profile picture – the basic signifier of one’s identity and mechanism of physical identification on Facebook – and presented herself as an ‘All Blacks emblem’ (see Figure 7.3).



**Figure 7.3** Screenshot of Amy’s Facebook post with the All Blacks emblem as profile picture (thumbnail image on the upper left corner). Amy’s comments, as displayed, translate to *I am very nervous! Hehe.*

Although profile photos are expected to be ‘iconic’, where the representation resembles the represented, Amy opted to *abstract* herself in order to strongly impart the idea of her identification with the team and the nation. This act could be seen as wanting to fully integrate, an essentially two-fold process: accommodating ‘foreign’ practices and meaning-making in her own repertoire of cultural habits that, in turn, could facilitate her integration in mainstream everyday culture. If having shared

values and interaction leads to social cohesion that results in migrants having access to resources and their associated advantages (Spoonley, Peace, Butcher, & Neill, 2005, p. 92), then developing a *taste* for nationally sanctioned habits is tantamount to acquiring a cultural capital.

As a platform of representation, the semiotic affordances of Facebook generally aided in the task of discursively *crossing* the bounds of ‘otherness’ in Amy’s RWC participation. However, the specific functionality of attaching external materials to one’s Facebook Timeline proves to be an effective way for her to simulate a sense of being ‘physically’ together with others. Her post on 27 October, for instance, seems to be a fitting coda to the whole RWC saga as told from the point of view of one individual whose involvement and passion emphasised the link between ‘collective emotions and national narratives’ (Sullivan, 2009). In citing a video that depicts the magnitude of New Zealanders’ attachment to the sport and the national team at their moment of triumph, Amy had no qualms when she said, *the emotions seen here<sup>34</sup> are about the same as what we felt back home* (excerpt 14). Although they were not with the *collective* physically, she still managed to feel and enact a union with it through social media (i.e. Vimeo, a video-sharing site, and Facebook). This act goes beyond basking in reflected glory although national pride and sporting events are characterised by an individual spectator sharing in the success of the team (Sullivan, 2009, p. 251).

The role of Facebook in Amy’s brief, but nonetheless passionate, involvement with Rugby was made clearer by this articulation of her selfhood. In general, the SNS has provided her a stage where she could fulfil her enactments as an All Blacks fan and by that, perhaps, as a legitimate New Zealander. It has also given her a chance to become part of the collective – the team, the people, and the nation. Notwithstanding the value of belonging to these collectivities, she explains that her RWC Facebook posts were for her own satisfaction rather than her relatives’, who are her usual audience. Performing her ‘part’ during the games was also done in ‘unity’

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<sup>34</sup> ‘Here’ refers to the Queen’s Wharf Fan Zone, a public space designated in Auckland to act as a central hub of RWC-related activities. The video documented a large number of spectators gathered in the area to witness the Final game on large screens, which ended in shots of All Blacks’ fans celebrating their team’s victory over France.

(*nagkakaisa kami*) with another community that she considers herself a part of. This refers to the set of New Zealand-based Filipino friends she has in her network: those who go through the same experience of finding a rightful place in a new country that they have considered their own; those who occupy a simultaneous position of attachment to and detachment from the homeland. In Amy's words:

For those specific people, *konti lang naman yun, e, iyong mga (Filipino) friends dito, nagkakaisa kami na ganun iyong mindset namin nung time na iyon, dahil nanunuod kami ng Rugby World Cup. So parang, it's not really for – iyong mga relatives mo sa Pilipinas, just like iyong other posts. Pero more on for you and your group of friends na nandito sa New Zealand. Iyon ganun, at the same time, e kung maging champion something to be proud of. (From interview)*

*...there's just a few, the (Filipino) friends here, we were one in having that mindset during that time, because we were watching the Rugby World Cup. So, like, it's not really for the relatives in the Philippines like my other posts. But it's more for you and the group of friends who are here in New Zealand. Something like that. At the same time, in case of a championship victory, something to be proud of.*

If sport is truly a way to forge a national identity then Amy's social media performance during the Rugby World Cup proved that she is capable of fulfilling this task and obtaining the goal of being a true New Zealander. As seen through her Facebook posts, Amy had become a 'passenger' in the transitional event where her point of departure and the *place* of eventual destination had been manifested. Considering that her position in New Zealand is defined by her migrant subjectivity, *virtually* taking part in the struggles and victory of a national sports team is a way to inscribe her presence in a grand national narrative through a contemporary tool of story-making.

Amy's migration story is told in other places on her Facebook Timeline. She continues the trope of belonging in the attempt to convey how they build a life outside the Philippines. In the next section, I intend to show how she discursively constructs a life that is patterned after an 'ideal' construct of place wherein the most important reason for their decision to depart from the homeland – the children's future – is fulfilled.

### 7.3 Imperfect strangers: Picturing place, family, and identity in diaspora

We value places in ways that transcend their functionality and facticity as location. ‘Places have power and the landscape constitutes a text that communicates meaning’ (Boogaart, 2001, p. 39). Harvey (1993) expounds on this relationship of power to the social construction of place:

There is, then, a politics to place-construction ranging dialectically across material, representational and symbolic activities which find their hallmark in the way in which individuals invest in places and thereby empower themselves collectively by virtue of that investment. (p. 23)

The notion of place becomes more conspicuous in the experience of diaspora or migration since it is the boundaries of space and the defiance of such that is at the core of moving. Tolia-Kelly (2004) suggests that the marginalised position of migrants within the dominant national landscape drives them to look for, if not construct, spaces that affirm their individual and collective identities. Living and belonging are, after all, a matter of securing a conducive place for being oneself and fulfilling one’s desires. On the one hand, one is always constrained by the materiality of location, but on the other hand there is always the potential for the agentive act of material and symbolic transformation of place.

The primacy of place can be seen in an audio-visual presentation (AVP) that Amy produced to celebrate their second year in New Zealand. Posted on her Facebook Timeline on 15 February 2011, the montage of still and moving images runs for 4.4 minutes and stands out due to the special occasion it marks in their migrant lives and the discursive crossroads of place politics and diasporic subjectivity that it potentially signifies.

Among Amy’s self-produced Facebook contents, the AVP is one of the most multimodal in the sense that it is made up of a combination of more forms of semiotic resources integrated into a coherent whole – text (i.e. uses words), still and moving images, and music – compared to her other posts, such as photo albums and verbal status posts. Also, the final product reveals Amy’s communication background, creative skills, and technical aptitude, especially to those who know her. She herself describes the particular presentation as ‘*broad na broad*’, meaning, it is very reflective of her experience and training in the broadcasting profession.

The AVP – its production value, intent, means, and context – exemplify what Androutsopoulos (2010) calls *vernacular spectacles*: multi-modal content that is uploaded by users on media-sharing sites and often embedded in other web pages (p. 209). As a re-reading and revision of the Debordian concept of ‘society as spectacle’ (Debord, 1967), Androutsopoulos refuses to believe that today’s media practice ‘stupefies social subjects’ and ‘estranges them from producing their lives’ (Kellner, 2003, p. 4). On the contrary, vernacular spectacles represent the culture of production ‘from below’; highlighting originality and creativity by capitalising on the ‘digital manipulation and appropriation of mass media resources’ (Androutsopoulos, 2010, p. 210). In a way, this assertion is an expansion of the idea of *bricolage* in the works of Hebdige (1979) and de Certeau (1984), wherein they shed light on the capacity of the common person to ‘make do’ with objects and texts the dominant culture makes available and rework them in ways that are most advantageous and meaningful. Only with vernacular spectacles, the focus is on how new media users ‘tinker’ with globalised mass media objects to recontextualise their value as local and personal digital products.

The careful and deliberate fusion of different components in the AVP – a convergence of global and local items – is the main reason why I am using an analytic framework that focuses on *composition* as a ‘system for integrating different modes into a multimodal whole’ (Van Leeuwen, 2003, p. 24, see also Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006) to complement the socio-semantic analytic system of representing actors in visual and verbal instances. There are three aspects of composition to be considered in the analysis of the AVP (Van Leeuwen, 2003, p. 24ff):

1. **Information value:** meanings conveyed by the arrangement or positions of elements in space. The left and right, top and bottom, or centre and margin sections of the information space endow elements with different values based on both natural and cultural experiences. The left and right positions, for instance, signifies the ‘given’ and ‘new’ respectively, where the former refers to what is already known, familiar, and taken for granted departure point while the latter is something which is not yet known, thus, the more important highlight of the message. The ‘top-bottom’ (e.g. discussion of POEA report cover image in Chapter 5) and ‘centre-margin’ positions are, likewise, differentially valued. However, I am focusing on the ‘horizontal dimension’ as it is what is relevant in the present analysis. It is important to note that the meanings of the given and new are not objectively defined, it depends on the context and intent of the sign-maker at the time of sign-making.

2. **Saliency:** refers to the degree to which elements are made more noticeable (e.g. eye-catching or ear-catching) than others in an arrangement. It is judged on the basis of visual cues or the ‘visual weight’ of each element in a composition. Again, saliency is not objectively defined. Size, shape, sharpness, focus, tonal and colour contrasts, perspectives, and potency of cultural symbols are some factors that affect saliency. I would also like to add that it is not just the visual where saliency plays a significant role. As I show below, sound (e.g. music) could also be a composite construction that makes certain aural elements more significant than others (e.g. through volume or pitch).
3. **Framing:** refers to the degree to which elements are separated or connected, continued or discontinued from each other by certain connective devices (e.g. framelines). Elements may be strongly or weakly attached to each other or to other elements resulting in a sense of grouping, rhyme, or repetition. It should be emphasised that all the principles of composition apply within and across modes.

I am focusing on three semiotic elements that comprise the AVP’s wholeness as a text: the short introduction (verbal) that appears on Amy’s Timeline, serving as overview to the content; the music that serves as the only audio element of the presentation; and, the images as main content of the AVP. The three compositional dimensions discussed above provide a framework to impart a unified message or meaning through the dialogue between the different semiotic elements that make up the text. My contention is that although the images do not possess one definite meaning on their own, placing them in a collection, in a particular order, complemented with a description and a specific song, constructs a signifying route for the viewer that potentially leads to an assertion about what life is like for a Filipino in a place like New Zealand.

### **7.3.1 Defining the good life: Framing images through words**

Amy provides the following as overture to her celebratory audio-visual presentation, presented here as a series of numbered lines for easy reference. In the original post, it is composed of just two paragraphs, the second one being sentence 7 below:

1. We've been here in New Zealand for two years now, and though we still sometimes miss UF, Le Ching, isaw<sup>35</sup> and all our friends and family, NZ has become our home now.
2. We love how Ben and Sarah can run around the park and enjoy being kids.
3. We love the clear blue skies, the fantastic views and kid-friendly activities everywhere.
4. This video is for our friends and family.
5. It encapsulates our family's milestones and some of the places we've been to in the past two years.
6. All praises to God for bringing us to this wonderful country.
  
7. Our life is not a perfect life, but it is a good life.

It is important to remember that the above piece of writing is an accompaniment to the video, the major purpose of which was to commemorate the family's second year as legitimate residents of the country. As a material that memorialises an important event in their migrant life, it is expected that its content would tend to highlight the appealing aspects of their move to New Zealand.

Also germane to the issue of presenting an idea of life abroad is how this introduction is devoted to showcasing the places Amy and the family have been able to see in the conduct of their relatively inchoate New Zealand life. Although there is a simultaneous historical and geographic depiction of migrant subjectivity, as shown by the terms 'milestones' and 'places' (they have been to) in sentence 5, all prior statements (1-3) speak of specific places of attachment in the Philippines and the general character of New Zealand as place. Bestowing the label 'home' upon the latter leans largely on the appreciation of the kind of environment that the country is able to offer, something that, though unsaid, is presumably unavailable where they come from.

Place is one of the most important concepts in human geography (Cresswell, 2011). The pioneers in the field such as Relph (1976) and Tuan (1977) advance the idea that places are created because of people's deep attachment to spaces they occupy so that generic locations are transformed into specific places when deeper and more

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<sup>35</sup> UF (pseudonymous) stands for Amy's alma mater; Le Ching is a Chinese restaurant; *isaw* (i-sao) is grilled chicken, pork or cow intestine skewers, a common street food.

complex emotions, memories, and significances are given to and given by it. Relph asserts further that the centrality of place in human lives implicates it in developing a sense of security and identity, so that ‘people’s opportunity and power to experience and determine their own relationship with places’ (1976, p. 96) should always be recognised.

Amy’s depiction of their success as immigrants is contingent on the description of New Zealand as a viable place to experience an ideal family life. I would like to focus on the last sentence of the short introduction to illustrate, by using the ‘given-new’ principle, the emphasis on the concept of the ‘good life’, which serves to anchor the meaning of the entire AVP. Although from the explanation provided above, the ‘given-new’ system pertains to the ‘horizontal dimension’ of arranging semiotic elements in a space, the principle can also be ‘applied to messages articulated in time’ (Van Leeuwen, 2003, p. 34), as shown by my discussion of the album *My Ben Through the Years*. Therefore, the sentence in question would have the following progression of expressed ideas:

Our life is not a perfect life, but it is a good life.

GIVEN → NEW

Not having a perfect life is a given – no one could possibly say that one’s life is perfect. The ‘given’ information is assumed to be true in general, and so the ‘new’ information – that they have a ‘good life’ despite not having a perfect one – should be the message in focus.

Describing life as good relies on abstraction that results in a sweeping assessment of the country as an ideal place. Actual meanings of the good life are presupposed in the discourse so that it is more difficult to deny or challenge (Norman Fairclough, 1992). Though no exact reason is provided for saying why she considers their life as good in New Zealand, there are details in the text that may serve as clues to the reasons for Amy’s positive appraisal of their situation, and these have something to do with how she perceives and consumes place. Take, for instance, sentences 2 and 3 in the excerpt: *We love how Ben and Sarah can run around the park and enjoy being kids. We love the clear blue skies, the fantastic views and kid-friendly activities everywhere.*

These short statements are a trove of rhetorical moves that serve to buttress the idealisation and romanticisation of life in a land that, by insinuation, is very different from, if not the opposite of, the Philippines. The affective impact of the lexical choices ‘good’ and ‘perfect’ is reinforced by the mental images projected by the general description of their surrounds: ‘clear blue skies’ and ‘fantastic views’ in sentence 3. Amy’s children are, again, implicated in the portrayal of their blossoming relationship with the place – they can finally ‘run around the park and enjoy being kids’ (sentence 2). Depicting the identity of Ben and Sarah through *spatialisation* presupposes an order of how it is to ‘really’ be a child – an essential condition of being – that is successfully fulfilled in New Zealand. This point is emphasised in sentence 3 that possesses a hyperbolic attitude: there are *activities especially for kids* ‘*everywhere*’ here!

The representation of kid-friendliness of the country is, of course, not necessarily accurate. Meaning-making is a matter of making a choice that is based on particular subjectivities and agency individuals possess in the role of either an originator or receptor of signs. Choices are positionings and this is what makes semiotic practices political (Kress, 2009). The AVP, after all, is still part of Amy’s staging of their private lives in a public ‘front’ stage where the image of the ‘good life’ is equated with New Zealand as ‘home’.

### **7.3.2 What you hear is what you get: Music and discursive foregrounding**

The AVP features a background song entitled *The Good Life* by the American band One Republic (see link <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jZhQOvvV45w> for official music video). It is the only sound that one will hear in the AVP, which means that the entire ‘soundscape’ (cited in Machin, 2010; term coined by Schaefer, 1977) is solely defined by elements the track is able to provide.

The song’s instrumental composition features drums, keyboards, acoustic guitar, bass (in the chorus), and an interesting human-like ‘whistling’. The 4/4 drumbeat that serves as foreground sound suggests a lively but relaxed energy – constant, continuing, unrelenting but pleasant. The keyboard in the background produces a mid-level monotonous pitch not exactly languid but unmistakably light. But perhaps the most crucial feature of the music in terms of meaning potential is the whistling

that appears 20 seconds into the song, after the pervasive drumbeats. This element, a high-pitched sound that rises and falls regularly, introduces a ‘fresh’ break to the monotony of instrumental sounds through its modality – it projects a ‘human’ quality. Not only does it complement the relaxed and steady pace of the melody but it injects a human-like sensibility to the soundscape, making it appear more real, relatable, and easily absorbed as a sensual experience. It disappears slowly just before the first line of the lyrics is sung and resurrects in the chorus shortly after all words have been uttered except for a lingering melodious ‘ah’, affording the listener a ‘carefree’ feel by combining the two distinct sounds.

The music evokes an image of regular movement that is not hurried but constantly proceeding. This could very much be likened to a steady pace, like that of a traveller who can afford to linger in certain spots without losing the intent to walk on. The regular drumbeats suggest this and the whistling – based on our actual experience of the act (its provenance) – emphasises that the journey being depicted is not a race. Amy’s choice of background music conveys a movement in space and coupled with the lyrics, place-making is at the heart of the song. From the opening lines (see Appendix I for complete lyrics): *Woke up in London yesterday/Found myself in the city near Piccadilly* up to the fifth stanza: *To my friends in New York, I say hello/My friends in L.A. they don't know/Where I've been for the past few years or so/Paris to China to Colorado*, it celebrates a peripatetic lifestyle that is not entirely different from Amy’s chosen path. As a deliberate feature of the AVP, which is an entire sign in itself, place as location paves the way for place as assertion. What it asserts, in particular, is the discourse of the ‘good life’ that is made evident by the information value and salience of the concept.

The ‘given-new’ principle is, once more, apparent in the song as the opening lines excerpted above (GIVEN) paves the way for the chorus (NEW):

Oh, this has gotta be the good life  
This has gotta be the good life  
This could really be a good life, good life

I say, ‘Oh, got this feeling that you can't fight’  
Like this city is on fire tonight  
This could really be a good life, a good, good life

With the very noticeable repetition of the lines and the term ‘good life’ (six times), sung relatively up-tempo, with an enduring mid-level pitch ‘ah’ in the background, and kicked off with a comparatively louder utterance of the ‘Oh’ to signal the beginning of the chorus, the musical accompaniment to the images is able to hold together an ‘essence’ of the entire text that points to the quality of living Amy’s family now enjoys.

The discourse of the good life, therefore, achieves salience within and across the distinct modes of the short introduction (verbal) and the song (sound). In the former, the term is made the NEW information, and as the final words in the final paragraph, it potentially sticks longer in the reader’s memory. In the latter, the term is heard in the chorus, a focal point of dynamism, energy, and interactivity (Van Leeuwen, 1999) in the song, repeated several times. As the AVP is the same length as the song, the chorus is heard three times up until the last image. Lastly, further emphasis on the ‘good life’ discourse is achieved across modes through repetition.

The final line, asking *What there is to complain about?*, is also conspicuously heard in the AVP as these are the final words sung when all other musical elements subside. It performs an interesting dialogue with the message in the introduction and the lines in the chorus. Amy may be conveying the idea that life at present, though not perfect, is good and there is no reason to complain despite ‘other’ things that may be contrary to the good life discourse – information *excluded* altogether in the text. The single narrative of the ‘good life’ provides a ‘thematic frame’ through which the varied images in the AVP can be connected and become continuous. Below, I present how this is accomplished in the way the images are chosen, sequenced, and labelled by Amy in order to represent their presence in many New Zealand landscapes and attachment (physical and otherwise) to the place they now call home.

### **7.3.3 Photographing the good life: Embedding selves in a new place**

To give an idea about the images comprising the AVP, Appendix I logs the timing, image type, caption, featured actors (subjects), their poses, and the location in each image. This video log also doubles as a representation and viewer network analysis, similar to what I employed in the previous chapter (cf. Facebook albums of Ben and Sarah). Additionally, I adopt the spatial representation network in Van Leeuwen’s

recontextualised practice framework (2003, pp. 88–104) in order to assess the significance of place in the chosen images and its relation to the projection of the good life discourse made salient in the introduction and the background song. In line with this, I am adapting the concepts of ‘acting in space’ (column 9) and ‘interpreting space’ (column 11) to my particular analysis, among all the other aspects of the ‘grammar of space’ that Van Leeuwen proposed. The decision to focus on these two is based on the specific issues each tackle that are pertinent to the AVP images. The former addresses the relationship of ‘actors’ to the space they occupy thereby having their actions define the space they use (e.g. how do the images in the AVP depict subjects’ actions and what do they tell about the arrangement of ‘space’ seen in the pictures?) while the latter relates to the meanings we give to space based on our representation of it (e.g. is the depicted space functional or ideological?).

Although my basis for understanding and use of the concepts is Van Leeuwen’s explanation, I add to them by considering other related issues. For instance, while I identify whether depicted action is a ‘position’ (showing spatial arrangement in a particular ‘moment’ of a social practice) or ‘transition’ (change in space of one social practice to the next) (Van Leeuwen, 2003, pp. 90–96), I also show whether the action is ‘natural’ or ‘posed’ (column 10). My assumption is that there is no way to actually know whether an ‘action’ is natural (i.e. not planned or composed) or staged in images. The task, however, is to see if the depicted action is made to appear ‘naturally occurring’ in concurrence with the basic function of the setting in the image or if the image is completely reflexive of its ‘constructedness’ – the performance of an action is the deliberate objective (e.g. striking a pose). The significance of these two categories is simple: natural actions embed the subjects in the places depicted in the images while ‘posed’ actions highlight the intent of the subjects to draw attention to themselves and their presence in particular places. In the former, subjects are represented as doing what is naturally done in certain spaces, thus, projecting a sense of ‘disinterest’, somewhat related to Kant’s notion of fine art which, to him, becomes successful only by having ‘a look of nature’ even when we know it is purposive (Kant, 1987, p. 174). In the latter, subjects are made the locus of attention by presenting them as ‘involved’ in the projection of an image instead of blending them in the represented environment.

On the other hand, I modify the notion of ‘interpreting space’ in my analysis. One could either assign *functions* (demonstrate conventional or natural use of space) or *meanings* (convey connotations of space) when interpreting space (Van Leeuwen, 2003, pp. 97–98). Moreover, space may be depicted as purely ‘functional’, which means that its relevance lies in its utility (e.g. playground for playing), or ‘meaningful’, which I understand to be ‘connotative’, in Barthes’ term, thus, ‘ideological’ (e.g. playful body language in national monuments). Being functional or connotative is, however, not totally discrete in many instances. This may be the reason why Van Leeuwen contends that interpreting space can only be realised visually when accompanied by words (2003, pp. 102–103). In the AVP, for example, images of the playground are usually depicted as ‘functional’ since Ben and Sarah are seen playing in it. However, this could also be interpreted as projecting a ‘myth’ of ideal childhood that is carefree, playful, and innocent, thus, the basic utility of the space gives way to another level of signification. For this reason, I formulate the ‘functional-meaningful’ interpretation of space as a *continuum* where depictions of space may be ‘function-leaning’ or ‘connotation-leaning’. I do believe that even in the absence of words, images can still project space as either functional or connotative in the way that represented agents are depicted to make use or meaning of it. In some cases in the AVP, there are images that interpret space as somewhere in between. In the appendix, this particular point is shown in the final column by placing the meaning of the image in between the cells F and M.

Overall, the AVP is composed of 88 images (78 still images, 10 video clips). A majority (79) features the children, Ben and Sarah, and depict locations outside the home (71). The significance of these general observations in conjunction with other characteristics of the images in the AVP is discussed in the succeeding sections.

**Table 7.2 Captions (P, E, PE)\*, shot location, and type of space whether domestic or public in Amy's second anniversary in New Zealand AVP**

		<b>Theme/Caption (in order of appearance in the AVP)</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Public/ Domestic sphere</b>
<b>1</b>	PE	First few days in NZ	Outdoors, playground, museum, beach, shops, park	<b>Public</b>
<b>2</b>	P	Our first home in NZ	Indoors/Outdoors, house	<b>Domestic</b>
<b>3</b>	PE	June 2009: Ben starts Kindy at AA Kindergarten	Outdoors, school grounds, parking area	<b>Public</b>
<b>4</b>	P	WETA Cave	Outdoors/Indoors, WETA cave	<b>Public</b>
<b>5</b>	E	Our little princess is born	Indoors, (assumed location)	<b>(Domestic)</b>
<b>6</b>	PE	October, 2009: Ben starts primary at BB School	Outdoors/Indoors, school	<b>Public</b>
<b>7</b>	E	Our first family picture!	Outdoors	<b>Public</b>
<b>8</b>	P	Wellington Botanical Garden	Outdoors, in a garden of flowers, next to lake or pond	<b>Public</b>
<b>9</b>	PE	F1 Exhibit at Te Papa Museum	Indoors, in exhibit area	<b>Public</b>
<b>10</b>	P	Our 2nd home at Wellington	Indoors, in a living room, bedroom	<b>Domestic</b>
<b>11</b>	PE	Our first summer in NZ	Outdoors, beach	<b>Public</b>
<b>12</b>	E	A visit from Ateh!	Outdoors	<b>Public</b>
<b>13</b>	P	Wellington Zoo	Outdoors, open grounds	<b>Public</b>
<b>14</b>	PE	Ben transfers to CC Primary School	Outdoors, school grounds	<b>Public</b>
<b>15</b>	P	Zealandia	Outdoors, near a lake	<b>Public</b>
<b>16</b>	PE	Strolls in the city	Outdoors, playground, park; Indoors, children's book library	<b>Public</b>
<b>17</b>	P	Staglands	Outdoors, farm, river	<b>Public</b>
<b>18</b>	E	Ben's school production	Indoors, school auditorium	<b>Public</b>
<b>19</b>	E	Sarah's first birthday	Indoors, party venue	<b>Public</b>
<b>20</b>	PE	Move to Auckland!	Outdoors, shot of a big mountain, tree-lined road, Auckland landscape	<b>Public</b>
<b>21</b>	P	A new house in Auckland	Outdoors, house, neighbourhood	<b>Domestic</b>
<b>22</b>	PE	A new school for Ben -- DD Primary	Outdoors/Indoors, school grounds	<b>Public</b>
<b>23</b>	E	A reunion with old friends	Outdoors, park; Indoors, restaurant	<b>Public</b>
<b>24</b>	P	Auckland War Memorial Museum	Outdoors/Indoors, museum grounds	<b>Public</b>
<b>25</b>	P	Auckland Zoo	Outdoors, zoo open grounds	<b>Public</b>
<b>26</b>	P	Kelly Tarlton's	Indoors, aquarium park	<b>Public</b>
<b>27</b>	PE	Picnics at parks	Outdoors, parks	<b>Public</b>

\***P** place-specific captions    **E** event-specific captions    **PE** place+event captions

### ***Between the public and the private: Locating home and a sense of place***

Table 7.2 presents the captions in the AVP in order of appearance. There are 27 captions to label each set of images and of these, 11 are solely about places (generic and specific) indicated by ‘P’ in the second sub-column, six are about events or ‘E’ (some could be considered ‘milestones’), and 10 mention activities with indicated place names or ‘PE’ (e.g. Strolls in the city). This illustrates that most of the shots were located outdoors (71 of 88), an aspect of the collection that points to the act of colonising space beyond the boundaries of the private sphere. The third column supports precisely this point as it establishes that most of the photographs portray places in public spaces. This highlights how Amy, in presenting how far they have come – literally and figuratively – as newcomers to a foreign land, appropriates the potential of visual cultural practice to perform an identity that dissolves being strangers, strangeness or being out-of-place.

There are only three sets of images that are explicitly identified as a domestic sphere (shaded grey in the table) by the anchoring effect of the captions. In all these three instances, the depicted space is specifically nominated as ‘home’ or ‘house’, signalling permanence in the family’s placement. Note that the first set of images that bears the label ‘home’ only appears after nine images (see Appendix I). Pictures of their domestic life were preceded by pictures of playgrounds, parks, the museum, and the beach that go under the label *First Few Days in NZ*.

Amy intimated that they stayed with a friend in the beginning. This was also the same friend who had become a big influence in their decision to consider migrating to the country. She picked them up from the airport and took them under her own family’s care until they had settled in. This may be the reason why, in Amy’s representation, their first few days in New Zealand did not begin ‘at home’ for they did not have one to consider as their own; they did not have a place yet to symbolise their own, unique, and legitimate place in the foreign land.

Migration is an expropriating act. One leaves behind properties, social networks, profession, and even symbolic capital, such as status, in choosing to depart from the homeland. Since the home, at once the physical family dwelling and the symbolic attachment to place of origin, is lost in the creation of a new life in a new land, it is one of the primary acquisitions that immigrants desire to have in order to get a sense

of acceptance in the new society. But unfortunately for New Zealand, in particular, housing has been one of the banes of new settler life due to cost, income constraints, and racial prejudice (Butcher et al., 2006). Treating the material dwelling in the new country as home is contingent on developing a sense of belonging. Acquiring a place to stay does not automatically translate to feeling *at home* but in Amy's case, finding 'a place of their own' afforded a feeling of control over their space.

In the table above, it is evident how the home – domestic sphere – punctuates Amy's narrative of their New Zealand life. Within their first two years, they moved three times: twice in Wellington and once to Auckland. Every move is indexed by a declaration of having a place they could invest in – materially and emotionally – to be able to establish a recognised domiciliary status. Every home, in turn, becomes a marker of a foray outside the private space and into the public sphere. Once a base is secured, the world outside is actively explored.

The interaction of the public and private spheres in the depiction of the family's life is crucial in achieving a successful migration story. This has the power to portray mobility and access to means of material and experiential appropriation. The link between material acquisitions as fulfilment of symbolic ties to a place is more vividly shown in their second move in Wellington. After having their second child, they deemed their first house too small and decided to look for a larger one. Although the first house they rented, being fully furnished, satisfied their practical needs as newcomers, their second home, an unfurnished rental property, crystallised their identities as incontrovertible subjects of New Zealand. The need to fill in the new dwelling with objects made their separation from the Philippines more real, as Amy explains in the interview:

Kasi parang bumibili na kami ng gamit, sa amin na 'yun, compared dun sa dati na parang, ok, ginagamit namin itong mga bagay na 'to pero hindi sa amin ito. Parang nung lumipat kami, kelangan ng ref, kelangan ng ano, parang totoong - parang may acceptance na, na: 'Ok, this is it. This is - nandito na kami sa New Zealand.' Parang kasi yung before, parang may nagho-hold pa sa 'yo na since wala ka naman kahit na anong bagay dito, you can always pack your bags and go home, go back to the Philippines. Pero nung may gamit ka na, siyempre, ito na yun! Ito na yung start ng buhay niyo talaga.

*It's like we were already buying stuff that is ours, compared to what we had before, all right, we were using those things but we didn't own them.*

*When we moved house, we needed a fridge, we needed things, it was real, like there was already acceptance: 'Ok, this is it. We are in New Zealand.' Before, it was like something was holding us back; since you did not have anything here, you can always pack your bags and go home, go back to the Philippines. But when you get your own stuff, of course, this is it! That is when your life really begins.*

Some things matter (Miller, 1998) because objects are not neutral entities (Appadurai, 1986; Bourdieu, 1984; Latour, 1993). They are given value and meaning by the subjects and contexts of their engagement so that the making and understanding of reality is impossible without them (Latour & Venn, 2002; Latour, 1993; Miller, 1987). Displacement of people entails replacement of objects since a new environment requires an understanding and navigation of a new material world (Burrell, 2008; Rosales, 2010). Hecht (2001) observes that acquiring significant objects is a necessary practice after migration since 'things' bring emotional fulfilment in the attempt of re-making the home.

Figure 7.4, for instance, shows a photo that bears the caption 'A new house in Auckland'. The shift in lexical choice in this third set of images of home in New Zealand is noticeable. Whereas Amy identifies their Wellington residences as 'home', the Auckland one, also a rented property, is labelled as 'new house'. The subject matter framed by the photo is partial to the material object that fulfils the title of 'home'. In fact, this is one of the rare instances in the AVP where Amy shows a photo that is empty of persons (4 photos in total). Even their homes in Wellington are shown as dwelt living spaces at all times. The image in question favours a projection of material procurement in their migrant life. The house and the car are commonplace items in portraying a comfortable middle class status – these have become established as common amateur photographic *mis-en-scène* (Chambers, 2006, p. 105).



**Figure 7.4** Screen capture of the AVP at 00:02:40. As shown, it was captioned ‘A new house in Auckland’.

Berger (2011) proposes a framework to read vernacular photographs or more specifically, snapshots, of this kind that have proven evasive as an object of scrutiny in visual culture. She employs a linguistic/literary concept, the *cliché*, to shed light on the origins, role, and practice of repeatedly producing images that follow a noticeably overused format. In brief, it speaks of the quality of pictures that *artists* abhor as boringly repetitive and highly unimaginative while the same characteristics are what is valued as familiar and meaningful by the *ordinary* person (Berger, 2011). Further, cliché images in family photographic self-representations potentially uphold the prevailing values of the culture and the time in the practice of photography as ‘middle-brow art’ (Bourdieu, 1990). That is to say, they not only capture personal and intimate moments but portray national narratives of an ideal family (Chambers, 2006, p. 98). They not only represent the ideal immigrant lifestyle but the ideal immigrant identity favoured by state-imposed human capital standards – economically viable and socially assimilable (Barber, 2008; McLaren & Dyck, 2004). My further analysis of the images included in the AVP is in consonance with this premise, as illustrated by a discernible touristic sensibility in making images of place consumption.

### *Migrant gaze and the construction of family-in-place*

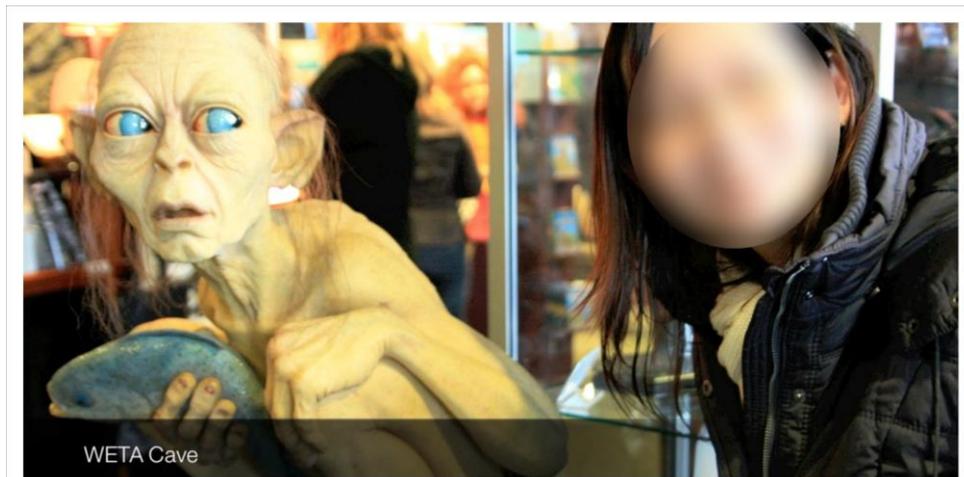
Since many of the photographs and video clips in the AVP feature the different places Amy and her family had been to (for the first time) in the first two years of their New Zealand life – an aspect of the presentation that she herself highlighted in the accompanying introduction – a touristic *flavour* cannot be missed.

The ‘tourist gaze’ (Urry & Larsen, 2011), though appearing to categorise a particular way of looking, is neither one kind nor is it purely descriptive. It refers to the many ‘ways of seeing’ (Berger, 1972) that are generated in the culture, practice, economy, and politics of travel coupled with the continually changing means of capturing and documenting the experience of being in and, primarily but not solely, looking at places – photographs, postcards, films – that enable ‘the gaze to be reproduced, recaptured, and redistributed over time and across space’ (Urry & Larsen, 2011, p. 4).

As with the salience of domesticity and domestic materiality in picturing the private sphere in Amy’s AVP, the photographic cliché also characterises snapshots of ‘special’ public spaces in the family’s travels in New Zealand. My reference to the concept of cliché does not necessarily connote that tourist-generated photographs are ‘performed’, instead I insist, as Urry and Larsen do, that these are manifestations of ‘performing’ the self in consonance with the practice of tourism as a ‘modern’ leisure activity (2011, pp. 4–5) that has not only become a marker of status in society (Jaworski & Lawson, 2005; Urry & Larsen, 2011) but instances of consumption and momentary arrogation of space. A good example of this touristic cliché is illustrated by Figure 7.5 where Amy appears to be mimicking the model of Gollum (an iconic *Lord of the Rings* character) in a Weta Cave<sup>36</sup> exhibition, seemingly performing a ‘disrespectful’ stance towards the space and its defining objects (Jaworski & Thurlow, 2011, p. 244) (images 17 and 70 in Appendix I are similar in character).

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<sup>36</sup> The Weta Cave is the Wellington-based museum and shop attached to the special effects and prop company Weta Workshop. It was established by Peter Jackson, et al of the *Lord of the Rings* fame. The name ‘weta’ is derived from the common name of an insect species endemic to New Zealand.



**Figure 7.5** Screen capture of the AVP at 00:00:45. As shown, it is captioned ‘WETA Cave’. It is included in the group of images taken when Amy and family were living in Wellington.

Of greater significance in understanding Amy’s touristic images, particularly in connection with her diaspora narrative, is what Haldrup and Larsen (2003) propose as the concept of ‘family gaze’ in which, instead of the consumption of places, tourist photography (especially those produced in family holidays) serves to enact sociality – the pre-eminence of social relations in the ‘extraordinary ordinariness’ of intimate social worlds. Amy’s touristic set of photographs in the AVP demonstrates the premise of family gaze well, especially since many of them were taken in usual tourist sites (e.g. museums, zoos, aquarium park). Although there is a place-centric framing of the images based on captions used, the performance of familial sociality is prominent in majority of the images.

Table 7.3 illustrates this character of the collection through the Representation and Viewer Network Analysis (depicting the relationship of subject to viewer), excerpted from Appendix I. The table only includes images depicting what could be considered usual ‘tourist’ spots. Identification of these places is based on the captions used (e.g. Weta Cave) to label a set of images or the depiction of pertinent places on the photographs or video clips even without explicit labelling (e.g. the ‘Beehive’ or landscapes). Other public places namely, parks and playgrounds are not included in the count although they could be interesting spaces to see for local and international tourists, as I consider them more of spaces for ‘mundane’, rather than special, activities.

**Table 7.3 Representation and Viewer Network Analysis of the AVP –  
touristic photos (Total number of images = 31)**

Viewer Network Dimension	Number of images
<b>Social distance</b>	
Close (close shot, subject is close to the viewer)	28
Far (long shot, subject is far from the viewer)	3
<b>Social relation</b>	
<i>Involvement</i>	
Involved (frontal angle)	25
Detached (oblique angle)	6
<i>Power</i>	
Viewer has power (high angle)	2
Equality (eye level)	28
Representation has power (low angle)	1
<b>Social interaction*</b>	
Direct address (gaze of subject directed at viewer)	21
Indirect address (gaze of subject avoids viewer)	17

\* Total in this dimension is greater than 31 since in seven photos, different gazes are displayed by different subjects.

Larsen observes that the family gaze produces subjects who connect with the viewer of the image through direct eye contact; positioning the spectator face-to-face with those pictured, thus, producing nearness, commitment, and involvement (2005, p. 430). This is likewise seen in the AVP, labelled in the table as ‘direct address’ (21 of 31 images). Echoing Kress and Van Leeuwen’s notion of *contact* in visual grammar, participants in images looking directly at the viewer *demand* the latter not to see them as mere objects of observation or contemplation but instead, occupy a position that takes part in the truth of the reality they are in (2006, p. 124). In Amy’s case, it is perhaps the reality of the kind of experiences they can acquire and the quality of life they have away from the Philippines.

In addition to eye contact, most of the images (28 of 31) in the AVP present the subjects as close to the viewer through the use of medium or close-up shots,

generally,<sup>37</sup> making the setting secondary to the depicted persons. Also, most represent the subjects as highly involved (25) and equal in power (28). It is worth noting that more than half (18) of the total number of images exhibit the combination close distance, involved, equal, and direct – clearly demanding engagement from the viewer while projecting equal power, awareness, and agency. The subjects I refer to here are Amy and the family – alone, with another, or all together. As mentioned earlier, Ben and Sarah dominate the entire collection while half of all the images (45) portray the children (alone or together) with at least one of the parents. In total, four images depict all of them together.

**Table 7.4 Spatial Network Analysis of the AVP – touristic photos  
(Total number of images = 34)**

<b>Dimensions of Representation of Space</b>	<b>Number of images</b>
<b>Acting in space</b>	
Position (establishing shots, arrangement of space)	8 **
Transition (movement from one position to another)	26
<b>Nature of action*</b>	
Natural	12**
Posed	25
<b>Interpreting space</b>	
Functional	7
Meaningful (connotative)	26**
Functional/Meaningful	2

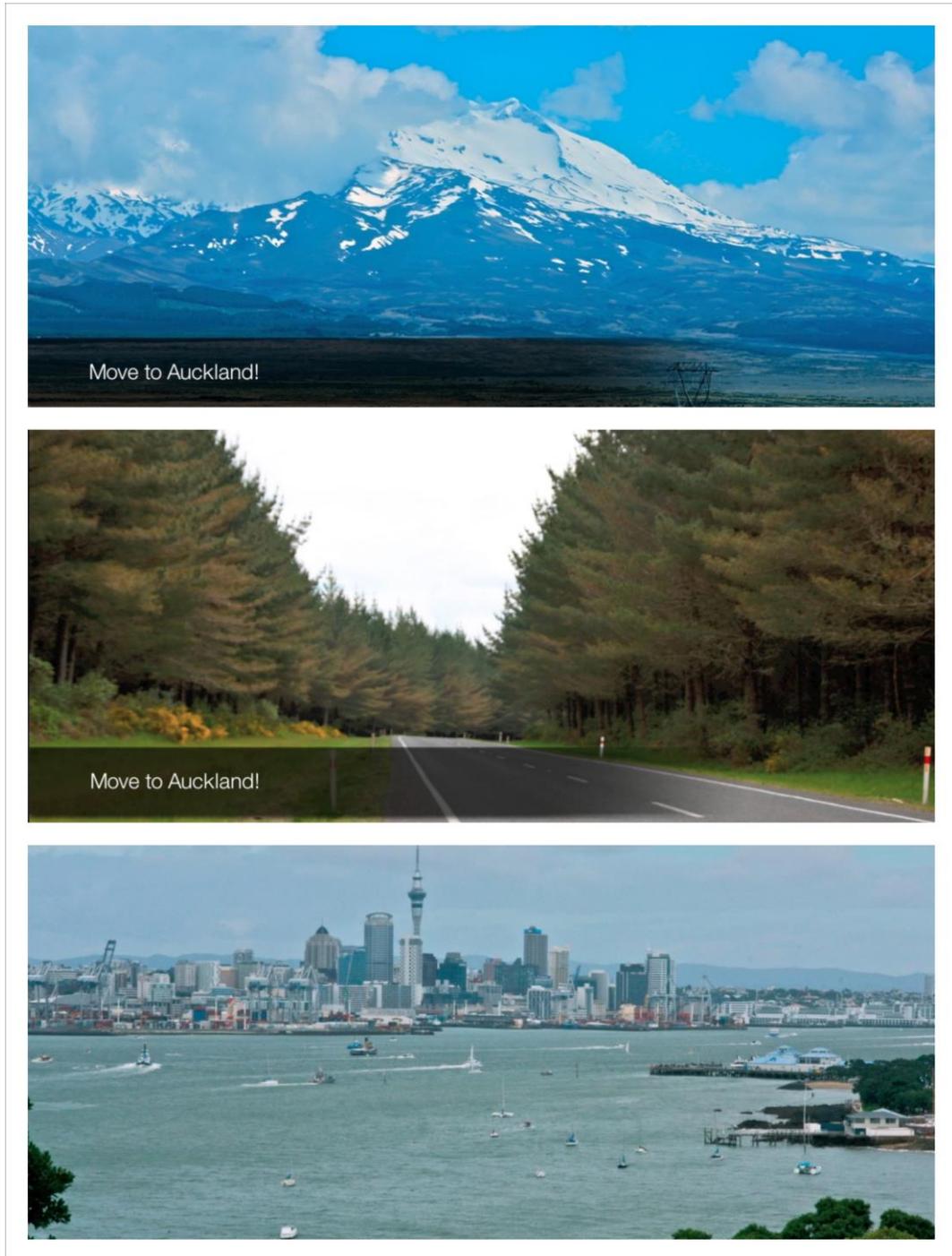
\*Total in this dimension is greater than 31 since in three photos, different subjects project different nature of action. \*\* Three landscape shots included

<sup>37</sup> Long shots usually present subjects in images as far from the viewer by showing the whole body within an equally expansive setting. However, certain instances make it appear that a represented subject is relatively closer to the viewer even when the whole body is seen, for example, in group shots or when subjects foreground a setting or a prominent element in a setting.

Table 7.4, a Spatial Network Analysis also extracted from Appendix I, complements the foregrounding of subjects in lieu of the special locations depicted in the 'touristic' shots. It focuses on the dimensions of 'acting in space', nature of the depicted action, and 'interpreting space'. Three more images that show no subject other than the scenery or landscape themselves are accounted for here (see Figure 7.6).

The arrangement of space, or establishing shots, is rarely depicted (8) compared to representing a transition in the subject's position in a social practice (26). But even scenic photographs, exemplifying establishing shots, do not call attention to themselves as they only serve as a bridge to the continuance of an underlying plot in Amy's migration narrative. Figure 7.6, for instance, represents, literally (as the set of images depict the movement from Wellington to Auckland by road) and figuratively, the family's mobility and the furtherance of their immigrant journey. Aside from these images, most actions are posed (25), indicating that the represented subjects draw attention to themselves instead of the depicted place no matter how unique, exotic or special. Also, a majority of the images interpret space as connotative (26), more so if the 'functional-meaningful' category is considered to lean towards the connotative instead of the functional.

The practice of tourism produces a recontextualisation of experience wherein everyday life is lifted into the realm of the fantastical and the banal transformed into the exotic (Jaworski & Thurlow, 2010, p. 255). Inasmuch as the AVP displays many images that can be seen as 'touristic', it can be argued that these also act as conduits of performing 'scenes' beyond the purpose of merely highlighting special tourist places in New Zealand. The message projected may not necessarily be fantastical, but constructions of 'fantasies' are certainly involved.



**Figure 7.6** A composite of screen captures of the AVP at 00:02:33, 00:02:34, 00:02:37 (from top). As shown, it was captioned ‘Move to Auckland!’

Family closeness appears to be the privileged theme in the AVP's touristic images, as illustrated by Figure 7.7 below. It exemplifies how the special quality of places takes a backseat to projections of the family's bond and intimacy. However, I have further identified the following possible meanings represented in the images considering that a majority of them renders space connotative (all images included). Listed according to the number of images in which each meaning is a likely potential, the specific themes are:

1. Ideal family (intimate, bonded, together; happy, shows at least one parent and one child)	24
2. Ideal childhood (carefree, playful, innocent, secure, natural or unaffected, discovery)	24
3. NZ landscape/NZ brand (green, 100 % pure, snow, ideal Western lifestyle, myth of Middle Earth)	8
4. Ideal home (green, secure, sufficient, clean, happy)	6
5. Owning public space (playfulness, defiance or disrespect)	5
6. Social connection (friends, connection with others)	4
7. Mobility (movement, airport, travel)	4
8. School is a fun place	2
9. Middle class status (material acquisition)	1

Projecting the ideal family and ideal childhood appears to be the major goal of the AVP. The different images bear witness to the family's occupation of a foreign place not mainly by consuming sites as if they were exotic objects unattached to any form of social life and cultural practice of people, but by projecting them as backdrops to the on-going performance of the family's everyday identity as a close-knit unit whose oneness and bond were never broken by the displacing effect of a diasporic journey. Since it is the family who *sees*, the images reflect not the 'extraordinary' character of the material worlds but rather, the 'extraordinary ordinariness' of intimate 'social worlds' (Haldrup & Larsen, 2003, p. 23). Additionally, visually projecting Ben and Sarah as *being* how children should be confirms the salience of a romanticised childhood in their other albums (see Chapter 6) and the AVP introduction – innocent, carefree, playful, and secure.



**Figure 7.7** A composite of screen captures of the AVP at 00:03:09 and 00:03:13 (from top). As shown, the first one was captioned ‘Auckland War Memorial Museum’. The second one, though bearing no caption, is still part of the same set.

The entire collection could then be seen as a migrant point-of-view of place-making. In a sense, it is not solely from a familial perspective that consumption of places is performed, but there is a need to recognise that a ‘migrant gaze’ is involved in the capture of images. As such, the ‘ordinary extraordinariness’ of a sense of place takes over the ‘extraordinary ordinariness’ of intimate sociality. That is, the ‘special’ quality of the place (the ‘fantastical’ and ‘exotic’, as per Jaworski and Thurlow above) must be projected as a remarkable yet *natural* location of the family’s presence. It may be exotic to some of Amy’s viewers – e.g. family and friends in the Philippines – but it should appear as ordinary to the subjects in the captured image.

Picturing themselves in the special and ordinary public places that typify or imagine a New Zealand ethos is Amy's basic goal in memorialising their young life in the country. Aside from projecting it as an ideal place for family and children, the images also *place* Amy and her family as completely immersed and subsumed subjects of a national landscape. This, however, can only be achieved through a collection of images over time since only such is capable of producing a history of place-making and presenting a trajectory of being placed.

Along with the connotation of the ideal family and ideal childhood that could be achieved in New Zealand, the AVP also makes significant the construction of New Zealand as a nation with a unique identity and as a place to build an ideal home (meanings 3 and 4). Seen through a migrant's perspective, Amy's AVP projects New Zealand as a place and the various specific places in it as ideal based on the dominant notion of what everyday life is like abroad. In many instances, as she attempts to present their status in conformity to the hegemonic discourses of a middle class, gentrified, nuclear, heterosexual, immigrant family successfully establishing a good life abroad, she also reproduces identities of the country that abide by dominant national myths. Photos with a *'Lord of the Rings'* iconic character taken in a public exhibition, Figure 7.4 above, is not entirely unexpected since the franchise has been exploited both economically and culturally to internationally profile New Zealand as a particular brand (Expósito, 2011). Figure 7.8 below, depicting 'snow'<sup>38</sup>, is, however, somewhat curious since it does not snow in Auckland. The photo, to the unsuspecting viewer, could successfully pass off as authentically portraying a white winter – a projection of life in a Western country that reigns in the imagination of many Filipinos. Although entirely different in subject matter, these two derive their semiotic potency from the 'fictionalisation' of place. They both propel the idea of the good life in New Zealand by consenting to the myth-making strategies employed by a state-corporate partnership to effect a management of discourse in both the homeland and the new country. Acknowledging the 'Middle Earth' fantasy is as fetishising as rendering the illusion of snow in that both surrogate for the ideal –

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<sup>38</sup> The photo was taken in 2010 December at Devonport inside a 'giant snow globe'. Cadbury, a multinational confectionery company, sponsored the event. The snow, of course, was artificially generated.

magical even – quality of the place as a location for the realisation of the Filipino migrant’s *desiderata*.



**Figure 7.8** Screen capture of the AVP at 00:03:04; a supposedly snowy day in Auckland; uncaptioned.

Individually, the migrant gaze leaves no distinct mark on images. As demonstrated by Amy’s touristic photographs in the AVP, what is recognisably manifested is either the ‘family gaze’, in terms of foregrounding familial intimacy, or performing a ‘defiant’ stance against culturally significant objects or space. The AVP must be read as one whole unit – the short description, the collection of images, the captions, and the theme song taken together – to be able to unravel the intricacy of its organisation as a text, one that does not only convey but constitute experience and construct reality.

The imaging and imagination of national belonging is what sets the ‘migrant gaze’ apart from other perspectives in the vernacular practice of capturing images. Placing the self in sites where the nation is remembered is an act of constructing an evidence and reminder that one is part of the history and community of the local (e.g. Figure 7.7 above). Chambers shares the insight and cogently interprets the portrayal of space in family albums as a statement of national belonging:

The ritual of photographing members of the family beside monuments of nation and at national events reveals a familial desire to record the family’s involvement in the creation of domestic images and meanings of

nation. Picturing ideas of belonging to a nation and place were ways in which the album came to represent symbols of imagined community, notions of continuity and connections to the past. (2006, p. 105)

Though picturing the family taking its place in national spaces is a means to articulate a legitimate place in a foreign territory, it is not just capturing images of ‘special’ national monuments that need attention. This brings us back to the representation of ‘public’ and ‘domestic’ spaces in the previous section because the mundane places of living where the family spends most of its time declaring their presence also need careful scrutiny.



**Figure 7.9** A screen capture of the AVP at 00:04:01. It bears no caption and is the last image shown in the AVP ending at 00:04:04.

If being pictured in national public spaces creates an impression of national belonging, being photographed in the domestic sphere and depicting the domestication of public places create an image of *natural* belonging. Photos and videos of Amy’s home, in Wellington and Auckland, demonstrate the family’s domesticity and in that sense, visually articulate their normal lives as ordinary inhabitants of New Zealand. Even images of public space in the AVP show not just their presence in public landscapes but act as ‘pictorial spectacles and visual memories of the ownership and domestication of unfamiliar, alien space’ (Chambers, 2006, p. 103). Figure 7.9, for instance, demonstrates how togetherness and playfulness in public spaces, such as parks, challenge the conventions of the public-private divide as the images document a performance of intimacy more appropriately practiced in the confines of the home.

The ‘migrant gaze’, then, creates a difference or a separation from the geographic and historic past by articulating a present positionality that is based not just on the physicality and materiality of a new location – where they are found – but on the development of a new *sense of place* – the mediated and shared meanings given to and derived from where one dwells (Agnew, 1987; Cresswell, 2011).<sup>39</sup>

#### 7.4 Conclusion

Amy’s endeavours in signifying a sense of place and projecting it on social media is the contiguous online practice of place making in the offline world driven by a diasporic disposition. Both the RWC posts and the second-anniversary AVP position her target audience (family and friends) to participate in the veracity of the projected reality even as their distance is reproduced by the difference of the Philippines and New Zealand in terms of cultural practice and the affordance of a *good life*.

Through the performance of her being one with New Zealanders at a significant event in recent national history and her use and ownership of the country’s spaces, the family’s foreignness is dissipated and their strangeness as part of the milieu erased through the discursive portrayal of their embedded presence in crucial events and significant sites. Amy’s ‘virtual’ involvement in the RWC attests to her willingness to learn, acquire, and be part of nationally sanctioned rituals. The various images in the AVP, on the other hand, show how the family has become a natural part of the national landscape by mixing private and public places as natural spaces of their movement. In both instances of Amy’s performance of national belonging, the migrant gaze produces a reconfiguration of their place in New Zealand so that words and images transform into unified strands of a personal-historical narrative of the good immigrant journey. What results is a carefully controlled story line that charts ideal geographies and geographies of the ideal life where they are neither outsiders nor itinerant dwellers.

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<sup>39</sup> It was John Agnew (1987) who developed a tripartite definition of place: *location* pertains to the literal *where* by some agreed measure of distance and space; *locale* refers to the material context of society and culture; and, *sense of place* concerns the deeper meanings one gives to where one physically stands.

## 8 'I BLOG THEREFORE I AM'

### DE/CONSTRUCTING THE SELF AND NATION IN SOCIAL MEDIA

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#### 8.1 Introduction

Ka Uro (a pen name) moved to New Zealand with his wife and daughter in 1996. Unlike Amy, he could be considered a 'seasoned' migrant as he had already lived in other countries before finally settling down in Auckland. Like her, his main reason for leaving the Philippines is to have a chance at a better future for his family.

As an IT professional, Ka Uro had stints in the Middle East, Australia, and the US. In fact, he had been living with his family in Los Angeles for less than a year when they decided to visit New Zealand in 1995 to personally see the country. The trip proved to be pivotal in the succeeding events in their lives. The story of their journey to the place they now call home is told in his blog, *Mga Kuro-kuro ni Ka Uro* (*Mga Kuro-kuro* henceforth).

*Mga Kuro-kuro* is the focus in this chapter. As with the previous analyses, I intend to unravel the discourses on Filipino diasporic identity in the blog entries. I still employ the major theories and concepts that I have set out in the beginning – the positionality and constructedness of identity, the unique context of liminality in the migrant situation, and the consequent textuality of experience as a result of engaging in social media.

Blogs or weblogs are sites published on the Worldwide Web that feature writings presented in reverse chronological order. Being a form of social media, blogs are commonly seen as 'interlinked, interactive, and externally oriented' so that their importance as 'individualistic and intimate forms of self-expression' is often overlooked (Herring, Scheidt, Wright, & Bonus, 2005, p. 163). *Mga Kuro-kuro* is a personal non-professional blog, that is, Ka Uro's main reason for blogging was to document his life in New Zealand with no intention of earning from it. Although the latter is quite clear, the point about being merely personal is something to ponder, as I discuss in succeeding sections. What cannot be denied is that the blog had become

a venue for Ka Uro to convey his experiences, beliefs, feelings, and contemplations about building a life in another country.

The title of the chapter, then, is quite befitting. Referencing Descartes' *cogito* in characterising the act of blogging is not an original idea, as a quick Internet search would reveal how it has become clichéd. My attraction to it comes from the 'existentialist' leaning that it attributes to the activity. Naturally, if one is to exist in the blogosphere, one must be in the business of blogging. Yet, the statement also seems to propound that blogging is a means of 'thinking' one's existence. From an utterly hubristic point of view, the title seems to suggest that if one does not blog, one does not exist. The lofty attitude is facilitated not only by one's engagement in the specific activity but an implied possession of specialised knowledge that makes participation in it possible. This is made especially evident when we trace the origin of blogs to their earlier forms, such as the 'online diary', that only those with sufficient technical know-how were able to practice (McNeill, 2009).

It was Jorn Barger who coined the term 'weblogs' in 1997 to label what are mostly 'filter-type' blogs (i.e. non-narrative or non-diary formats; an inventory of other sites of interest) and it was shortened to 'blog' by programmer Peter Merholz two years later (Chapman, 2011). McNeill contends that the name carries with it a certain amount of status and power since it was only the tech-savvy and elite users of the Internet who had the ability to engage in such activity (2009, p. 317).

Blogging was brought to the mainstream with the introduction of what would later be known as Blogger in 1999 (Chapman, 2011). Created by Pyra Labs in San Francisco and bought by Google in 2003 ("The Story of Blogger," n.d.), this platform spares average Internet users the technical requisites of building their own blogs. More platforms have become available since then (e.g. WordPress, Typepad) making the erstwhile exclusive technology more accessible. Social networking sites, such as Facebook, even incorporate blogging as one of their features. The come-on of these products is in the ease with which one can create an online presence by customising pre-designed templates to generate and display web-based articles in reverse chronological order, multimodal in form, instantly published, and potentially perpetually archived. Whereas before, only a chosen few with special skills could chronicle their thoughts on an Internet-based platform, with the facilitating

affordances of blogging software, virtually anyone could now claim online engagement in such a format.

*Mga Kuro-kuro* was created using Blogger. Ka Uro echoes precisely the general intent behind the development of non-technical tools for engaging in the Internet. ‘*Simple lang gamitin*’ (simple to use) was the main reason he gave for choosing the platform to realise a vision of chronicling life in New Zealand.

After providing a brief history and description of the blog, I move forward to a critical examination of Ka Uro’s writings by focusing on specific entries selected based on their relevance to the overall goal of revealing discourses of identity in diaspora. These texts are drawn from the categorisation that Ka Uro himself devised in organising his blog posts (discussed in more detail below). Interestingly, a parallelism could be observed between some of these entries and Amy’s Facebook content central to the discussion in Chapter 7. In particular, Ka Uro also speaks of national belonging and cultural attachment that special events engender, albeit not exactly in conjunction with Amy’s pronouncements. Also, paramount to my analysis is the way ‘self-centredness’ is transcended in *Mga Kuro-kuro*, as the blog shifted from being merely a documentation of personal life to becoming a fountainhead of information for Filipinos wanting to migrate to New Zealand. But more importantly, I aim to demonstrate how this change in purpose is revelatory of a desire to create not only a personal presence in social media but rebuild a nation within a nation.

## **8.2 *Mga Kuro-kuro*: Of beginnings and meanings**

Ka Uro disclosed in the interview that he initially considered the blog as an archive of his personal writings about migrant life. He envisioned it being accessed by his daughter in the future as a way of remembering how they made New Zealand their home. After reading other blogs he decided that it would be easy enough for him to put up his own.

Figure 8.1a is a screenshot of the main page of *Mga Kuro-kuro* while Figure 8.1b presents an abstraction of its entirety with sections labelled appropriately. The left column, the larger of the two, is the central area of the webpage as it contains the

blog entries presented in reverse chronological order. Displayed on the right column are ancillary features, namely:

- a badge that makes explicit the blog is a ‘visitor-friendly site’
- a message board that acts as a synchronous communication medium between Ka Uro and his readers
- information about the blog and the blogger
- some advertisements
- two sets of archives one of which shows the 10 latest posts and another that organises the entries by date
- a listing of posts that go under the label ‘Living in NZ’, a collection of entries that are focused on the practicalities of settling down in the country.

Although each blog entry is shown in its entirety on the opening page, the reader remarks are hidden but easily accessed through the ‘comments’ link. Clicking on it leads to a page dedicated to a particular entry where one can also read and leave comments.

*Mga Kuro-kuro* had its maiden post on 1 December 2004. The entire blog is still accessible as of this writing – people can read all available entries since they are archived in the website. Ka Uro officially declared the end of his blogging through a short valedictory piece on 29 December 2006, two years after its inception. He clarified that he would still continue to answer queries about NZ immigration through the message board (see Figure 8.2) or under any of his posts provided these are pertaining to immigration matters (i.e. he does not respond to questions about his more personal entries anymore). Lack of time to devote to the activity was the reason he gave in the interview for deciding to discontinue writing new entries for the blog. Technically, Ka Uro produced content from 2004 to 2006, stepped away from blogging in 2007, and resumed posting, albeit sporadically, non-personal entries (e.g. immigration-related materials, re-posts, and community notices) from 2008-2011. His last formal entry was published on 14 December 2011. It was nothing like his usual posts as it only announced that the migrant’s handbook they produced, which was partly inspired by the blog itself, received a media award from the Commission on Filipinos Overseas. The peak of his writing was clearly in the years 2005 and 2006 where readers enjoyed 258 of the total 269 entries.

**mGa KuRo-KuRo Ni Ka UrO**

Wednesday, December 14, 2011

**"From Carabao to Sheep" Wins Print Journalism Award**

Email from CFO notifying AKLnzPINOYS that the migrant handbook "From Carabao to Sheep" is the winner of the Print Journalism Award:

Dear AKLnzPINOYS Moderators:

Greetings from the Commission on Filipinos Overseas!

We are pleased to inform you that AKLNZ's publication "FROM CARABAO TO SHEEP" was chosen as the winner for the Print Journalism Award, one of the seven categories of the first Migration Advocacy and Media Awards. This year's awardees were chosen for having raised public awareness on issues on Filipino migration, advocated the cause of Filipinos overseas, and promoted a positive image of Filipinos overseas, and migration and development

We hope that you will be able to receive this award during the Awarding Ceremonies on 15 December 2011 (Thursday), 5:30 pm at DM Hall (LandBank Auditorium), LBP Plaza, Malate, Manila. Should you be unable to personally receive the award, you may delegate a representative in behalf of your group to accept the award.

Please be informed that awardees are allowed to bring a maximum of five (5) representatives or guests during the Awarding Ceremonies. Kindly provide us the complete names of those who will be receiving the award (maximum of three), as well as your guests on or before December 10.

May we also invite you to participate in the different activities organized by the Inter-Agency Committee in line with the celebration of the Month of Overseas Filipinos (MOF) in December and International Migrants Day on December 18. Please find attached the confirmation slip, which include the MOF activities, in which you could participate.

For more information, you may contact Mr. Frenel Tingga at telephone no. 552-4766 and at his e-mail address [ftingga@cfo.gov.ph](mailto:ftingga@cfo.gov.ph).

**Visitor Friendly Site** Please Leave a Note

[Get a Cbox] refresh

name

e-mail / url

message

Post

help - smiles - cbox

2 Dec 13, 01:51

1984

28 Nov 13, 03:16  
 KU: @ naman mahirap.

23 Nov 13, 15:08  
 marami part-time jobs.

23 Nov 13, 15:08  
 kelsey: Hi po. Tanong ko lng po lung madali makahanap ng part time work sa im holding student visa po. kung may po ang start ng class ko. Thankyou po

19 Nov 13, 05:29  
 Dencio: Hi Ompong! Ang bayad sa Residence fee na 1810 tapos pag ma-approve magbayad ka na lang Migrant Levy na NZ\$300+

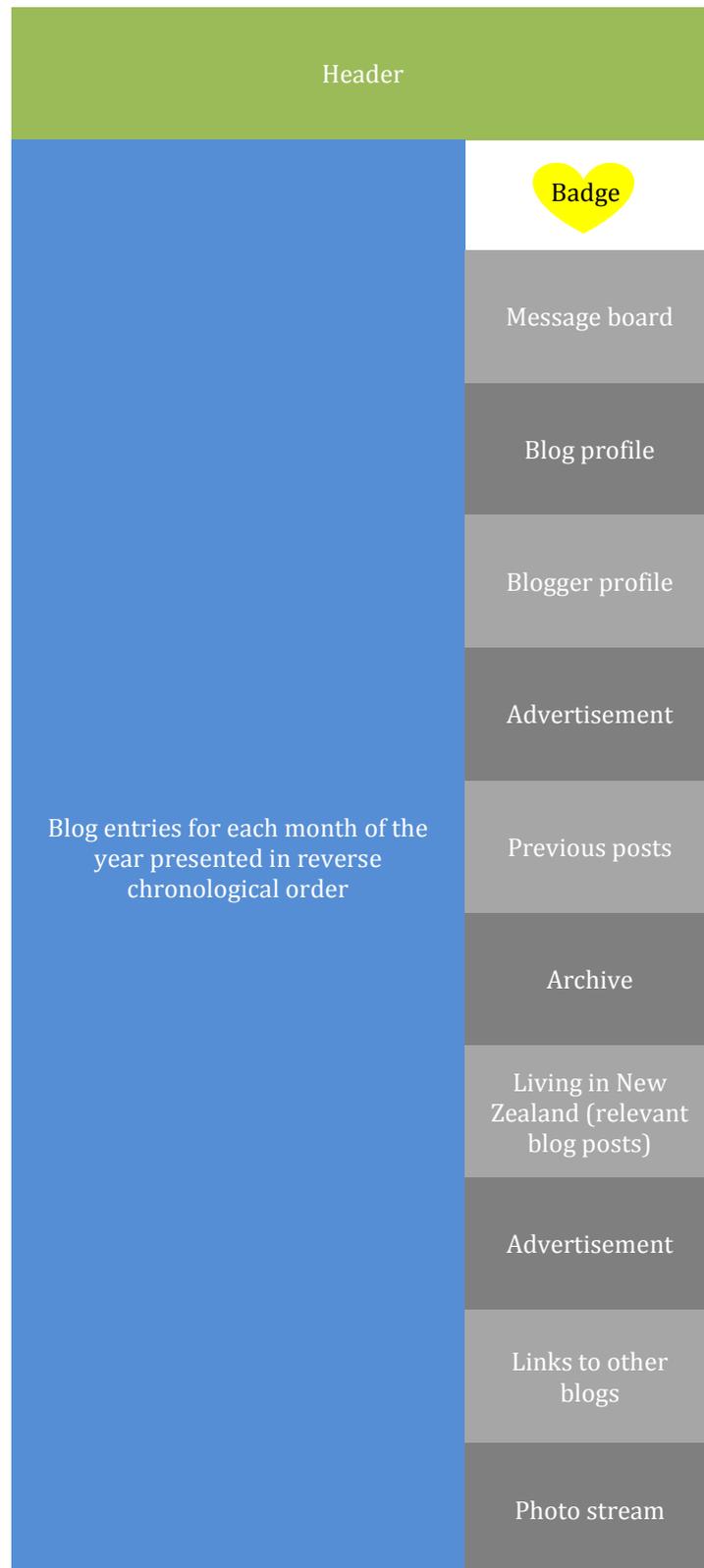
21 Oct 13, 10:41  
 KU: hi ompong, sanat ng fees nakalagay sa Immigration website.

21 Oct 13, 10:40  
 KU: hu ma-eh i cant recommend any consult if you are really keen on hiring one, make sure they are licensed. to be honest there is no advantage in getting consultants.

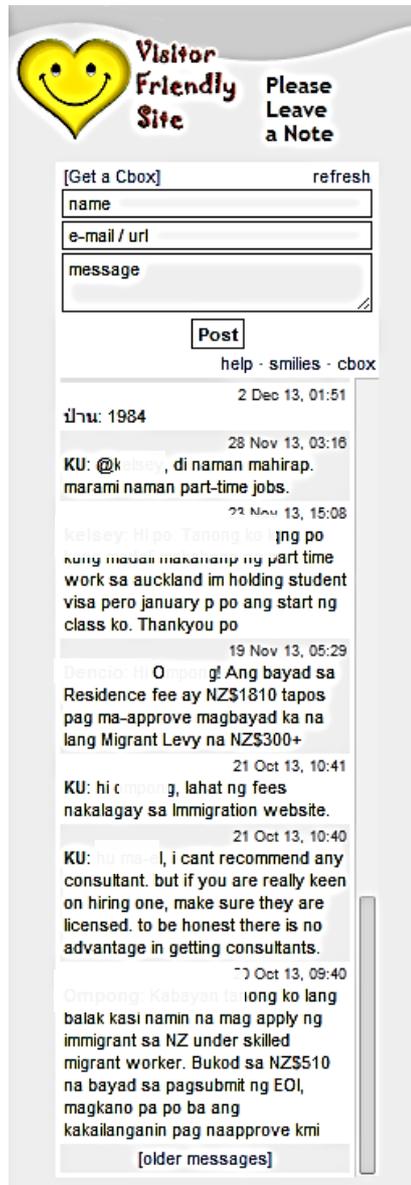
20 Oct 13, 09:40  
 Ompong: Kabayan tanong ko lang balak kasi namin na mag apply ng immigrant sa NZ under skilled migrant worker. Bukod sa NZ\$510 na bayad sa pagsubmit ng EOI, magkano pa po ba ang kakailanganin pag naapprove kami

[older messages]

**Figure 8.1a** Screenshot of *Mga Kuro-kuro* main page, i.e., what will come up initially on the screen when the website is accessed



**Figure 8.1b** Abstraction of *Mga Kuro-kuro* main page with sections labelled accordingly.



**Figure 8.2** Magnified screenshot of *Mga Kuro-kuro* message board located on the right column of the webpage. The commenter handle ‘KU’ is Ka Uro. Some details are hidden for privacy purposes.

A noticeable characteristic of the blog is its bare and simple appearance. It is neither an outstandingly elaborate visual site nor is it a playground of multimodal details. When asked about his design considerations, Ka Uro emphasised that he was not as concerned about the ‘look’ of the site as he was with what it would contain. Hence, images are used sparingly and no video or audio link is present. If hyperlinks are utilised, they are placed for practical purposes. For instance, some links lead to websites of relevant government agencies (e.g. Immigration) or news websites (i.e. as relevant background information). Posts with accompanying image or photo are not unusual. However, the site is primarily made up of ‘texts’ and this focus on written content was clear to Ka Uro from the very beginning.

He explains that the character of the blog is based on his personal taste or a natural reflection of his personality. In other words, the way the blog is presented is a matter of his subjective choices without any underlying or especially meaningful reason. Yet, the purported nonchalance towards multisemiotic details and layered meanings is belied by Ka Uro’s explications of the rationale behind how he does blogging, that is, his sign-making practice in the medium. His choice, for example, of a header image is quite significant as it visually depicts the overall theme that he set out in his first ever post and that he carried through to his formal farewell entry. On 1 December 2004, he announced the start of his blogging with a piece entitled *A journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step*. On the 26<sup>th</sup> of December, two years later, he bade his readers goodbye as he declared that *The traveller rests*. Figure 8.3 is a screen grab of the header of the website in which, aside from the title, an image of a path that goes infinitely into the horizon is used.



**Figure 8.3** Magnified screenshot of *Mga Kuro-kuro* header featuring a generic image of a path across a field.

There is nothing special about this picture in terms of origin, Ka Uro explains in the interview, as it was a generic image taken from the Internet. Its significance lies, however, in the projection of the overall motif of *Mga Kuro-kuro*, as the author himself points out:

...nung inuumpisahan ko yung blog ko...parang treatment ko sa kanya, parang nag-ta-travel ka, and through your travels, sinusulat mo yung mga, ano mo, yung mga naiisip mo kaya nga ‘kuro-kuro,’ e. CHUCKLES

*...when I started my blog...I treated it like travelling, and through your travels, you write what comes to your mind, that’s why it’s ‘kuro-kuro’.*<sup>40</sup>  
CHUCKLES

There is no doubt that from the start Ka Uro’s choice of the image was purposeful in that it conveyed how he saw the act of chronicling his life in a new place. In fact, it would not be far-fetched to speculate that deciding on this particular depiction of a path set in the middle of a green field is a reference to the *pure* and *green* branding of the country. After all, it had always been about the ‘journey’ – both his life in New Zealand and his foray into blogging.

An unassuming meaningfulness is what is attractive about his writing. In the interview, he credited the way the posts are written to personal style: informality, conversationality, Filipino-English code-switching, and a subtle sense of humour characterise many of the entries. He even ascribes the rhetorical devices of metaphor and allegory in some of his more reflective and literary posts to nothing deeper than his natural tendency to write. In his own words: *‘Parang style ko lang siguro ‘yun’* (I think it’s just my personal style).

But to write is to speak in and from a language chosen at a specific juncture in time and with a particular purpose in mind. Writing, as with all forms of cultural work, is not easily done apart from an ideological stance. The politics of writing begins with the decision to write. Ka Uro’s choice of language to use, for example, was clearly in order to perform a certain character on the online stage of blogging – he wanted to

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<sup>40</sup> *Kuro-kuro* means ‘opinion’ or ‘thoughts’ in Filipino. Its significance in the blog title is discussed below.

sound how a ‘normal’ Filipino would: ‘...umpisahan ko pa lang ‘yun, nag-decide na talaga ako na hindi gawing ano, hindi gawing pure Tagalog or pure English. Parang... nakikipag-usap ka lang...’ (...from the beginning, I decided not to make it pure Tagalog or pure English. It’s like...you’re just normally talking with someone...).

Even the name of the blog and his choice of penname reveal, at least, Ka Uro’s creative efforts at giving elements of his blog relevance and substance beyond personal taste. *Mga Kuro-kuro ni Ka Uro* literally means ‘Ka Uro’s opinions’ or ‘points of view’ but as used in the blog, the more appropriate translation would be ‘Ka Uro’s thoughts’ or ‘insights’. To the reader who is versed in Filipino (or Tagalog), the meaning of the title is straightforward. The point, however, is not only what the phrase means, but also the way it is composed. What is interesting is how Ka Uro devised a way to make the name of his blog more memorable by playing with the sounds and rhythmic potential of the words. He achieved the alliterative effect and the internal rhyme by formulating for himself a pen name that would complement the consonants and vowels of the word *kuro-kuro*. ‘Uro’ was derived from his real first name although he had never used it as a nickname prior to the blog. ‘Ka’, generally, is an honorific appellation used in addressing older persons or a respected elder in more traditional (perhaps, rural) communities. This title, however, gains a more particular meaning in reference to members of progressive leftist groups whose connection to the countryside and its people’s struggles outline their image in popular imagination. Certainly, not all Ka Uro’s readers will have this latter understanding since he never bothered to explain these meanings in the site. The appellation ‘Ka’ has a particular cultural resonance, nonetheless, and I believe that its general honorific relevance is what is more accessible to his Filipino audience. Using the name has given the blog (and the blogger) a particular stature akin to ‘an elder’s words of wisdom’, a reputation that is validated by the regularity of readers commenting or seeking advice from Ka Uro as regards moving to New Zealand.

Transcending the personal, he wrote about immigration matters from the practical to the profound. He admitted that what started as a venue to collect his personal thoughts transformed into something else along the way. He relayed the message through his farewell entry excerpted below:

But the journey had twists and turns. And just like the “Little Prince”, the journey took me to places I never imagined before, met new friends, rediscovered old ones, and even got me involved in civic projects and organizations. (*The traveller rests*, 26 December 2006)

The ‘twists’ and ‘turns’, that eventually led him to tasks and responsibilities bigger than the blog and bigger than himself (i.e. organisations and civic projects), are the reasons why his writings possess a significance warranting a closer reading. Although Ka Uro’s modesty prevents him from seeing his writings in the blog as meaningful beyond its role as migration information resource for his direct online network, I believe that he was able to recognise the potential of his writings in terms of its ability to reach a wide readership and provide some influence on his audience’s migration considerations. Taking for granted the cultural import of his words, especially to the community or audience that his blog had developed through the years, would be to ignore the impact that his writings might have had on both the Filipino community in New Zealand and his Filipino followers elsewhere in the world.

### **8.3 How to be Filipino online: The blogging of identity**

On 1 January 2010, a little over a year after announcing the end of his blogging journey Ka Uro posted an entry, *For Pinoy Migrants and Tourists in NZ*. The piece immediately denied any sign of him returning to regular blogging but was quite significant, nevertheless, because it was an attempt to organise the blog according to themes he identified himself. Drawing on his own perspective about the value and meaning of his words, his categorisation also served as my initial basis for choosing the particular texts to include in the analysis. This methodological decision not only acknowledges Ka Uro’s authorial agency, it also approximates the way categorising his entries potentially structures readers’ evaluation of the entire blog content.

He included 96 (roughly a third) of his blog posts divided into 14 different categories in this organisation. Appendix J is a tabulation of the categorisation. The first column shows the name of each category that Ka Uro formulated himself. The succeeding two columns indicate the specific blog entries included in each category and the dates of their publication. I provide in the last two columns a brief summary of each blog and the overall theme that, based on my reading, characterises a specific entry.

In Table 8.1, I present my further regrouping of the categories. Without changing their order as listed in the blog, merging particular categories results in a reclassification that puts emphasis on the general steps a potential migrant has to take to realise the move to New Zealand. Ka Uro's first category, *Still Deciding on Migrating to NZ*, is retained and, appropriately, indexes the first course of action in moving overseas – making the final decision to leave one's country of birth. Alternatively, I would name it 'Pre-migration considerations' as a way to emphasise its place in the entire process. The succeeding three new categories correspond to the next stages in the undertaking – processing the move, the move itself, and settling down – covering mostly practical and technical information about migrating to New Zealand.

Judging by Ka Uro's thematic classification, 'Filipino identity' was never a prominent topic. Out of the 96 entries that he included in the listing, only two are explicitly about Filipino identity in general and only one of these deals directly with the subject of identity of the Filipino migrant in particular. Thematically, therefore, Filipino identity in diaspora was never at the core of Ka Uro's social media discourse. In the interview, he admitted that the said issue was never a conscious topic of choice: '*...actually 'di pumasok sa akin yung identity or anything basta...may makuha sila na mga praktikal na bagay*' (...actually it never occurred to me – identity or anything, as long as they are able to pick up something practical). Notwithstanding his assessment, the subject matter figures in the blog. It may be more directly addressed in some entries while treated as a subtext in others. In fact, I see Ka Uro's inclusion of this topic in the first category as a sign of the importance of thinking about one's identity in migrant life.

Categories are meaningful. Labeling is meaning-making. Ultimately, what Ka Uro did – deliberately or otherwise – was to make a choice as to how his writings should be read, at least in terms of their general subject matter and usefulness. My focus on the first category, at this point, was prompted by the image of uncertainty, anxiety, and tension that the title insinuates. The suggested feeling of being caught in the middle of a very important step is reflective of the actual emotional conundrum that people are likely to face in contemplating migration. If Ka Uro determined that these blog posts are the ones that could help prospective migrants to make up their minds,

then the most important step – as suggested by the entries – is to reflect on ‘philosophical’ questions in the same way that one would consider practical issues. This includes reflections about who a Filipino is and where the nation stands in the lives of migrants.

**Table 8.1 Re-classification of Ka Uro’s original categories resulting in emphasis on process of migration to New Zealand (based on 1 January 2010 post)**

Ka Uro’s original categories	Reclassification: focus on process of migration
Still Deciding on Migrating to NZ	<b>Pre-migration considerations</b>
Migrants BEWARE!	
Some Useful Information about NZ	<b>Processing the move to NZ</b>
Moving to NZ	
Migrant Experiences	<b>Actual move to NZ</b>
Life at Home	
Interacting with Others	
Cars and Driving Around	
House Buying, Flat Renting	
Kids and Schooling	<b>Settling down in NZ</b>
Life in Auckland	
Language	
Buying Stuff	
Cellphones, Calling the Phillipines [sic]	

In the succeeding discussion, I will focus on three texts, two of which are included in the first category of Ka Uro’s classification; the third one is not part of any of his groupings. The entry with the title *After being in NZ for 10 yrs now, do you consider yourself Kiwi?* is obviously the most relevant of Ka Uro’s writings. Aside from its direct connection to the main subject of the thesis, its inclusion in the first stage of the migration process speaks of the author’s conscious effort at making questions of identity, among other introspective matters, an issue to be reckoned with by a Filipino before making the decision to emigrate. Although the other two texts – *Happy 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary* and *Events that Stop a Nation* – are not directly about migrant identity, they contain discourses crucial to the overall understanding of identity work outside the homeland. It is the latter that is not included in the

categorised listing. My decision to discuss it in this section was driven by the entry's thematic relevance. In addition, both texts could be treated as parallel to Amy's discursive identity performances in Chapter 7. Reading them side-by-side allows us to see not only complementary or contradictory discourses but also the complexity of working out and through one's identity, especially if one's rightful place in the nation is constantly in question.

Finally, along with these main texts, I will reference other blog posts pertinent to the discussion to firmly anchor my arguments in the data set. I hope to demonstrate how the central texts that figure in this chapter bear thematic and discursive connection to other texts that make up the entire blog. Being aware of this wholeness is integral to the appreciation of Ka Uro's representation of life abroad and the ways in which choosing to be far from the original home impacts on a Filipino migrant's sense of self.

#### **8.4 A perfect fit: Ideal place, ideal people, and ideal immigrants**

On 21 February 2005, Ka Uro posted an entry bearing a title that doubled as a celebratory gesture for their first decade in New Zealand. *Happy 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary* recounts the events that ultimately led to their decision to resettle in Auckland from the United States. Ka Uro is a perfect example of a Filipino transnational migrant worker whose transborder mobility appears to render geographic distance and national boundaries immaterial. As mentioned in the chapter's introduction, he had lived and worked in other countries prior to moving to New Zealand. What prompted the visit to Auckland in 1995 was a letter from NZ Immigration confirming the approval of their application for residency. Ka Uro had to decide then whether moving to a new country is worth giving up a stable, good-paying job in the States. 'To help us make an informed decision,' he says in the blog, 'nag-decide kami na magpasyal muna sa (*we decided to first visit*) Auckland for a few days, just to see the place first hand.' The outcome of this little adventure is obvious. The family was convinced to make the move to Auckland after the 10-day visit, a decision they happily made to the surprise of many. In the blog post, he relates:

The impressions on New Zealand we got during those 10 days in Auckland have made us decide to permanently settle in Auckland 12 months later in 1996. To this day we've never regretted the decision.

Yung ibang nakikilala namin nagugulat kapag nalalaman nila na galing na kami ng States at lumipat pa sa NZ. Tanong nila kaagad bakit? Di ba mas mataas ang suweldo sa US?

*Some people we meet are surprised after learning that we moved to NZ from the States. They would immediately ask why. Don't you get higher pay in the US?*

Ka Uro has only one answer to the question: *lifestyle*. He defines it himself in the same post by describing a little scenario: 'A stroll on the beach, Sunday at the park, the sense of security, being stress-free.' The images generated by the statement bring to mind Amy's depiction of New Zealand in her second-year anniversary AVP as the following excerpts from (1) the blog post and (2) Amy's introductory piece illustrate respectively:

1. ...New Zealand is definitely the perfect place to raise a family. Where you can let your kids play and run around like kids.
2. We love how Ben and Sarah can run around the park and enjoy being kids. We love the clear blue skies, the fantastic views and kid-friendly activities everywhere.

In fact, the overall tone of the blog entry about the place appears to echo Amy's words. The noticeable consistency in imagery (e.g. happy family, happy kids, beautiful place) and lexical choice (e.g. kids 'run around') is evidence of the two individuals' shared sentiments towards the country which to them is the perfect place to build a family and raise children.

#### **8.4.1 Meeting ideal people**

While Amy chose to represent their belonging in the anniversary AVP through signifiers of place and place-making, Ka Uro indicated in the blog post that it was mainly the 'people' in New Zealand that compelled them to make the decision to move. He mentions four instances in their short visit that gave him a strong positive impression of the kind of people in Auckland. The following excerpts, in order of appearance in the actual blog entry, illustrate this:

1. Yung taxi-driver na naghatid sa amin sa hotel, very friendly at matulungin sa pagbigay sa amin ng advice kung saan okay mag-stay. At hindi rin siya tumatanggap ng tip, unlike taxis in Manila or LA.

*The taxi-driver who took us to the hotel, very friendly and helpful in giving advice as to where it is okay to stay. And he does not take tips, unlike taxis in Manila or LA.*

2. One time we were walking along Albert Park, looking lost (which you may say is my normal appearance), I was trying to figure out our location on a map, a student approached us and asked “Can I help you?” Sabi ko: “No, thank you, we’re fine”. Sa isip ko, natuwa ako at meron pa palang mga taong may kusang mag-offer ng tulong.

*...I said: “No, thank you, we’re fine”. In my mind, I was happy to know that there are still people willing to offer help.*

3. In another incident, nasa playground kami ng park, at may dalawang bata, ages 5 and 7 years old and dumating at nakipag-laro sa anak ko. Jean asked where their parents are kasi medyo nagtataka lang kami at nandoon sila na walang kasamang adults. We found out that their parents were in one of the nearby houses. It dawned on us that in Auckland pala, it was safe to let kids play by themselves! Kasi sa LA, kahit sa harap ng apartment namin kailangan pang bantayan si Fidez sa paglalaro. Later we got to meet the parents of the 2 kids, Richard and Sharon Jones (no joke!). The Jones's [sic] even invited us for dinner the following day and to this day we’ve remained friends.

*In another incident, we were at a playground of a park, and there were two children, ages 5 and 7 years old who came and played with my child. Jean asked where their parents are because we were kind of wondering why they were there without supervising adults. We found out that their parents were in one of the nearby houses. It dawned on us that in Auckland, it was safe to let kids play by themselves! Because in LA, we need to look after Fidez even when she’s playing just outside our apartment...*

4. Then there was this time I bumped into Jeff, isang Pinoy IT professional din. Nakapila ako sa Immigration at nakapila din siya. Lumapit siya sa akin at tinanong kung Pinoy ako. That broke the ice at nagkwentuhan kami kasi pareho kaming sa IT. The next day sinundo kami ni Jeff sa hotel at pinasyal kami sa Auckland at later nag-dinner sa bahay nila. Sabi ko sa sarili ko, “very accomodating [sic] pala ang mga Pinoy dito”.

*Then there was this time I bumped into Jeff, also a Pinoy IT professional. I was in a queue at the immigration and he was too. He approached me and asked if I am Pinoy. That broke the ice and we chatted because we are both in IT. The next day he picked us up from the hotel and took us around Auckland and later we had dinner at their place. I told myself, “Pinoy here are very accomodating.”*

Using Van Leeuwen's social actor network analysis, the four sets of scenarios construct the identity of the depicted individuals by either *functionalisation*, what they do (e.g. taxi driver, student, IT professional), and *relational classification*, their personal and kinship network (e.g. Richard and Sharon Jones and *their* children). There is nothing strikingly special about these descriptions except that these could be perceived as 'models' of the *local folk* that one might meet in a typical Auckland neighbourhood. However, this apparent ordinariness is what makes their inclusion in the retelling of Ka Uro's brief Auckland experience effective signifiers of the quality of the environment, a convincing legitimation of his positive regard for New Zealand.

Further, the excerpts reveal how Ka Uro *differentiates* this set of people, by virtue of their actions, to others who are either explicitly or implicitly identified in his narration of the events. Excerpts 1 and 2 are straightforward, albeit in a generalised way, in identifying the two groups of social actors that are being compared – taxi drivers in Auckland and LA or Manila, and children and families in Auckland and LA. Meanwhile, excerpts 3 and 4 express the differentiation as clearly but are quite vague as regards the two groups being differentiated. We could only surmise, based on the two other excerpts, that the helpful student and the accommodating Pinoy are being compared to similar social actors in LA (USA) or Manila (Philippines). The use of the Filipino interjection in both accounts, *palá*, is an indication of sudden realisation effectively substantiating the claim that Auckland's remarkableness lies in how different its people behave in daily life, which to Ka Uro is altogether surprising and appealing.

Differentiating people in Auckland from others based on his personal experience is not only a work of description but also an attempt on Ka Uro's part at 'moral evaluation' (Van Leeuwen, 2008, pp. 109–112). In order to legitimise his decision to move to New Zealand from the United States, the groups he describes, their acts, and, by association, the character of the place, become the discursive channel of demonstrating what is 'good' and 'bad' and why his further actions, i.e. settling down in Auckland, are warranted. Aside from 'evaluative adjectives' (Van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 110), such as *matulungin* (helpful) in excerpt 1 and 'accommodating' in excerpt 4, the comparisons performed by Ka Uro in all four instances ensured a

legitimising function (Van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 111) by representing the individuals involved as carriers of positive values that, presumably, are not commonly found where he came from.

The mention of Jeff, the accommodating Filipino IT professional, is quite significant in this respect not only because it contributes to the depiction of Ka Uro's affinity for the place, but also because the former's presence in the narrative is a direct commentary on the identity of overseas Filipinos. Again, the processes of differentiation, in order to activate his identity, and comparison, in order to emphasise the valuation of his positive character, perform his distinction from other overseas Filipinos who are, based on Ka Uro's assessment, less than ideal.

Nominating Jeff in the discourse paves the way for the author to make a generalised claim about the identity of Filipinos in New Zealand. In the concluding section of the blog post, Ka Uro asserts why the country is perfect for raising a family, perhaps more specifically, a Filipino family. Among the many reasons that refer to the ideal attributes of the country, apparently there is one that stands out:

At importante sa lahat, kapag kinausap mo ang isang Pinoy ng Tagalog, sa Tagalog din siya sasagot. Ewan ko ba, bakit kung minsan may mga kababayan tayo na ilang taon palang sa abroad, nalilimutan na ang mag-tagalog [sic]?

*And most important of all, when you talk to a Pinoy in Tagalog, s/he will answer back in Tagalog. I don't know why, sometimes we have fellow-Filipinos who have only been abroad for a few years, but have already forgotten to speak in tagalog?*

Exemplified by the initial encounter, Ka Uro presents Jeff as the epitome of New Zealand-based Filipinos who exhibit a desirable trait presumably already difficult to find among Filipinos based elsewhere. Characterising them by *utterance autonomisation* (Van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 46), in which their speech defines their identity, may be essentialising but it is not entirely without basis. The loss of heritage language among Filipinos living abroad is documented especially in the case of second-generation Filipino immigrants (and beyond) in the United States (Nadal, 2009; Tuason, Taylor, Rollings, Harris, & Martin, 2007). What is more revealing is the fact that rejection of passing on the mother tongue (whether Tagalog or another

Filipino language) is instigated by the parents or elders themselves for fear of their children speaking English with a Filipino accent (Nadal, 2009). It is highly possible that Ka Uro refers to US-based Filipinos in this understated criticism. Aguilar's proposition that 'language is a transportable signifier of national community' in exilic communities (1996, p. 119) of Filipinos overseas is of absolute relevance at this point. The expression of disappointment with compatriots utterly refusing to speak and teach their 'native language' to the younger generation is a form of rebuke against an unnationalistic attitude and a lack of oneness with co-nationals.

Ka Uro's *grumble* then about Filipinos who 'forget' to speak their mother tongue (in this instance, Tagalog-speakers) after having lived outside the Philippines is another instance of negative evaluation that puts a spotlight on the better 'quality' of those who are based in New Zealand. The moral evaluation is a denouncement not only of the inability to perform one (although significant) aspect of an ethnic belonging but of the implied denial of one's national roots. Therefore, based on Ka Uro's recollection of their initial journey to New Zealand, the country is a 'good' place because it is where one finds a *kababayan* who does not forget nor deny his/her national origin.

#### **8.4.2 Being the ideal immigrant**

This romanticised notion of an immigrant family life in New Zealand is what is also constructed and advertised in official texts, such as the case of the testimonial of John Evangelista produced by Immigration NZ earlier presented in Chapter 6. Judging by the thematic consistency (e.g. letting kids be kids; stress-free lifestyle; beautiful place), regularity of lexical choice (e.g. perfect place; perfect life), and collocation of particular words (e.g. life, perfect, family, kids) that could be gleaned from Amy's AVP, Ka Uro's blog post, and the Evangelista testimonial, official discourse that aims to 'sell' the ideal image of New Zealand as a perfect place for families from abroad appears to be achieving its objectives well. In other words, both Amy and Ka Uro's presentations of family life in their respective social media are

‘hegemonic’ readings<sup>41</sup> of state-sponsored immigration discourses. Yet, Ka Uro’s active participation and positive action in taking control of his circumstances are also evident in the post.

We could gather from the narrative that he was consciously involved in the quest for the best place and situation for his family. The beginning of the story makes sure that what is relayed to the reader is an image of a person who does not just sit around and wait for good fortune to come by even when he makes use of the expression *sinuwerte* (got lucky) in referring to how he got a company to sponsor his work visa in the States: ‘*Sinuwerte din ako sa LA at may nag-sponsor sa akin ng work permit kaya ako nakapag-trabaho doon ng legal*’ (I got lucky that a company sponsored my permit in LA so I was able to work legally). Ka Uro received the news of their residency application approval in New Zealand while already being positioned well in his industry in America. The situation was clearly not desperate and the scenario depicts Ka Uro and his family as having options: read another way, as possessing the power to make certain things happen in their lives. Visiting New Zealand first in order to test the water is, for instance, a prudent move but one has to realise that they were only able to make this happen because they had the wherewithal to do so.

In another post, dated 18 May 2005, Ka Uro admonishes his countrymen who, he says, have given up on their hopes and dreams: ‘They used to be dreamers like me, but slowly their Filipino dream evaporated to become just that, a dream, an impossible dream.’ He, then, advises them to take their fate in their own hands. In the conclusion, he leaves the following message:

**A bright future, starts with a dream, a vision of tomorrow. Then one has to work on it...TODAY.**

Note that I approximated how this part of the post appears exactly on the blog: in bold face and with the last word in all caps. Ka Uro’s intention in emphasising the critical importance of his statement is aptly signified by the typographic choice –

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<sup>41</sup> Stuart Hall (1973) outlines three positionalities a reader (consumer) can take in interpreting texts: hegemonic or dominant (the consumer agrees with what the text says); negotiated (a combination of accepting and rejecting the encoded message in the text); and oppositional (a rejection of the encoded meaning).

solid, bold, and dark – wherein the increase in the weight of the typeface is meant to increase the salience of the message (Machin, 2007).

The message is one of personal agency. As reflected in Ka Uro’s recollection of their New Zealand migration journey, it is exercised in defiance of an ever-present Filipino desire – the Great American Dream. The title of the post where he left off with an emphatic message of hope and perseverance is *My Filipino Dream*. In it, he explains the nuances of the Filipino dream, the American dream, and what, to him, is an emerging trend of the New Zealand dream among Filipinos wanting to migrate. Once again, a moral evaluation is evident in the comparisons – while Ka Uro exerts effort at giving the pros and cons of each ‘dream construct’, there is a clear winner in the end.

In brief, the Filipino dream is a personal one and for Ka Uro, it is living a simple yet fulfilling family life – satisfied, secure, and cared for. The American dream, on the other hand, is the desire of many Filipinos to migrate to the United States hoping that all, especially material, ambitions will be fulfilled in the land of milk and honey. As Ka Uro points out, it is basically the dream of working hard and getting rich:

In America, if you have the skills, guts and determination and with hardwork you can become rich, multi-millionaire pa kung gusto mo’

*...multi-millionaire, if you like.*

Finally, the New Zealand dream is virtually identical to the American dream in the sense that one will be living in a developed country, only, one cannot hope to get as wealthy. The trade-off, nonetheless, is quite alluring – a chance to live a peaceful and stress-free lifestyle. In Ka Uro’s assessment, his Filipino dream is much closer to what New Zealand can provide:

What NZ dream offers is modern living just like in America, comfortable, but not extravagant. A stress free, simple and more laid-back lifestyle. Uncomplicated. Para ka lang nagbabakasyon. Exactly, the way I described my Filipino dream above.

*...It’s like you’re on vacation...*

Turning his back on the American dream to achieve another kind of life that he believes to be more consistent with what he wants for his family is pivotal to the analysis of Ka Uro's characterisation of himself as a migrant. As a central aspect of his story, it demonstrates his capacity to challenge the prevailing discourse of the ideal migrant life in the States – a fantasy that has been cultivated in Filipino consciousness by the US assimilationist agenda after the fall of the Spanish regime in the Philippines in the late nineteenth century; also the colonial root of unabated labour diasporisation of Filipino workers under state blessing. Achieving the American dream is a compelling reason for migration and up to this day, USA is the top destination country of Filipinos (Commission on Filipinos Overseas, 2012). As an idea, the American dream possesses a predominant meaning in mainstream public consciousness. It has become a 'lingua franca' that everyone can utter and understand (Cullen, 2003, p. 6). Surprisingly or not, the dream is pervasive even outside America, as exemplified by the case of the Philippines. The American dream speaks of the chance to attain success (mainly economic) that is open to anyone who is willing to work hard. Although the idea is 'multifaceted, versatile, and open to interpretation', there exists a prevailing articulation of its 'rags-to-riches' meaning, making the contentious issues of 'whiteness', race, ethnicity, and systemic inequality invisible (Madriaga, 2005) in its activation in discourse and application in everyday American life. Ka Uro was evidently on track to fulfil this American national ethos. Living and working in the States were signs that he was closer to the goal. Perhaps, that is the reason why he attributes his relatively secure status to *suwerte* (luck) when they were living there – not all Filipinos who hold on to the American dream are able to make it real and to others, the pursuit of the dream becomes a trap.

Based on the retelling of their journey to the land they now call home, a strong sense of individual agency is projected by Ka Uro as a defining characteristic of a Filipino migrant. Leaving the Philippines for economic reasons is no longer a surprise. Such is the effect of more than a decade of state-sanctioned labour migration policy. But deliberately walking away from the American dream, especially when it is clearly within grasp, is no mean and ordinary feat. He took in his hands the responsibility of making certain that the family is on its way to achieve what they want in life. By choosing New Zealand over America, he was able to perform his opposition to a reigning discourse. Ka Uro, by his own narrative, has depicted himself as the

epitome of the *homo economicus* – the rational man; able to act in the most effective way in order to attain what is best for him. Therein lies a contradiction, one that points to the inherent precariousness of power in Ka Uro's narrative. Madriaga (2005) asserts that 'individualism underlines [sic] the 'official' meaning of the American Dream'. It is also this kind of 'individual' agency, however, that Ka Uro manifested in practically abandoning the desire. The empowered persona of a migrant portrayed in the blog entry could signify an interrogation of pervasive migrant discourses, even one as big as the American Dream. But this same discourse of individualism also undergirds the predominant neoliberal capitalist agenda that fuels the enterprise of transnational labour migration.

Although migrant actualities cannot be understood in a homogenous fashion (i.e. issues of well-being, access to resources, and citizenship rights vary depending on context), there is evidence to show that migrants are more susceptible to poorer well-being than the native-born (International Organization for Migration, 2013). Dispossession, disenfranchisement, and dissatisfaction of migrants are, indeed, enduring issues that require attention and immediate address since migration has been mainstreamed as a legitimate aspect of national development design in the global capitalist system (Alonso, 2011; Nonnenmacher, 2010). Migrant narratives, such as that of Ka Uro, running counter to the automatically accepted notion of disempowerment act as important reminders that individuals have the capacity for agency and that material and social expropriation is not an immigrant's destiny. This is an important aspect of identity work because it makes manifest the complexity of migrant sources of identity formation. In other words, they are not merely people who have 'uprooted' themselves and suffer painful extrication from the homeland, but are also capable of navigating their unique placement in both (or all) of the countries that serve as host and home. Ka Uro, in constructing his very own 'story world' (Schiffrin, 1996) in the particular blog post, has demonstrated this agentic position. In his version of the events, it is the migrant who makes a choice over which country is best suited for his envisioned life amidst the actual immigration system that sifts the hopefuls according to their potential benefit to the receiving society.

## 8.5 Half empty, half fish: Hybridity, binarism, and ambivalence

In calling for a more complex perspective on hybrid identities, Papastergiadis (2010) laments the fact that no new concepts of social solidarity, based on multiplicity, or notions of belonging, drawn from diasporic perspectives, have overcome the pervasive imagination of migrants as threat, invaders, or danger. He further explains that since they are perceived as ‘transgressors’ of borders, laws, values, and deeply held attitudes, their entry into a supposedly stable societal structure is disruptive, thus, must be subject to control:

Despite the historical evidence that social order is formed through negotiated patterns of mobility, the figure of the migrant persists in a menacing space. He or she is not configured as a subject with which the self engages in dialogue for mutual identification, but the object whose regulation defines the strength of the skin and the function of every cell of modern power. (Papastergiadis, 2010, p. 245)

The construction of the identity of migrants as disruptive presence is in line with the liminal position that they occupy. Because they deny ‘socio-cultural distinction, classification and hierarchy’ as in-between subjects, they are always perceived ‘as a threat, always polluting and undercutting’ hence, they are whom ‘the guardians of social structure always attempted to police...if not out of existence then out of sight (time, mind) and seriousness in terms of everyday life’ (Rapport & Overing, 2000, p. 234). Following this argument, the bestowal of the label ‘immigrants’ is a way to regulate their existence as a formal, if subaltern, section of the social structure even as that structure declares an embrace of multicultural values (e.g. The Immigration Policy Review of 1986 resulting in the New Zealand Immigration Act of 1987).

What I present in this section is how Ka Uro, through his blog, discursively tackles this issue of migrant identity as either troublesome or *invisibilised*. If social structure would rather that migrants like him be rendered unseen by putting up the veneer of multiculturalism, then the discourse of belonging must be exposed to scrutiny. *Mga Kuro-kuro*, as will be shown, becomes the space for such critical engagement. In it, Ka Uro was able to provide a public arena for rethinking belonging and the regulation of not only himself as an immigrant, but of *his* entire nation as well.

### 8.5.1 Identity as crisis: Resolving the conflicts of diasporic identification

On 8 November 2006, Ka Uro posted an entry that could be considered counterpart to Amy's RWC posts. It discusses, in particular, special events in countries he had lived in and ruminates on these occasions' role as carriers of a national identity. As with Amy's Facebook activities during the games, Ka Uro's linguistic choices hold some indication of his national commitment and affiliation.

*Events that Stop a Nation* talks of four special moments in four different countries that act as a springboard for Ka Uro's projection of his 'problematic' national identification. He mentions the Melbourne Cup for Australia, the Superbowl in the United States, the Rugby World Cup for New Zealand, and Manny Pacquiao<sup>42</sup> bouts for the Philippines as occasions that possess the power to 'grab the entire nation by its throat' and sway a large portion of the country to profess national allegiance by showing patronage and support of the games.

National sporting events, as illustrated by my discussion of Amy and her relationship with the RWC 2011, have the capability to become channels of nationalistic performance. Ka Uro made special mention of the four occasions since these had become part of his experience as a transnational migrant worker in the said countries. In seeming contradiction to Amy's projection of attachment to New Zealand through social media during the RWC, Ka Uro's words clearly admitted to a dilemma as regards these opportunities for belonging to the host nation. He confesses in the post:

Ba't nga ba ito ang topic ko? Simple lang naman. Kasi bilang isang migrante na nakarating na ng US, Australia at ngayon kasalukuyang nasa NZ, I feel strange whenever the nation around me "stops" and yet I remain unaffected. Nung nasa US kami, lahat ng bahay nanonood ng Superbowl, pero kami patuloy lang sa aming pang-araw-araw na gawain. Nung bago pa lang kami sa NZ, nagdadalamhati ang mga Kiwi pagkatapos ma-eliminate ang All-blacks sa World Cup quarterfinals, pero kami, wala kaming na feel na lungkot.

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<sup>42</sup> The Melbourne Cup is Australia's major horse race; the Super Bowl is the yearly championship game of the National Football League in the United States; the Rugby World Cup is a rugby union meet held every four years and hosted by one of the member nations; and, Manny Pacquiao or 'The Pacman' is a Filipino professional boxer and politician. He is a world champion and is famous for being the first to win championships in four different weight divisions.

*Why do I even talk about this? Simple, really. As a migrant who has been to the US, Australia and now currently in NZ, I feel strange whenever the nation around me “stops” and yet I remain unaffected. When we were in the US, everyone was tuned in to the Superbowl, but we were just going about our usual lives. When we were new in NZ, the Kiwis were grieving over the All Blacks’ elimination in World Cup quarterfinals,<sup>43</sup> but in our case, we didn’t feel any sadness.*

As a means of re-viewing and revaluing one’s identification with the nation, Ka Uro’s use of the various national (sporting) events in his post is comparable to Amy’s Facebook posts about her involvement in the RWC games. There is, however, a general difference in tone in tackling the similar subjects. One could see Amy’s posts and Ka Uro’s blog entry as a study in contrast, in a way, since an occasion that opens up to migrants the potential to identify with the nation was received and processed oppositionally.

While Amy was able to use the games to showcase her emerging New Zealand identity – in terms of being one with the nation in celebrating a national team and its victory – Ka Uro is only reminded of his non-belonging to the country. Instead, these special events that carry encompassing signifiers of the national spirit act as markers of his status as an outsider to the culture and excluded from the people. Officially, he may profess a legitimate identity as a citizen rightfully having a place in the nation but emotionally, as shown by the post, Ka Uro’s attachment becomes manifest as inextricably bound to the homeland even after many years of being apart from it.

Of particular interest is their use of linguistic strategies in engaging with the social media format of their choice. It will be recalled that Amy’s emerging sense of belonging to the New Zealand nation was projected by *differentiation* through the shifts in her pronouns from a ‘Us vs. Them’ dichotomy, where she is separate from the Kiwis, to a self-inclusive ‘We’, ‘Us’, and ‘Our’, where she is one with them. In Ka Uro’s case, the pronominal choice indicates a sense of being one with the nation that is in contrast with Amy’s, as the following excerpts demonstrate:

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<sup>43</sup> While Amy’s posts refer to the World Cup in 2011 held in New Zealand, Ka Uro most probably cites the 1999 World Cup, which was hosted by Wales and won by Australia.

1. ...nagdadalamhati ang mga Kiwi pagkatapos ma-eliminate ang All-blacks sa World Cup quarterfinals, pero *kami*, wala kaming na feel na lungkot.

*...the Kiwis were grieving over the All Blacks' elimination in World Cup quarterfinals, but in our case, we didn't feel any sadness.*

2. When I stop to watch a Pacquiao bout, the Kiwis around me wonder what the brouhaha is all about. And when they talk passionately about their Rugby or Cricket, I feel left out.

Aside from the use of pronouns, the specific mention of ethnic classification makes orientations in one's affiliation more visible. Ka Uro's instance of categorisation in narrating his feelings for a special event in New Zealand confirms how he regards his belonging. In this case, it is not only his affinity for the country of origin that is indicated but also his presumed association with its people.

Using 'Kiwi', as category label, displays Ka Uro's sense of self that unsubscribes to the notion of being a member of the particular community despite having legitimate (official) status as a resident of New Zealand. This could be seen in the first example where nomination of the name 'Kiwi' is set against the exclusive first person (plural) pronoun (italicised in the excerpt), 'kami' (we), as a manifestation of separating – *differentiating* – themselves (Ka Uro and the family) from the other group. This sense of association is repeated in the second excerpt where *feeling* 'left out' is emphasised as the 'Us vs. Them' dichotomy is affirmed by referring to Kiwis as 'they'. Categorisation processes pertaining to the ascription of group membership are crucial aspects of social identity formation because they are often drawn from an individual's sense of belonging to groups (De Fina, 2003, p. 139). While in Amy's case, using the categories Kiwi and Pinoy demonstrates a bifocal perspective where one reality is understood through another (e.g. RWC vis-à-vis Filipino Christmas), Ka Uro's employment of the label 'Kiwi' sends out a clear message that he does not feel he is one of them. To be clear, Amy also never used the term to label herself directly although she does speak of her children as 'becoming' Kiwi in some of her Facebook pronouncements.

The power of naming is in its capacity to both signify and constitute reality. In terms of membership in a group or belonging to a category, appropriating a name at once announces one's social membership and renders the existence of the labelled group

real. Since to Ka Uro, ascriptions of being Kiwi do not represent who he is or projects to be, creating another category is a plausible response in order to resolve the dilemma of being named appropriately. In discussing his lack of empathy for the events that the nation he inhabits holds dear, he nominates a label for his national belonging that depicts his divided – or reconfigured – sense of national attachment:

The best term to describe me is that I am a *Kiwinoy* or *Piwi*, part Kiwi, part Pinoy, but neither one nor the other. Ano ba yan? Parang Shokoy, part man, part fish. I feel like I'm having an identity crisis.

...*What the heck? Just like a Shokoy<sup>44</sup>, part man, part fish...*

The liminal character of the immigrant situation is clearly expressed by Ka Uro in this excerpt. Being ‘neither one nor the other’ is the exact description of the *initiand* in *rites de passage* rituals, the source of Turner’s outline of the liminal concept. Looking at the current state of his identity (in the sense of being Kiwi or not) as ‘crisis’ is not only curious, but also crucial. This act of *abstraction*, rendering Ka Uro himself as a ‘quality’ (Van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 46) of instability and precariousness, illustrates how liminality is characterised at once by ‘chaos and cosmos’ or ‘disorder and order’ (Turner, 1982). The liminal condition exposes the individual to ideas more ‘creative and more destructive than the structural norm’ which, Turner believes, is an invitation to more ‘speculation and criticism’ (Turner, 1982, p. 46). In the particular blog post above, Ka Uro’s ‘speculation and criticism’ are centred on his unsettled national identity.

In order to fully understand how immigrants, like Ka Uro, practice identity work, there is a need to recognise that claims of difficulty, struggle, or trouble regarding one’s selfhood presume that something is in need of a resolution. In the ‘true’ liminal phase, the resolution after the period of ambiguity is a return to the status quo where the *initiand* occupies a new position in the existing societal system. If a crisis (in one’s identity) is a liminal period, where the reconfiguration of one’s existing ideas of self is possible, the resolution is expected to be the bestowal and embodiment of a

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<sup>44</sup> *Shokoy* (shô-koi) is a folkloric sea creature that has scales for skin and piscine facial features. In contrast to mermaids, however, they have two legs and use them to walk on land. They are also usually depicted as malevolent and male.

new identity (by virtue of a new status) in the transitioned person. If being a migrant is, indeed, equal to occupying a liminal status, overcoming the transition entails one 'travelling' from being an outsider to being one with the nation. In Amy's case, the RWC presented an opportunity for her to perform such a changeover through the semiotic and communicative affordances of social media. In Ka Uro's situation, the resolution is not yet clearly seen, judging by his statements in the blog.

'Being neither one nor the other' certainly does not signify a condition of stability. Ka Uro's metaphor of himself as a *shokoy* is, in fact, a highly evocative rhetorical move to express his divided national identification. Inspecting the statement further, the construction of the new ethnic classification 'Kiwinoy' or 'Piwi' – both possible portmanteaus of Pinoy and Kiwi<sup>45</sup> – is brought about by Ka Uro's *feeling* that he no longer belongs to either New Zealand or the Philippines, although most of his statements account for his emotional detachment from the former. This case of *symbolisation* – using mythical or fictional social actors to represent a non-fictional one (Van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 46) – marks Ka Uro's 'overdetermined' sense of self, that is, he is simultaneously involved in two 'separate' social practices (Van Leeuwen, 2008, pp. 47–48). His immigrant status, as a condition of being placed physically in one country at a given time but emotionally and psychically being situated in both (or more) at all times, spawned an imagined ontological state that adheres to the notion of hybridity.

In postcolonial theory, the concept of hybridity has been cogently outlined and widely developed by Bhabha (1994), Hall (2003), Gilroy (1993), and Spivak (1999), among others. I am referencing, at this point, Canclini (1995) and his specific take on the concept that he would rather treat as a process than an ossified object. Further, although he insists that hybridity (or hybridisation) is an inevitable cultural and societal process that has critical avail in the globalised modern world, it is not always easily accepted and embraced. His elucidation of the *hermeneutical* capacity of the concept has profound implications for understanding and interpreting migrant subjectivities. If the usefulness of the concept is hinged on its potential to 'interpret relations of meaning that are reconstructed through mixing', Canclini objects to the

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<sup>45</sup> 'Kinoy' (Kiwi + Pinoy) is another possible version of the neologism used by Ka Uro in other sections of the featured blog entry.

conception of hybridisation that suggests ‘easy integration and fusion of cultures, without giving sufficient weight to contradictions and to that which resists being hybridised’ (1995, p. xxix). Hybridity may be a celebration of fusion but it does not prevent conflict and contradiction in individuals and structures that are subject to the process of cultural amalgamation.

Ka Uro’s depiction of himself as a folkloric creature epitomises the process of hybridisation that resulted in a *troubled* and unsettled selfhood. This condition is expressed in yet another instance of analogy that is fairly consistent with his fantastical allusion. He says in the same blog post: ‘The sad thing about being a migrant is that sometimes one feels like a fish out of the water. Your feelings are ambivalent.’ Indeed, this *ambivalence* is at the heart of hybridity. Ang (2003) maintains that living an ambivalent status may not be a comfortable position to be in but it is a necessary condition for living together in difference (p. 149). Further, she calls for an examination of specific contexts where hybridity operates. The next section is an inquiry into the hybridity claim as illustrated by Ka Uro’s discursive dissection of his own identity. His particular understanding of where he stands as a Filipino migrant in New Zealand illustrates that the metaphor of the ‘hybrid self’ may not be as easily achieved. On the contrary, defining the self in diaspora requires constant negotiation in everyday life wherein the notion of the *binary* is as crucial as hybridity.

### 8.5.2 ‘Split’ personality: Balancing national identifications

In an earlier entry, dated 10 June 2005, a similar metaphor of being divided is used by Ka Uro in problematising his national identity, only this time there is no trace of lament to be felt and the element of shocking imagery is muted. The metaphor has a different analogical referent – or source domain (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) – in the attempt at evoking a ‘split personality’:

So that’s about how kiwi I am. Kaya siguro nagkaroon ng mga salitang ‘Kinoy’ at ‘Piwi’, (terms we used over here to refer to Kiwi-Pinoy at Pinoy-Kiwi) because for most Filipinos in NZ, we always think of ourselves as Pinoys and that we can only be 50% kiwi at the most.

...*That may be the reason for having words like ‘Kinoy’ and ‘Piwi’...*

This entry, *After being in NZ for 10 yrs now, do you consider yourself a kiwi?*, is the one that directly answers the question about Ka Uro's identity as a Filipino migrant in New Zealand. It is worth observing that his suggestion about any change in his national identity, 'personality' in his words, is anything but deliberate. This positioning absolves himself of any guilt and insists on his national(istic) attachment. There is a trace of moral evaluation in his explanation of the 'event'. Discursively, the change in his national identification is constructed as *deagentalsed* (no person's doing) and *naturalised* (not within anyone's control), as further illustrated in the following excerpt:

For some of us, when we decide to live in another country, we just live there and make the country an extension of our own. There is no deliberate attempt to change one's personality from Pinoy to something else. If part of me has become kiwi, it would have happened at the subconscious level.

Whether deliberate or not, Ka Uro admits to a transformation in himself that may be construed as becoming Kiwi, or at least, half-a-one. Relative to the *shokoy* metaphor above, a more 'rational' imagery is used in declaring that he 'could' already be partly Kiwi with no conscious effort at being so. As opposed to being 'ambivalent', Ka Uro in the above instance presents a 'binary' sense of his being (Kiwi and Pinoy). I would also like to draw attention to the apparent 'matter-of-fact' tone in the deployment of the mathematical analogy compared to the 'adverse' emotion attached to the former one, effectively signified by the expression *Ano ba 'yan?* (What the heck?). More importantly, in this current blog post, he identifies the specific criteria that provide evidence to his probable Kiwiness and tenacious Pinoyness – recognising the *boundaries* that define the contours of his binary identification. Table 8.2 shows these identity indicators as listed down by Ka Uro.

**Table 8.2 Ka Uro’s identified markers of being Kiwi and being Pinoy; direct quotes from the blog post *After being in NZ for 10 yrs now, do you consider yourself a kiwi?*, posted on 10 June 2005**

Category	Indication of being Kiwi	Translation	Indication of being Pinoy	Translation
<b>Food</b>	1. Beef and lamb, cooked bland with a pinch of salt and pepper.		10. ...mussels but cooked our Filipino way.	
	2. Fresh, raw oysters (sarap!!!), green salads...	...(delicious!!!)...	11. But given a choice, I'll settle anytime of the day on sinigang, nilaga, adobo, asado, paksiw, piniritong isda o baboy, tuyo, tinapa na may sawsawan na kamatis at patis at bagong saing na kanin. Kamayan at taas pa ang isang paa.	...sour soup, meat in broth, <i>adobo</i> , <i>asado</i> , <i>paksiw</i> , fried fish or pork, dried salted fish, smoked fish with tomatoes and fish sauce on the side and hot rice. I'll eat with my hands and sit with one foot planted on my chair.
	3. Sandwiches ang baon ko sa lunch instead of rice.	I bring sandwiches for lunch in the office instead of rice.		
	4. Sa dessert naman, yung pavlova nila sobrang tamis (parang yung brazo de mercedes sa atin).	With desserts, their pavlova is too sweet (like our brazo de mercedes).		12. Mas type ko ang leche-plan o kaya yung sans-rival ng Pampanga.
<b>Sports</b>	5. I follow NZ sports like rugby and cricket, but still can't appreciate their netball.		13. Basketball pa rin ako.	I'll still go for basketball.
<b>History</b>	6. NZ history, I know very little of.		14. It's not as eventfull [sic] as ours anyway.	
<b>Arts</b>	7. In arts, their Maori dances are impressive...		15. ...but ours, in my opinion are more graceful.	
	8. I liked the kiwi films Whale Rider and LOTR...		16. ... but I still miss Filipino movies.	
<b>Social network</b>	9. We only have very few kiwi friends.		17. It's still Pinoys we mostly mingle with.	

In majority of the examples, he constructs his identity through *impersonalisation* – referencing objects in order to impart a designation of a particular character (all excerpts except 9 and 17): food, sports, dance, and movies. The objectivation effectively translates his national identification via the items that he is depicted to use or consume as he describes specific activities. Note that most of what Ka Uro identifies as markers of his ‘half-and-half’ national identity exemplify Billig’s idea of banal nationalism wherein mundane objects that we attach to ourselves indicate strongly, but subconsciously, our national loyalties (although in this case, the practice of writing was able to bring the subconscious to the fore). As such, the items specifically mentioned are more than markers of specific cultural undertakings but act as *connotational* devices of a supposed in-built cultural, ethnic, and national identity.

Additionally, referring to excerpts 9 and 17, Ka Uro also portrays his character through relational classification by mentioning the kind of social network that he has developed in New Zealand. Associating largely with co-nationals clearly gives Ka Uro reason to consider himself more Filipino than Kiwi. But this is not to mistake the situation as a deliberate disengagement from the Kiwi community as the blog entry itself shows how he realised that he should build stronger relationships outside a familiar community: ‘Come to think of it, maybe it’s time we should actually make an effort to mix with more kiwis [sic]’.

I would like to emphasise the ‘balancing act’ that Ka Uro performs through the culturally relevant items identified in the blog post. Once again, he depicts himself with an overdetermined persona, which means that he is seen as simultaneously participating in two distinct practices – that of being Filipino and being Kiwi. For example, while he acts out the latter by ‘bringing sandwiches for lunch’ (excerpt 3), he also relishes traditional Filipino dishes that are consumed in an equally (stereotypical) ‘nativistic’ way (excerpt 11): *Kamayan at taas pa ang isang paa* (...eat with my hands and sit with one foot planted on my chair). The presentation of comparable items and practices successfully reinforces his claims of a ‘50%’ change in his ‘personality’. Using evaluative adjectives, for instance, in order to mitigate cultural distance and dissimulate his actual preferences generally places Filipino and New Zealand culture on an equal footing especially as they act as markers of his

cultural attachment. Therefore, while he finds Maori dances ‘impressive’ (excerpt 7), he thinks Filipino ones are ‘more graceful’ (excerpt 15); while he enjoys Kiwi films (excerpt 8), he still longs to see Filipino movies (excerpt 16).

Canclini warns against a definition of identity based on distinct traits as if they were absolute markers of ‘purity’ when he argues that –

When an identity is defined through a process of abstraction of traits (language, tradition, certain stereotyped behaviors), there is often a tendency to remove those practices from the history of mixing in which they were formed. Consequently, one mode of understanding the identity becomes absolute, and heterodox ways of speaking language, making music, or interpreting the traditions are rejected. One winds up, in short, selling off the possibility of modifying culture and politics. (1995, p. xxviii)

It is not difficult to agree with the anti-essentialistic slant of the claim. The empowering and liberating effect of hybridity is, after all, hinged on the principle of ambivalence, as mentioned above, since cultural ‘mixing’ is inevitable. Recurrent in postcolonial theory is the deployment of this very concept as an antidote to reductive binarism prevalent in the framing of colonial relationships. The value of ambivalence is in its contention that power is ‘two-faced’, which makes the structure of authority ‘fragile’. Bhabha (1994) develops the concept to explain the variegated nature of master-subject dynamics in the colonial setting that he argues cannot simply be rigidly understood as a relationship of dichotomous opposition. Authority and resistance are not secured by either party as both may simultaneously hold desire and hatred, exploitation and nurturance, and complicity and rejection toward each other in a fluctuating fashion (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2000). The centre and periphery are not fixed positionalities, and nor are the relations of power they involve. Although veering away from the limiting framework of dichotomous power relationships, from the perspective of ambivalence, may open up more complex and nuanced spaces of resistance, a blanket repudiation of binarism is ultimately simplistic and unproductive.

Hybridity, it appears, is the cultural logic of globalisation (Kraidy, 2005) and its apparent value in easily comprehending the experience and practice of intermixing and eclecticism in producing and consuming cultures is a major reason for its ready

acceptance as both a theoretical lens and a frame for everyday practice. There is nothing new with the occurrence of hybridity in contemporary times, what is new is the scope and speed – the *acceleration* – of mixing (Pieterse, 2001, p. 231). Considering this ‘accelerated’ condition of the process, it is crucial we develop a mechanism for understanding the particular experiences of being or becoming hybrid – culturally mixed, syncretic, eclectic, multiple, in-between. Without conscious engagement with the given normalcy of our hybrid existence, the political entanglements of a supposedly unbounded condition of the self are left concealed.

Abandoning the binary paradigm in absolute terms in order to advance hybridity is theoretically, ethically, and politically dangerous as the act runs the risk of denying the reality of still-prevalent binary structures that are in place in the neoliberal and neo-colonial system (Acheraiou, 2011). There are certain binaries that could never be discounted as they still persevere in reproducing uneven power relations. Disparities preserved between men and women by patriarchy, normalising gender systems by heterosexism, racial prejudice, and unequal wealth distribution between the global North and South are some of these dichotomous oppositions that should never be set aside because they still prevail. Present day migration may be characterised by transnational border crossing, but the presumed ease with which boundaries are transcended cannot be true for all. The subjective and material positions of immigrants make a clear case for realising why binarism, as a material and signifying condition, should be addressed and critiqued, not abandoned.

When Ka Uro identified ‘items’ that mark his Kiwi and Pinoy attachments, as shown above, I believe it is not to rigidify his identity as a dichotomy but to set temporary fixity in order to achieve and communicate meaning and meaningfulness. I follow Hall when he likens identity formation to temporary and incomplete ‘meeting points’ or ‘points of *suture*’ between the way we ‘speak’ and the way we are ‘spoken’ (1996, p. 5). Ka Uro’s audit of his fifty per cent Kiwiness brings to mind Camroux’s conception of *binary nationalism* which forwards the idea that subjects of diaspora reference both their home and host nations in constructing useful meanings over their dual placement. The blogger’s ‘artifactual’ basis for rhetorically performing his national identity is synecdochic – the parts represent the whole – as it becomes a signifier of his binary cultural practice and alignment; and, in its entirety, the items become metaphoric as an analogical strategy that depicts his binary national

attachment and belonging. This particular construction of his identity, binary and conventional, is temporary. Unraveling the source of this *fixation* or ‘exclusion’ of other possible meanings (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985) of being Filipino in New Zealand is the next important task at hand.

### **8.6 Starting from scratch: Ideal migrants and ideal nation through social media**

If one needs a simple response to the question of his New Zealand identity, Ka Uro is straightforward when he says in the conclusion of the last presented post,

My short answer is: No, I’ve never considered myself a kiwi [sic]. Sa pasaporte lang ako kiwi. Sa isip, wika at gawa, Pinoy pa rin. Maging sa pagtulog, mga panaginip ko sa Pilipinas pa rin. And that probably won't change even in the next 50 years.

*...I'm only kiwi in passport. I am still Pinoy in thought, speech, and deed. Even in my sleep, my dreams are still about the Philippines...*

Defining his nationality in terms of an official document reveals how Ka Uro acknowledges and presents Kiwi or New Zealander as just a nominal identity. What the excerpt makes clear is that his entire ‘being’ is still very much Filipino no matter his residence in another country and, this time, he claims the identity without any trace of doubt or confusion. His pronominal choices and ethnic categorisation labels make clear how he creates a separation between Kiwis and Pinoys in terms of his own social belonging. But other portions of his writing, at different times, present evidence to the contrary. His detachment from and attachment to *his* nations, essentially, fluctuate.

The linguistic hybridisation of his own ethnic category name – Kiwinoy or Piwi – is an indication of an accommodation of the binary reality of his national belonging. His identification of concrete indexes of an otherwise abstract cultural attachment is an attempt at displaying that he has developed a *taste* for the New Zealand way of life even as his Filipino practices are not diminished. To say, therefore, that he is in ‘no’ way Kiwi is, perhaps, a sign of ambivalence.

Manifestations of a hybrid identity, binary nationalism, and ambivalent feelings are not necessarily contradictory subject positions for migrants. Ka Uro’s ruminations in his blog illustrate how these could be products of the migrant’s unsteady placement

as belonging fully to neither the homeland nor the host nation. His intimation of a ‘troubled’ self-representation through the *shokoy* metaphor and likening himself to a ‘fish out of the water’ is, in fact, reflected in another blog post within the same category of *Still deciding on migrating to NZ*, once again illustrating how the blogger sees such issues worthy of pre-migration introspection.

### **8.6.1 Emotions and the regulation of diasporic subjects**

Posted on 31 May 2005, *My mind is in a quandary, have I betrayed my country?* lays bare the guilt that is caused by his lack of desire to return to the Philippines. In rationalising his feelings, Ka Uro employs the image of a ship that can barely keep afloat. The picture is vividly depicted in the excerpt below with inclusion of the section that gives the reason for his non-existent longing to come back and the feeling of betrayal he burdens himself with:

Para bang ang tingin ko sa Pilipinas ay isang malaking barko. Lahat ginagawa nito para manatiling nakalutang sa dagat. Pero dahil marami na itong butas at kalawang na nakakasira kaya unti-unti itong lumulubog. Kung hindi tatapalan ang mga butas at gagamutin ang kalawang, darating ang araw tuluyan na itong lulubog.

Pakiramdam ko isa ako sa mga nag-jump ship at ngayon ay nagpapakasasa na sa isang island paradise. At ngayon hindi ko lang hinihikayat na mag-jump ship ang iba, kung di tinutulungan ko pa.

*It seems to me that the Philippines is a big ship. It's doing everything to stay afloat. But because it is already heavily damaged by rust and too many holes, it is slowly sinking. If nothing will be done to patch up the holes and mend the rust, the time will come when it will completely sink.*

*I feel like I'm one of those who jumped ship and now enjoying life in an island paradise. And this time, not only am I convincing others to jump ship, I help them do so.*

As with the water metaphors presented earlier, the ‘crumbling’ ship that Ka Uro adopts to characterise the Philippines reflects feelings of unsettledness. Only this time, it refers not to his relationship with his new home nation and ambiguous national identity but his commitment to his former homeland. Towards the end of the entry, Ka Uro poses some questions validating his emotions while at the same time, implying a course of action to mitigate his negative self-assessment:

Traydor ba ako sa ating bayan? Makasarili ba ako to think of my own welfare? Will going back on board the ship help in any way? What can people like me do to help keep this sinking ship afloat?

*Am I a traitor to our country? Am I selfish to think...*

At the most basic level, notions and actual lived experiences in migration are ‘potent sources of emotions’ and have strong ‘emotional connotations’ (Skrbiš, 2008, p. 236). Understanding emotions in examining identity construction of people in diaspora is important since they reflect social, cultural, and institutional roles or positions in the prevailing structure (Averill, 1980; Brooks & Simpson, 2013; Sarbin, 1986). Getting emotional is a way to claim a particular identity, Parkinson argues, and elaborates that –

...the identity claims involved in getting emotional are based on role commitments and derive at least partly from the individual’s position in pre-existing interpersonal social networks. (1995, p. 199)

Although emotional representation in discourse is more commonly equated with lack of power or agency, as opposed to representations of rationality (Van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 56), Ka Uro’s disclosure of his emotional state in the blog entry is an active performance of his strong attachment to the Philippines despite the lack of interest in returning. This instance illustrates how the emotions take on a different significance in the lives of diasporic persons when used as a means of disciplinary control over individuals relative to their involvement in power relations (Burkitt, 1997, 1999; Hochschild, 2003).

Guilt, in particular, is automatically seen as a natural consequence of leaving, wherein feelings that one has abandoned others in order to get to a better situation in life are generated (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 1994; Ward & Styles, 2012; Xu, Begue, & Shankland, 2011). Referencing my analysis in Chapter 5, the state plays a big role in fostering migrant attachment to the homeland as a means of ensuring economic leverage. The feeling of guilt in this situation is apparently exploited as capital to legitimise discourses of ‘responsibilisation’ and ‘responsibilised’ courses of actions targeted at those nationals in territories beyond the direct governance of their former nation-state. Guilt as ‘*emotional habitus*’ becomes evident, then, since it is the presiding culture that ‘outlines ways of

speaking' and 'acting out' the feeling in particular contexts (Burkitt, 1997, p. 43). As a mechanism of regulating dispositions, the 'natural' emotion associated with leaving the homeland may become an instrument of what Foucault terms 'technologies of power', which pertain to the means of shaping desirable conduct in the hope of avoiding undesirable ones (Rose, 1999).

Technologies of power (e.g. prison and its panoptic architecture) complement 'technologies of the self' to constitute governmentality (Foucault, 1988, p. 17). While the former speaks of the domination of the subject by powerful systems, the latter pertains to techniques that 'permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality' (Foucault, 1988, pp. 16–17). The technique of responsabilisation is technology of the self in its finest form as it constructs subjects as autonomous and self-directed. Thomas Lemke (2001) substantiates this argument by describing responsibility as an ideal type of commitment for the neoliberal project, in which subjects'–

moral quality is based on the fact that they rationally assess the costs and benefits of a certain act as opposed to other alternative acts. As the choice of options for action is, or so the neoliberal notion of rationality would have it, the expression of free will on the basis of a self-determined decision, the consequences of the action are borne by the subject alone, who is also solely responsible for them. (p. 201)

As attested by the blog entry that discloses his *emotional quandary*, Ka Uro undoubtedly embodies the spirit of the 'responsibilised' subject. In enacting his guilt, he also proposes a resolution to his self-condemnation (probable absolution) by offering to take action to remedy the ails of his embattled nation. His audience is more than willing to commiserate and even aids in the extension of the emotional confession to a discourse on the nation. While most of the reader comments share the opinion that the blogger should not feel guilty about his choices, they redirect the blame to those who are in positions of power but have failed to 'helm the ship' in the proper direction. One comment deserves special mention since it directly addresses Ka Uro's questions and unpacks the abstraction of *bayan* (nation) that is foregrounded in the specific entry. The particular commenter propounds that 'the

people you're helping represents your *bayan*' to which Ka Uro agrees and uses such a premise to reiterate the purpose of his blog, among his other efforts:

tama nga siguro na kahit nasaan tayong mga pinoy pwede pa rin tayong makatulong sa pamamagitan ng pagtulong sa ating mga kababayan. di naman dapat nasa atin ka para makatulong.

sa pamamagitan ng pagbabahagi ko ng kaalaman sa pag-migrate sa nz [sic], kahit papaano may naitulong na rin ako...

*perhaps it is true that no matter where we pinoy are, we can still help by extending aid to our compatriots. we don't have to be in our country to be able to help.*

*by sharing what I know about migrating to nz [sic], I am able to help in some ways...*

Equipping the self and purposefully changing one's situation is one of the most prominent messages that the blog sends out. From the public revelation of personal experiences of being a migrant up to the practical counsel that Ka Uro makes available in his writings, he seeks to empower his readers by providing relevant information and knowledge. A critical lesson from Foucault (1976) is that power is productive, relational, and is found everywhere. We may be subjected to structures of domination (e.g. state) or enact our own 'subjectivation' (e.g. being responsible), but these are premised on the same involvement in power that makes change possible. Heller (1996) argues that, to Foucault, power is neither inherently positive nor inherently negative – it is simply the ability to create social change (p. 87). Power either makes us do or hinders us from doing things but its relationality is a reminder that it is neither found exclusively in (certain) individuals nor in (certain) structures. The non-residence of power in a single place or entity is neither a promise that is waiting to be fulfilled nor an ideal that is bound to be elusive – in Foucault's formulation, ubiquity is power's only mode of existence. At the very least, what we can gather from Ka Uro's narrations are instances of an ability to negotiate his marginalised and disempowered position as a foreign other. Among others, this is demonstrated by stories of how they chose New Zealand over the lure of the American Dream, his efforts at making meanings of his dual cultural and national immersion, and the practicalities involved in migrating that he casts light on in his writings. In other words, Ka Uro's blog is illustrative of the assertion that discourse

is a site of both power's dominating effect and resisting possibilities (Foucault, 1998). After all, where power is present, resistance is not far behind (Foucault, 1976).

The blogger is cognisant of this access to the capacity to be empowered. In the interview, he spoke about taking upon himself the responsibility of tackling a project that goes beyond mere provision of migration information. What he actually wants is to take advantage of the opportunity to create a community of Filipinos in New Zealand that is different from other places. Studying his words, this aspiration is undergirded by the dynamics of power which, by belonging to nobody, can be claimed by anyone:

Nakita ko, mayroong ano e, lahat tayo may power to change something. 'Di ba? E, ang maganda dito sa New Zealand dahil bago pa, meron ka pang opportunity na ma-influence yung...lalo na yung mga dumarating. So doon ang – doon – kaya ko rin naisip yung, yung AKLNZPinoys, yung, yung blog ko, yung handbook, ganoon. Parang ang gusto ko talaga, yung ma-influence yung mga Pilipino na dumarating dito. Kahit na hindi mo na ma-influence yung mga dati nang nandito, at least yung mga dumarating dito ma-maipakita mo sa kanila kung ano yung dapat na maging magandang...Pilipino dito...

*I realised that we, all of us have the power to change something. Right? What's good about New Zealand since it is young, you have the opportunity to influence those...especially those who are newly settled. So, it's because of that, that's why I thought of, of AKLNZPinoys<sup>46</sup>, the blog, the handbook, those things. It's like, what I really want is to influence Filipinos who are coming here. It doesn't matter if you are able to influence those who have lived here for a long time, at least for those who have just arrived, you are able to show them how to be a good Filipino here.*

The statement befits the very definition of the responsible subject – self-directed, self-disciplined, self-governed. As projected by a neoliberal optics, the kind of immigrant Ka Uro's actions showcase ideally benefits both the former and host states. For the Philippines, the attachment to the homeland ensures that economic ties

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<sup>46</sup> AKLNZPinoys or Auckland NZ Pinoys is an organisation founded by Ka Uro along with other Filipino migrants who are based in Auckland. The main thrust of the group is to help Filipinos, especially the newcomers, in the city settle down by providing information, assistance, network, and fellowship.

is secured by disciplining Filipino bodies as marketable international labouring subjects; for New Zealand, on the other hand, there is assurance of the ‘production’ of ideal immigrants that deliver the desired economic and social contribution. In the above excerpt, Ka Uro uses the word ‘influence’ in spelling out his goals, signifying an intention to impart a ‘conduct of conduct’ (Foucault 1983) for the purpose of marshalling the best ‘kinds’ of *his* people to constitute the community he envisions.

### **8.6.2 Building a *proper* Filipino nation**

The concrete manifestation of Ka Uro’s efforts at ‘creating’ an ideal Filipino migrant in New Zealand through his blog is the set of entries that addresses practical matters concerning moving to the country. In his categorisations as shown previously, these are the groups of posts after the first one that focuses on pre-migration considerations, essentially suggesting that when the decision to leave has become final, there are more issues to come to grips with. Among these are matters that pertain to ‘acting’ properly in New Zealand. In Appendix J, these are generally the entries that are thematically labelled ‘Practicalities of living in NZ’, ‘Language practice in NZ’ or ‘NZ culture/practice’. A good example would be *Being an Ideal Guest in a New Zealand Setting* posted on 2 February 2006. As with all other posts of the same theme (e.g. *Feeding your Kiwi guests; Children’s party; Tea, Dinner, Supper?*), it consists of advice that addresses the difference of particular cultural practices in New Zealand and the Philippines. In the cited blog entry, he lists conventions of behaviour that one should follow in the hope that Filipino migrants project themselves as ‘ideal guests’. By appealing to the ‘authority of tradition’, Ka Uro makes a case for issuing certain instructions for living because they are ‘enforced by everyone’ (Van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 108) in the community and not only by him or any single identifiable power. He legitimises adherence to the code of proper conduct if one is a guest in a Kiwi home by a claim to a desirable outcome: *‘Dahil kung hindi maganda ang impression sa iyo ng iyong hosts, asahan mong hindi ka na mai-invite sa uulitin’* (Because when your hosts do not have a good impression of you, expect to not be invited again).

‘Designing’ an ideal Filipino migrant identity in New Zealand has therefore two components. First, echoing his post that talked about how accommodating Filipinos in New Zealand are, Ka Uro endorses the idea that ‘good’ overseas Filipinos

maintain an attachment to the homeland and are not afraid or ashamed to show it. He confirms in the interview the difference in willingness to use the mother tongue between Filipinos in the US and New Zealand that he was able to observe the first time they came to Auckland. Second, in order to become a ‘good Filipino’ in New Zealand, one needs to know how to conduct the self properly by adapting to the Kiwi way of doing things, from how they speak to the way they eat, resonating Amy’s demonstration of her children’s emerging cultural practices. At first glance, these constitute practical information that increases cultural knowledge and eases transition into a foreign pattern of everyday practice. However, these are also techniques of conducting the responsible self and ‘fixing’ a particular desirable identity – willing to learn, well-informed, and malleable enough to refashion a character that is suited to the conditions imposed by the current context.

What is crucial about Ka Uro’s project of ‘moulding’ a better kind of overseas Filipino is that, to him, the venture can only be successful because the situation that New Zealand offers is quite unique, especially if compared to Filipinos in other countries, such as the USA. The Filipino community in the former has a special quality that makes it more open to change, as Ka Uro explains in the interview:

...sa ibang bansa ka sa, let’s say sa America, makikita mo doon ibang-iba ang ugali ng mga Filipino. Minsan, maano mo...bakit sila ganoon, o bakit di sila, snob sila, hindi sila namamansin? Kung baga tatagalugin mo, i-inglisin ka. Pero nung nandito na sa New Zealand naisip ko rin, instead na kini-criticize mo yung mga Filipinong ganoon, bakit sila ganoon, dapat isipin mo rin, paano mo mababago yung ganoong, kung baga, yung ganoong ugali nila...Uhm, kaya consciously, kung baga, uhm, naisip ko dito, na since young, ang mga Pilipino rito mga bata pa...di kagaya doon sa America na...mga ilang generations na sila, kaya hindi mo na mababago yung Pilipino doon, e.

*...in other countries, let’s say in America, you’ll see that Filipinos there have a really different attitude. Sometimes it gets you thinking...why are they like that, they’re snobs, they don’t acknowledge you? It’s like, if you speak to them in Tagalog, they answer back in English. But when we got to New Zealand, I realised that instead of criticising Filipinos who are like that, why are they like that, you have to think of ways to change the way they think...Uhm, so consciously, that meant, uhm, I thought about Filipinos here since they form a newer community unlike those in America who have been there for generations, which is the reason why it’s already hard to change Filipinos there.*

Within the restrictive and limiting parameters of the neoliberal migration structure, Ka Uro is able to enact a desire that is beyond his official role as ideal immigrant or *bagong bayani* (new heroes) by envisioning a future bigger than his goals of personal progress. On the one hand, this empowered position could be interpreted as just another function of his subjection to the dominating techniques of the neoliberal system that seeks to generate highly conformed transnational labour migrants. On the other hand, Ka Uro's will to create a 'model' of the exemplary Filipino community outside the Philippines speaks of an appropriation of power that extends his aspirations beyond his 'official' persona as immigrant – economic tool of both nation-states that circumscribe his material and symbolic realities. For embedded in the fantasy of creating ideal Filipinos is a critique of the limits of perceiving the nation as determined by geographic bounds. Ka Uro, whether compelled by the force of responsabilisation or acting on his own volition, ultimately seeks to not only encourage the development of model Filipino transnational citizens but a model Filipino nation outside the homeland. He expounds on this desire in the interview:

Kung baga parang ang ano ko dito, uhm, model Filipinos ang mangyari sa mga Filipino dito sa New Zealand. Kung baga kung titingnan mo kung, let's say itatayo mo uli Pilipinas from scratch, tingnan nila na model yung mga Filipino na nandoon sa New Zealand. Bakit sila nandito? Ano sila, disiplinado sila. Bakit, uhm, mas well-behaved sila, ganoon 'di ba? Compared doon sa Pilipinas na ano, puro ano, corruption. Pero 'pag nandito naman sa ibang country ayos naman sila. Ayun ang para sa akin ang...pagiging Pilipino at Pilipinas sa New Zealand.

*What I [want] to happen to Filipinos here in New Zealand is to be model Filipinos. Like, if you see, let's say you are going to rebuild the Philippines from scratch, consider as ideal the Filipinos in New Zealand. Why, when they're here, they are more disciplined? Why, uhm, are they more well-behaved, right? Compared to those in the Philippines who are all into corruption. But if they move to a different country, they are all right. That for me is what...being Filipino and the Philippines in New Zealand are all about.*

## **8.7 Conclusion**

Lawson (2000) argues that ambivalence in migrant narratives possesses theoretical power because they 'bring to the surface the contradictions of capitalist growth, which can only be spoken by those on the margins' (p.186). Ka Uro's recollection of

their journey to New Zealand portrays an ideal migrant story, but only because he embodies an ideal immigrant position by human capital standards. He may suggest happily settling down in the new country but he is also preoccupied by his fluctuating association with and dissociation from being Kiwi and being Pinoy. And, although he declares having found *the* place to fulfil his dreams, his efforts at *designing* the ideal Filipino migrant and Filipino nation within New Zealand expose a profound longing for his native land. What Ka Uro's writings exemplify, therefore, is that potential to reveal the shortcomings of the neoliberal agenda for sustaining transnational migration as part of a development design. For despite all the insistence that globalisation breaks down boundaries and opens up new worlds, those who harbour a desire to migrate have to contend with the reality of the limits of their choices, their movements, and their chance at fully belonging outside the homeland.

The will and capacity to resist may not be the marginalised subject's sole practice of power. *Mga Kuro-kuro* shows how the ambivalent migrant position can be used strategically in asserting his ties to the homeland even as he endeavours to build a life (and nation) in his new home. Further, the discourses of binarism and hybridity that characterise his migrant identity define situations where two distinct structures are compelled to co-exist or coalesce. Their potency as resisting discourse to the dominant migrant debates, over integration or assimilation, narratives of uprooting and expropriation, and depiction of the ideal immigrant as human capital exemplar, lies in their openness to assert that identity is more a 'matter of negotiation and exchange than as a fixed entity' (Burton, 2004, p. 9). As illustrated by Ka Uro in his blog posts, the recognition and expression of binary national belonging and hybrid cultural practices may be situational and tactical in order for immigrants to bridge the gap between the former and new home as they constantly reconstruct and negotiate a sense of who they are and where they must be.

## 9 CONCLUSION

### NEW MEDIA TEXTS, NEW MEDIA SELVES, NEW MEDIA LIVES

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#### *Vignette 3: PR*

I have lost count of all the instances and could not remember the faces. What remains is the question that has been constantly asked us by not a few Filipinos we meet for the first time in Auckland: *PR na ba kayo?*

Their curiosity is aimed at finding out whether we hold a **P**ermanent **R**esident visa in New Zealand. I admit to being offended by the brazenness of the act. I have always felt the information they inquire about is something private. It is as if they pry into my grooming habits or check out what remnants of days past I keep in my pockets. The question and the abruptness with which they pose it make me feel as if I am being frisked. Their words, like a stranger's hands, pass over my body as I helplessly yield.

Civility takes over all the time and so I issue a polite 'No'. I wonder whether I sound overly apologetic every time I am compelled to reply to such queries from my compatriots. This concern is probably the reason why my 'no' is always hedged by a long justification, whether those who ask the question want it or not.

Sometimes, trying to discover the kind of visa we have is accompanied by a lengthier interrogation. What we do here; where we work; where we live; how large our flat is; how much we pay for rent; where we get our money; are we planning to stay? My wife and I reply with as much detail, clarity, and honesty as we can. For the last question, though, our former straightforward answer, 'no', has been gradually superseded by a more *acceptable* 'we will see'. We realised after a few encounters that certain questions deserve *more* 'proper responses'.

#### *Vignette 4: High contrast*

It was only coincidental that they were also seated at the opposite sides of the room.

At a post-graduate student conference in 2012, a black man gave his comments after I presented the initial insights from my research. He was largely concerned with the concept of ‘ideal immigrants’ under which Filipinos coming over to New Zealand are often categorised. Classifying migrants as ‘ideal’ because they are ‘flexible’ enough to endure lower salaries, underemployment, and retraining, he argued, is for the benefit of the state. ‘Don’t you think it is abusive?’ he asked. My first response, after briefly constructing a safe, if evasive, answer in my head was: ‘The Filipinos I have talked to never used the term *abusive*.’ ‘Perhaps,’ I added, ‘because to them, less than ideal situations are a stepping stone to something they really desire and think they could achieve.’

‘Yes,’ he said, ‘but for how long?’ He then proceeded to raise scepticism about migrants fully belonging to the host country.

I have to say that we are generally on the same page regarding the issue. But before I could elaborate, a white woman in the audience who claimed a different migrant positionality – being Dutch – and a different position regarding the matter of belonging, emphatically remarked that she hates the term ‘host country’. She went on to explain that the term ‘host’ presupposes treating another as a visitor who is expected to leave soon. She claimed that when one has lived in New Zealand for a very long time, when three generations of migrants start speaking and presenting themselves as Kiwis, they will be accepted fully by NZ society.

‘I beg to differ,’ the black man interjected. I learned later that he was from Nigeria and works in an Auckland-based non-government organisation.

The discussion could have gone on if not for the moderator’s signal that we had run out of time. Our session on immigrant identity ended with two contrasting views on belonging. There were no easy answers to take home.

## 9.1 Everywhere stories

I end the thesis the same way I began: with little stories that demonstrate how complex individual lives are. Because disparate scenarios are interconnected nodes of a single whole, treating each story as an integral part of a *grander* narrative is a necessity for understanding. Bruner (2004) explains:

...life stories must mesh, so to speak, within a community of life stories; tellers and listeners must share some 'deep structure' about the nature of a 'life,' for if the rules of life-telling are altogether arbitrary, tellers and listeners will surely be alienated by a failure to grasp what the other is saying or what he thinks the other is hearing. (p. 708)

Opening with the anecdote of the 'recurring question' leads to a very important observation Turner has on the liminal condition. *PR* is a two-letter acronym that has figured prominently in introductory engagements with fellow-Filipinos I have had the chance of meeting in several different occasions in Auckland. It certainly does not always happen, but the frequency almost makes me feel fidgety that someone I meet for the first time will ask that I pin the two-letter badge on my chest. My strong reaction to such events prompted me to reflect on the validity and politics of my feelings. Perhaps it is my propensity for manifesting self-blame that drove me to initially conclude that my sense of differential status is the source of my discomfort. It is, to my dismay, highly likely a manifestation of 'class distinction' (Bourdieu, 1984) that I could not help but actualise. As a matter of reflexive practice, I have always made sure that I let people know of my 'official' designation as an academic researcher to provide them a sense of clarity to my actions, an idea of my status, and to issue a 'caveat' of some sort. I may think of disclosing my foremost intent as a basic way of realising ethical research but being open about my status as an academic inevitably deploys a 'symbolic good' on my behalf. What I failed to see was that, maybe, to those *kababayan* I have run into, the authenticity of my presence in New Zealand is established, first and foremost, not by my position as a researcher but by my being a Filipino who, like many other Filipinos in New Zealand, is currently out of the homeland to establish a life in a new place. This is where Turner's elucidation of the characteristics of liminal subjects becomes relevant once more.

Liminality is characterised by a 'blurring and merging of distinctions' in which the person in the transitional period is described as 'dark' and 'invisible' (Turner, 1982, p. 26). This state of the liminal person possibly explains the real source of my unease towards the imposition of the two-letter identity upon me. It is as if my individuality as a person is stripped off and what is left is a mere label. It is as if the incarnation of this symbol is my only means of securing a rightful existence in the place.

A migrant's sense of self is constricted by his/her marginal status in the host country. Aguilar (1999) concludes that, overall, the migrants' 'betwixt and between' position in the social structure 'collectively marginalises' them 'into social invisibility' (p. 104). In practical terms, this invisibility is brought about by their limited rights, privileges, presence, and venue to voice their concerns in the adopted society. Vignette 2, however, emphasises the point that the experience of marginalisation among migrants is not homogenous. From the limited interaction and surface information on hand, I will conjecture that race or culture (more than gender in this situation) have a significant role to play in the differential positions my two commenters occupy in New Zealand society. Migration may be a common occurrence in today's world but different groups experience it differently.

The designation of 'invisibility' in the liminal condition ends in the fulfilment of the 'journey of achievement' (Aguilar, 1999), as discussed in Chapter 3. If, for the temporary migrant, a return to the country with a 'changed' status equals the end of the journey, what is its equivalent for those whose primary purpose is to live permanently abroad? In Amy and Ka Uro's cases, departing the homeland was also based on an overwhelming desire to attain a better future for the family. However, going back 'home' is not their charted route. In other words, channelling the first commenter in my second opening story from a slightly different angle, 'but until when' are they supposed to wait to be able to finally claim a rightful end to their 'pilgrimage'?

I have sought to find an answer to this question by looking at how the participants in the study 'wrote' about their lives as Filipino immigrants in New Zealand. The 'writing' was accomplished through new forms of media that the Internet is able to provide. My general object of interest has been 'identity' and how it is constructed in a diasporic setting with the help of the sign-making affordances particular social

media platforms possess. Because identity cannot be accomplished outside discourse, as Hall reminds us, what I needed to achieve was a ‘grasp’ of how Amy and Ka Uro’s social media discourses produce a performance of their identities. My efforts at understanding are, of course, necessarily limited. This means that the answers I have been able to formulate were from specific cases, observations, and analyses of Filipino migrant experiences in New Zealand. I would also like to point out that Amy and Ka Uro exemplify the experiences of middle class, highly educated, first generation immigrants, which is configured differently from later immigrant generations that bring their own set of challenges to the field (Fortunati, Pertierra, & Vincent, 2012).

This chapter is both a synthesis and conclusion. In saying this, I aim to accomplish two things. First, I round up the main points of the thematic threads in the cases that I was able to gather through my efforts at interpretation. Second, I would like to make certain propositions about the character of ‘writing’ using new media platforms in general and social media formats in particular. In addressing this issue, I revisit and expand on Ricoeur’s thesis on the effects of writing on the experience being written. The experience I talk about here is of crucial importance in understanding the making of the texts that my participants, as diasporic subjects, have undertaken. It is only through this sense of a specific historicity that their experiences – and sense of self – are rendered authentic.

## **9.2 Between recording and performing: Making life in social media**

Nation-states possess an enduring capacity to overcome the transnational process (Wimmer & Schiller, 2002). Contrary to the envisioned insignificance of national boundaries effected by opening up borders – encouraging the free-flow of capital, culture, products, people, and ideas – the nation’s reach and mechanisms of control over its ‘subjects’ are no longer confined territorially (Urry, 2003; Wimmer & Schiller, 2002). With this perspective in mind, it is not difficult to see *who* benefits from the reinforcement of national attachments in the case of Amy and Ka Uro.

Chapter 5, the first analytic chapter, has demonstrated how official texts design discourses to perpetuate a particular *character* of the Filipino migrant that fulfils the criteria of the human capital framework:

- The Philippine Overseas Employment Agency (POEA) 2009 report depicts the Filipino as *naturally* built to withstand the challenges of foreign labour caught in a global economic crisis.
- The Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO) audio-visual brief constructs the migrant Filipino as a viable ‘economic tool’ for the benefit of both the homeland and the receiving state.
- The Immigration New Zealand-produced video testimonial of the *Evangelistas* creates an image of an ideal Filipino migrant family that is able to achieve the *perfect* life in their new home.

These largely illustrate how the state plays a significant role in the binary attachment and identification of the Filipino migrant to the home and host nations. The discursive manoeuvrings employed by these government agencies have the potential to establish legitimate meanings of the migration situation, including the ‘necessary’ traits one must possess in order to successfully build a life overseas.

The two cases of social media writings in the study reveal how individuals ‘find’ themselves in the grand narratives of officially sanctioned discourses. In the beginning, both Amy and Ka Uro had in mind a very practical use for their preferred social media. Managing relationships from a distance is clearly fulfilled by the Internet-based medium, an observation that echoes Madianou and Miller’s insights on the role of *polymedia* in the lives of Filipino migrants and their families (2011, 2012). In particular, Amy uses Facebook to update the grandparents of her children, Ben and Sarah, as to how they are growing in New Zealand while Ka Uro hopes to store, for posterity, memories of their *journey* as Filipino migrants in the archives of the blogging platform (i.e. Blogger). But while what they endeavour to do is to document the small and big events in their lives, they inevitably ‘perform’ the diasporic Filipino in New Zealand that necessarily reveals a dialogical relationship with prevailing discourses advanced by official state structures.

In Chapters 6 and 7, I have presented my reading of Amy’s Facebook entries and the identity discourses that these potentially convey to her audience. Examining the variety of linguistic and semiotic resources she used, I would like to emphasise the following points:

- Amy consciously uses Facebook to project the ‘positive’ aspects of being Filipino to a Kiwi audience. She has taken it as a personal responsibility to represent what her country and its people ‘really’ are like.
- Ordinary and extraordinary events can both provide the impetus to perform one’s national identification. In the case of migrants, ‘everyday’ life can project a semblance of normalcy in making a life outside the homeland while ‘special’ occasions, especially those that are national in scale, become opportunities to externalise a sense of national belonging.
- Projecting the *good life* is a salient aspect of immigrants’ representational activities. Social media act as *stage* where such discourse is enacted and witnessed by the family who are separated by distance along with other possible sets of audience.
- The ideal migrant life is made discursively ‘real’ by consciously representing the host country as a ‘good’ place, with necessary ‘silencing’ of details that do not fit the image.
- A binary sense of national belonging is also prominent in Amy’s case. Facebook, once more, plays a crucial role in depicting her emerging attachment to the new country and its way of life. At the same time, the social media is also a means of ‘asserting’ that she will always be Filipino (i.e. through the images of her children) despite her departure from the homeland.

The other case of social media use, the blog *Mga Kuro-kuro ni Ka Uro*, has been presented and discussed in Chapter 8. There are parallel discourses of the migrant situation and diasporic identity construction in Amy and Ka Uro’s social media writings. Both make prominent the achievement of the good life in New Zealand, both demonstrate how certain national events act as triggers for rethinking one’s national belonging, and both appear to accept that identity is never ‘fixed’. However, Ka Uro’s experiences, as written on the blog and as elaborated in the interview, have nuances that at times run counter to the idea that individuals, as transmigrants, automatically ‘take root’ in multiple settings:

- National events in the host country may be opportunities for belonging for those who are ‘formally’ outsiders (e.g. Amy and the Rugby World Cup), but in Ka Uro’s case, they are further reminders of his *difference* and exclusion.

- Hybridity – as mixing, syncretism, and boundary-breaking – may be the main ethos of a globalised and networked world, but for migrants like Ka Uro, it is a dilemma that needs to be resolved. His way of addressing the issue is to be adamant about his being Filipino despite the changes that he may undergo as a migrant.
- Ka Uro’s case demonstrates that the migrant’s attachment to the homeland is not easily cut off. To him, the project of the nation involves rebuilding a better version of the Philippines beyond its geographic territory.

Nora (1989) claims that the ‘the task of remembering makes everyone his [sic] own historian’ (p. 15). Remembering, however, demands choosing which parts of one’s experiences deserve committing to memory. In this situation, memory-making is not only a matter of engaging in a mnemonic process but also an ideological one. The cases in the study bring to light the exercise of privileging certain aspects of reality over others through acts of remembering done in the representational arena of Internet-based platforms.

### **9.3 Writing on a networked platform: What is a new media text?**

In discussing the affordances of new media (based on the social media cases in the study) as platforms of self-expression, content production, distribution, and preservation, I do not intend to offer a listing of the specific linguistic and semiotic resources that are unique or uniquely employed in social media. I believe this is not the best way to make full use of the insights from the three cases I have focused on in the study and the analyses stemming from my observations of them. Having said this, I hope that from my discussions of the cases of social media use by Amy and Ka Uro, I have been able to illustrate the richness of the multimodal semiotic repertoire that is potentially available to new media users.

I am invoking, at this point, the relevance of the concept of *bricolage* in recognising the creativity involved in the sign-making tactics of ordinary people in contemporary Internet-based media. ‘Tinkering’ with available knowledge and re-using remnants of prior structures to come up with something ‘new’ out of extant resources characterise the capacity of human beings for creation and ‘making do’ (de Certeau, 1984). The improvisational quality of myth-making by ‘primitive’ people, as

explicated by Claude Lévi-Strauss (1966), is the same resourceful imagination that could describe computer programmers and average new media users (for example, Androutsopoulos, 2010; Turkle, 1995) as they intuitively build new worlds from fragments (Lévi-Strauss, 1966).

I work on the premise that the ‘pervasively textually mediated’ quality of everyday life (Fairclough, 2010, p. 549) requires that we develop the skill to process and confront the politics of representation the main ingredients of which are semiotic materials from the prevailing culture. Since Internet-based and digital media fuel the speed and spread of representations that, for good or ill, carry social and personal implications, the ability to apprehend and make use of the means to imagine and perform our sense of self and society become an indispensable form of knowledge. In Papacharissi’s words: ‘...redactional acumen becomes a survival skill, as individuals exercise, become comfortable with, and play with a networked sense of self’ (2011, p. 317). What I would like to discuss at this point are ideas about the character of texts and textualities in new media that makes engaging in them ‘special’. I aim to accomplish this by, first, revisiting Ricoeur’s question regarding the essential attributes of a text (Ricoeur, 1981) and reframing it in accordance with the specific qualities of new media as sites of textual production and consumption. Second, referencing the thoughts of Martin Heidegger on the nature of being, I would like to forward the idea that the potential sense of agency we can gather from our new media engagement is dependent on the reduction of the *transparency* in our encounters with the self and society as we engage in new media platforms.

### **9.3.1 The ‘archive is alive’: Revisiting the autonomy of the text**

Sartre (1964), in his memoirs, offers a view of writing that proves useful in understanding the overall experience of putting the ‘world’ into words:

Since I had discovered the world through language, for a long time I mistook language for the world. To exist was to have a registered trade-name somewhere on the infinite Tables of the Word; writing meant engraving new beings on them or – this was my most persistent illusion – catching living things in the trap of phrases: if I put words together ingeniously, the object would become entangled in the signs, and I would hold it. (p. 115)

Capturing ‘life’ itself in the interweaving of words is the fundamental, and least straightforward, aim of writing. There are two things that are of interest in the above quote as they remind us of some basic perceptions about texts. First, mistaking ‘language for the world’ suggests that what is gained in writing is not the replication of the object being written but a ‘representation’ of it. In other words, texts do not mirror reality. Second, as much as we desire to ‘catch objects’ in signs in order to ‘hold’ them, writing cannot give the writer the ability to ensnare objects, actions, or realities. However, what writing is able to offer is the possibility of *fixing* not the objects, actions, or realities themselves but the ways we *see* these.

In answering the question, *what is a text*, Ricoeur advances ideas regarding writing that echo Sartre’s words: ‘A text is any discourse fixed by writing’ (Ricoeur, 1981, p. 145) but ‘a text is really a text only when it is not restricted to transcribing an anterior speech, when instead it inscribes directly in written letters what a discourse means’ (Ricoeur, 1981, p. 146). As an overarching design for my interpretive undertaking in the study, I discussed in Chapter 4 Ricoeur’s explication of the nature of texts and Bell’s extension of this framework in discourse analysis. I would like to focus on the proposition that written texts are premised on an ‘upheaval in the relation between the text and its world’, which brings about a further upheaval that affects the relation of the text to its author and reader (Ricoeur, 1981, p. 149). A text gains autonomy by being ‘uncoupled’ from its original social context, its author, and its original audience (Bell, 2011; Ricoeur, 1981). This situation is key to a text’s potential relevance beyond the immediate environment (e.g. how Amy and Ka Uro’s writings on their respective social media are interpreted, appropriated, and ‘re-written’ by their audience). ‘Writing preserves discourse and makes it an archive available for individual and collective memory’ (Ricoeur, 1981, p. 147). This condition opens up the text to a new world of interpretations.

Deuze (2012) also employs the metaphor of the archive in making sense of the ubiquity of new media in daily contemporary life. In consonance with Ricoeur’s point about the preservation of discourse in writing, Deuze sheds light on the capacity of new media forms to record every detail of our existence:

A media life can be seen as living in the ultimate archive, a public library of (almost) everything, embodying a personalized experience of all information of the universe. At the same time, in media life, the archive

is alive, in that it is subject to constant intervention by yourself and others. (2012, p. xv)

Although they may not be speaking of exactly the same things, both Ricoeur and Deuze further the perspective that something happens to experience when it is inscribed in writing. At the very least, it is preserved. But, as Ricoeur insists, it is not the experience itself that is fixed but its meaning; it is not the object itself that gets entangled in signs but the way it is *seen* that is apprehended. Also, this archive of experiences – of *almost everything* – is not static. Deuze above considers it ‘alive’ and identifies the interaction of the ‘subject’ and ‘others’ as the reason for this dynamism. This position is not entirely different from the autonomies of the text that Ricoeur puts forward, however, the ‘constant intervention by *yourself* and *others*’ (my emphasis) that Deuze regards as the source of life of new media archives departs from the ‘upheaval’ in the relationship of the text to its authors that Ricoeur posits.

In the following statement, Ricoeur affirms the estrangement of the text from its ‘maker’:

This proximity of the speaking subject to his own speech is replaced by a complex relation of the author to the text, a relation which enables us to say that the author is instituted by the text, that he stands in the space of meaning traced and inscribed by writing. (1981, p. 149)

Based on the social media cases in the study, however, there is an interruption to the full autonomy of the text. In the networks of contact and connection that new forms of media create, the uncoupling of the text is arrested so that its ‘proximity’ to the author is kept intact, which has implications for the text’s attachment to an audience and the social context. Although the potential for a multitude of meaning-making is always open, the interpretive process is also always exposed to the mediation of the author – the speaking subject. For instance, the meaning potential of the image of a cinnamon roll and flat white in one of Amy’s Facebook posts during the Rugby World Cup in 2011 was only fulfilled because of her intervention (See Chapter 7). Also, Ka Uro’s replies to comments in his blog posts perform some amount of regulation as to the meanings that could be created from his writings. I do not suggest that as authors, Amy and Ka Uro, have full control of the significance of their texts, however, their ‘nearness’ to their words afforded by the new media

platforms accomplish a 're-coupling' of the texts to their authors. This re-connection may not be absolute as it is only enacted through the active interaction between the author and reader, but the potential of this re-confinement of the text is always present. It seems that as more opportunities for wider dissemination of one's thoughts are created by the digitisation and networking of writing, meanings are at once potentially open and delimited.

Obviously, it is not only the closeness of the text to its author that is harnessed by new media writing. The revision of readings of a text is likewise made *apparent* within the space of exchange that particular platforms provide (e.g. Facebook Timeline and the blog comments page). Texts are interpreted and reinterpreted and the venues of interaction between readings make the *dialogicality* more visible. Different voices on the platform are able to assert a presence that is concrete enough so that they can be addressed and re-addressed directly. Meanings, ultimately, do not reside in the text, but in the different voices that reread and rewrite it. This is nothing new. What new media permit, however, is to render observable the 'chains' of texts and textualities wherein discourses branch out in a networked fashion. The audience paves the way for new pathways of meanings, which is in accordance with Ricoeur's exposition of the widening of the horizon of readings of an autonomous text. At the same time, the networked architecture of new media provides the potential to trace these pathways and engage with the 'subjects' whose voices shape the *heteroglossic* (Bakhtin, 1981) nature of texts.

What needs further investigation and elaboration is the revision of the 'upheaval' in the relation of the text to its author, reader, and social references that new media writing may have created. It is not my intention to elaborate on this point but I deem it fruitful to further study new media-based textual production and consumption with focus on the impact of 'audience design' (Bell, 1984) in such media forms. Since social media cease to be personal media in many instances, they take on attributes of mass media that exhibit a complex and conflicted configuration of the different kinds of audiences (e.g. addressees, auditors, overhearers) (Bell, 1984, p. 177). In ascertaining the relevance and rethink of the fundamental premise of audience design theory, two sets of questions are initially pivotal in this direction. First, how is discourse and style configured by the forms of audience that new media engender (whether unique to the medium or similar to traditional media). Second, to what

extent do the affordances of new media recast not just the forms of audience but the relationship between the audience and the author? Answers to these questions will ultimately bear on our understanding of texts, the textualisation of experience, and the way we make meanings from our interpretive process.

### **9.3.2 Defamiliarising the self: Necessities of new media writing**

Heidegger (1962), in *Being and Time*, sought to understand the meaning of ‘being’ by positing that it can only be made intelligible by works of interpretation involving *Dasein* – Being-in-the-world. At the risk of deploying Heidegger in a simplistic manner, I claim to have been, in certain ways, guided by this proposition in the attempt at understanding my participants’ engagement with new forms of Internet-based media. Although I never intended to unravel their ‘sense of being’ per se, I was able to get an inkling of the ways they fashion a sense of identity as diasporic subjects. This is but a small aspect of what Heidegger endeavoured to do, if it was at all a part of his great project. Certainly, any study of identity would benefit from taking the position that in order to have an understanding of our existence there is a need to see that ‘being-in-the-world’ necessarily means sharing that existence with others. In Heidegger’s terms: ‘So far as *Dasein* is at all, it has Being-with-one-another as its kind of Being’ (1962, p. 163).

Being with others is what new media allows us to feel, think, and achieve. These new forms of communication media, harnessing the potential of vast networks and connections, are not the sole determinants of relationships but they provide the means by which one can link up with another across vast distances, defying timezones, in this day and age. Among people that are greatly separated geographically, the widespread use of these media is a testament to how they have reconfigured our conceptions of the limits of our ‘being-in-the-world’, and the possibilities of transcending these limits in the attempt to rebuild what has been destroyed and unite what has been set apart. Such a scenario underpins actions that stimulate attachments to one’s land of birth despite physical estrangement from it.

In *Imagined Communities*, Anderson (2003 [1983]) proposed that the rise of print-capitalism, paving the way for print-languages, ‘laid the bases for national consciousnesses’ (p. 44). The combination of practical and representational prospects

created by print technology facilitated the reproduction and dissemination of ideas, and the generation of ‘conversation’ among people that led to the construction of the nation as collective fantasy. But the democratising potential of print technology eventually was subject to exploitation ‘in a Machiavellian spirit’ by interest groups and those in power (Anderson, 2003, p. 45). Although I am not talking of ‘nationalism’ in particular in this study, these elucidations by Anderson provide a credible foundation for understanding the relationship of national/nationalist sentiments and attachment, and new media technology in the diasporic experience.

The notion of *long-distance nationalism* also introduced by Benedict Anderson (1992) and picked up by authors such as Skrbiš (1999) and Schiller and Fouron (2001) was brought on by the continuance and cultivation of national attachments of people who are far away from what they consider as their homeland but are connected to it by other means. Related terms, such as *e-mail nationalism* (Anderson, 1992) and *Internet nationalism* (Eriksen, 2007), suggest the important place of technology in the furtherance of this phenomenon, a situation reminiscent of the way print-capitalism paved the way for the imagination of the nation and the cultivation of nationalisms. However, new forms of communication and signifying technologies, such as social media, are not identical to print technology in terms of its distributive and representational potential. Based on my examination of the cases in the study, I would like to discuss two dimensions of how new media facilitate the imagining of the nation for people who are physically absent from their homeland.

First, the liminal condition of migrants prompts them to rethink their place in the world – their Dasein, perhaps. Writing the experience of uprooting, resettlement, belonging, and attachment generates more room for contemplation. The Russian formalists proffer the concept of ‘defamiliarisation’ in literature to explain how poetic language, in making the ordinary seem unfamiliar, jolts individuals out of the automaticity of the senses. This is what writing allows – to see mundane objects and events in a different light and render their *transparency* exposed. Heidegger is relevant once more at this point. In particular, his exposition of the modes of

existential engagement with the world<sup>47</sup>. Entities are ‘transparent’ when they are *ready-to-hand* because, as exemplified by the act of using a tool, we do not think of them as separate entities from our bodies and the work we do. However, these entities become *unready-to-hand* when we experience a disruption (e.g. malfunction), so that the ‘tool’ becomes a conscious object that is separate from us, as subjects, in the act of working. Therefore, they are made ‘apparent’ v. ‘transparent’ as they are submitted to reflection or contemplation.

Writing about everyday life in social media provides opportunities to think about and view ordinary experiences from an unfamiliar angle. If we consider ‘identity’ as an ‘entity’ that is transparent on a daily basis, it becomes a subject of contemplation in situations that question its fixedness (e.g. being an immigrant) – when it becomes ‘unready-to-hand’. It gets to be all the more an object of deep reflection when inscribed in writing. This is true of any act of writing, whether in traditional or new media formats. Not so many people, however, will keep a chronicle of their lives and contemplate their everyday ‘being’ by textualising their experiences. Although using new media is likewise a volitional act, Amy and Ka Uro’s cases demonstrate how these technologies come to be a necessary part of migrants’ lives due to their practical import in keeping connections and relationships alive. Engaging in social media, in particular, plays a crucial role in this respect since they make ‘writing’ the default means of engagement. Social media induce a ‘necessity to write’, and writing is, of course, an act of capturing meanings rather than reflecting reality. There is no other way of participating in social media but to ‘write’, which in this situation refers to employing the multimodal resources these media formats offer for meaning-making. The necessity to write begets a ‘necessity to imagine’, and the necessity to imagine brings about the ‘necessity to step out’ of oneself and become unfamiliar with one’s ‘being-in-the-world’ temporarily.

In calling for the need to view the new global cultural economy as complex, Appadurai (1996) asserts that *imagination* should be treated as ‘central to all forms of agency’ since it is a social practice and –

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<sup>47</sup> Discussion is generally taken from Division 1, sections 15 and 16 of *Being and Time*, Macquarrie and Robinson translation (Heidegger, 1962).

has become an organized field of social practices, a form of work (in the sense of both labor and culturally organized social practice), and a form of negotiation between sites of agency (individuals) and globally defined fields of possibility. (p. 31)

Imagining a community, a nation, one's attachment, and sense of belonging may have been facilitated by the progress in print technology but new media and communication technologies have led the constitution and significance of this national consciousness to new directions. It is hard to *imagine* how print alone, as technology of communications, could have sustained the transnational networks of relationships with the speed and reach that new forms of communication media, such as SMS, e-mail, and social media, are able to afford us today. What is more, the progress of print technology may have opened up the conversation about the nation to a wider population through the production and dissemination of literary and literacy commodities, but they have also created a political-economy of the print industry that is based on a status of difference where only the 'select' could have their 'imagination' realised in published form. As many commentators have claimed, the digital and Internet age champions the democratisation of media by offering ordinary individuals a space to have their voices heard, their thoughts aired, and their presence felt. This is the second dimension of new media's facilitation of the imagination of the nation for diasporic subjects.

The social media cases of Amy and Ka Uro illustrate the potential relevance of communication media in the furtherance and reconstitution of national consciousness beyond print. They also exemplify how new media have allowed the participation of a wider section of the population in imagining the nation by affording them a platform for expression that, more or less, provides some latitude in control of design, production, and distribution (i.e. audience). Again, social media's furtherance of the national consciousness is but a potential. As Amy and Ka Uro's situations would show, one's motives for engaging in new media are crucial in determining the extent of what the medium can do both as a practical means of keeping relationships and a representational site of identity performance. But both Amy and Ka Uro also demonstrate how writing in online new media becomes a way of 'interrupting' the linear, targeted, and mechanical process of subjectification in the neoliberal design of migration practices. By having the opportunity to render daily migrant experiences as

meaningful engagements in writing, the question of identity becomes entangled in a web of issues that needs to be confronted and interrogated.

#### **9.4 Identity on the fly: Remembrances, departures, and confrontations**

Memory and representation combine to provide the materials for constructing both personal and collective identities (Eber & Neal, 2001). Identity work in the study is nothing special. Identity construction in media – old and new – is an everyday phenomenon.

In thinking of how Filipinos in New Zealand construct their identities in social media, I do not mean to fetishise the technology that becomes both the tool and venue for such identity work nor do I fetishise the ‘uniqueness’ of Filipino identity as if it were a singular occurrence. What I had endeavoured to accomplish was to provide observations of identity work in diaspora from studying the three cases of engagement with new media (i.e. the official texts and the two social media cases), and brought to the fore by certain ways of looking. I consolidate these observations into the following general themes:

##### ***Show-and-tell: Social media engagement is, inevitably, self-presentation***

Many of Amy’s Facebook updates and Ka Uro’s blog entries on *Mga Kuro-kuro* bear the features that are generically identified with diaries of the print era (McNeill, 2009). But whereas diaries are usually regarded as extremely private and inaccessible to public scrutiny, Ka Uro’s blog and Amy’s Facebook *Timeline* are open to the consumption of others. Prior to the twentieth century, however, certain forms of ‘diaries’ are deliberately subject to the perusal of others, including those kept by travellers and immigrants wanting to update their families of what life is like away from home (McNeill, 2009). Writing for an audience, therefore, makes ‘unpremeditated sincerity’ as mark of the ‘true diary’ quite untenable (Fothergill, 1974, p. 40). Writing about the self is constructing a *character* that is made real only by a representational operation. Amy’s case serves as a good example since she admits (interview) to wilfully *excluding* negative information about New Zealand in her Facebook posts: ‘...*may certain expectation yung mga Filipino na ‘pag lumipat yung ibang Filipino sa ibang bansa, na dapat medyo ok na kayo dyan...*’ (...I think Filipinos have certain expectations that when other Filipinos move to a different

country, they are supposed to have it good...). Social media, aside from their practical value as communication and documentation platform, necessitate the user to carry out constant self-presentation.

***I am 'where' I am: Diasporic identity is performed through place-making***

The claim that 'geographical identification and social identity are quite closely connected' (Pascual-de-Sans, 2004, p. 351) becomes especially true for migrants. I would expand on this by going back to the concept of the 'journey of achievement' introduced earlier. The discourse of the 'perfect place' permits the discourse of the 'good life' as demonstrated by Amy's commemoration of their two years in New Zealand and Ka Uro's remembrance of when they became enamoured with the country. Depictions of the place stand in for the kind of life they have, thus, the *character* that they could possibly take on and project to others (e.g. Amy's exclusion of 'unpleasant' posts about New Zealand that might be construed as 'failure' on her part as a migrant).

***No zero-sum game: Identity is, at once, bounded and boundless***

The global workplace reinforces the national identity of migrants (Aguilar, 2003) in that their character – the pros and cons – is defined by their national origin (e.g. Filipinos as world-class workers). This situation fosters a deepening sense of national attachment despite one's exposure to a multitude of experiences and references to substantiate the claim of the fallibility of boundaries. We tend to cling to something familiar and comfortable. This is not to dismiss the reality and value of hybridity – the boundless self – but it certainly raises questions regarding its limits and specificities, just as doubts are levelled at the long-standing boundaries that confine how we understand ourselves.

'To say that all cultures as hybrid has become a truism' (Acheraiou, 2011, p. 1). Despite the appearance of comfort in living out the comingling of different sources of one's identity formation, both Amy and Ka Uro also appear to carry out a 'resolution' of their diasporic identities as if they were a dilemma that needs to properly end. If identity is, indeed, a matter of figuring out one's 'attachments' and sense of 'belonging' (Fortier, 2000) when prompted to make a 'choice', Amy and Ka Uro issue similar-sounding assertions that, once and for all, end the ambivalences in

their identity: ‘they (children) will always have Pinoy tummies’ (Amy); ‘*Sa isip, wika at gawa, Pinoy pa rin*’ (I am still Pinoy in thought, speech, and deed) (Ka Uro). One can dissolve boundaries but also erect them at the same time. Although there is a sense of liberty and openness in accepting a hybrid state of one’s being, boundaries are still crucial in performing a specific mode of one’s identity in terms of cultural attachments and national belonging.

***The personal is national: Diasporic identity is defined by the burden of the nation***

Migrants carry the weight of their homelands on their backs despite their departure from it. This burden is illustrated by Ka Uro’s feelings of *guilt* in ‘abandoning’ the ailing motherland and Amy’s desire to show to Kiwi friends what the Filipino *really* is like. It is the same sense of responsibility conveyed in the parting words of friends before we left for New Zealand – *itayo niyo ang bandera ng Pilipinas* (raise the Philippine flag). Whether real or invented (Hobsbawm, 1983), the nation and the nationalism/s it induces in people are not easily expunged in the specific case of migrants.

Thomassen (2012) maintains that the point of the liminal phase is the *transition* in the end. Compared to temporary labour migrants who are sure to return home, the end of the journey is not as easily defined in the case of permanent migrants, such as Amy and Ka Uro’s. Both perform a transgression of the limits of national identifications (e.g. being Kiwi and being Pinoy) on social media. At the same time, they resolutely claim to *still* be Filipinos. Perhaps, these are attempts at finding a comfortable position in the liminal situation, if not their actual means of completing the transition. ‘It is impossible simply to feel at home everywhere if one does not feel at home *somewhere*’ (Thomassen, 2012, p. 31). Amy and Ka Uro may not be returning to the homeland but they can always bring the ‘home’ wherever they go.

These four insights on identity construction in social media have been afforded me by an interpretive engagement with the texts, the relationships built with the participants and other Filipino migrants, and reflecting on my personal experiences of being a migrant, temporary as it may be, in New Zealand. In formulating these themes, I invoke once more Hall’s cogent assertion that identity is a matter of ‘becoming’ and ‘being’ (2003). As the cases in the study have demonstrated, holding on to long-standing identity formations and revising one’s identifications are both

motivated acts. Identities are constantly modified but absolute freedom from forces of conformity is but an illusion, even in a society that values individual freedom above all.

Fromm (1941) believes that ‘one of the greatest illusions we have about ourselves’ is to be convinced that as long as there is no outside overt power that forces us to do something, our decision is ours; and if we want something, it is us who want it (p. 200). In the end, the potential for personal agency that rethinking our identity offers does not necessarily lie in our ability to be what we choose to be, it is in the opportunity to realise that we are defined by our involvements in a network of relations. Redefining ourselves entails more than contemplating our navel. For despite our choices being *personal*, they always speak about narratives bigger than our individual stories.

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## APPENDIX A

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### Online Environment Mapping Guide:\*

General Structure of the New Media Environment:

1. What activities are unfolding in the new media environments?
2. What is their rate of change?
3. Who are the main actors?
4. How do they interact or interrelate?

General Content (Textual, Visual, Audio, Audio-visual) of the New Media Sites:

1. What are the linguistic and semiotic resources deployed in the new media field?
2. What characteristic clusters or categories do they form?
3. How do different environments, participants and genres differ in their use of these resources?
4. As *texts*, what are the “formalistic” features of the particular contents that make up the whole of the site?
5. How do these elements relate to one another?
6. What are the marginal elements?
7. How do these marginal elements relate to the whole?
8. What are the characteristics of these marginal elements?

General Movement of Observation or Opportunities for new Research Sites

1. Are there peripheral links that you could follow in order to access richer and varied data?
2. Observe the links by repeating structure and content guidelines

\*Based on Danets (2001) as cited in Androutsopoulos 2008

## APPENDIX B

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### Template of introductory letter and information sheet for participants (sent via e-mail or private message)

(English version)

Hi! I am a researcher in culture, discourse and communication. Sounds like a lot but currently I am studying the way Filipinos in New Zealand create their identities online. This is why I am interested in your site (state name of website) because I think it is a rich source of information that would help me understand the interaction of identity construction and online new media in the lives of people who are away from their country of origin. I am also Filipino and that's a big reason why I am doing this study. I believe that identities, like the Filipino identity, are complex and that it will always be part of decisions, emotions, thinking and actions of people who grapple with equally complex everyday experiences. This is especially true in the lives of those who, for one reason or another, choose to stay away from their 'motherland' but, by all means, still holds on to a connection to it. And making it more 'exciting' is today's new media resources via the Internet that give many a means to exchange information and ideas that transcend the boundaries of space and time. This means, perhaps, that even if Filipinos are far away from the Philippines, the Internet serves as the bridge that constantly serves as a link. Then, I wonder the ways that the Internet affect how Filipinos (specifically) view and *re-view* themselves as Filipinos who are establishing a presence and life in another country—New Zealand.

I'd be much obliged if you welcome me into your website to take a look around, read and experience your thoughts on various things and on being a Filipino. Also, I would be extremely grateful if you grant me an interview that would be done *kuwentuhan*-style\* to talk more about your Internet engagement and your views on Filipino identity. It is ideal to do it face-to-face if you can make time for it though other means are always available (e.g., e-mail or Skype). It would likely take 1 to 1.5 hours to do the interview in a location that is most convenient for you or we agree on. Rest assured that I would exercise utmost care in protecting your identity in the things that I use from what you will say.

If you'd like more information about the research and me, I am providing a very simple website at (state web address). There, you can learn a bit more about the study, my credentials and a link to the research institute and university that I am affiliated with. Also, I am attaching an information sheet and consent forms for you to further consider in case this introduction makes you somewhat interested.

I am sorry if this mail had been too long and more apologies if you were bothered by it. But I do hope that you become a participant in my study.

Thanks once again my *kababayan!*\*\*

Alwin C. Aguirre

\**kuwentuhan*: candid, informal chat or talk

\*\**kababayan*: countryman

(Filipino version)

Hi! Researcher po ako ng *culture, discourse and communication*. Parang kung ano pero sa ngayon ang focus ko ay kung paanong nililikha o ginagawa ng mga Filipino sa New Zealand ang identity nila online. Ito po ang dahilan kung bakit naging interesado ako sa website ninyo (state the name of the website) dahil sa tingin ko'y mayaman ito sa impormasyon na makatutulong na maunawaan ang interaksyon ng paglikha ng identity at online media sa buhay ng mga taong malayo sa kanilang sariling bayan. Bakit ko ba ginagawa ito? Filipino rin po ako at naniniwala na komplikado ang identity ng tao, tulad sa tanong na *sino nga ba ang Filipino*, at lagi itong bahagi ng desisyon, iniisip, nararamdaman at ginagawa ng mga tao na komplikado rin ang mga nararanasan sa araw-araw. Siguro, totoong-totoo ito sa mga taong pinili sa kasalukuyan na mabuhay sa ibang bayan pero hindi naman pinuputol ang koneksiyon sa pinagmulan. At mas 'exciting' lalo ngayon dahil sa Internet na nagbibigay sa marami sa atin ng paraan na mabilis na makapagpalitan ng impormasyon at ideya na hindi nalilimitahan ng oras at distansiya. Puwede siguro nating isipin na kahit malayo ang mga Filipino sa Pilipinas, ang Internet ang nagsisilbing 'tulay' sa kanilang dalawa kaya't laging buo ang koneksiyon. Iniisip ko rin kung ano ang epekto ng Internet sa kung paanong nakikita at ipinakikita ng mga Filipino ang kanilang pagiging isang Filipino na sinisikap mabuhay sa New Zealand, sa labas ng kanilang sinilangang bayan.

Malaking utang na loob po kung babasbasan ninyo ang pagdalaw ko sa inyong website para magbasa at tumingin-tingin tungkol sa iba't ibang bagay at sa pagiging Filipino. Malaking pasasalamat din po kung papayag kayo sa isang interview na sa totoo ay kuwentuhan namang talaga tungkol sa karanasan at pananaw ninyo sa pagkakaroon ng website at sa pagiging Filipino sa New Zealand. Mas mabuti po sana kung personal ko kayong makikita pero kung hindi naman po kaya ng inyong oras, laging may ibang paraan (e.g., Skype o e-mail). Tantiya ko po ay 1-1.5 oras ang itatagal ng interview sa panahon at lugar na nais ninyo o na ating mapagkakasunduan. Umasa po kayo na gagawin kong lahat upang protektahan ang inyong *pagkakakilanlan* kung may banggitin man ako sa alinman sa inyong mga sasabihin.

Kung may nais pa kayong malaman tungkol sa aking research at kung sino ako, meron akong simpleng website sa (state web address). May impormasyon ito tungkol sa research, sa aking credentials at may link din sa aking research institute at university. May in-attach din po ako na information sheet at consent forms dito sa e-mail sakaling nagkainteres kayo kahit na kaunti sa aking mga sinabi.

Nagpapaumanhin po ako kung medyo napahaba at lalong humihingi ng tawad kung nakaabala. Pero, umaasa pa rin po ako na kayo'y maging bahagi ng aking pag-aaral.

Maraming salamat muli kabayan!

Alwin C. Aguirre

## **Participant information sheet template**

### **Date Information Sheet Produced:**

20 March 2011

### **Project Title**

Negotiating the Filipino in Cyberspace: A Study of New Zealand-based Filipinos' Engagement with Internet-based Media and its Consequent De/Construction of Filipino Identity

### **An Invitation**

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am Alwin C. Aguirre, a PhD student at the Institute for Culture, Discourse and Communication (ICDC) at the Auckland University of Technology. I am a Filipino and that fact is a big reason for my motivations to do this particular study. I am conducting a research on New Zealand-based Filipinos' experience and use of Internet-based new media (i.e., Filipino-dedicated websites such as online magazines and online community newsletter, blogs and social media) to see how they construct their identity as Filipinos online. The study involves two methods of gathering data that require me to focus on 1) specific new media websites; and, 2) the people or individuals who engage in such activity. This is the main thesis project that leads to my PhD completion.

I have been a follower of your site (state the name of new media site) even prior to commencing the study but I am now formally presenting myself as a researcher who respectfully asks that you *favor* my presence in your website. More than adhering to research proprieties or fulfilling research practice requirements, I consider this as an expression of courtesy to you. In line with this, I am also inviting you to be a participant in my research by agreeing to an informal, semi-structured interview, preferably, held face-to-face. The interview will focus on three general themes: a) use of Internet-based new media; b) views on Filipino identity; and, c) intersection of engaging with Internet-based media and the construction of Filipino identity. The semi-structured interviews are intended to be accomplished in one session. However, in the event that a follow-up interview is needed, the decision to grant me one will always be on your discretion.

This study will be monitored by my supervisors at the ICDC. You will be informed of any changes in the research that might prove relevant to you as a participant.

Your participation in the study is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time prior to the completion of data collection without any adverse consequences. I assure you that your participation in the project and the information that you will give me will be held with utmost confidentiality even as the research results take different forms—final report, academic presentations and publications. Should you wish to discontinue participation, I am requesting you to inform me promptly. However, there would be difficulty in making changes or withdrawing your participation once the research reaches the final stages of writing. Nevertheless, I am always open to discuss with you such issues as with other matters pertinent to the study.

Thank you for considering my request. Your participation will be of great value in the further understanding of migrant identities and online culture.

### **What is the purpose of this research?**

The main aim of the project is to understand how New Zealand-based Filipinos' participation in various Internet-based media (e.g., Filipino-dedicated websites, blog sites and social networking sites) figure in the way their identities as Filipinos are created online. The project sees the 'meanings' of their Web creations or productions (e.g., blog entries, graphics, photos, music) as the primary indicators of how they "get around" with the question of identity as members of a particular community in a country other than their place of origin.

The resulting output of this research project is a thesis that leads to a doctorate degree. A book version of the study is likely to be written at the end of the project as well as smaller academic papers, conference and lecture presentations.

### **How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?**

I identified you as potential participant based on your website (state name of website) that I have visited even prior to beginning this project. I find your website to be a rich source of information that would certainly aid me in achieving the objectives of the project. I am hopeful that the study extends its significance beyond the academe and be of use to the actual Filipino communities (and perhaps, other communities in similar situations as well) by contributing to the understanding of the complexities of forming and making sense of identities.

I aim to interview the person behind the website. I would like to give you ‘voice’ as the ‘source’ of the ideas that we get to read online. I believe that you could provide the necessary background and possible meanings of your own creative output on the Web. Combined with my analysis as researcher, your insights could only give the research a deeper and fuller understanding of the subject matter.

The particular criteria that I used in the study to choose potential participants are straightforward: that they are Filipinos who live in New Zealand, at least 16 years old, and who engage or have engaged in Internet-based new media with regularity.

### **What will happen in this research?**

I have two ways of gathering data: 1) detailed examination of textual production in new media sites, where “textual” means various forms of output such as written, visual, audio and audio-visual materials on the Web; and, 2) semi-structured interviews with the individuals behind the websites.

The first method doesn’t require anything of you aside from your usual online activity. I am actually hoping that this research will not drastically affect the way you usually do things on your site. For the second method, I am requesting you to take part in a semi-structured interview in order to enrich the data and the analysis of the study.

### **What are the discomforts and risks?**

The most probable issue that may occur in being involved with the project is the protection of your privacy especially in the write-up of the study. As active users of Internet-based media, we are aware of how easy it is to find the source of particular statements with the use of online tools (e.g., Google and Yahoo) if a person would deliberately do so for whatever purpose. I aim to address this issue in the most appropriate manner (see next item).

### **How will my privacy be protected?**

I recognize the possibility that the source of particular statements in the write-up may be identified and have designed the study, in consultation with past and similar researches, so that your privacy is protected. Specifically, you will be given pseudonyms when being cited in the research report. Additionally, if it is applicable, your online handles or pseudonyms will be treated as real names so that a pseudonym of your pseudonym will be used in the write-up when referring certain items to you.

Part of the design of the study is to provide you a copy of preliminary versions of the write-up. This will be an opportunity for you to check whether you are aptly recognised as the source of particular items where these items do not pose a risk to the protection of your identity or whether your identity is sufficiently protected when attributable items are mentioned in the report

**What are the costs of participating in this research?**

As already mentioned, I am hoping that my invitation and presence in your website will not drastically change your regular online activity. I aim to be as unobtrusive as possible in your usual engagement with the Internet through your online media site. However, it would really be of great benefit to the project if you allow me a portion of your time to participate in an interview that would likely be for 1 to 1.5 hours. The interview is open in structure and would encourage you to respond in a way that you see fit and respond only if you wish to. I will aim for our interview session to be as candid, informal and mutually rewarding as possible.

**What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?**

I will gladly await your response to this invitation within two weeks after receipt hereof.

**How do I agree to participate in this research?**

Please use the consent forms attached to this information sheet to signify your participation in the study. You may send the signed form to my e-mail address below or use a postage-paid envelope that is provided if you prefer.

**Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?**

Yes. You will be provided the preliminary, intermediate and final research results (e.g., analysis) of the study. A website specially dedicated to the research project is set-up so that we can have an online hub where we could interact, exchange ideas, offer insights and provide suggestions regarding issues that are relevant to the study. Of course, this site will also contain the preliminary and final results of the analysis that you can access as participant. This site is generally public but certain parts are only open to me, as the researcher, the participants and my supervisors. Also, as a participant, you could find more information regarding the project that might interest you and send me messages through private messaging or e-mail. This will ensure that your opinions, thoughts, concerns and statements are protected from untoward access.

**What do I do if I have concerns about this research?**

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the primary Project Supervisor, *type contact details*.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary, AUTECH, *type contact details*.

**Whom do I contact for further information about this research?**

*Researcher Contact Details:*

*Project Supervisor Contact Details:*

*Research Website (or Blogsite):*

**Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on *type the date final ethics approval was granted*, AUTECH Reference number *type the reference number*.**

## APPENDIX C

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### Semi Structured Interview Theme Guide

#### Theme 1—Use of new media

**Motivations:** What motivates a person to do the following:

1. Participating in new media
2. Creating a new media account
3. Regularly accessing the accounts or sites
4. Terminating the account or ending the participation

**Experience:** How would you describe your own new media activity:

1. Frequency or regularity of access (e.g. updates)
2. Maintaining the participation
3. Cognitive and emotional impact
4. Describe a usual moment of engaging in new media from beginning to end
5. Actively or not actively participating
6. Say the things you say as comments, or blog entries or status updates
7. Withhold reaction, statement, comment or entry
8. The audience or reader

**Perceptions:** General views on new media and your engagement with it:

9. The nature and character of internet-based media
10. The knowledge or information sent and received through internet-based media
11. The value of new media in the daily lives of people
12. The use and utility of media in the daily lives of people
13. Some issues that tackle the ‘good’ and ‘bad’ in participating in new media

#### Theme 2—Views on Filipino identity and/as diasporic identity (Based on Wodak et al. 1999)

**Who is a Filipino?:**

1. The ‘defining’ or salient characteristics of a Filipino
2. Own perceptions of how to describe a Filipino
3. Perceptions of how others define a Filipino
4. Salient images of who a Filipino is
5. Misconceptions about a Filipino
6. Source or origin of these characterisations

**Who is a Filipino in New Zealand?:**

1. The ‘defining’ characteristics of a Filipino in New Zealand
2. Own perceptions of how to describe a Filipino in New Zealand
3. Perceptions of how people in New Zealand define a Filipino
4. Salient images of who a Filipino is in New Zealand
5. The difference or non-difference of Filipinos in New Zealand vis-à-vis Filipinos in ‘general’
6. Source or origin of these characterisations

**What does the Philippines mean?:**

1. The ‘defining’ characteristics of the Philippines (as a country or nation, broadly defined)
2. Own perceptions of what the Philippines means
3. Perceptions of how others see the Philippines
4. Salient images of the Philippines
5. Source or origin of these characterisations

***What does New Zealand mean?:***

1. The “defining” characteristics of New Zealand (as a country or nation, broadly defined)
2. Own perceptions of what New Zealand is and its people
3. Perceptions of how others see New Zealand and its people
4. Salient images of the New Zealand and its people
5. Source or origin of these characterisations

**Theme 3—New media and Filipino identity construction**

***Construction of Filipino identity in new media:***

1. Relevance of new media in constructing Filipino identity
2. Salience of being a Filipino in new media engagement
3. Deliberate or non-deliberate efforts to include Filipino identity in new media engagement
4. Particular instances or examples of placing Filipino identity (possibly as a national discourse) as a topic or focus in new media creation

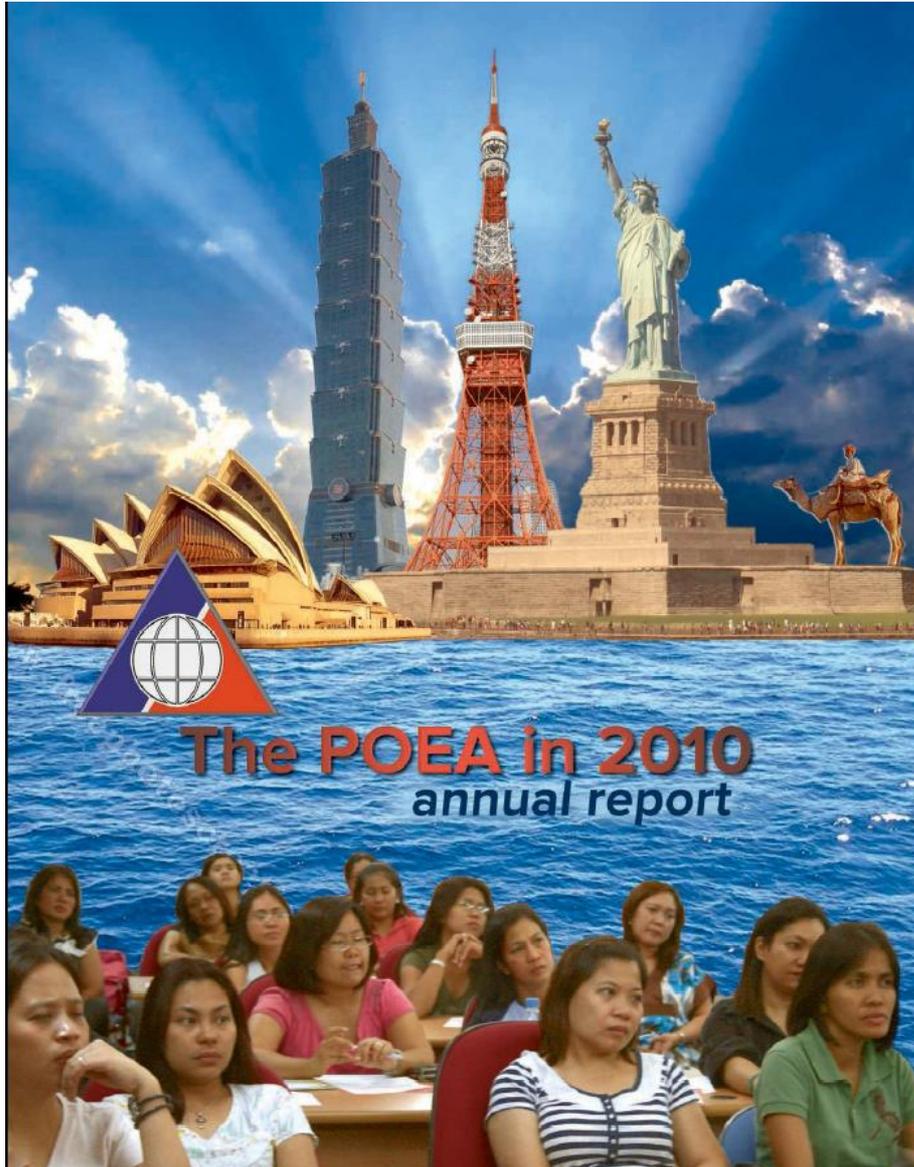
***Specific issues arising from the mapping of a participant’s new media site (the first phase of the study):***

1. Based on initial assessment or analysis of respective new media sites, discuss specific issues that are relevant
2. Themes, details, photos, graphics, etc that manifestly or latently deals with the construction of Filipino identity in online new media
3. Details of the participant’s online sites that are relevant to the objectives of the study
4. Clarification of the linguistic and semiotic strategies, style, resources that the participants employ in constructing their online sites and specific activities within the sites

## APPENDIX D

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Philippine Overseas Employment Agency (POEA) 2010 annual report inside cover image



## APPENDIX E

### Commission of Filipinos Overseas (CFO) audio-visual brief 2012 Transcript

Time min/sec	VIDEO			AUDIO
	Text	Image/Clips	Background	
00.00	Countdown			
00.09	<p>Super:*</p> <p>Today, 214 million international migrants live or work outside their country of birth.</p> <p>The world is experiencing an ever-increasing movement of people.</p> <p>White</p> <p>Appears by word with moderate fast speed</p>	<p>Clips of airport scenes</p> <p>EWS images of urban landscape of different countries—cars, buses, buildings, billboards</p>		<p>Electronic music</p> <p>Exciting</p> <p>Fast-paced</p>
00.23	<p>10 Million Filipinos in more than 200 destinations</p> <p>White text</p> <p>Animated (swivels)</p>		<p>World map image in monochromatic dark blue hue</p>	<p>Music continued from previous</p>
00.31	<p>(Pie chart)</p> <p>Permanent migrants 47%</p> <p>Overseas Filipino Workers 45%</p> <p>Undocumented 8%</p> <p>(Each line appears successively)</p> <p>White text</p>		<p>same</p>	<p>Music same</p> <p>SFX: Appearance of pie chart labels with high-pitched ‘laser’ like sound</p>
00.41	<p>Why do Filipinos leave the country?</p> <p>Yellowish text</p>		<p>Black that changes to:</p> <p>Left half: rotating globe which stops at USA (Washington)</p> <p>Right-half: orangey-yellowish blend with animated whitish multi-size circles as if being ejected in all directions</p>	<p>Music same</p> <p>SFX overlay: ‘high-pitched’ series of ‘ping’ sound of varying notes</p>

Time min/sec	VIDEO			AUDIO
	Text	Image/Clips	Background	
00.45	<p>To find greener pastures...</p> <p>Yellow text</p> <p>(Note credit): Video Clips Courtesy of ABS-CBN Global TFC (appears all the time until testimonials end)</p> <p>Super: Sammy De Hitta, USA</p> <p>White text</p>	<p>Framed shot of Sammy testimonial; WS, INT. Sammy stands and speaks in front of senior persons seated on chairs; at 'work';</p> <p>Intercut to:</p> <p>INT, Same place; Fronting images of faces and words 'Focus on Abilities, Not Disabilities'</p> <p>Frame composed of overlapping 'golden' rectangular borders that get animated with every change of 'speaker'.</p> <p>Framed testimonial on right of globe opposite 'texts'</p> <p>Same format (backdrop, effects, frames, text colour) for all testimonials</p>	same	<p>Music: Slower, more mellow, synthesizer, techno quality</p> <p>VO to SoT Sammy: I'm in this country for greener pasture. Although I have a good job in the Philippines but I like it better here.</p>
00.50	<p>Destined to live abroad...</p> <p>Super: Gracie Manuel, USA</p>	<p>Gracie, MS, EXT. EWS of green hills</p> <p>Intercut with:</p> <p>Still images of her with another person, EXT.</p>		<p>Music: Slower, mellow, less techno, more 'strings'</p> <p>SoT to VO: Gracie: I never dreamed of coming to this country pero I think God has other plans for me.</p>
00.56	<p>Family unification...</p> <p>Super: Chuck Lapus, USA</p>	<p>Chuck, MS EXT; Clutching a helmet; Fronting a helicopter</p>		<p>Music: Slower, mellow, less techno, more 'strings'</p> <p>SoT to VO:</p>

Time min/sec	VIDEO			AUDIO
	Text	Image/Clips	Background	
		Intercut with:  Still image of Male and Female holding a baby in her arms		Chuck: I'm in this country because my parents brought me here for a better life.
01.00	Professional advancement...  Super: Eduardo Rodriguez, Saudi Arabia	Still photo of Eduardo in office, MS; in his suit;  Intercut with:  Eduardo, in his suit, at work, inspecting things (moving clips)	Globe rotates and stops at Abu Dhabi part	Music: Slowish, mellow, volume up from previous  VO: Eduardo: Nagsimula ako bilang, <i>ah</i> , field salesman at kalaunan ay na-promote ako bilang spare parts manager.
01.08	For better work opportunities...  Super: Wilfred Tua, Australia	Wilfred, MS, INT. Printed materials on display as background; casual pink collared shirt with Philippine map on chest  Intercut with:  EXT, escalator with visible 'Blacktown' signage	Globe rotates and stops at Australia	Music: Slow, mellow, more 'country'  SoT to VO: Wilfred: Yung isang brother in law ko, nauna siya rito sa Australia and then nagsabi sa akin na mas maganda raw dito sa Australia. So, sinubukan naming mag-apply.
01.16	Marriage to foreign nationals...  Super: Susan and Malcolm Conan, UK	Still photo of Malcolm and Susan seated together, INT, MS	Globe rotates and stops at Europe	Music: Faster than previous, more techno  VO: Susan: Susan Conan, ho. Malcom: Malcolm Conan
		Intercut:  Stills of Susan holding a baby in arms, the couple, young people presumably their children		VO: Susan: Nung nakilala ko siya, ayun, nagkapamilya...  VO: Malcolm: Filipinos are caring and an...fantastic people. ( <i>sic</i> )

Time min/sec	VIDEO			AUDIO
	Text	Image/Clips	Background	
01.25	<p>To look after the needs of migrant Filipinos worldwide, the Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO) was established...</p> <p>Yellow font Text dissolves into a ball of light and disappears</p>		<p>'Globe' composite that transitions to black then to a 'golden' matrix.</p> <p>Shifts from low angle to high angle settling at gold matrix as ground with fading golden hue horizon.</p> <p>Same background used up to 16</p>	<p>Music: Faster; exciting; synthesizer; louder; grander; techno; as with the opening (applies until stated otherwise)</p>
01.30	<p>Office of the President</p> <p>Black text Animated appearance</p>	Office of the President emblem		
01.32	<p>Super: Batas Pambansa 79</p> <p>Blue blocked font Animated appearance</p>	Formal document image		
01.33	<p>Commission on Filipinos Overseas</p> <p>Black text Animated appearance</p>	Commission on Filipinos Overseas emblem		
01.35	<p>Tasked to promote and uphold the interests, rights and welfare of overseas Filipinos and strengthen their ties with the motherland.</p> <p>Red text Animated appearance</p>			
01.42	<p>CFO clientele includes the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Filipinos permanently residing abroad</li> <li>• Filipinos who became naturalized or dual</li> </ul>	<p>Still images Framed by translucent whitish border</p>	<p>Orange Reddish band cuts through mid-screen, slightly</p>	

Time min/sec	VIDEO			AUDIO
	Text	Image/Clips	Background	
	<p>citizens</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Filipino spouses and partners of foreign nationals</li> <li>• Descendants of overseas Filipinos</li> <li>• Filipino youth overseas</li> <li>• Exchange Visitor Program participants</li> </ul> <p>Yellow text</p>	<p>Appears on the left side of the screen; appearance is animated—swings;</p> <p>Appearance coincides with the revelation of each bullet point (which are superimposed)</p> <p>Images include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Group of people in snow outfits sitting on a snow-covered ground most probably a ski resort</li> <li>2. A woman, in the act of speaking, holding a document with right hand slightly raised; little girl standing by her; Another person to the left of the woman in the same act of ‘pledging’</li> <li>3. An Asian-looking man in black suit with his arms around the waist of a woman in pink long gown.</li> <li>4. Young boys and girls sitting on a couch</li> <li>5. Gathering of young people in what seems to be a convention area</li> <li>6. Group photo hinting a mix of Caucasian, Asian (Filipino).</li> </ol>	<p>animated; <i>CFO Clientele</i> text of minimal opacity slides from right to left slowly</p>	
02.06	CG: 01.33		Same as 12	

Time min/sec	VIDEO			AUDIO
	Text	Image/Clips	Background	
	<p>+</p> <p>RA 10022 expanded the definition of “Overseas Filipinos” now includes overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) and their dependents among existing CFO clientele</p> <p>Blue blocked text Animated appearance</p>			
02.23	<p>CFO updates its services and responds to the challenges of migration and development.</p> <p>Black text</p>	<p>CFO logo moves from right to left of screen</p> <p>To its right: framed moving images of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. CFO building EXT;</li> <li>2. Panning shot of building name (CFO)</li> <li>3. Reception INT showing a casually dressed male interacting with building security</li> <li>4. INT seating area; people holding documents; appears to be in wait</li> <li>5. A casually dressed woman transacting by the window of an ‘officer’ whose face is not shown, only hands and profile; woman on the opposite side points to documents and passport</li> <li>6. Very quick shot of a man in the same situation as above but the angle is opposite; man’s back is turned towards the cam and ‘officer’ faces cam but footage too quickly disappears to be</li> </ol>		

Time min/sec	VIDEO			AUDIO
	Text	Image/Clips	Background	
		noticeable		
02.37	<p>CG: 01.33 + CFO Vision CFO envisions a community of well-respected and proudly competitive Filipinos overseas who contribute significantly to the productivity and well-being of the countries where they reside or work while maintaining strong political, economic and cultural ties with the Philippines.</p> <p>Red text Animated appearance (scrolls from below then dissolves)</p>			
02.53	<p>CFO Mission</p> <p>Black text</p> <p>CFO's mission is to be the Philippine's premier institution in promoting policies, programs and projects with migration and development as a framework for strengthening and empowerment of the community of Filipinos overseas.</p> <p>Red text Animated: scrolls from below then dissolves</p>			
03.02	<p>Programs and Services</p> <p>Black text Super: Regular services are</p> <p>Yellow text, bold</p>	<p>A series of image thumbnails line up from right of screen</p> <p>A typical 'classroom' set-up; casually dressed adults and children seated; attention on a female speaker in front of the room—professionally dressed (in red); her back turned towards the camera; audience faces cam; angle of shot reveals table with documents and a</p>	Gold matrix as before	

Time min/sec	VIDEO			AUDIO
	Text	Image/Clips	Background	
		transparency projector		
03.08	<p>Registration (Green text)  Pre-Departure Orientation (orange text)  Seminar (PDOS) (Blue text)  Counseling</p> <p>Au-pair Registration (Red text)</p>	<p>Composite image:  A document (newsletter) of three columns; CFO logo left half in watermark; upper half of newsletter is shown; photo on this supposed document changes coinciding with the bullet points:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Moving image of a person filling in forms; over the shoulder</li> <li>2. Transaction by the window; shows documents and passports; MS from shoulder, heads not shown</li> <li>3. Public sign posted on wall: (black on yellow) CFO public assistance and complaints desk</li> </ol> <p>Composite image: Reveals lower half of the supposed document; same scheme--</p> <p>Photo collage showing group pictures; UK flag prominent; 'Europe' prominent as text on what appears to be map in background</p> <p>Composite image: Reveals another page of the supposed document (CFO</p>	same	

Time min/sec	VIDEO			AUDIO
	Text	Image/Clips	Background	
	<p>Community Education Programs (CEP) (Beige text over blue)</p> <p>Linkapil logo Lingkod sa Kapwa Pilipino (in blue text) Relief Operations (white over red) Livelihood Programs Medical Missions</p>	<p>logo right half watermark); upper half; same scheme</p> <p>Images: Gathering of people; EXT; most are seated; a male is standing in front appears to be speaking to the rest.</p> <p>Composite image: Lower half of the supposed document</p> <p>Images: 1. Various photos of relief operations 2. Woman and little girl getting water from manual pump 3. Woman carrying a baby and a man in face mask (doctor)</p>		
03.35	<p>New Initiatives</p> <p>Anti-human Trafficking Actionline 1343 Laban kontra Human Trafficking, Laban nating lahat! Report Human Trafficking! Call or Text 1343 Call (02) 1343 if outside Metro Manila Or report through our website www.1343actionline.ph</p>	((lay-out with info)	Gold matrix + line-up of images	
03.44	<p>Global Summit (white text) Diaspora to Development (D2D) (white text; smaller font) 1<sup>st</sup> Global Summit 2011 (white text) 2<sup>nd</sup> Global Summit 2013 (white text) the Birth of Diaspora to Development (D2D) 10 Components (lighter blue text)</p>	<p>Global summit logo— Philippine map in yellow circled by an arrow that starts from top of map in dark blue; goes counter clockwise around map and</p>	Dark blue with scattered 'stars'; space or night sky	

Time min/sec	VIDEO			AUDIO
	Text	Image/Clips	Background	
		ends with arrow head in red pointing inward to middle part of map.  Zoom in to map until it dissolves out of the screen		
03.50	<p>D2D 10 Components (light blue text)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (Logo) Alay Dunong sa Bayan (Brain Gain): Skills and technology transfer (white font)</li> <li>• Arts and Culture Exchange: Promote arts and cultural exchange with Filipino communities abroad</li> <li>• Business Advisory Circle: Business matching and mentoring program</li> <li>• Balik Turo (Teach Share): Share expertise in educational programs and services</li> <li>• Diaspora Investment: Channel remittances for local and national development</li> <li>• Diaspora Philanthropy: Facilitate donations and development contributions from overseas Filipinos</li> <li>• Global Legal Assistance and Advocacy: Provide legal assistance to migrant Filipinos in distress</li> <li>• Medical Mission Coordination: To coordinate and rationalize foreign medical missions</li> <li>• Return and Reintegration: Assist the reintegration of overseas Filipino returnees and retirees</li> <li>• Tourism Initiatives: Encourage “balikbayan” tourism and investment in tourism enterprise</li> </ul>	<p>(shows respective logos of each program)</p> <p>Style: Each logo is composed of ‘arrows’; arrow as metaphor and mode; used in varying degrees usually aligns with conventional symbols; colour scheme: red, yellow, blue, white (PH flag colours)</p>	(see 24)	
04.23	<p>Be more than a BALIKBAYAN Ang Kaalaman at Kakayahan iBALIK sa BAYAN!</p> <p>White text to yellow (for last two lines) Letter case as shown</p>		same	

Time min/sec	VIDEO			AUDIO
	Text	Image/Clips	Background	
04.29	<p>Defining Leadership in the Next Generation</p> <p>Animated: zooms in on the centre of the screen by word and breaks apart to reveal next word (except for last two words which appear at the same time)</p> <p>YouLeaD (blue text) Youth Leaders in the Diaspora (red text)</p>	<p>(Logo)—which is blue upper half and red lower half</p>	<p>Blue upper half; red lower half</p> <p>Orange</p>	
04.33	<p>YouLeaD Commitments (white text)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To establish groups and chapters</li> <li>• To become anti-human trafficking youth advocates.</li> <li>• To organize heritage sites and appreciation tours in the Philippines through Lakbay-Aral.</li> <li>• To train students on leadership and social entrepreneurship.</li> </ul>	<p>YouLead logo</p> <p>Composite image: a series of still images framed in the centre of the screen by a white, faded border; on the left of this frame is the image, on the right appears bullets points; image coincides with bullet points:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. MCU of a young non-white female speaking through microphones</li> <li>2. MS of a young white male with large image in background showing 'Massive Monkeys' words (for the first bullet)</li> <li>3. Photos of young people seated in a convention area</li> <li>4. Photo of a young male speaking through a microphone</li> <li>5. Photo of a young male speaking through a microphone</li> <li>6. Group photo of young people bearing flags (PH</li> </ol>	<p>Black</p>	

Time min/sec	VIDEO			AUDIO
	Text	Image/Clips	Background	
		perhaps; blue and red) 7. Photo of a young male speaking on a microphone 8. Photo of young people interacting with children		
04.59	CFO helps mainstream 60 provisions of the Philippine Development Plan on Migration and Development.  White text Animated appearance per clause		Blue	
05.05	Among the initiatives are OFs-ReD Project...  White text over blue band Animated  ...aims to leverage remittances for economic development with cooperatives, microfinance institutions, rural banks, and social enterprises as conduits to development. White text Scrolls from bottom	Image extract appears in place of text:  'Overseas Filipino Diaspora Remittances for Development Project: Building a Future Back Home'  With illustration featuring windy road and dollar bills being paraded by people  Framed moving image on the left side rises; images in monochromatic brownish hue feature transactions in banks		
05.23	ReDC is an advisory and policy-recommending body that serves as a forum for issues about remittances for multi-stakeholder memberships.  Remittance for Development Council ReDC	Features logo of ReDC composed of nested circles of clear, blue, yellow and red (from the inside)	Animated images Low opacity	Music slows a little; not as exciting and fast as previous

Time min/sec	VIDEO			AUDIO
	Text	Image/Clips	Background	
05.38	CFO engages in (yellow text) Financial Literacy Campaigns (orange text) Teaching overseas Filipinos, their families and communities the importance of SAVINGS, INVESTMENTS, BUDGETING, FINANCIAL PLANNING (white text)	Framed images from left and top featuring topics about saving money, people giving talk as shown by projections on wall...		
05.50	3 decades of large-scale migration shows little evidence of poverty reduction. (red text that appear per clause)		Blurred image of world map that starts from the PH and zooms out to rest of the world; pulsating red then blue circle zeroes in on the PH where broken lines emanate and spreads to many parts of the map	Music changes. More foreboding, slower, grimmer. Lower notes; heavy
05.56	Super: High social costs (yellow font) of migration include (white font)  Super: BRAIN DRAIN (yellow all caps; centre of screen)	Ninoy Aquino Intl Airport EXT  Airport scene INT		
06.02	Super: FAMILY BREAKDOWN (yellow all caps; centre of screen)	Airport tarmac, EXT		VO: (young FEMALE): Growing up as a little girl without a mom was difficult.
06.05	Super: OVER DEPENDENCE ON REMITTANCES	EXT, street, commercial area, crowded with 'Western Union' branch name spotted;  Intercut:  INT, woman counting bills (seemingly the inside of		VO: (Female, senior): Because I was not there to help my kids, I sent as much money as I could.

Time min/sec	VIDEO			AUDIO
	Text	Image/Clips	Background	
		Western Union)		
06.10	Super:  FEMINIZATION OF LABOR MIGRATION	CU shot of adults of mostly women; woman in the centre; they seemingly await something; cut to:  MS of a woman and man in airport's EXT; they sort out luggage on a trolley  Cut to:  Over the shoulder of a person filling in forms		VO: (FEMALE, young): I was separated from my four sisters who moved to Canada.
06.15	Overseas Filipinos still end up without savings Cycle of labor migration continues While remittances constitute 10.7% (red font) of our GDP Few initiatives were being carried out to channel remittances for development (yellow text)	Series of cut-ins of formal transactions involving documents and computers		
06.29	President Benigno S. Aquino III 2 <sup>nd</sup> Ministerial Meeting of the Abu Dhabi Dialogue (yellow text)	President's emblem  Images: Cropped EWS still of a formal gathering with the 'Welcome His Excellency Benigno S...' noticeable in the background of the scene.	Blue	VO: (President Aquino): From the moment we stepped into our office, our administration has been on a mission to reverse this trend.  Music: heightens; faster and livelier; then to lighter; higher notes, uplifting
06.36	Working abroad should not be a necessity, but a choice.	Series of MCU stills of President speaking on a	same	Working abroad should not be a necessity, but a choice.

Time min/sec	VIDEO			AUDIO
	Text	Image/Clips	Background	
	White text Mover slowly in blocks of clauses coinciding with VO.	microphone (continues until 43)		
06.40	And our policies have always been guided by our desire to give Filipinos that choice.		same	And our policies have always been guided by our desire to give Filipinos that choice.
06.44	Our countrymen shouldn't have to leave the country to live good, comfortable lives.		Same	Our countrymen shouldn't have to leave the country to live good, comfortable lives.
06.48	They shouldn't be forced to sacrifice time they could spend visiting their parents or playing with their children and watching them grow up.	No border but framed as distinct from background and text  1. Contrasting photos: Family (mother, father, boy, girl) together vs. Father, luggage in tow, waving goodbye to his family 2. Group of children bearing 'gifts' 3. Young woman showing off her passport and an elderly woman seated beside her. 4. Young people playing a musical instrument with women who are in a typical 'teacher' uniform (FEU)	same	They shouldn't be forced to sacrifice time they could spend visiting their parents or playing with their children and watching them grow up.
06.56	This is precisely why our reform efforts are focused on attracting more investments...  Creating more jobs, and giving our countrymen reason to believe that...	Images: 1. Series of photos featuring various Fil products, trades, services (women sewing, fisherman carrying tuna on his shoulders, etc)  2. EWS of modern		This is precisely why our reform efforts are focused on attracting more investments...  Creating more jobs, and giving our countrymen reason to believe that...

Time min/sec	VIDEO			AUDIO
	Text	Image/Clips	Background	
	A good life awaits them here at home. Text: Larger font size in white	buildings/cityscape  Interfades with MCU still of President speaking (as before)		That a good life awaits them here at home.  Music: More dynamic, livelier but not as fast as opening
07.14	CFO joins all government agencies in meeting migration-related challenges.  White text  We serve as a bridge to access knowledge, expertise and resources for Philippine development. (white)	CFO logo flashes on screen  Globe rotating; streaks of green and blue light runs across it  Globe changes to Phil map in yellow	Dark space	
07.23	Super: The time has come For strong and sustained engagements (last word in yellow, rest in white) Between overseas Filipinos and the Philippines, And for overseas Filipinos to benefit (yellow) from exciting opportunities (Yellow) the country can provide.	Collection of animated thumbnail images of people and gatherings in formal and informal setting; showing PH flag, etc.	Black	
07.39	Commission on Filipinos Overseas	CFO logo stylised		Music: becomes faster and more dynamic, similar in quality to opening as it reaches end of video.  SFX: 'fireworks' sound as sparks emanate from stylised logo
07.56	Commission on Filipinos Overseas contact details			End music
08.02	Acknowledgments RTVM, Malacanan ABS-CBN Global The Filipino Channel (TFC)			

Time min/sec	VIDEO			AUDIO
	Text	Image/Clips	Background	
08.12	The Transnational Families in Transition Research Team, Canada End			

\*

Super: superimposed

SFX: sound effects

VO: voice-over

SoT: sound on tape

INT: interior

EXT: exterior

MS: medium shot

WS: wide shot

EWS: extreme wide shot

CU: close-up

ECU: extreme close-up

CG: computer graphics

## APPENDIX F

### Screen shot of Commission on Overseas Filipinos (CFO) Homepage

Office of the President of the Philippines  
**COMMISSION ON FILIPINOS OVERSEAS**  
"Responding to the Challenges of Migration and Development"

HOME ABOUT US PROGRAMS AND SERVICES FAQ NEWS DOWNLOADS LINKS CONTACT US

**Diaspora Dialogue 2** 1st Conference of Filipinos in Europe 2012  
Rome, Italy  
26.27-29 September 2012  
For more details, email [info@d2d.ph](mailto:info@d2d.ph)

COM International Organization for Migration  
OM Organizzazione Internazionale per le Migrazioni

Scalabrini International Commission on Filipinos Overseas

Global Filipino Diaspora Council Comune di Roma

**CFO**

**PDOS/REGISTRATION**

- Filipinos Leaving the Country with Immigrant Visa
- Filipino Spouses and Partners of Foreign National
- Exchange Visitor Program/J1 Visa
- Filipinos Leaving the Country with Au Pair VISA

**PROGRAMS AND SERVICES**

- Diaspora to Development
- Lingkod sa Kapwa Pilipino
- Philippines Schools Overseas
- Presidential Awards for Filipino Individuals and Organizations Overseas

**MORE PROGRAMS**

- 1343 Trafficking Actionline
- Lakbay Aral
- Overseas Filipino - RED Project
- Statistics
- More...

**SEARCH**

Search...

**SECRETARY'S CORNER**

**CFO accepts DONATIONS & ASSISTANCE**  
for relief efforts to badly flooded areas due to monsoon rains. Send your donations through bank deposit or VISA credit card.

## APPENDIX G

### Transcript of *John Evangelista* video testimonial (<http://www.newzealandnow.govt.nz/videos/john-evangelista>) with topic of talk identified

Time min/sec	Video	Audio	Topic of talk
00.00	Opening INT* Office AM JOHN in black suit, tie (formal, corporate) CU/Front Shift to CU/Profile	SoT: <b>JOHN:</b> Hi, I am JOHN Evangelista. I am a medical doctor by education, I originally come from the Philippines. I started work here in New Zealand in October 2010 as general manager of East Tamaki Healthcare.	Personal details Educational Profession
00.14	Cut to Ext Residence AM House as background LS Family (son in school uniform; daughter in comfortable clothes)	SoT: <b>JOHN:</b> This's our house and this is my family: my wife TINA ( <b>TINA:</b> Hi) and my children Felicia and Nico ( <b>ALTOGETHER:</b> Hi).	Introducing the family
00.22	Cut to INT Residence AM MS JOHN and TINA (JOHN front face camera; TINA profile) in casual wear  CA EXT Lawn AM Family playing Frisbee (JOHN, TINA and son in frame) Super Text: TINA full name and 'From the Philippines now living in Auckland'	SoT/VO: <b>JOHN:</b> We moved to New Zealand in October 2010 but it took us about six months before we finally moved into this house. We participated in an auction.  <b>TINA:</b> The first time ever! (JOHN: to participate in an auction)	History of arrival in NZ and finding the house
00.36	Same as previous	<b>JOHN:</b> I think I – ( <b>TINA:</b> he went over budget) – we went over our budget - it is all my fault! But, but I really loved the house so we moved in in April 2011.	Buying the house

Time min/sec	Video	Audio	Topic of talk
00.50	Change cam angle: shot from their right now JOHN profile, TINA front; shot treatment shaky, hand-held	The day we moved in and the movers in the house and had all the boxes all over the house ( <b>TINA</b> : Yes) we are surprised that the neighbours came and brought some food. They realized that we didn't have time to cook, ( <b>TINA</b> : Yeah)	Welcoming neighbours
00.59	CA: EXT Lawn AM MS of Son and daughter jumping up and down the trampoline	to cook dinner so they came out with roast beef and, ah, and some dessert.	Engaging with neighbours
01.05	Inter: EXT AM Garden TINA and daughter walking close together  Cut to:  INT Residence MS As previous	<b>JOHN</b> : Yeah, and ever since then we had a close relationship with our neighbours which [sic] in fact with the four neighbours round us. We would get together every month. We'd take turns. <b>TINA</b> : to host the lunch <b>TINA and JOHN</b> : or dinner <b>JOHN</b> : It's been going on for the past more than a year...	Relationship with neighbours
01.21	Inter: EXT Lawn AM LS Children jumping on trampoline Camera angle moves up to reveal that TINA and JOHN are in the scene; watching the children	<b>TINA</b> : In fact the next one is tonight (laughs). We have dinner tonight at the neighbour's house.	Dinner with neighbours
01.30	Cut to: INT Office (as with opening) CU JOHN front as in the beginning	VO/SoT <b>JOHN</b> : I just turned 50 and...	Age
01.31	CA: EXT Residence AM Son walking in the lawn; white pavement Back towards cam and walks playfully away from cam	...I realize that life is just not, is much more than earning money or professional achievements.	Realisations about life and work
01.38	Cut to: INT Office CS JOHN front; with 'Healthcare' and 'Cross' (parts of office logo?) logo visible in background	I was looking for a more balanced lifestyle. So I tried to research what New Zealand had to offer – and yeah, I was enticed, you know, the simple pursuits of, the outdoors	Balanced lifestyle
01.49	Inter: EXT Residence AM Family plays with ball in the grassy lawn; Their backs towards the cam and walks away from cam onto trampoline area	is really a sort of a perfect antidote to our stressful professional activities.	Work-life balance

Time min/sec	Video	Audio	Topic of talk
01.57	Cut to: INT Office AM CU/Front JOHN	SoT <b>JOHN:</b> In each of the countries I worked in there are a lot of differences. Each country has its own strengths and, and its weaknesses. But one thing for sure	Working in other countries
02.06	Inter: Office Moving MS of JOHN (LS/Side) with office chairs in foreground	is that one has to adapt to the culture of the country. The, the Kiwis	Work culture in different places
02.10	Inter: EXT Residence MS of family with children on trampoline, a continuation of previous shot	have their own way of doing things	Way of life in NZ
02.13	Inter: INT Office JOHN CS front	and which, I think they are more fun loving,	Kiwi more fun-loving
02.17	Inter: EXT Residence MS TINA and son smiling gesturing in conversation with someone	more, more relaxed and less structured, and it helps you to, in a way to be –	More relaxed
02.22	Cut to: INT Office JOHN MS front	more productive because there are less barriers for you to hurdle.	Kiwi productivity
02.26	Inter: EXT Residence AM MS family shot with house as background smiling as if in photo op From left to right: son, TINA, daughter, JOHN (Tall plant with yellowish leaves in the background)		
02.28	Cut to: INT Office AM JOHN CU front	<b>JOHN:</b> We wanted an assurance that when we get older and we're not well, we'll be cared for by the, the health care system.	Future security
02.33	Inter: EXT Residence Garden (purple flowers in the foreground) Blurred LS of TINA and daughter walking seemingly in casual mom to daughter moment	Probably what we want in our retirement would be comfortable home,	Retirement
02.37	Inter: INT Office JOHN MS front	a big garden--which is my passion--or a farm house if we are lucky and I think we could achieve this in New Zealand.	
02.48	Cut to: INT Residence AM (back to previous) TINA CU front	SoT <b>TINA:</b> Yeah, we've kind of grown to, no we've loved it the minute we first arrived here.	Loving NZ
02.56	Inter: EXT AM LS of Kids jumping on trampoline as JOHN and TINA watch on; greens in foreground	The weather changes: they change but they're nice you know,	Weather
03.00	Inter: INT CU of JOHN and TINA (JOHN foreground laughing w/o audio)	they're not too extreme. <b>JOHN :</b> and in England, and it was so cold as well. This is just perfect really.	Perfect weather

Time min/sec	Video	Audio	Topic of talk
03.07	Cut to: CU Of JOHN and TINA INT Residence (as previous) Cam pans from L to R; JOHN to TINA then stops at TINA. TINA CS at mention of 'cultural diversity'	<b>TINA</b> – And everyone is so nice, there is lots of cultural diversities or, wherever you come from, you're bound to bump into someone else who comes from the same country you came from. And there's, well I haven't felt any discrimination at all, or anything like that here.	Diversity of people in NZ
03.28	Turns head towards JOHN briefly	Everybody is just cool you know.	NZ people are cool
03.30	Cam pans R to L; From TINA to JOHN; Stops at JOHN CU, smiling at word 'home'.	<b>JOHN</b> – You know, if I would summarise it: this is the place that people call home.	NZ as home
03.35		(End)	

\*

Super: superimposed  
SFX: sound effects  
VO: voice-over  
SoT: sound on tape  
INT: interior

EXT: exterior  
MS: medium shot  
WS: wide shot  
EWS: extreme wide shot  
CU: close-up

ECU: extreme close-up  
CG: computer graphics

## APPENDIX H

### Representation and Viewer Network/Visual Social Actor Network/Connotation (Second-level signification) Analysis of three albums about Ben and Sarah

*Growing Kiwis*

Representation and Viewer Network Analysis

Visual Social Actor Network

Connotation (Second-level signification)

Photo number	Distance	Angle	Gaze	Action	Categorisation	Pose/Facial expression	Object	Setting
1	Close (MCU)*	Front/Eye level	Direct	(hugging) B-Agent/S-Patient	Generic and Specific (see chapter)	Big smile Sits on the floor Very close to each other	Red clothes	Interior Living area Couch in background
2	Close (MCU)	Front/Eye level	Direct	(hugging) B-Agent/S-Patient				
3	Close (MCU)	Front/Eye level	Direct	(hugging) B-Agent/S-Patient				
4	Close (MCU)	Front/Eye level	Direct	(hugging) B-Agent/S-Patient				
5	Close (MCU)	Front/Eye level	Direct	(kiss on cheek) B-Agent/S-Patient				
6	Close (MCU)	Front/Eye level	B-Direct S-Indirect	(kiss on cheek) B-Agent/S-Patient				
7	Close (MCU)	Front/Eye level	Direct	(cheek to cheek) B-Agent/S-Patient				
8	Close (M)	Front/Eye level	Direct	(B only) Agent				
9	Close (M)	Front/Eye level	Direct	(cheek cheek) B-Agent/S-Patient				
10	Close (CU)	Front/Eye level	Direct	(B only) Agent		Big smile Makes peace sign		Interior Living area White wall
11	Close (CU)	Front/Eye level	Direct	(touches head) B-Agent/S-Patient		Big smile B behind S B touches head of S		
12	Close (CU)	Front/Eye level	Direct	(touches head) B-Agent/S-Patient				
13	Close (CU)	Front/High angle	Direct	(lying on the bed) Agents		Both lie on the bed Heads side by side Big smile Silly face (B)	White clothes Green, white, blue striped bed sheet	Interior Bedroom
14	Close (CU)	Front/High angle	Direct	(lying on the bed) Agents				
15	Close (CU)	Front/High angle	Direct	(lying on the bed) Agents				
16	Close (CU)	Front/High angle	Direct	(lying on the bed)				

Photo number	Distance	Angle	Gaze	Action	Categorisation	Pose/Facial expression	Object	Setting
				Agents				
17	Close (CU)	Front/High angle	Direct	(lying on the bed) Agents				
18	Close (CU)	Front/Eye level	Direct	(hugging) B-Agent/S-Patient		S sits on B's lap Big smile	Blue clothes	Interior Living area Couch
19	Close (MCU)	Front/Eye level	Direct	(arm around shoulder) B-Agent/S-Patient		Sitting side by side on the couch Big smile		
20	Close (MCU)	Front/Eye level	Direct	(arm around shoulder) B-Agent/S-Patient		Sitting side by side on the couch Big smile	Yellow clothes	
21	Close (MCU)	Front/Eye level	Direct	(arm around shoulder) B-Agent/S-Patient		Sitting side by side on the couch Big smile		
22	Close (MCU)	Front/Eye level	Direct	(cheek to arms) B-Agent/S-Patient		B kneels beside S	B – green shirt S – purple dress with small pink bag Christmas tree (in background)	Interior Living area
23	Close (MCU)	Front/Eye level	Indirect	(hugging) B-Agent/S-Patient		B hugs S Sitting on the couch	Blue clothes	Interior Living area
24	Far (LS)	Front/Eye level	B-Direct S-Indirect	(show off ice lolly) Agents		Sitting in the porch Show ice lolly	Pyjamas Ice lolly	Exterior Front porch
25	Far (LS)	Front/Eye level	Direct	(licks ice lolly) B-Agent/S-Patient		Licks ice lolly		
26	Far (LS)	Front/Eye level	Indirect	(sits on chair) Agents		Sitting together in one chair	Play clothes Paper plates	Exterior Park (greenery)
27	Far (LS)	Front/Eye level	Direct	S only -- Agent		Crouches in open luggage	Blue vintage luggage, teddy bears	Interior White background
28	Far (LS)	Front/Eye level	Direct	B only -- Agent		Stands behind tire	Black tire	Interior White background

*My Ben Through the Years*

**Representation and Viewer Network Analysis**

**Visual Social Actor Network**

**Connotation (Second-level signification)**

Photo number/ Caption	Distance	Angle	Gaze	Action	Categorisation	Pose/Facial expression	Object	Setting
28	Close (CU)	Front/Eye level	Direct	B -Agent	Generic/specific	Smiling Fist under chin	Half of face painted blue with letters 'NZ' in white Half has noticeable 'All Blacks' fern logo	unclear
29	Close (M)	Front/Eye level	Indirect	B-Agent	Generic/specific	Smiling Fist under chin Sits on the floor (fuller version of previous)	(face same as previous) All Blacks logo painted on arm Holds Rugby ball	Interior Living area
30	Close (M)	Front/Eye level	Direct	B-Agent	Generic/specific	(same)	(same) Logo on arm not visible	(same)

*filipiniana pix*

**Representation and Viewer Network Analysis**

**Visual Social Actor Network**

**Connotation (Second-level signification)**

Photo	Distance	Angle	Gaze	Action	Categorisation	Pose/Facial expression	Object	Setting	Colour
1	Close (M)	Front/Eye level	Direct	S- Agent	Specific Generic	Standing Little smile	Costume	Exterior (blurred)	Sepia Vignetted
2	Far (LS)	Front/Eye level	Direct	S-Agent		Standing Smiling Head tilted to side	Costume	Exterior Front porch Greenery Wood fence	Full colour White blouse Red orange skirt
3	Far (LS)	Front/Eye level	Indirect	B-Agent		Standing Smiling Bare feet	Costume	Exterior Front porch Greenery Wood fence	Full colour White top Blue pants
4	Close (MCU)	Front/Eye level	Direct	B-Agent		Big smile	Costume	Exterior (blurred)	Sepia Vignetted
5	Close (MCU)	Front/Eye level	Direct	S-Agent		Head tilted to side Little smile	Costume	Exterior (blurred)	Sepia Vignetted
6	Close (MCU)	Front/Eye level	Direct	S-Agent		Head tilted to side Little smile	Costume	Exterior Front porch	Colour (same picture as above)

Photo	Distance	Angle	Gaze	Action	Categorisation	Pose/Facial expression	Object	Setting	Colour
								Greenery Wood fence	but in full colour)
7	Far (LS)	Front/Eye level	Indirect (slightly)	B - Agent S - Agent		Standing S in front of B Smiling Bare feet	Costume	Exterior Front porch Greenery Wood fence	Full colour
8	Close (MCU)	Front/Eye level	S Indirect B Direct	B - Agent S - Agent		Smile S standing B hunched a bit	Costume	Exterior (blurred)	Sepia Vignetted

\*CU Close-up  
MCU Medium close-up  
LS Long shot  
B Ben  
S Sarah  
A Anonymous person

## APPENDIX I

### Video Log/Representation and Viewer Network Analysis/Spatial Network Analysis of Amy's AVP commemorating their two years in New Zealand, posted on her Facebook Timeline on 15 February 2011

Song lyrics*	Image number	Time	Image type	Caption	Actors	Pose	Type of Shot Distance/Angle /Gaze	Setting	Acting in space		Nature of action		Interpreting space	
									P	T	Natural	Posed	F	M
(Opening: Instrumental)  	1	00:00	Video Clip	none	Ben	Ben standing up with his arms raised and mouth open	MS, Revolving  Close, Front/High angle, Direct	Outdoors, Grassy field		✓		✓		World revolves around him / Ideal childhood, carefree, playful
	2	00:10	Photo	none	Amy and Ben	Both are seated and looking at the camera, Amy smiling and leaning towards the boy, the boy has his brows furrowed and appears to be playing a portable video game	M, Two-shot, slow zoom out  Close, Front/Eye-level, Direct	Indoors, Airport Lounge		✓		✓		Mobility
	3	00:13	Photo	First few Days in NZ	Ben	Young boy riding a small plastic horse usually found in playgrounds	MS, zoom in  Close, Oblique/Eye-level, Direct	Outdoors, Field/ Playground		✓	✓			Play-ground for playing
	4	00:15	Photo	First few Days in NZ	Amy and Ben	Amy and Ben in sort of a playful 'fighting' position	ELS, zoom out  Far, Front/Eye-level, Indirect	Outdoors, Plaza/ outside of Museum of New Zealand	✓			✓		Mother-child intimacy/ carefree/ playful/ secure childhood
	5	00:18	Photo	None	Ted and Ben	Both looking at the camera and	LS, two-shot, zoom in	Outdoors, Beach/near		✓		✓		Father-son intimacy and

Song lyrics*	Image number	Time	Image type	Caption	Actors	Pose	Type of Shot Distance/Angle /Gaze	Setting	Acting in space		Nature of action		Interpreting space	
									P	T	Natural	Posed	F	M
<p>(+ 'whistling')</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p>Woke up in London yesterday</p> <p>Found myself in the city near Piccadilly</p> <p>Don't really know how I got here</p> <p>I got some pictures on my phone</p>						smiling; they're sitting on big rocks	Close, Front/Eye-level, Direct	a river with big rock boulders						bond/ ideal childhood
	6	00:21	Photo	None	Ben	One arm raised while the other is holding on to thick red ropes of jungle gym	MS, zoom in Close, Front/Eye-level, Indirect	Outdoors, Playground / Park		✓		✓	jungle gym for playing	
	7	00:23	Photo	None	Amy	Holding two cones of ice cream and smiling at the camera	MCU, zoom in Close, Front/Eye-level, Direct	Indoors, Food shop		✓		✓	food shop for getting food	
	8	00:25	Photo	None	Ben	Climbing ropes in jungle gym	MS, zoom out Close, Front/Low angle, Direct	Outdoors, Playground		✓		✓	jungle gym for playing	
	9	00:28	Photo	None	Ted and Ben	Both looking at the camera with one arm around each other	LS, zoom in Far, Front/Eye-level, Direct	Outdoors, playground	✓			✓	Play-ground for playing	
	10	00:30	Photo	Our first home in NZ	Ben	Ben in a living room watching television and eating popsicle stick	MLS, overhead, tilt Far, Oblique/High angle, Indirect	Indoors, house		✓	✓		Living area for relaxing and watching TV	
	11	00:32	Photo	Our first home in NZ	Ted and Ben	Ted and Ben outside their home; Ben eats a sandwich while Ted tends to plants	MS, zoom out Close, Front/Eye-level, Indirect	Outdoors, deck		✓	✓		Deck for domestic acts e.g. potting plants	
	12	00:35	Photo	None	Ben	Ben looking at	MS, zoom out	Outdoors,		✓		✓		Ideal home is green and

Song lyrics*	Image number	Time	Image type	Caption	Actors	Pose	Type of Shot Distance/Angle/Gaze	Setting	Acting in space		Nature of action		Interpreting space	
									P	T	Natural	Posed	F	M
						the camera, smiling, and pointing at the plants	Close, Front/Eye-level, Direct	deck						natural, sufficient and clean
New names and numbers that I don't know	13	00:37	Photo	June 2009: Ben starts AA School	Ben	Ben stands in front of the school fences	LS, zoom in Far, Front/Eye-level, Indirect	Outdoors, outside the school	✓			✓	School as place for children Ben's age	
Address to places like Abbey Road	14	00:40	Photo	None	Amy and Ben	Amy and Ben feeding ducks	LS, zoom out Far, Oblique/Eye-level, Indirect	Outdoors, Park	✓		✓		Parks for feeding ducks	
Day turns to night, night turns to whatever we want	15	00:43	Photo	WETA Cave	Ben	Ben holding a WETA cave flyer/brochure looking to his left	MCU, tilt Close, Front/Low angle, Indirect	Outdoors, outside the WETA cave		✓	✓		WETA cave for touring	
We're young enough to say	16	00:45	Photo	WETA Cave	Amy	Amy posing next to sculpture of Gollum from Lord of the Rings; mimics its facial expression	MCU, zoom out Close, Front/Eye-level, Indirect	Indoors		✓		✓		Exhibit area for parodies of the act of looking/owning space/NZ myth
Oh, this has gotta be the good life	17	00:48	Photo	WETA Cave	Ted	Ted mimics stare of Gollum	CU, zoom in Close, Oblique/Eye-level, Indirect	Indoors		✓		✓		Exhibit area for parodies of the act of looking/owning space/NZ myth
This has gotta be the good life	18	00:51	Photo	10 August 2010: Our little princess is born	Baby Sarah	Lying down, half-awake	ECU, zoom out Close, Front/Eye-level, Direct	Indoors Assumed space (home)		✓	✓			Ideal childhood/innocent/happy/carefree
This could	19	00:54	Photo	None	Baby Sarah	Newborn baby with eyes opened	ECU, zoom in Close, Oblique/	Assumed space (home)		✓	✓			Ideal childhood/innocent/

Song lyrics*	Image number	Time	Image type	Caption	Actors	Pose	Type of Shot Distance/Angle /Gaze	Setting	Acting in space		Nature of action		Interpreting space	
									P	T	Natural	Posed	F	M
really be a good life, good life							Eye-level, Direct							happy/ carefree
	20	00:57	Photo	October, 2009: Ben starts primary at BB School	Ben	Ben posing in front of the school's bulletin board	MS, zoom in Close, Front/ Eye-level, Direct	Indoors, inside the school		✓		✓		School is fun
I say, "Oh, got this feeling that you can't fight"	21	00:58	Photo	None (previous caption applies)	Ben	Photo of Ben in a costume party with school friends	MS, group shot, pan Close, Front/ Eye-level, Direct/Indirect	Outdoors School grounds		✓		✓		School is fun
Like this city is on fire tonight	22	1:00	Photo	Our first family Picture!	The whole family (Ben, Ted, Amy and Sarah)	The whole family posing and looking at the camera	MS, group shot, zoom out Close, Front/ Eye-level, Direct	Outdoors  (setting extremely backgrounded)		✓		✓		Ideal family/ being together/ intimacy
This could really be a good life, a good, good life	23	1:03	Photo	Wellington Botanical Garden	Amy and baby Sarah	Amy carrying Sarah foregrounding a field of flowers	MS, zoom in Close, Front/ Eye-level, Direct	Outdoors, in a garden of flowers		✓		✓		Mother-daughter intimacy/ ideal family/ childhood
(Ooh)	24	1:06	Photo	Wellington Botanical Garden	Ted and Ben	Ted and Ben foregrounding a lake/pond with the boy holding a ball	MLS, zoom out Close, Front/ Eye-level, Direct	Outdoors, balcony by a lake or pond	✓			✓		Father-son intimacy/ ideal family/ childhood
(Instrumental (+ 'whistling'))	25	1:08	Photo	F1 Exhibit at Te Papa Museum	Ted and Ben	Ted and Ben foreground a red race car	MLS, zoom out Close, Front/ Eye-level, Direct	Indoors, exhibit		✓		✓		Father-son intimacy/
	26	1:11	Photo	None	Amy, baby Sarah	The three of them posing near a silver race car	MLS, zoom out Close, Front/	Indoors, exhibit		✓		✓		Mother-children intimacy



Song lyrics*	Image number	Time	Image type	Caption	Actors	Pose	Type of Shot Distance/Angle/Gaze	Setting	Acting in space		Nature of action		Interpreting space	
									P	T	Natural	Posed	F	M
					and Ben		Eye-level, Direct							
To my friends in New York, I say hello	27	1:13	Video clip	Our 2nd home at Wellington	Ben	The boy climbing down from the sofa and raising his arms overhead and probably shouting	MLS Close, Front/ Eye-level, Direct	Indoors, living room		✓		✓		Ideal home as site of happiness and childhood
	28	1:17	Photo	None	Ben and Sarah	Both lying together and smiling at the camera	CU, overhead, zoom in Close, Front/ High angle, Direct	Indoors, Assumed space (bedroom)		✓		✓		Ideal home as site of happiness and childhood
	29	1:19	Photo	None	Ben and baby Sarah	Both lying together and smiling at the camera	CU, overhead, zoom in Close, Front/ High angle, Direct	Indoors, Assumed space (bedroom)		✓		✓		Ideal home as site of happiness and childhood
Where I've been for the past few years or so	30	1:22	Photo	Our first summer in NZ	Ben	Ben playing on the beach	MLS, zoom in Close, Oblique/ High angle, Indirect	Outdoors, beach		✓	✓		Beach for playing/relaxing	
Paris to China to Colorado	31	1:24	Photo	None	Ben, Ted and Sarah	Ted posing with Sarah with his feet in the water, while Ben is playing nearby	LS, zoom out Far, Front/ Eye-level, Direct (Ted and Sarah)/Indirect (Ben)	Outdoors, beach		✓	✓ Ben	✓ Ted and Sarah	(Ben) Beach is for playing	(Ted and Sarah) Beach to display family intimacy
Sometimes	32	1:26	Photo	None	Whole family (Ben,	Whole family posing on the beach	MS, group shot, zoom in	Outdoors, beach	✓			✓		Family bond/intimacy

Song lyrics*	Image number	Time	Image type	Caption	Actors	Pose	Type of Shot Distance/Angle /Gaze	Setting	Acting in space		Nature of action		Interpreting space	
									P	T	Natural	Posed	F	M
there's airplanes I can't jump out					Amy Sarah, Ted)		Close, Front/ Eye-level, Direct							
Sometimes there's bullshit that don't work now	33	1:28	Photo	A visit from Ateh!	Ted, Amy, and another woman holding Sarah	The group standing in a balcony, foregrounding a large body of water	MS, tilt down Close, Front/ Eye-level, Direct	Outdoors, balcony, by a body of water		✓		✓		Social connection/ sociality/
We are God of stories, but please tell me	34	1:31	Photo	Wellington Zoo	Amy and Sarah	Amy holding Sarah, overlooking the giraffe grounds; Sarah sees giraffe	MCU, zoom out Close, Oblique/Eye level, Indirect	Outdoors, zoo		✓	✓		Zoo is for seeing animals	
What there is to complain about?	35	1:33	Photo	Wellington Zoo	Ben	Ben lying on top of a hippopotamus sculpture and holding a stuffed toy	MS, zoom in Close, Front/ Eye-level, Indirect	Outdoors, zoo		✓	✓		Zoo for children to have fun/ Ideal childhood - carefree	
When you're happy like a fool, let it take you over	36	1:35	Video Clip	Ben transfers to A-A Primary School	Ben	Ben opening the door of a school and entering	LS Far, Oblique/ Eye level, Indirect to direct	Outdoors, outside a school		✓	✓		School is where children Ben's age go to	
When everything is out you gotta take it in	37	1:41	Photo	Zealandia	Ben	Ben foregrounding a lake, points a toy gun at the camera	MS, zoom in Close, Front/ Eye-level, Direct	Outdoors, by a lake		✓		✓		Ideal childhood/ playful/ carefree
Oh, this has gotta be the good life	38	1:44	Photo	None	Amy, Sarah and Ben	Ben and Amy (holding Sarah) sitting in what is probably a park and looking at	MS, zoom out Close, Front/ Eye-level, Direct	Outdoors		✓		✓		Ideal family/ bond/ intimacy
This has gotta														

Song lyrics*	Image number	Time	Image type	Caption	Actors	Pose	Type of Shot Distance/Angle/Gaze	Setting	Acting in space		Nature of action		Interpreting space	
									P	T	Natural	Posed	F	M
be the good life						the camera								
This could really be a good life, good life	39	1:47	Photo	None	Ted and Sarah	Ted carrying Sarah on his shoulders and both looking at the camera	CU, zoom in Close, Front/ Eye-level, Direct	Outdoors		✓		✓		Father-daughter intimacy/ideal childhood/secure/innocent
	40	1:51	Video clip	Strolls in the city	Ben and Sarah	The two of them playing on the see-saw	MS Close, Oblique/Eye level, Indirect	Outdoors, playground	✓		✓		Playground for playing	
I say, oh, got this feeling that you can't fight	41	1:54	Photo	None	Ben, Amy and Sarah	Three of them sitting on the floor, reading books	MLS, zoom in Close, Oblique/Eye-level, Indirect	Indoors, children's library	✓		✓		Library is for reading books	
	42	1:56	Photo	None	Ted and Sarah	Ted sitting on the grass, holding Sarah who is standing up, both looking at the camera	LS, zoom out Far, Front/ Eye-level, Direct	Outdoors, park	✓			✓		Father-daughter intimacy/ideal childhood/secure/innocent
Like this city is on fire tonight	43	1:59	Photo	None	Amy and Sarah	Foregrounding the 'Beehive' (Parliament Building), both smiling at the camera	MS, zoom in Close, Front/ Eye-level, Direct	Outdoors		✓		✓		Mother-daughter intimacy/ideal childhood/secure/innocent
	44	2:01	Photo	Staglands	Sarah and Ben	Both smiling at the camera	MCU, zoom out Close, Front/ Eye-level, Direct (Ben)/Indirect (Sarah)	Outdoors, farm		✓		✓		Ideal childhood/secure/innocent/happy
	45	2:04	Photo	None	Ted and Sarah	Both are petting a brown sheep	MS, zoom out Close, Front/	Outdoors, farm		✓	✓ Sarah	✓ Ted	Petting zoo is for interacting with animals	

Song lyrics*	Image number	Time	Image type	Caption	Actors	Pose	Type of Shot Distance/Angle/Gaze	Setting	Acting in space		Nature of action		Interpreting space	
									P	T	Natural	Posed	F	M
good, good life							High angle, Direct (Ted)/Indirect (Sarah)							
(Ooh + 'whistling')														
↓														
	46	2:06	Photo	None	Ben	Arms raised overhead, smiling at the camera, foregrounding a river	MS, tilt Close, Front/ Eye-level, Direct	Outdoors, next to a river		✓		✓		Ideal childhood, carefree, innocent, playful/natural
	47	2:09	Video clip	None	Sarah	Sarah eating bread	MCU Close, Front/ Eye-level, Direct	Indoors, house		✓		✓	Home is place for a child to grow	
	48	2:12	Video clip	Ben's school production	Ben	Ben, in a dog costume, dancing in his school production	MLS, group shot Close, Front/ Eye-level, Direct	Indoors, school (auditorium)		✓	✓		School for school-related activities, eg., plays	
Oh, a good, good life, yeah	49	2:15	Video clip	Sarah's 1st Birthday	Amy, Sarah, Ben and other kids	Sarah attempting to blow her birthday candle	LS, group shot C, Front/High angle, Indirect	Indoors		✓	✓		Birthday party scene	
(Ooh + 'whistling')														
↓														
	50	2:18	Video clip	Sarah's 1st Birthday	Ted and Sarah	Ted holding Sarah's hand to wave at the camera, and waving himself	MCU Close, Front/ Eye-level, Direct	Indoors		✓	✓		Birthday party scene	
	51	2:20	Photo	None	Ben and Ted	Both posing holding golf clubs	MLS, zoom in Close, Front/ Eye-level, Direct	Outdoors, in a golf park		✓		✓		Father-son intimacy/ideal childhood/secure/playful
Hopelessly	52	2:22	Photo	None	Amy, Sarah and Ben	The three foreground a waterfall, smiling at the camera	MLS, zoom out Close, Front/ Eye-level, Direct	Outdoors, next to a small waterfall		✓		✓		Family bond/intimacy

Song lyrics*	Image number	Time	Image type	Caption	Actors	Pose	Type of Shot Distance/Angle /Gaze	Setting	Acting in space		Nature of action		Interpreting space	
									P	T	Natural	Posed	F	M
I feel like there might be something that I'll miss	53	2:26	Video clip	None	Ben	Ben sliding down a kid's slide in a playground	MLS Close, Front/ Eye-level, Direct	Outdoors, playground		✓	✓		Playground for playing	
Hopelessly	54	2:28	Video clip	None	Ben	Ben running in a crisscross way around small lampposts in a plaza	LS Close, Front/ Eye-level, Direct	Outdoors, plaza		✓	✓		Public area for playing	
I feel like the window closes oh so quick	55	2:32	Photo	Move to Auckland!	None (setting as actor)	Shot of a big mountain and the blue sky, with green fields below	ELS, zoom out	Outdoors (establishing)	✓		✓			NZ Landscape, natural, green, fresh/ Mobility
Hopelessly	56	2:34	Photo	Move to Auckland!	None (setting as actor)	Tree-lined road	LS, zoom out	Outdoors (establishing)	✓		✓			NZ Landscape, natural, green, fresh/ Mobility
I'm taking a mental picture of you now	57	2:37	Photo	None	None (setting as actor)	Auckland vista, buildings, harbor, sailboats	ELS, zoom out	Outdoors (establishing)	✓		✓			NZ Landscape, natural, green, fresh/ Mobility
'Cause hopelessly	58	2:40	Photo	A new house in Auckland	None (setting as actor)	Photo of a house and car	LS, zoom in	Outdoors (establishing)	✓		✓			Middle class objects/ideal home
The hope is we have so much to feel good about	59	2:43	Photo	None	Sarah and Ben	Posing and making faces in front of the camera	MS, two-shot, zoom out Close, Front/ Eye-level, Direct	Outdoors, home		✓		✓		Ideal home as place for ideal childhood, carefree, innocent, playful
Oh, this has	60	2:46	Photo	None	Ben	Making faces at the camera with his arms overhead, foregrounds general area	MCU (wide background), zoom in Close, Front/ Eye-level,	Outdoors, at the top of a hill with houses, the sea and	✓			✓		Ideal childhood, carefree, innocent, playful

Song lyrics*	Image number	Time	Image type	Caption	Actors	Pose	Type of Shot Distance/Angle /Gaze	Setting	Acting in space		Nature of action		Interpreting space	
									P	T	Natural	Posed	F	M
gotta be the good life							Indirect	building seen below in the background						
This has gotta be the good life	61	2:48	Photo	None	Sarah	Looking at her hands (she seems to be holding clumps of grass)	CU, tilt Close, Front/ Eye-level, Indirect	Outdoors, in a grassy field		✓	✓		Lawn (grass) for playing, sitting on	
This could really be a good life, good life	62	2:52	Photo	A new school for Ben – BB Primary	Ben and other children	Ben is smiling while holding what seems to be props (ribbons)	MS, tilt, group shot Close, Front/High angle, Indirect	Outdoors, school grounds	✓			✓	School grounds for school activities	
	63	2:54	Photo	None	Children and parents	Children in an assembly with parents, sitting down and paying attention to event	ELS, group shot, zoom in Far, Oblique/High angle, Indirect	Indoors, school auditorium	✓		✓		School hall for school activities	
I say, "Oh, got this feeling that you can't fight"	64	2:57	Photo	A reunion with old friends	Amy, Ben and Sarah with other friends (2 kids and 3 grown-ups)	The family and friends posing in front of the waves on a beach	LS, zoom out, group shot Close, Front/ Eye-level, Direct	Outdoors, beach	✓					Social connection/ sociality/
Like this city is on fire tonight	65	2:59	Photo	A reunion with old friends	Amy, Ben and Sarah with other	The family and friends having a picnic by a lake	LS, zoom in Close, Front/ Eye-level, Direct	Outdoors, park, next to a lake	✓			✓		Social connection/ sociality/

Song lyrics*	Image number	Time	Image type	Caption	Actors	Pose	Type of Shot Distance/Angle /Gaze	Setting	Acting in space		Nature of action		Interpreting space	
									P	T	Natural	Posed	F	M
This could really be a good life, a good, good life					friends (1 kids and 2 grown-ups)									
	66	3:01	Photo	A reunion with old friends	Amy, Sarah, Ben and friends (2 kids, 2 grownups)	Posing and smiling at the camera	MS, zoom out, tilt  Close, Front/ Eye-level, Direct	Indoors, play area		✓		✓		Social connection/ sociality/
	67	3:04	Photo	None	Amy and Sarah	Amy and Sarah looking at falling snow	MS, two shot, zoom in  Close, Front/ Eye-level, Direct (Sarah), Indirect (Amy)	Outdoors, where snow is falling	✓		✓		Public place to experience snow/ Connotation of snow/NZ landscape	
	68	3:06	Photo	None	Ben, Sarah and Ted	Smiling at the camera in front of snow-capped Christmas trees	MS, three-shot, zoom in  Close, Front/ Eye-level, Direct (Ted), Indirect (children)	Outdoors	✓			✓	Public place to experience snow/ Connotation of snow/ NZ landscape	
	69	3:08	Photo	Auckland War Memorial Museum	Amy and Ben	Amy lifting the boy and smiling, foregrounding the museum	LS, zoom in  Far, Front/ Eye-level, Direct (Amy), Indirect (Ben)	Outdoors, museum grounds	✓			✓	Mother-son intimacy/ideal childhood/ playful	
	70	3:10	Photo	None	Ben	Ben making faces at the camera in front of a wall of Maori sculpture	MS, zoom out  Close, Front/ Eye-level, Direct	Indoors, in a museum		✓		✓	Exhibit area for parodies of the act of looking/ owning	
Oh yeah, good, good life, good life, oh, this is														
(Instrumental, 'whistling', 'oh yeah')														

Song lyrics*	Image number	Time	Image type	Caption	Actors	Pose	Type of Shot Distance/Angle/Gaze	Setting	Acting in space		Nature of action		Interpreting space		
									P	T	Natural	Posed	F	M	
Good, good life														space/NZ myth	
Good life  (Ooh + 'whistling')  ↓	71	3:13	Photo	None	Amy, Ben and Sarah	Posing while sitting on the steps (Museum grounds)	MS, zoom in, three-shot  Close, Front/Eye-level, Direct, Indirect (Ben)	Outdoors, museum		✓		✓		Family intimacy/ideal childhood/secure/innocent	
	72	3:15	Photo	Auckland Zoo	Amy, Ben and Sarah	Posing in the zoo, in front of a wide open cage	LS, zoom out  Close, Front/Eye-level, Direct (Amy), Indirect (Ben and Sarah)	Outdoors, zoo	✓			✓		Family intimacy /ideal childhood/secure/innocent	
	73	3:17	Photo	None	Sarah	Sarah touching flowers	MS, zoom out  Close, Oblique/Eye-level, Indirect	Outdoors, zoo garden area		✓	✓			Garden as place to be near flowers	
	74	3:21	Photo	None	Ben and Sarah	Siblings pose and sit on a bench	MLS, zoom in  Close, Front/Eye-level, Indirect	Outdoors, zoo		✓			✓		Ideal childhood/playful/innocent
	75	3:23	Photo	Kelly Tarlton's	Sarah and Ted	Ted and Sarah looking at fishes in an indoor large walk-in aquarium	MLS, zoom out  Close, Oblique/Eye-level, Indirect	Indoors, aquarium park		✓	✓				Aquarium park for looking at sea life
Listen,  To my friends in New York, I say hello  My friends in L.A. they don't know	76	3:26	Photo	None	Amy and Sarah	Sarah pointing at fishes while Amy smiles at the camera	MS, two-shot, tilt  Close, Oblique/Eye-level, Direct (Amy), Indirect (Sarah)	Indoors, aquarium park		✓	✓ Sarah	✓ Amy		Functional use of space/Mother-child intimacy /ideal childhood/discover	
Where I've been for the	77	3:28	Photo	Picnics at parks	Amy and Sarah	Sarah and Amy looking at and feeding birds	LS, tilt  Close, Oblique/	Outdoors, park	✓		✓			Parks for relaxing/Feeding birds	

Song lyrics*	Image number	Time	Image type	Caption	Actors	Pose	Type of Shot Distance/Angle /Gaze	Setting	Acting in space		Nature of action		Interpreting space	
									P	T	Natural	Posed	F	M
past few years or so							Eye-level, Indirect							
Paris to China to Colorado	78	3:31	Photo	None	Amy, Sarah and Ted	Three looking at camera, foregrounding a lake	LS, three-shot, zoom in  Close, Front/ Eye-level, Direct	Outdoors, park with lake	✓			✓		Family intimacy /ideal childhood/ secure/ innocent
Sometimes there's airplanes I can't jump out	79	3:34	Photo	None	Amy and Sarah, Ben in the background	Amy and Sarah looking at the camera with Ben on a picnic blanket at the back	MLS, zoom out  Close, Front/ Eye-level, Direct (Ben - Oblique)	Outdoors, park	✓		✓ Ben	✓ Amy and Sarah	Functional use of parks/ Family	
Sometimes there's bullshit that don't work now	80	3:37	Photo	None	Ted and Sarah	Ted and Sarah playing in the swings	MS, zoom out  Close, Oblique/ High angle, Indirect	Outdoors, playground		✓	✓		Playground for playing	
We are God of stories but please tell me	81	3:40	Photo	None	Sarah	Sarah posing at the camera, appears to be eating	MCU, zoom in  Close, Front/ Eye-level, Direct	Outdoors, park		✓		✓	Park grounds for picnic/ Ideal childhood, innocent, playful	
What there is to complain about?	82	3:43	Photo	None	Amy, Sarah and Ben	Amy and Ben smiling at the camera and sitting on a picnic mat while Sarah is playing with an umbrella	LS, zoom out  Close, Front/ Eye-level, Direct (Amy and Ben), Indirect (Sarah)	Outdoors, park	✓		✓ Sarah	✓ Amy and Ben	Park grounds for picnic/ Ideal childhood, innocent, playful	
(Closing: Instrumental + 'whistling' to fade)	83	3:45	Photo	None	Amy, Ben and Sarah	Amy with one arm around Ben's shoulder, who seems to be playing his PSP, Sarah eating	LS, zoom out  Close, Front/ Eye-level, Direct	Outdoors, park or grassy field	✓		✓ Sarah	✓ Amy and Ben	Park grounds for picnic/ Ideal childhood, innocent, playful	

Song lyrics*	Image number	Time	Image type	Caption	Actors	Pose	Type of Shot Distance/Angle /Gaze	Setting	Acting in space		Nature of action		Interpreting space	
									P	T	Natural	Posed	F	M
	84	3:49	Photo	None	Amy and Sarah	Both smiling at the camera	CU, zoom in  Close, Front/ Eye-level, Direct (Amy), Indirect (Sarah)	Outdoors, park		✓		✓		Mother-child intimacy /ideal childhood/ secure/ innocent
	85	3:52	Photo	None	Amy	Amy jumping with arms overhead	LS, tilt  Close, Front/ Eye-level, Direct	Outdoors, park		✓		✓		Playful disposition/ relaxed/ Carefree/ Owning space
	86	3:55	Photo	None	Ted	Ted jumping/skipping	LS, tilt  Close, Oblique/ Low angle, Indirect	Outdoors, park		✓		✓		Playful disposition/ relaxed/ Carefree/ Owning space
	87	3:57	Photo	None	Ted, Amy, Sarah, Ben	Family photo, looking straight at the camera	MS, zoom out, group  Close, Front/ Eye-level, Direct	Outdoors, park (although not seen, presumed based on prior photos)		✓		✓		Ideal family/ relaxed/ happy/ intimacy
	88	4:00	Photo	none	Ted, Amy, Sarah, Ben	Family photo, making goofy faces at the camera	MS, zoom out, group  Close, Front/ Eye-level, Direct	Outdoors, park (although not seen, presumed based on prior photos)		✓		✓		Ideal family/ happy/ carefree/ intimacy

\*Placement of song lyrics is only an approximation

Audio/music used: *Good Life* by One Republic

CU	Close-up	P	Position
MCU	Medium close-up	T	Transition
MS	Medium shot	F	Function
LS	Long shot	M	Meaning
ELS	Extreme long shot		

## APPENDIX J

### Ka Uro's categorisation of his blog entries based on 1 January 2010 post with main topic identified

Category	Date of blog post	Title of blog post	General content	Theme
Still Deciding on Migrating to NZ	28 February 2005	Life abroad is not all roses	Sacrifices and difficulties of living abroad	Living overseas
	23 February 2005	Migrating to New Zealand anyone?	Information about NZ immigration (skilled migrant point system)	NZ immigration system
	21 February 2005	Happy 10 <sup>th</sup> anniversary	Personal story about how and why Ka Uro's family decided to move to NZ	Reasons for migrating
	17 March 2005	Isang paraan ng pagpunta sa NZ	Information about Student visa as an option to enter NZ	NZ immigration system
	March 2005	I was an Aussie reject	(missing page)	
	25 May 2005	Migrant rules get scrutiny	Policy changes to address immigration issues	NZ immigration system
	24 May 2005	Have I made right choice?	Being clear on reasons to move to NZ	Reasons for migrating
	18 May 2005	My Filipino dream	The Filipino dream of having a simple but fulfilling family life can be achieved in NZ	Reasons for migrating
	13 May 2005	My mind is in quandary. Have I betrayed my country?	Feeling guilt for not wanting to go back to the Philippines while other Filipino migrants do.	Emotional dilemma of migrating
	3 May 2005	A nation of heroes	There's no need for heroes if systems in the Philippines are working.	Reasons for migrating
	30 June 2005	Case of double standards	NZ prefers immigrants from English-speaking countries.	Challenges of migrating to NZ
	21 June 2005	Saan ba mas magandang mag-migrate sa Canada o sa NZ?	(no direct answer to question but provided link to a relevant website)	Reasons for migrating
	10 June 2005	After being in NZ for 10 yrs now, do you consider yourself Kiwi?	Identity of Filipino migrant living in NZ	Filipino migrant identity
	1 June 2005	Some blogs about NZ migration	(links to several useful blogs)	NZ immigration system
	14 September 2005	Crab mentality??	An oppositional take on the concept of 'crab mentality' (i.e., pulling each other down) as a way to introduce Filipino group 'Pinoys2NZ'.	Filipino identity
	1 March 2006	Estimating your cost of living and finding out what salary you'll need to sustain your lifestyle	Practical information about living in NZ	Practicalities of living in NZ

Category	Date of blog post	Title of blog post	General content	Theme
	18 April 2006	If a man dwells on past then he robs the present. ~Master Po	(Allegory) Predicaments and adjustments of living in a new country told through a scenario of a 'blended family' where NZ is Tea (mother) and the Philippines is Pilo (father).	Emotional dilemma of migrating
	10 April 2006	Unhappiness is best defined as the difference between our talents and our expectations - Edward De Bono	Necessity of starting from scratch in terms of job or profession when moving to NZ.	Challenges of migrating to NZ
	9 August 2006	An "Elitist" List of Schools	List of Philippine schools recognised by NZ Immigration	NZ immigration system
	20 October 2006	"There are lots of jobs around, but migrants are too picky which is why they can't find jobs."	(In response to a letter in an NZ newspaper) Migrants have no choice but to be 'picky' with jobs because of tight immigration rules.	Challenges of migrating to NZ
<b>Migrants BEWARE!</b>	17 May 2006	NZ dream, NZ nightmare	Stories of Filipinos suffering immigration issues after spending thousands of dollars for services of dodgy recruitment firms	Dealing with recruiters
	22 September 2006	Ginisa sa Sariling Mantika	Case of a recruiter, 'Gors', who made false promises to Filipino migrants	Dealing with recruiters
	12 September 2006	Babala: Bagong Raket ni Kaloy	Case of a recruiter, 'Kaloy', who made false promises to Filipino migrants	Dealing with recruiters
	4 December 2006	News Flash: NewJobz leaves migrants short of \$600,000	News report about a Christchurch recruitment agency who did not fulfil contract	Dealing with recruiters
<b>Some Useful Information about NZ</b>	17 April 2005	Some Kiwi Practices Not Common to Us Pinoys	Information about NZ culture	NZ culture/practice
	19 May 2005	Maraming Kabaligtaran sa New Zealand	Information about NZ culture	NZ culture/practice
	14 October 2005	NZ Income Tax	Information about NZ tax system	Practicalities of living in NZ
	9 June 2005	It's in the context	Explaining the different meanings of the term 'kiwi'	Language practice in NZ
	13 June 2005	Six o'clock Swill	Information about NZ culture	NZ culture/practice
	10 July 2005	Class, our subject for today is Geography	Geographic information about NZ and Ph	NZ geography
	2 December 2005	Bakasyon	Information about NZ public holidays and leave entitlements	Practicalities of living in NZ
	12 February 2006	More Kiwi Terms	Information about NZ language	Language practice in NZ
	25 March 2006	Feijoa	Information about the fruit	NZ culture/practice
<b>Moving to NZ</b>	4 April 2005	Settle in NZ in 12 Weeks	Information about settling in NZ	Practicalities of living in NZ

Category	Date of blog post	Title of blog post	General content	Theme
	19 April 2005	What to Wear Down Under	Information about living in NZ	Practicalities of living in NZ
	30 August 2005	Pwede at di Pwedeng Dalhin sa NZ	Information about moving to NZ	Practicalities of moving to NZ
	1 May 2005	Phil to NZ Cargo Movers	Information about sending cargo	Practicalities of living in NZ
	24 July 2006	Mga Istorya sa NZ Embassy sa Makati	Repost: 'Noel's' unpleasant experience dealing with NZ embassy in the Philippines	Challenges of migrating to NZ
	14 November 2006	Ganito kami noon (ang karugtong)	Autobiographical account of family's transmigration experiences until finally settling in NZ	Reasons for migrating
	4 November 2006	Ganito Kami Noon (part 1)		Reasons for migrating
	26 April 2005	To Bring or Not To Bring	Information about moving to NZ	Practicalities of moving to NZ
	31 July 2005	Eye Test	Advice about having eye checked before moving to NZ	Practicalities of moving to NZ
<b>Migrant Experiences</b>	12 April 2005	A New Migrant's Introduction to Life in NZ	Personal anecdote about the challenges during their first months in NZ	Practicalities of living in NZ
	30 May 2005	Is this going to be a fairy tale ending?	Anecdote about a Filipino overcoming migrant challenges in NZ	Successful migrant story
	31 May 2005	Lessons from Mar	Faith, trust, humility, dedication, hardwork: lessons to be learned from the 30 May post	Successful migrant story
<b>Life at Home</b>	28 February 2005	Finding pleasure from everyday tasks	Lifestyle change when living in NZ	Practicalities of living in NZ
	21 May 2005	Ano ang Peborit Past Taym Namin?	Uncomplicated quality time with family as a defining NZ practice	Practicalities of living in NZ
	17 May 2005	Iron Man	Euphemisms for low-paying jobs migrants take on in the beginning of living in NZ	Challenges of migrating to NZ
	17 August 2005	Sleepover	Information about NZ culture	NZ culture/practice
	7 March 2006	Sa aking pagmumuni-muni sa loob ng banyo...	Information about things not available in NZ	Practicalities of living in NZ
	6 October 2006	Success is having one of this...	Having a 'dirty kitchen' in an NZ home	Practicalities of living in NZ
	15 April 2006	Laugh and the world laughs with you, snore and you sleep alone - Anthony Burgess	Practical advice about buying a duvet in NZ	Practicalities of living in NZ
<b>Interacting with Others</b>	31 March 2005	Sir, Boss, Mam	Information about NZ language	Language practice in NZ
	9 May 2005	Pinoy Social Circles	Difference between Filipino communities in the USA and in NZ	
	2 June 2005	Buhay sa Opis	Information about NZ work culture	NZ culture/practice
	5 September 2005	Feeding your Kiwi Guests	Information about NZ culture/practice	NZ culture/practice

<b>Category</b>	<b>Date of blog post</b>	<b>Title of blog post</b>	<b>General content</b>	<b>Theme</b>
	31 January 2006	Tea, Dinner, Supper?	Information about NZ culture/practice	NZ culture/practice
	10 January 2006	Of Names and Nicknames	Information about NZ culture/practice	NZ culture/practice
	2 February 2006	Being an Ideal Guest in a New Zealand Setting	Information about NZ culture/practice	NZ culture/practice
	8 September 2006	Anong nationality ang madali or mahirap pakibagayan sa NZ?	Information about different ethnicities in NZ	NZ culture/practice
<b>Cars and Driving Around</b>	12 March 2005	Cost of Owning a Car in NZ	Information about settling in NZ	Practicalities of living in NZ
	6 December 2004	Kaliwa ba o kanan?	Information about driving in NZ	Practicalities of living in NZ
	12 January 2005	Ay bastos!	Information about names of places in NZ	Language practice in NZ
	26 May 2005	Controls of my Right Hand Drive Car	Information about driving in NZ	Practicalities of living in NZ
	14 May 2005	My Driving Record	Information about driving in NZ	Practicalities of living in NZ
	24 July 2005	In case of car collisions	Information about driving in NZ	Practicalities of living in NZ
<b>House Buying, Flat Renting</b>	10 March 2005	Economics of Renting vs Owning a House	Information about housing in NZ	Practicalities of living in NZ
	8 April 2005	Receive \$2,472 extra income per month	Information about housing in NZ	Practicalities of living in NZ
	11 May 2005	Renting a Flat	Information about housing in NZ	Practicalities of living in NZ
	29 November 2005	Mga Dapat Tandaan Kapag Nagpalit ng Address sa NZ	Information about housing in NZ	Practicalities of living in NZ
	13 December 2005	Flat/Apartment Search Part 1	Information about housing in NZ	Practicalities of living in NZ
	15 December 2005	Flat/Apartment Search Part 2	Information about housing in NZ	Practicalities of living in NZ
	17 March 2006	Have RIDE will Travel	Information about housing in NZ	Practicalities of living in NZ
	31 July 2006	1-1+1 equals 1, but 1+1-1 equals more than 1	Information about housing in NZ	Practicalities of living in NZ
	14 July 2006	Misconceptions that Hinder People from Buying a House	Information about housing in NZ	Practicalities of living in NZ
	22 August 2006	Fixed versus Variable, or Split	Information about housing in NZ	Practicalities of living in NZ
	14 August 2006	It pays to pay off your mortgage early	Information about housing in NZ	Practicalities of living in NZ
	7 August 2006	4/5 + 1/5 - 1 is not 0	Information about housing in NZ	Practicalities of living in NZ
<b>Kids and Schooling</b>	18 April 2005	We Reap What We Sow	Child rearing and elderly support practice in NZ families	NZ culture/practice
	13 April 2005	Schooling para sa ating mga Tsikiting	Information about schools in NZ	Practicalities of living in NZ
	11 April 2005	Children's Party	Information about culture in NZ	NZ culture/practice

<b>Category</b>	<b>Date of blog post</b>	<b>Title of blog post</b>	<b>General content</b>	<b>Theme</b>
	11 December 2006	Bullying in School	Information about schools in NZ	Practicalities of living in NZ
	8 December 2006	Prize Giving Ceremony	Personal anecdote about school customs in NZ	NZ culture/practice
<b>Life in Auckland</b>	6 January 2005	We need to be aware of what we have and be thankful for it	The character and attraction of Auckland	NZ geography
	22 February 2005	What I Dislike about Auckland	Burglaries in Auckland (as a way to balance the positive appraisal of the city previously)	Challenges of migrating to NZ
	20 November 2006	Bloody Stupid!	Commentary on Kiwi justice system: kinder to criminals than victims	NZ justice system
	17 March 2005	Ah, fresh air!	Smoking in NZ	Practicalities of living in NZ
	3 July 2005	Ang Toilet	Public toilets in third world and first world countries (i.e. Philippines, and Japan and NZ)	Practicalities of living in NZ
	1 September 2005	My Two Cents	Fair practices of government officials in NZ	NZ government
	27 September 2006	Qualms about Kiwi Justice	Commentary on fairness of NZ justice system	NZ justice system
<b>Language</b>	14 April 2005	Wassup Mate?	Information about NZ language	Language practice in NZ
	17 August 2006	Kwentong Pinoy sa Abroad	Personal anecdote about NZ language	Language practice in NZ
<b>Buying Stuff</b>	6 April 2005	Buying a Computer in Auckland	Information about buying in NZ	Practicalities of living in NZ
	17 January 2006	Ahh, the joy of bargain hunting!	Information about buying in NZ	Practicalities of living in NZ
<b>Cellphones, Calling the Phillipines</b>	6 May 2005	Calling the Philipines	Information about calling from NZ	Practicalities of living in NZ
	20 October 2005	Using Your GSM Cellphone in NZ	Information about calling in NZ	Practicalities of living in NZ