

Social Media and the Renegotiation of Filipino Diasporic Identities

by

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Abstract

Diasporic identities may involve shifting forms of socio-economic class, status, culture, ethnicity and the like depending on one's relationship with others (Lan, 2003; Pua, 2003; Seki, 2012). Social networking sites (SNSs) may offer transnationals to do more than just keep in touch with loved ones. Unlike other technologies (landline/mobile phones, email, instant messaging, voice-over IP service, etc.), the SNS design may also reveal ambivalent facets of their identities previously segregated through one-on-one or one-to-few modes of communication. In SNS contexts, unexpected paradoxes, such as being labelled an ethnic migrant in the host country while simultaneously being stereotyped as a prosperous immigrant in the home country, may become more evident.

Previous studies conclude that SNS facilitate the demonstration of diasporic identities (Bouvier, 2012; Christensen, 2012; Komito, 2011; Oiarzabal, 2012). These platforms may allow diasporics to constantly and continuously renegotiate who they are to certain people. This research investigates how Filipino diasporics may simultaneously perform their cultural identities on Facebook to loved ones in the home country, new friends in the host country and members of their diasporic community around the world. Profile photos, status updates, photo uploads and video sharing may allow them to challenge Filipino stereotypes.

By combining Filipino indigenous methods and virtual ethnography, I acknowledge my unique position as a Filipino migrant. Such means occupying an in-between space—as both an insider and an outsider (*saling pusa*). While my research methods may seem aligned with virtual ethnography, *pakikipagkapwa* (development of trust through relationship-building) is my mother method. Interviews and focus group

discussions are more like casual conversations than formal data gathering techniques. I treat participants as equals in our shared experience of renegotiating who we are as Filipino diasporics. This is rooted in the Filipino core value of “*kapwa*” which views identity as a fusion of self and others. Thus, I investigate how my participants and I renegotiate our cultural identities with Filipino and non-Filipino contacts on Facebook.

Subtle renegotiations seemed to emerge through online *pakikipagkapwa*. These result in new forms of Filipino diasporic identities that may seem more visible on Facebook than in our material encounters. Such renegotiations may involve identity formation through deliberate association with and/or distancing from people in the way we enact *kapwa* as part of who we are as diasporic Filipinos through social networking.

Preface

This thesis is an original work by Almond Pilar Nable Aguila. The research projects, of which this thesis is a part, received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, Project Name “Diasporic Identity Formation through Social Media,” No. Pro00019729, December 22, 2011, and Project Name “Renegotiating Diasporic Identity Through Social Media,” No. Pro00032971, August 21, 2012.

Dedication

To my parents, who made me a *saling pusa* when they sent me to school before I was two.

My mom taught me to love books from the time I could read. She crossed over to the Great Divide before I completed my MA thesis.

My dad gave me the drive to finish whatever I started and to be devoted to learning. He crossed over to the Great Divide as I was writing this dissertation.

I recognized the above episodes as profound ironies in my life as a scholar. While I have been seeking to understand ways technology may mediate our distanced relationships, I have persistently been reminded that not all distanced relationships may be enacted through communications technology.

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CHAPTER 1: Introduction

Social networking sites are international venues for multicultural interactions. Facebook, for example, hosts over a billion netizens whose large majority live in countries outside North America (Facebook, 2013). But, as an emergent transnational space, it has just recently gained interest as a venue for socio-political participation by emigrants from their host to their home countries (Dale, 2013; Lauri, 2012).

As pedagogical scholar David Smith (2009) has emphasized: "...we cannot understand the troubles of our students without understanding the deep politico-economic grammar...underwriting their lives, and our own as teachers" (p 116). The grammar of our current lives now includes our existence on Internet platforms. While the academy remains focused on multiculturalism inside classrooms, it ignores other transnational spaces like Facebook.

For Overseas Filipinos, the social network has become an alternative place where geographic location no longer determines one's presence in the Filipino community. It connects the material to the virtual, embodying and symbolizing the location-dislocation of diasporic communities. Facebook may allow Filipinos to simultaneously feel connected by providing common Internet functions such as photo uploading, video sharing, microblogging, private messaging and text/video chatting in one website any time and from any place. According to Universal McCann International (2008), the Philippines and Filipinos lead the world in social networking, blogging, video and photo uploading. Soon after, headlines were declaring the Philippines the Social Networking Capital of the World (Clemente, 2011; "Social networking capital," 2011). This title

comes as no surprise. In 1999, the Philippines was proclaimed the “Texting Capital of the World” (Pertierra, Ugarte, Pingol, Hernandez & Decanay, 2002, pp. 87-88).

How did a tiny nation in Southeast Asia become a hub for communications technology? Studies have established that Filipino migration and the need to remain in touch with loved ones is a strong motivation (Aguila, 2006; Pertierra, 2007). Gergen (2002) even used the term “absent presence” to describe virtual closeness through media technology (p. 227).

In 2013, Socialbakers ranked the Philippines as the 8th most active country in world on Facebook with its 30 million users. This number reflects a population penetration of 30% and an online population penetration of 93%. TNS, an international marketing company, provided further detail about Filipinos’ use of Facebook. The TNS Digital Life study (2012) reported that Filipinos spent an average of 11 hours online on a daily basis. Close to four of those 11 hours were devoted to social networking sites such as Facebook. Filipinos became more active on Facebook in 2012 by averaging of 440 contacts compared to 2011 when they averaged only 171 (Castro, 2012). Significantly, the said study also focused on the digital preferences of families with Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs). It noted that the Internet (81%) beat the mobile phone (77%) as the communication tool in long-distance relationships. TNS confirmed that Filipinos engaged with Facebook (90%) more than any other social networking site. In fact, Twitter was a distant second with only 6% of respondents as members.

My investigation on diasporic identity is focused primarily on Facebook for more reasons than just its immense popularity with Filipinos. On this social networking site, identity is most overtly reflected in one’s profile. Who you are finds translation in the

following information: Profile name, work and education; family and friends list; basic information (gender, birthday, interest in male or female friends, relationship status, languages, religion and political views); living (current city and hometown); contact information (emails, mobile phones, other phones, instant messenger screen names, address, website and networks); history by year; about me; favorite quotations; likes (music, books, movies, TV shows, games); uploaded photos; places; Facebook groups; and notes.

McKay (2010a) has noted that Filipinos express their cultural identity on Facebook through profile photos. These depict strong connections to their native soil and to their left-behind loved ones. The intentionality behind such declarations becomes questionable given that the Facebook design makes disclosure unavoidable. Such tendencies for exposure and revelation can certainly apply to culture (Adria, 2007 & 2010; Dale, 2013; Grasmuck, Martin, & Zhao, 2009; Rosen, Stefano & Lackaff, 2010) which is framed by the Internet's "speed, universality and instrumentality" (Adria, 2007, p.36).

Even so, some studies suggest that Facebook profiles present edited identities created specifically to be socially attractive (Boyd 2004, 2008; Boyd & Heer, 2006; Keshelashvili, 2005). Such performances can take extreme forms. For instance, pre-service teachers have included "inappropriate" materials in their profiles without considering professional repercussions (Olson, Clough and Penning, 2009). Friedlander (2011) even drew an intriguing connection between the Facebook profile and the ancient art of portraiture. He stressed:

Social Network Sites (SNSs) offer users novel environments for self-representation and for interaction with others. As Livingstone and Lunt (IN PRESS) argue, these sites reflect a deep shift in our culture, a shift from the verbal to the visual, from passive to interactive modes of communication, and from local to global identity making (p. 1).

While affirming the function of Facebook profiles as online displays, some scholars questioned the inauthenticity of virtual identities (Back et al., 2010). They have, instead, suggested that people project themselves on social networking as they really are in offline lives. This has been seen, to some extent, in the profiles of Filipino diasporic participants.

In fact, their expressions of diasporic identity have overcome one major hurdle in the Facebook design. Ginger (2008) noted that profile fields have not directly addressed “race, ethnicity or nationality” (p. 40). In this way, the social network has remained silent on cultural identity. Still, participants’ profiles reveal their diasporic histories through other means.

Scholarly research has focused on the issue of ethnicity in social networking sites (Tynes, Garcia, Giang & Coleman, 2011). Rosen, Stefanone, and Lackaff (2010) have noted that people generally reflect their cultural and gender identities while interacting with others on social network sites. Ironically, Ginger (2008) warned that, because Facebook profiles do not include racial or national origins, people are vulnerable to stereotyping. Skin color and other physical features easily become the basis for determining another’s ethnic origins. Bouvier (2012) has made the same conclusion

based on his young Welsh participants still ascribing to “biological definitions of national/ethnic identity” on Facebook (p.54).

In the last few years, from 2011 to the present, diasporic identity on social media such as Facebook has drawn increased research attention. *The Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* has, in fact, devoted a special issue on *Migration and the Internet: Social Networking and Diasporas* in November of 2012.

General interest first focused on identity formation (Grasmuck, et al., 2009; Miller, 2011; Palfrey & Gasser, 2008). Some studies have concluded that management of one’s image on social media may be influenced by one’s social network (Wollam, 2008; Walther, Van Der Heide, Hamel and Shulman, 2009). Simply put, the virtual form of “tell me who your friends are” on Facebook is compounded by the constant, swift and archival uploading of digital data (Palfrey & Gasser, 2010). Such associations are made despite the range of ties one shares with contacts (Tufekci, 2008; Vitak, 2008). Some may be as intimate as family members while others may be mere acquaintances one meets in professional gatherings. In other words, people’s perceptions of you on Facebook become a composite of your own profile and posts as well as by those of your other contacts (Palfrey & Gasser, 2010).

Furthermore, Pike, Bateman and Butler (2009) believe that Facebook identity is highly visual in nature. They concluded that: “Facebook users predominantly claim their identities implicitly rather than explicitly; they ‘show rather than tell’” (p. 1816). Given emphasis were indirect declarations through friends lists, photo uploads and wall posts.

The above suggest that diasporics may creatively display their diasporic identities on Facebook through demonstrations of identity. Donath (2007) has suggested that even

gestures on Facebook can function as “social grooming” (para. 37). An example is the customary posting of birthday greetings to friends’ on their Timelines. Such performances surpass mere communication. These may be seen as seamless demonstrations of real relationships that permeate the virtual realm (Donath, 2007). For diasporics, this quotidian overlap between the current country of residence and the nostalgic homeland may require a different kind of mindfulness--the kind that considers the pedagogy of the virtual as it intersects with the material world.

To some, the connection between identity and Facebook persona is so intertwined that communication becomes possible even in death. Stokes (2011) spoke of how bereaved loved ones continue to post wall messages as if their connection to the dearly departed remains true on Facebook. In this way, the platform becomes a living memorial of persons and relationships. The social networking site may function as an archive of one’s public persona over time and across space. Identity demonstrations, thus, may leave digital traces through Facebook posts.

Background of the study

Scholarly imperative compels me to tell this dissertation story through personal experiences—those lived by me and my participants. This is in keeping with my chosen methodology rooted in the Filipino core value of *kapwa* or the fused identity of self and others. It likewise follows the tradition of ethnography—a framework I adapt with some revisions (see Chapter 3 for further detail).

Paul Stoller, an American anthropologist, wrote the book *Power of the Between* in 2008. In it, he described the liminal spaces he occupied as an ethnographer. I began reading his work in the summer of 2012, after we met at the Public Ethnography

conference on Victoria Island. That was also after I wrote my candidacy paper—describing my liminality as a researcher. From Stoller, I learned that ethnographers access power from constantly being between. That new understanding made me appreciate how events in my life seemed to prepare me for this research.

Liminality is, in fact, a general theme that surrounds my identity as a researcher and Filipino diasporic. It is important to mention that I am in an interdisciplinary PhD program. This required me many times to cross the Saskatchewan River by LRT from the Faculty of Education on main campus to the Faculty of Extension in downtown Edmonton.

I found my academic home in two departments. Communications and Technology was a natural fit to my background as a media practitioner and communication instructor. Secondary Education was, on the other hand, fertile ground for me to develop my pedagogical interest in media ethics. That I occupy this scholastic “Third Place” (Bhabha, 1994, p.56) was an unexpected parallel to my research topic. More importantly, my theoretical understandings of Facebook and diasporic identity took root from these sites.

That I was drawn to the field of communication was no big surprise. Even as a young girl, I was opinionated and verbose. These qualities found a natural expression in writing. I became a journalist by choice. My first by-line appeared on print while I was in university. Upon graduation, I was hired by the *The Philippine Star*, one of the top three broadsheets in my country. By the time I resigned seven years later, I was assistant editor to two sections of the paper. I continued to be a contributor and parttime editor for

several years. Eventually, I was hired as managing editor of a startup magazine operated by the company's affiliate.

Meanwhile, I fell into teaching quite by accident. My university degree in Journalism was only a few months old when I was invited to teach an elective course at a private high school. As I gained more experience as a media practitioner, the call to teach became more persistent.

Academia also had a personal allure I could not resist. I devoted the first six years of this century completing my master's degree in communication research. My thesis brought together my interest in communication and my training in journalism. The topic that intrigued me, even then, was migration. Four years later, I pursued my PhD convinced that it has remained the most relevant social issue that demands attention.

In 2010, when I took curriculum courses in Canada, I had been a media ethics instructor for five years. It was only then that I heard of the curriculum reconceptualization movement headed by William Pinar and Ted Aoki (the former chair of Secondary Education, one of my two home departments). From Aoki (2005/2008), I learned about another Third Space I have occupied—"between curriculum-as-plan and curriculum-as-lived" (p. 201). But, unlike my colleagues, I had not lived in the tensionality of a required course plan and the unfolding lives of my students. The University of the Philippines had allowed me to design my own courses as I deemed fit.

What I considered "fit," I later realized, was the application of praxis. This slowly revealed itself to me through a study of Dewey's "My pedagogical creed" (1897). From that document, I realized that learning and pedagogy are not confined to academic institutions but also reside in society and the lived experiences of teachers and students.

Freire (1970/2006) taught me that praxis is “reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it” (p. 51). This idea of mindful practice as a union of epistemology and ontology highly appealed to me. The Brazilian educator’s critical pedagogy of the oppressed also echoes the struggles of my people. According to him: “No pedagogy which is truly liberating can remain distant from the oppressed by treating them as unfortunates and by presenting for their emulation models from among the oppressors. The oppressed must be their own example...for their redemption” (p. 54).

Cynthia Chambers (2006) also showed me a different way to understand Facebook through the Pedagogy of Place. She has argued that current affairs keep us mindful of the present and neglectful of the past. Her very personal account has described, in lyrical (almost poetic) language, her orientation to the aboriginal philosophy of the wisdom of places. A true believer in the pedagogy of autobiography, she proposed:

Writing about life experiences is a way of making a connection between their world and the curriculum.... Now my mission as a teacher and a researcher is to elevate the story, particularly the life story. Through the use of narrative, I weave in theoretical discourse to help my students make sense of lived experience (University of Lethbridge, 2006, para. 2 & 4).

Her struggles as an outsider have shaped her interest in the shared need for belongingness, home and identification. She is best known for her pioneering work on the pedagogy/curriculum of place (Chambers, 1999 & 2006) and, in collaboration with other scholars, on metissage (Chambers, Fidyk, Hasebe-Ludt, Hurren, Leggo, & Rahn, 2003; Chambers, Hasebe-Ludt, & Donald, December, 2002; and Hasebe-Ludt, Chambers

& Leggo, 2009). Both are effectively explained in the unique perspective: “Curriculum is always a verb, a process of quest(ion)ing, a sojourn in words and worlds. In our collaborative performance, we spell out our multiple identities, while interrogating possibilities of identity, in an evocative textured textualizing, both echoic and embodied” (Chambers, et al., 2003, para. 2).

Chambers’ influence on my work can be seen in the way I share my own stories as a diasporic Filipino in Canada. The presence of a vocal “I” in this document also reflects a type of scholarship that bridges the gap between the researcher and the researched. Such connections have been emphasized by scholars in the 1980s whose postcolonial initiatives centered on ethnography. Michael Jackson (1989), for instance, considered the researcher’s personal experience as data. He stressed:

A radically empirical method *includes* the experience of the observer and defines the experimental field as one of interactions and intersubjectivity. Accordingly, we make ourselves experimental subjects and treat our experiences as primary data. Experience, in this sense, becomes a mode of experimentation, of testing and exploring the ways in which our experiences conjoin or connect us with others, rather than the ways they set us apart (p. 4, italics provided by author).

Thus, I present stories—my own and those of my participants—about Filipino diasporic identities. It is my hope that these local, contextualized experiences may teach us profound lessons about diaspora in the digital age. To apply Lyotard’s famous proposition (1979/1984), such small narratives may defy the grand narratives that blind emigrants with promises of milk and honey. These stories may also transform Overseas Filipinos from celebrated stock estimates and dollar remittances to human flesh and

blood. Our very human experiences may shed light on what it means to always be between—simultaneously here and there on Facebook.

Meanwhile, the overlapping facets of my identity have influenced my research interest. I am a communication and media instructor as well as a media practitioner. My decision to take doctoral studies in Canada also thrust me in a powerful yet vulnerable place—that of a researcher who is a diasporic Filipino on Facebook.

Ironically, I never felt more Filipino than when I left the Philippines still undecided about completely losing faith in its promise. Physical distance brought me face-to-face with the personal significance of my research topic. For a curriculum class, I wrote an overdue confession—that I was conflicted about my Filipino identity and further confused by my new diasporic status:

I do not look Filipino. My skin is fair; my eyes are generically Asian. If I hold my tongue, even at the international airport in Manila, other Filipinos automatically assume I am Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese or Thai but not Filipino.

As I young girl, my paternal grandfather told me that a Spanish friar sired our family. I stood beside his lounge chair and stared at the huge, scary photo of my somber great grandfather (his spitting image) looming above us. He looked more like an old Chinese man than a Spanish mestizo. I said nothing, not wanting to be cruel to my kind grandfather. But I listened with disbelief—convinced it was probably more fiction than fact.

When I look in the mirror, I see a face that resembles the hodge podge nature of Philippine history. Echoing in my ears is the often-recited summary of “300 years in the convent and 50 years (and more) of Mickey Mouse” (anonymous, n.d.). As a people, we

survived three centuries of Spanish rule, half a century of (official) American rule and three years under Japan.

Even before I became a foreign student, I never hesitated to say I was Filipino to people I met in my travels. I was aware of the bad reputation (sometimes deservingly) earned by the Philippine passport I carry. Once, many travels ago, a South Korean immigration officer lengthily interrogated my mother. Her sex, age and nationality stereotyped her as a potential illegal alien seeking employment. The issue was immediately clarified when she pointed out that she was a tourist visiting Korea with her daughter. Fortunately, my educational, professional and economic status made me feel invincible against such assumptions. But these eluded me into thinking my Filipinoness was somewhat different from that often experienced by the world.

Some Filipinos living in Edmonton—like the cleaning lady at Enterprise Square and the administrative assistant at the Faculty of Extension—carry great pride in my being a Filipino PhD student. I feel an automatic affinity to other Filipinos I encounter. There are ways of expressing this: A look, a smile or a word in our native tongue. But I never recognized my sense of superiority until November, 2010 when my Philippine passport was denied a US visa.

“But I have an expired US visa and I have been in your country before. I’m a legal foreign student in Canada with plans of visiting relatives and attending a conference. I have no intentions of marrying an American to get a green card,” I argued with the immigration officer to no avail.

It was humiliating to be considered no different from other Filipinos in Canada desperate to cross the border. Over copious tears, I lamented for days about being

labeled “still Filipino” by a white officer who refused to see my esteemed position as highly educated.

But why should I be treated any differently? I carry the same notorious Philippine passport. What difference is it that, to assuage my guilt of betrayal and abandonment of my homeland, I say I have not decided to file for permanent status in Canada? I am torn by the same motivations as other Filipinos who see overseas employment as a future brighter than what the Philippines can offer.

In multi-ethnic Canada, mine is a face that does not stand out. I am a Global Filipino in what is literally a global society. But, like other global citizens, (some even Canadians now living outside Canada), I bring with me the hopes of those I left behind in my home country. Canada makes me feel welcome. Still, my heart yearns for home.

In this way, my dissertation topic displaced me from home to reside in the in-between where other diasporic Filipinos lived. I would wake up to darkened skies and nippy air in Edmonton. At night, I laid my head on a pillow that located me in Mill Woods—the center of ethnicity in this city, I was told. But, by the magic of technology, I was also simultaneously home on Facebook.

So what is the Filipino nation without those who have physically left with hearts, minds and souls still connected to the land of scarcity? What is to become of a society whose migration is a direct contrast to Canada—exploding out into the world?

Filipino diaspora. Migration scholars have often cited former Philippine President Ferdinand E. Marcos as the spark that ignited this now unstoppable exodus (Guevarra, 2006; Kikuchi, 2010; San Juan, 2009; Tyner, 2004). Remembered for his two-decade dictatorship, the brilliant strategist used overseas employment to address the

nation's employment crisis in the mid-1970s. Thousands of Filipinos answered the call of the Middle East for labour. This was when overseas Filipino workers became known as the Philippines' most significant resource. Marcos' historic policy has forced all succeeding Philippine presidents to clarify their position on overseas employment. The issue is highly contested since the country remains dependent on dollar remittances.

Marcos should also be noted for a different kind of migration. A few years before placing human resource into policy, he declared martial law in 1972. This, according to Bello (1991) and other Filipino critics, was a desperate attempt to maintain political power with support from the American government. By then, Marcos was on his second (and, based on the Philippine Constitution, last) term of office. Amid claims of insurgency and communist uprising, Marcos ordered the midnight arrests of journalists and student leaders; the shutting down of media organizations; the imposition of curfews and military check points around the country and heavy restrictions on foreign travel. This caused a "chilling effect" (Dresang, 1985, p. 36). Members of the middle class left the country after the assassination of Benigno Aquino, Jr., Marcos' strongest political rival. Some were driven away from the Philippines for good (Dresang, 1985).

Another wave of migration occurred when Joseph Ejercito Estrada, a popular action star turned politician, became president in 1998. Hopelessness about the political and economic future of one's country is, according to Massey and Taylor (2004), a common reason for migration. Such dissatisfaction seemed rooted in the stories told to me by overseas-based Filipinos I have met as I travelled through my life to this dissertation.

Not long ago, I passionately engaged my media ethics students in discussions at the University of the Philippines about what it means to be Filipino. I reminded them of our long history of colonization and how Filipino identity remains dynamic for a nation so young. Much later, I would realize the fallacy of my question. I was seeking a unified identity for people who are naturally diverse. There is not just one, but several Filipino identities. I was also questioning Filipinoness with the displaced attention of an observer looking at “the other.” While the Philippine government continued to praise Overseas Filipinos as the nation’s heroes, some Filipinos looked down on their sacrifice and criticized their materialistic sense of nationhood. I was among those who felt this way.

In September of 2003, I was interviewed by an immigration officer at the Canadian Embassy in Manila about my application for a tourist visa. It was established that the trip, my third to Edmonton in Alberta, would allow me to spend precious time with my mom’s sister and her family. Reviewing my aunt’s letter of support, the officer became suspicious of my desire to cross the Pacific Ocean to be with relatives. Expressing her doubts, she emphasized: “You claim to be close to an aunt who left the Philippines when you were a little girl.”

Her statement gave me pause, not because I understood her logic but because her confusion surprised me. I was from a country where this was as common as common could get. Like many other fragmented families, we managed to keep in touch through every means possible—whether it was via painfully slow snail mail or through expensive overseas calls. I even remember sending an hour-long voice recording (on cassette tape) in support of a dear friend going through cancer treatment in the US. On rare occasions, at least one family member crossed the great distance for physical reunions. Things

changed when the Philippines got on the World Wide Web in the 1990s. At the time of the interview, my aunt and I were constantly connected through email and instant messenger. These technologies seemed to recreate the feeling of togetherness while apart. We shared significant and insignificant moments without much delay. Thus, I told the stunned immigration officer: "I can tell you what my aunt had for breakfast, lunch and dinner yesterday, if you'd like."

The above experience launched my quest to understand Filipino diaspora beginning with my MA thesis. Back then, I sought to discover how technology offered alternative means for Filipinos who were physically apart to sustain their relationships.

*In March of 2006, when I finished writing **As the Wired World Turns: How Computer-Mediated Communication Is Reshaping the Filipino Long-distance Relationship**, there were close to 7 million Overseas Filipinos. In 2009, when I began conceptualizing this dissertation, there were over 8.5 million Filipinos scattered across the globe. Now, as I submit this document, official estimates report a staggering 10.5 million Filipino diasporics as of December, 2012 (Commission on Filipinos Overseas, 2014).*

Filipino migration continues to be part of the Philippine economic policy. The Commission on Filipinos Overseas, an agency under the Philippines' executive branch, tracks the number of Filipino emigrants. These statistics provide the number of Overseas Filipinos under the categories of permanent (dual citizens, immigrants and permanent residents), temporary (contract workers or, in my case, foreign students) and irregular (those whose stay abroad have not gone through the proper legal channels). The habitual reminder that more than one million Filipinos leave the Philippines yearly causes a lot of

attention—both critical and celebratory. Presented in Table 1, on Page 18, are statistics from 2000 to 2012. In a telling fashion, these numbers are described as “stock estimates” by an economic system that views Overseas Filipino Workers as exports. No details have been provided on the protocols used for culling these numbers. The same is true for the categories specified above.

Significantly, changes have occurred amid the continuous fragmentation of the Filipino society. It was easier to make sense of the numbers in previous years. One could say that Overseas Filipinos comprise 10% of the Philippine population. But that is no longer accurate. Based on the 2000 census, the National Statistical Coordination Board (2013) has estimated that there will be 103 million Filipinos living in the Philippines by 2015. But, as far back as 2012, there were already 10.5 million Overseas Filipinos. If that does not raise enough of a concern, I have highlighted cells on Table 1 (see next page) to display the significant shift that occurred in 2004. Since then, nearly half of Filipinos emigrants have opted for permanent migration. It must be noted, however, that the stock estimate for 2012 only showed an increase of 33,840.

Nevertheless, research trends have responded to the quantity and quality of these human flows. Numerous studies have been done on the plight of Overseas Filipino Workers (Constable, 1999; Hechanova, Tuliao, Teh, Alianan Jr., Acosta, 2013; Johnson, 2010; Lai, 2011; Lau, Cheng, Chow, Ungvari & Leung, 2009; Liebelt, 2008; Parreñas, 2001 & 2008; Pe-Pua, 2003; Pratt, 2013; San Juan, 2009). However, there has also been increased interest in Filipinos who are now citizens of other countries (Kim et al., 2008; Jamero, 2011; Lagman, 2011; Mariano, 2011; Mendoza, 2004 & 2006; Posadas, 2013; Pratt, 2003 & 2010; Siar, 2013; Wilks, 2012).

Table 1. Stock estimates of Overseas Filipinos 2012-2000

(From Commission on Filipinos Overseas, 2014)

Year	Permanent	Temporary	Irregular	TOTAL
2012	4,925,797 47%	4,221,041 40%	1,342,790 13%	10,489,628 100%
2011	4,867,645 47%	4,513,171 43%	1,074,972 10%	10,455,788 100%
2010	4,423,680 47%	4,324,388 45%	704,916 8%	9,452,984 100%
2009	4,056,940 47%	3,864,068 45%	658,370 8%	8,579,378 100%
2008	3,907,842 48%	3,626,259 44%	653,609 8%	8,187,710 100%
2007	3,693,015 48%	3,413,079 44%	648,169 8%	7,754,263 100%
2006	3,568,388 49%	3,093,921 42%	621,713 9%	7,284,022 100%
2005	3,407,967 49%	2,943,151 42%	626,389 9%	6,977,507 100%
2004	3,204,326 44%	2,899,620 41%	1,039,191 15%	7,143,137 100%
2003	2,865,412 37%	3,385,001 44%	1,512,765 19%	7,763,178 100%
2002	2,807,356 37%	3,167,978 42%	1,607,170 21%	7,582,504 100%
2001	2,736,528 37%	3,049,622 41%	1,625,936 22%	7,412,086 100%
2000	2,551,549 34%	2,991,125 41%	1,840,448 25%	7,383,122 100%

- Total number of Overseas Filipinos
- Largest number of Overseas Filipinos based on kind of migration
- Second largest number of Overseas Filipinos based on kind of migration
- Least number of Overseas Filipinos based on kind of migration

Concerned with the social impact of permanent migration, I focused my research on Filipino diasporics in Edmonton, Alberta. On September 1, 2010, I landed in Vancouver with a Canadian student permit. It was the beginning of my own journey as a diasporic Filipino. The figures presented in Table 1, above, justified my need to take my scholarship so far from home. This was important work, I told myself mainly to alleviate the guilt of abandoning loved ones. What I did not know was how my journey would

change me as a researcher and as a Filipino. I was not only learning more about my dissertation topic but I had also begun to live it. It was no longer about studying diasporic Filipinos and their diasporic networks. It was about being a diasporic Filipino with my own diasporic network on Facebook.

History of Filipino (diasporic) identities. Obviously, Filipino diasporic identities cannot be viewed separately from Filipino identities. I knew this from the time I conceived my research topic in its singular form (identity instead of *identities*). Lying just beneath the surface of the questions I asked were the legacies of a tortured past. Revisiting the past also meant accepting that the Filipino does not have a neat and unified identity but complex and varied identities.

Investigating Filipino diasporic identities suggests a need to study Philippine history to truly understand the complexities of Filipino identities. This endeavor, however, is not seen as a review of a past gone by but, in the words of Filipino historian Renato Constantino (1978), as “a continuing past” (book title). Scholars have pointed to colonization as the source of the Filipino’s conflictedness (Constantino, 1969 & 1976; Dagumol, 2010; Hogan, 2006; Patajo-Legasto, 2008).

The “continuing past” has existed in the names of my people and our country. Hogan (2006) has noted that the Philippines was christened after and Christianized under King Phillip II in the 16th century. Its name, thus, has remained “an artefact of Iberian imperialism” (p. 123). Constantino (1969) has gone even deeper by revealing the true nature of the Filipino *label* as a colonial concept. Philippine society, during the Spanish rule, was structured on perceived racial dominance. The two general groupings drew a line between the powerful Spaniards and the subjugated natives. But further segregations

existed within these large groups. Natives, also called *indios* arising from similarity in skin color with East Indians, were subdivided among those who were civilized (Christianized) and those considered primitive (pagan). Among Spaniards, exceptional privilege as the elite of the elite went to those born in Spain. They were called *peninsulares* (born in the peninsula of Spain). *Insulares*, those born in the Philippine archipelago, were Spanish elite of lesser status. They were the first Filipinos.

The conflictedness of Filipino identities has resided in what Bhabha (1994) has called the “Third Space” (p. 56). This intersecting site involves not only geographic and temporal locations but socio-psychological spaces as well. The ambiguity of being between can be traced back to the original Filipinos. Constantino (1969) emphasized that, unlike the *peninsulares* who considered the Philippines a temporary residence which they would abandon for their motherland, the *insulares* had allegiance to mother Spain as well as to their Asian homeland. Dialectics of simultaneous Eastern and Western tendencies were later inherited by the next generation of Filipinos. This problematic has been acknowledged through the appropriate description of a nation that “is in but not of Asia” (Hogan, 2006, p. 115).

Meanwhile, the society’s evolution under Spanish rule led to the expansion of the term. Intermarriages between the original Filipinos (Spaniards born in the Philippines) and members of the native elite gave birth to Filipinos of mixed parentage. The next progression found the inclusion of *indios* whose education and civility rendered them *Hispanized*. Also called *ilustrados* (enlightened ones), they began their propaganda movement by calling for unity among all *indios* as Filipinos under one emerging nation. It was in this way that the term shed its class configuration (Constantino, 1969).

Still, the *label* Filipino was contentious from the onset. Aguilar (2005) drew attention to its racial connotation: “The *ilustrados*’ self definition of Filipino was ontologically compromised from the start. A slippery concept, Filipinoness often demanded the certification of ‘genuineness’” (p. 630). The author exemplified this through Jose Rizal’s protest against being called a Chinese *mestizo* instead of a Filipino. The future national hero took offense in the way he was described in the document that foretold his death by firing squad. Rizal and other Filipinos, at that time, identified with the Malay race.

Such identification was confirmed by American anthropologist Daniel Garrison Brinton. In 1898, two months after the official turnover of the Philippines from Spain to the United States, he produced a concise report about the islands. In it, he described majority of the population as Filipino. These were people of Malayan descent. In the minority were Negritos. They were assumed to have originated from Papua New Guinea given their dark skin, wiry hair and diminutive stature. Brinton noted that he excluded other ethnic groups such as “Europeans, Chinese, Japanese, etc.” since their cultures were well known (p. 307).

One may assume that, as depicted by Rizal’s protest, those of mixed ethnicity and allegiance (to Spain and the Philippines) had no place in the social structure. Thus, they sought acknowledgment by being called Filipino. Bernad (1971) also noted the multi-lingual nature of Filipino identities. Unlike other scholars, he commended Spanish colonizers for preserving indigenous languages that encouraged regionalism.

But the Filipino social elite’s in-betweenness as being native to the country but still fascinated with the *progressive* West sustained their conflictedness. Rizal, born to

landed parents, was well-educated. Like other *ilustrados*, he spoke Spanish fluently. He began his studies in the Philippines but completed his medical education in Europe. Remarkably intelligent and artistic, Rizal joined the Philippine rebel movement against Spain after being inspired by the French Revolution. However, he distanced himself from the armed struggle and rallied for peaceful resistance and negotiated reforms.

Leading the bloody revolt was Andres Bonifacio, Rizal's anti-thesis. His parents died at a young age, leaving him with four younger siblings to support. Poverty and lack of education made him the hero of the masses. Many believed he was robbed of the national hero title. Respected Filipino scholar Teodoro Agoncillo (1956) later expounded on this in *The Revolt of the Masses: The Story of Bonifacio and the Katipunan*. The book and its author gained notoriety for claiming that Rizal (as national hero) preserved the status of the middle class. In contrast, Agoncillo promoted Bonifacio as a romantic figure for labor movements and the common Filipino.

Delmendo (2004) extended this argument by suggesting that Rizal was convenient to the American colonizer. Bonifacio wanted complete independence from foreign rule while Rizal demanded assimilation. Elite Filipinos wanted nothing more than to be acknowledged as legal Spanish citizens.

Previously, the Philippine revolutionary movement founded the *Republica de Filipinas* (Republic of the Philippines) in 1896. This was an attempt to officialize identity through a nation state. Unfortunately, national artist for literature Bienvenido Lumbera (2008) noted that this nation state had a "fragile identity" (p. 88). Within its ranks were factions that fragmented members among class interests. The educated elite strongly resisted the radical goal of secession from the West. This was an opportunity for

one colonizer to ease out another. The Treaty of Paris in 1898 formalized the surrender of the Philippines by Spain to the United States for \$20 million. No representatives of the Republic of the Philippines were invited.

The American colonial structure, Lumbera (2008) further stressed, revived class divisions. Peasants, who pursued freedom through armed struggle, were excluded from nation building. They were declared bandits and enemies of the American colony. The elite, still aspiring for Western assimilation, turned their backs on one foreign ruler but embraced another. Their allegiance was fully rewarded. Concluded Lumbera:

“‘Filipinos’ were members of the elite who served as native signature models of the colonial rule under the Americans” (p. 90).

Thompson (1995) acknowledged the Filipino’s problematic identity. He wrote:

The two great obstacles to a genuine sense of nationalism in the Philippines are the willingness of the rich, ruling elite to sell out and exploit their fellow citizens and the dominance of the US in Filipino affairs, and these are two sides of the same coin.... On the one hand there has been a constant struggle throughout the Philippines’ long colonial history to achieve a national identity and independence, and the elite...have shown creativity and courage, as have ordinary Filipinos. But at every key juncture in history the elite have opted for self-interest and sold out their compatriots in order to maintain their wealth and position (p. 156).

Adding to Filipinos’ conflictedness is an American colonial education.

Constantino (1977) has lamented the enslavement of both mind and heart by an imagined ally. He has described the use of English in educational instruction as a “wedge that

separated the Filipinos from their past and later to separate educated Filipinos from the masses of their countrymen” (p. 24).

Unfortunately, there is barely any information about the pre-colonial past. Philippine historical records do not go that far back (Lynch & Makil, 2004; Steinberg, 2000). This is to be expected since Spanish colonizers intentionally burned all traces of the “pagan” culture. What remained were bits and pieces that do not present a holistic picture. So, what the Filipino has become after 300 years in the convent and close to a century in Hollywood is:

...a blend of East and West. The Western influence can be seen more in external ways—dressing, liking for hamburger and other food, Western music and dance, etc. However, the internal aspect, which is at the core of his *pagkatao* (personality), is Asian—deference for authority, modesty/humility, concern for others, etc. (Pe-Pua & Protacio-Marcelino, 2000, p 56).

Meanwhile, the continuing past has involved an unfolding history with a former colonizer. Philippine independence from American rule was finally granted in 1945—five decades after promises were made. Still, Filipino political leaders (mostly members of the elite) justified continued American presence through its military bases around the country. It took another 50 years for the US to visibly leave the Philippines. This military departure, though still considered more of a show than a complete withdrawal, was not a logical result of Filipino mass protest. Mount Pinatubo, a long-dormant volcano, erupted in 1991. Subic Naval base, the largest US installation in the Pacific, was completely buried in ash. It was this natural calamity that sealed the exit of the US military (Thompson, 1995).

Still, links to the US in the 21st century have remained the topic of Philippine headlines. The North Korean nuclear threat in 2012 has revived a debate on US military presence in the Philippines as a question of sovereignty. On April of 2013, the Philippine government clarified that it only offered American troops territorial access for military operations. This agreement did not permit the building of US infrastructure in the form of military bases (“DND chief says,” 2013). Source of the controversy can be traced to the value of the country’s location. In the 20th century, General Douglas MacArthur declared the Philippines as “the finest group of islands in the world. Its strategic location is unexcelled by that of any other position in the globe” (as cited in Bello, 1991, p. 150).

Strategic positioning likewise led diverse Filipino cultural groups to embrace a unified Filipino identity (Lumbera, 2008). The Philippine revolutionary movement was born in a world organized around the concept of nation states—a European invention. According to Guéhenno (1995), “The nation is a modern idea, and the call for nationalism was the engine of the process of decolonization (p 1).” Thus, the cry for independence begged for the creation of an alternative to the Spanish colonial structure. The inclination to imagine *Filipinoness* in its singularity has become part of crisis of identification.

Struggling to defy my own understanding of what it means to be Filipino (as seen through the eyes of Spanish and, later, American historians of my youth), I have opted to refer to Filipino identities. This acknowledges the multiple types of Filipinos living within and outside the Philippine islands. What unifies various cultural groupings under

the monicker Filipino is *kapwa*—the integration of self-and-other that allows for unity in diversity.

Diaspora and Filipino identities. The word diasporic is loaded with meaning (Clifford, 1994). After all, there are various ways to describe migrant identity. Transnational, multicultural, global, ethnic are only a few of the more common ones. Each of these represents one's position in the ongoing discussion on migration and globalization.

A number of scholars have opted for the less controversial term “transnational.” This choice is not surprising given the neutral focus on human and spatial mobilities (Sheller & Urry, 2006) and material culture (Crang, Dwyer & Jackson, 2003; Mariano, 2011). Others allude to the distinction between the powerlessness of the diasporic experience and the fight for transnationalism (Aguilar, 2009; Bonifacio, 2009; Kim, 2011; Lai, 2007, 2011; Lanza, & Svendsen, 2001; Law, 2002; Parreñas, 2001). These address the migrant's aspiration to live in a society where there are no dominant or marginal cultures. A particular strand of research views migration from generational standpoints where struggles are experienced differently by young and old (Pratt, 2010; Wolf, 1997). In such projects, diasporic refers to first-generation migrants born in the homeland while transnational refers to their children who were either born or grew up in the host country. I have drawn no such distinctions—acknowledging that the diasporic experience may extend to several generations.

By describing Overseas Filipinos as diasporic, I am deliberately engaging in a socio-political discourse. Diaspora, through written history, has been directly associated with the Jews. According to Tololyan (1996), their saga of homelessness was

documented in an Egyptian translation of the Torah (the Christian Old Testament) in 250 BCE. That journey-with-no-destination was a result of a curse by an angry God. However, diaspora's etymology goes further than that. It was derived from the Greek word "diaspeirein" which described the natural but violent manner in which seeds are taken from an organism and distributed to other locations. Prior to the 1960s, diaspora mainly referred to long-suffering Jews. However, other marginalized groups such as African Americans brought to light similar tales of brutal separation from the motherland. This turning point, also fuelled by human rights movements, resulted in the redefinition of diaspora (Tololyan, 1996, p.10).

Six common features define diaspora: 1. Large-scale migration resulting from coercion (sometimes, economic motivation); 2. Migrant groups generally viewed as homogeneous regardless of their heterogeneous composition (e.g. African slaves); 3. Communal remembrances of the homeland which shape collective difference from the population at large; 4. Clear conception of insider-outsider distinctions either imposed by the community itself or imposed on the community by the host society; 5. Community members' interest in keeping in touch with each other and; 6. Persistent connection to the homeland community. For these reasons, Italian-Americans can be described as ethnic but not diasporic. While they have a distinct cultural identity, they are not as connected to their homeland as other ethnic communities (Tololyan, 1996).

This is not to say describing a migrant community as diasporic is a simple matter. While acknowledging the heated debate over definitions of diaspora, Adamson and Demetriou (2007) grounded their definition on a migrant's interconnections within a

diasporic community as well as those of the home and host countries. My research has adapted the same stance.

The liminality of migrant culture has been taken up by some scholars as diasporic. Appadurai (1996) introduced us to the term “ethnoscape” which refers to the “shifting world” of people whose movement may be physical as well as virtual (p. 33). Bhabha (1994) called this the “Third Space” of “hybridity” and “in-betweenness” of postcolonial cultures undergoing “translation and negotiation” (p. 56). Hall (1990) drew our attention to the “‘doubleness’ of similarity and difference” in the diasporic’s experience of returning to the home country (p.227). Said (2000) described being in exile as being neither here nor there but perpetually “out of place” (p. 180).

This idea of in-betweenness, however, may be cloaked under the term transnational (Bonifacio, 2009; Kelly, 2007; Schiller, Basch & Blanc-Szanton, 1992) or under the generic descriptor “ethnic” (Mah, 2005; Salazar, Schludermann, Schludermann, & Huynh, 2000; Sanders, 2002). In the case of Filipino migrants, Camroux (2009) questioned the labelling of Filipinos abroad as either transnational or diasporic. His contention was that such Filipinos may no longer possess any *Filipinoness* given their cultural distance from the homeland. Transnationalism, for Camroux (2009), was also as contentious since not all migrant Filipinos possess a transcendent type of nationalism.

However, I argue that the use of the term diasporic is appropriate. My position considers the consistent manner in which migration scholars in general (Clifford, 1994; McKay, 2006b; Okamura, 1983; Tyner & Kuhlke, 2000) and Filipino scholars in particular (Contreras, 2010; Mariano, 2011; Mendoza, 2006; Opiniano, 2005; Parreñas, 2001; San Juan, 2000, 2001 & 2009; Silva, 2006) refer to Filipino diaspora. The

explicitness of the term discloses the conflicted nature of the Overseas Filipino identities. In fact, Liebelt (2008) has documented how Filipino domestic workers in Israel labelled themselves modern-day Jews.

That said, this research does not preclude the possibility of attaining the transnational ideal—a type of world where one may possess multiple forms of cultural identities no longer limited by issues of nationalism. It is, however, pragmatic in its view of Filipino diaspora. Such an approach means accepting that diasporic identities are dynamic and in constant flux (Contreras, 2010; Ignacio, 2000; Mah, 2005) rather than static and well-defined (Rotheram-Borus et.al., 1998; Umaña-Taylor, Bhanot & Shin, 2006). More precisely, as Bhatia (2002) proposed:

...the dialogical negotiations undertaken in the diaspora...are specifically affected by the culture, history, memory and politics of both the hostland and the homeland. Furthermore, these negotiations are not only affected by the incompatible and incongruent politics and cultural practices of the hostland and the homeland but are also embedded within, and fundamentally governed by, the asymmetrical power relationships between the cultures of Third World and the First World, and the majority and the minority culture (p 72).

The passage above emphasizes how liminality of diasporic Filipino identities requires constant negotiation with various cultural groups (host and home cultures as well as the Filipino diasporic culture). Previous migration studies have not investigated how these three social realms shape diasporic identities in general. It is this gap that this research has addressed with specific focus on Filipino diasporic identities.

Undoubtedly, the issue of diaspora cannot be separated from nation building, nationalism and national identity. Lie (2001) noted how anticolonial efforts by diasporics from the Third World “were imbibed in the belly of the beast,” the city centres of the First World (p. 360). This has paralleled the Philippines’ struggle against its Spanish colonizers in the 19th century. Educated members of the Filipino elite, then attending universities in Barcelona, formed the Philippine Propaganda Movement. Anderson (1983) later credited Dr. Jose Rizal, the national hero, for inspiring patriotism in the hearts of Filipinos with his novels *El Filibusterismo* (*The Filibustering*) and *Noli Me Tangere* (*Touch me not*). There were two reasons why diaspora played a significant role in the overthrowing of Spanish rule in the Philippines: 1. Rizal and his cohorts, though pushing for reforms rather than secession, were stirred by concepts that emerged from the French Revolution, and 2. Living in the land of their own colonizer empowered even the cooperative middle class to imagine themselves equal to their cultural master.

The colonial nature of diaspora, today, translates to neo colonial issues affecting certain diasporic communities (Bhatia, 2002; San Juan, 2009). For Filipino diaspora, these concerns become more complex when the host country is the United States. It is not surprising that the US has remained the most favoured destination of Filipino migrants (Commission on Filipinos Overseas, 2014). Scholars rightly conclude that generations of Filipinos, products of the (colonial) American educational system, idealize American English, culture and lifestyle (Constantino, 1976; San Juan, 2000; Wolf, 1997). Even so, research show fragmented and isolated cases of Filipino-Americans asserting linguistic nationalism by speaking their own languages such as *Ilokano*, spoken by

Filipinos in Northern Luzon (Contreras, 2010) and Filipino¹, an underdeveloped national language (San Juan, 2005). Generally, however, the Filipino migrant is inclined towards assimilation (Lau et al., 2009; Rotheram-Borus et al., 1998).

While Filipino-American relations cannot escape its colonial past, the Third World and First World division remain part and parcel of the Filipino diasporic experience (Bischoff, 2012; Mariano, 2011; Ocampo, 2013; San Juan, 2009). What this says is that, for Filipino migrants, traces of colonialism are alive even in places outside the US (Ignacio, 2000; Kelly, 2007; San Juan, 2009). This has strongly suggested that Canada is a suitable research site given its reputation for welcoming migrants into a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society.

Yet another dimension of the politics of diaspora is the experienced marginalization in various host countries (San Juan, 2000 & 2009). Prime examples are Filipino domestic workers in Hong Kong whose activism was spawned by what they perceived to be unfair labour practices (Lai, 2011; Law, 2002). These experiences speak of the trials enveloping diasporic identities as well as the constant need to negotiate one's position in the host society.

Still, Filipinos are known to be relatively adaptive to migration than other ethnic groups (Lau et al., 2009; Rotheram-Borus et al., 1998). A dominant strand of research focuses on the Filipino being an ideal migrant with an inclination for foreign languages (Lanza & Svendsen, 2001; Mah, 2005). This is often attributed to fluency in English, a second mother tongue in the Philippines. In fact, the ability of Filipinos to thrive even in the most oppressive of circumstances is well documented. However, other scholars have

¹ Filipino refers both to a person from the Philippines as well as to the national language that combines over 100 languages spoken in its 7,107 islands.

chosen to dig deeper into the messiness of the Filipino diasporic experience (Bischoff, 2012; Mossakowski, 2007; Ocampo, 2013; Seki, 2012). This was precisely what my research sought to unravel.

For instance, Filipino migrant youth are considered ideal diasporics because of their strong family connection and academic/professional success. Given little attention is the growing cultural gap between them and their distinctly Filipino parents (Mariano, 2011; Li, 2000; Wolf, 1997). Also ignored are their feelings of guilt over countless sacrifices by elders for whom migration is often painful. In some cases, Filipino migrant youth have felt a strong obligation to succeed (Fuligni & Masten, 2010; Kim et al., 2008). Adding to the ambiguity of diaspora has been the children's lack of agency in the family's decision to migrate (Pratt, 2010). Aside from age, other forces within the Filipino diasporic community classify members according to place of birth (home or host countries). Far from having things easy, second generation migrants suffer from a more complex form of identity crisis (Bischoff, 2012; Mossakowski, 2007; Ocampo, 2013; Pratt, 2003). Discrimination and stereotyping are experienced by Filipino youth as visible minorities regardless of how long they have lived in the host country (Bischoff, 2012; Ocampo, 2013; Pratt, 2003; Kim et al., 2008).

Comparatively well researched is the plight of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs). Scholarly attention has been given to Filipino mothers forced to leave their families for economic survival (Cabanés & Acedera, 2012; Constable, 1999; Lai, 2011; Lau et al., 2009; Law, 2002; Parreñas, 2001; Pe-Pua, 2003). Stark differences in their social and political positions in the home and host countries have often led to emotional and psychological problems (Lau, et al., 2009). Still, some Filipino women embrace

diaspora as an escape from dire conditions in the Philippines (Constable, 1999; Del Rosario, 2005; Parreñas, 2001). Given the abundance of research on this segment of the Filipino diasporic community, my research delimited its definition of Filipino migrants to permanent residents. Such specificity was not only practical in terms of filling a particular gap but also reflective of the current trend of Filipino migration (Commission on Filipinos Overseas, 2014).

Still, no assumptions were made about the homogeneity of Filipino diasporic identity despite the focus on permanent migrants. I recognized the complex issue of economic class. Seki (2012) and Johnson (2010) have described the conflictedness in how middle-class diasporic Filipinos associate with and disassociate from their working class compatriots. Previous studies have likewise emphasized heterogeneity of regional and linguistic groups (Contreras, 2010; Law, 2001) and other differences as discussed above. For this very reason, my study acknowledges the plurality of *Filipinoness*.

At this point, it must be emphasized that various research has been done on Filipino diasporic identities. Studies have confirmed that Filipino migrants consciously shape and define their diasporic identities (Bischoff, 2012; Law, 2002; Mah, 2005; Ocampo, 2013; Pratt, 2010, San Juan, 2005; Tyner & Kuhlke, 2000). Several scholars have likewise established that diasporic Filipinos maintain traditional Filipino values such as conservative views of gender roles (Enrile & Agbayani, 2007) and the importance of family and kinship ties (Fuligni & Masten, 2010; Li, 2000; McKay, 2010b; Pasco, Morse, & Olson, 2004; Wolf, 1997).

In fact, an important part of Filipino diasporic identities involves the continued connection to the Philippines (Lagman, 2011; McKay, 2010a). A distinct strand of

research addresses diasporic philanthropy which places Filipino migrants in the position of benevolent donors to needy fellow countrymen (Mariano, 2011; Okamura, 1983; Opiniano, 2005; Silva, 2006). Significance is also given to return trips to the homeland (Mariano, 2011; Pratt, 2003) which is something Filipino diasporics share with other cultural migrants (Basu, 2005). These nostalgic journeys reconnect them with their distant histories through glimpses of life in the Philippines. These performances of diasporic identities are currently facilitated through virtual platforms like Facebook. Such is another area where this research sought to make a contribution. As mentioned earlier, social media may reveal what used to be segmented and compartmentalized role performances. This begged me to ask: How do Overseas Filipinos' public expressions of *Filipinoness* on Facebook shape their diasporic identities in the eyes of other diasporic Filipinos, non-Filipino friends and left-behind loved ones in the Philippines?

Undoubtedly, Filipino diasporic identities are shaped by relationships with other citizens in the host country. While some may respect Filipinos as dedicated workers (Kelly, 2007), others may view them negatively (Mah, 2005). Quite interesting is how positive Filipino stereotypes still carry unflattering assumptions. Kelly (2007) made note of how the good-natured attitude of Filipino employees were considered a hindrance to their professional progress. The enactment of sometimes conflicting social roles requires Filipino migrants to negotiate their identity (Li, 2000; Parreñas, 2001; Seki, 2012).

The precarious existence in the third space of cultural hybridity creates diasporic identities that are an endless dialogue between migrants and their various communities (Bhabha, 1994; Bhatia, 2002). This ongoing process is emphasized through my decisive use of the term "renegotiation" as a way to acknowledge how identities may repeatedly

be co-created through communication. Significantly, such happens on Facebook which is neither located in the host country nor in the home land but in the (virtual) third space bringing both together.

My research also aims to do more than just provide a multiple perspective of Filipino diasporic identities. It likewise seeks to explore methodological innovation by applying Filipino indigenous research techniques to virtual ethnography. This, I felt, was the best way to fulfill ethnography's intention to view "culture on its own basis" (Boas, 1922/1986, p. 205).

Most of the above studies on Filipino diasporic identities have used ethnographic research methods such as interviews, focus group discussions, journaling and the like (Bischoff, 2012; Fuligni & Masten, 2010; Law, 2002; Li, 2000; Mah, 2005; Ocampo, 2012; Pasco, Morse & Olsen, 2004; McKay, 2010a; Pratt, 2010; Seki, 2012; Wolf, 1997). A few of the cited scholars combined quantitative and qualitative methods in their research (Mah, 2005; Ocampo, 2012; Silva, 2006; Wolf, 1997). Interviews were either structured or semi-structured using interview guides. Some of the researchers designed their research around cultural nuances of their participants. For example, Bischoff (2012) adapted the free-flowing style of hip hop to connect with his Fil-American participants. Pratt (2010), on the other hand, admitted that she was "not at many of the interviews with youth because the Filipino-Canadian Youth Alliance (FCYA), felt that youths would be more open if interviewed by a Filipino peer only" (p. 351).

Comparatively, I take a Filipino indigenous approach to ethnography by focusing on relationship-building as a primary part of my investigation. This research approach involves conducting online and face-to-face interviews as well as the focus group

discussion without an interview guide. This is in keeping with Filipino-style of communication which is highly contextual and other-centered (Maggay, 2002). Thus, this research investigates Filipino culture through methods that naturally occur in Filipino culture. It also aligns with Filipino identity as *kapwa*—fusion of self and others. (Further details regarding my methodology will be discussed in Chapter 3.)

Filipino diasporic identities and popular media. Scholars have been fascinated with the influence of popular media on diasporic identity (Barker, 1999; Cunningham, 2001; Delamont & Stephens, 2008; Dudrah, 2002). Through history, Filipino identities have found expression and development through the use of communications technology. Often cited has been the role of print media (specifically Dr. Jose Rizal’s controversial novels) in instigating critical points in Philippine history (Anderson, 1983). Lai (2007) and Parreñas (2001) have applied Anderson’s concept of “imagined community” to the diasporic collective formed by the publication of *Tinig Filipino* (Filipino voice), a magazine produced and read by Filipino migrants. Expectedly, other types of media (TV dramas, popular music, communications technology and the Internet) were also associated with the shaping of Filipino diasporic identity (Bonini, 2011; Contreras, 2010; Figer, 2010; Trimillos, 1986). Also noteworthy has been the pioneering research of Tyner & Kuhlke (2000) who, four years before Facebook, concluded that websites were functioning as home away from home for Filipino migrants who could exist in multiple spaces at once. They emphasized:

...members of the Philippine diaspora utilise the Internet to stimulate diaspora-host community relations and, simultaneously, to maintain social linkages within the homeland. Our analysis of the web allows us to view diasporic communities

not as isolated islands, but as part of a wider, and integrated, socio-spatial network (p 232).

While much research has been done on diasporic identities, even on Filipino diasporic identities (mostly as a singular form), the dynamic nature of identities lends itself to continuous discovery and rediscovery. Figer (2010) gave examples of how, to diasporic Filipinos, the Internet was “a place for the imagination of the homeland” (p. 101). However, his research was delimited to an online forum—an exclusive site for Filipinos living in Japan.

In the last decade, scholarly interest has shifted towards the significance of the Internet. Researchers have shown similar yet nuanced ways migrant peoples use online platforms to celebrate transnationalism and cultural identities (Bouvier, 2012; Chan, 2005; Christensen, 2012; Kim, 2011; Oiarzabal, 2012; Tynes, 2007; Vittadini, Milesi, Aroldi, 2013). Some studies have likewise confirmed that online sites supported migrants through the discomforts of diaspora (Khvorostianov, Elias & Nimrod, 2011; Palmer, 2012; Thulin & Vilhelmson, 2013). In fact, a few researchers have suggested that social networking sites do more than just increase social capital or sustain connections. These virtual societies have also provided diasporics a sense of community and belongingness not available to them on other online platforms (Oiarzabal, 2012; Palmer, 2012; Vittadini et al., 2013). Komito (2011) goes further by citing at least three revolutionary changes introduced by web 2.0: 1. Heightening of absent presence of diasporics through “ambient or background awareness of others”; 2. “Enhancing and supporting communities by contributing to bonding capital”; and 3. Minimizing the importance of physical location through the transformation of the “connected migrant” to

the fully participatory and active “virtual migrant” (p. 1084). He has raised the possibility that such changes may allow diasporics to hold on to their cultural identities longer than ever before. However, Bouvier (2012) has questioned assumptions that Facebook will allow alternative formations of identity. The author believes old identity categories have, instead, been reified.

Meanwhile, specific social networking sites have targeted ethnic groups united by their common cultures. These have included the Korean Cyworld (Kim, 2011), the Russian Odnoklassniki (Khvorostianov et al., 2011), the Chinese QQ (Boyd & Ellison, 2007) and the Polish Grono (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). As discussed in previous sections, Filipinos have gravitated towards Facebook--a multicultural venue despite its primary use of the English language.

Unlike other media, social networking sites such as Facebook may challenge Anderson’s concept of “imagined community.” Print media may have created cultural communities composed of imagined yet anonymous members. This is seen in the case of Filipinos bonded as a nation by the novels of Dr. Jose Rizal in the 19th century (Anderson, 1983). But, in the 21st century, digital media such as Facebook may allow Filipinos to recognize each other as members of intimate communities composed of familiar individuals. To diasporic Filipinos, this may involve revealing their daily struggles as Filipinos geographically distant from Philippines yet culturally connected to their fellow Filipinos around the world.

Facebook and Filipino diasporic identities. *I joined Facebook four years after its birth in Mark Zuckerberg’s Harvard dorm room in 2004. I was counted among the social network’s first 100 million users the year its chat feature was launched. My*

motivation was pretty typical—desire for social connectedness (Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe, 2007; Köbler, Riedl, Vetter, Leimeister, & Krcmar, 2010; Subrahmanyama, Reich, Waechter & Espinoza, 2008). Like other Filipinos, I considered this the best way to communicate with Filipinos living abroad (Clemente, 2011; “Social networking capital,” 2011; Universal McCann International, 2008). My first Facebook contacts were relatives and friends around the world. I distinctly remember wanting to reconnect with two female cousins who lived in North America.

Four months before I moved to Canada, I received a mysterious Facebook message from a certain Lance Collins. He insisted we were related. I reviewed his picture and wondered how it could be possible. He looked so very “white” and lived not in the Philippines but in Hawaii. I suspended disbelief long enough to confirm with my dad that we were related to the woman Lance said was his grandmother.

Lance sent me a digital copy of our family tree—one that starts with a scandalous account of three Aguila brothers marring the municipal elections at the town hall of San José, Batangas in April of 1892 during the Spanish occupation. This was the introduction to the diagram of names, marriages and births with the oldest date being the marriage of Felizardo Aguila and Toribia Matibag in 1828.

The file was the product of the decade-long research of another relative, former Philippine Ambassador to Spain Juna Ona, my dad’s second cousin. Lance volunteered to carry on his work. He explained: “This includes the children and their descendants of your father's grandfather's grandfather and grandmother (Aguila-Matibag). You and your immediate family are on page 16 in the middle” (L. Collins, personal communication, May 3, 2010).

We have spoken several times since then: Twice on the phone; several times via Facebook chat and, on three occasions, face-to-face in Manila. Lance admitted he knew of the rumored Spanish ancestor but has not found concrete proof. That fortunate connection through Facebook allowed me to discover my hidden past. The quest for my PhD was enlightened by my historical ties to a male ancestor, the first Aguila to seek higher education abroad a century ago. Lance, an American lawyer, received his PhD in Political Science from the University of Hawaii on December of 2010. He described ours as a family of lawyers and doctors (of medicine and philosophy) . The family tree explains how marriages (both inter and intra) blend Spanish, American, Italian, Chinese and Malay blood in our Filipino veins.

But, on Facebook as a diasporic, I felt even more Filipino. My posts often talked about food cravings for sun-kissed fruits and rice cake. Across the globe, the Filipinos in my network continued the conversation by expanding the craving for what I knew was much more than just food.

“Do you feel homesick?,” people often asked me. The question always took me longer than usual to answer. If I said no, I feared I would sound heartless and insensitive to the ones I left behind. So, instead, I would say: “We always have Skype and Facebook.”

Facebook posts by Filipinos have reflected a growing awareness of their cultural identities. McKay (2010a) noted that uploaded photos by Filipino Facebook users depicted their childhood memories. Furthermore, these historic photos sustained their connection to their homeland and to their left-behind loved ones. Whereas she limited herself only to Filipinos on Facebook, my study explores Filipino diasporic identities

through the perceptions of Filipino and non-Filipino contacts in the Philippines, Canada and the US.

Komito (2011), on the other hand, has specifically investigated Polish and Filipino diasporics' use of social media. The attention he gave to sustained relations with Philippine-based Filipinos as well as community-building on Facebook comes close to my interest in diasporic identities. However, just like other social media scholars, Komito delimited his research to diasporics themselves.

My research extends the discourse through a multiperspective view. Focus is not only given to the formation of diasporic identities but also to the renegotiation happening between diasporics and various segments of their social networks. This is related to how the Internet may allow Filipinos in long-distance relationships to negotiate power (Aguila, 2006; Hjorth & Arnold, 2011).

Meanwhile, place and location have been recurrent themes in the discussion of cultural identity (Bhabha, 1994; Gupta & Ferguson, 1992). The first time I wanted to write about my Filipino identity was when I read Cynthia Chambers' *A Topography for Canadian Curriculum Theory* for a curriculum class. I was fascinated by how she (1999) spoke of the land's deep connection to its people's culture and identity.

The dramatic differences between Canada and the Philippines were always in my thoughts as I walked on ice and snow in Edmonton. I remember how my jaw dropped during my first visit to this city some decades ago. I had never imagined how big the world literally was. The horizon went on and on—beyond what my eyes could see. Still, I was just a visitor. My return to hot, noisy, crowded and bustling Manila eventually buried those observations. Then, years later, I read Chambers as a temporary resident of

a country she describes as a massive topography, thinly-populated and land-locked. I experienced sensory flashbacks of home—oppressive humidity against Canada’s cold and dry air; the missing water smells (salty oceans, polluted canals); and the absent crowds which only appeared during rush hour in my city commute.

In my head, on trains and buses, I applied Chambers’ (2006) Curriculum of Place to understand how the Philippine land shaped the culture and identity of its people. Its 7,100 islands can be taken as a metaphor for the complexity of our identity.

Unavoidably, Filipino identities have been defined by physical distance (Kaufman, 2013). Lynch and Makil (2004) noted the Philippines’ geographic isolation from its Asian neighbours and its internal division as an archipelago. According to the authors:

Because of this marginality, the Philippines remained aloof and apart from the great civilizations of Asia. Until the day when Spain appeared, the Philippines was uncommitted to any great ideology or sphere of influence. It had taken no sides, thrown in its lot with no one. It had never been invited. ...the Philippines was fragmented....Nestled in coves and bays, at river mouths and in river valleys, speaking different tongues and owing allegiance to none but local leaders, the pre-Spanish Filipinos were like dwellers in a vast and scattered housing development, each aware only of the doings in his own small home, apparently caring little and knowing less about those around him. The only exception was found in parts of Mindanao and Sulu (p. 414).

Filipino historian Renato Constantino (1976) echoed the same thoughts. He emphasized that the greatest tragedy of Spanish colonization was its timing. Western

ideas infiltrated Philippine shores in the 16th century, before cultural consciousness could be formed. When our awareness of ourselves was born three centuries later, Filipinos were forced to conform to the notion of a nation-state—neglecting the intricate differences among cultural groups. But this kind of unified nationalism emerged as neither Asian nor Western but confusingly both. Constantino likewise noted the Philippines' honor of being the first Asian colony to successfully topple its foreign rulers. However, he concluded that the Filipino identities were fraught with ambivalence and confusion.

In 2011, I sat with other doctoral students in a class that seemed to bring the world together in one room. Each one of us was asked to talk about our location as scholars on the issue of globalization. I was struck by the confident declaration of one colleague that she was “pure Chinese.” When it was my turn to speak, I confessed with embarrassment: “I cannot claim to be pure Filipino because there is no such thing as a pure Filipino. I don’t even look Filipino to Filipinos.” Then, our opinions converged towards a common assumption. We each argued passionately about how colonialism seemed neither post nor neo in a world that now calls it globalization. The room only fell silent when Dwayne Donald, our instructor, asked: “You have said a lot against globalization. But what are you doing here right now? How are you participating in globalization by seeking this kind of education?”

The answer came to me through a wave of emotion that could not be expressed in words. Like other Filipino diasporics, I left my homeland carrying the guilt of betrayal and abandonment (Fresnoza-Flot, 2009; Seki, 2012). In Canada, where I feel more Filipino than when I lived in my own country, my allegiance stretches across the globe.

This has made me aware of how Filipino identities are compounded by the history-bound and history-making diaspora that lies at the heart of my research. The persistent departure of over one million Filipinos yearly has left the naturally-diverse Philippine society even more fragmented.

Still, Steinberg (2000) has suggested that Filipinos have always been a migratory people. This propensity to wander has made Filipinos vulnerable to out-migration. Referring to the reconceptualization of Philippine history, John Larkin (1982) concluded that: “The attachment of the archipelago to the world marketplace and the exploitation of resources on its interior frontiers are the basic forces motivating modern Philippine history from at least the mid-eighteenth century to the present” (pp. 597-598). He emphasized that one can view Philippine history in this alternative way, separate from the tale of colonialism.

While I acknowledge that out migration is not new to the Filipino, I do not agree that this “marketplace” is a neutral space devoid of the tragic past. Filipino identities, perhaps just like other cultural identities, have been plagued by ambiguities. Their diasporic versions are faced with complexities beyond geographic and temporal locations. This statement runs counter to the common assumption that Filipino migrants effortlessly assimilate into any host culture (Rotheram-Borus, Lightfoot, Moraes, Dopkins, & LaCour, 1998). In fact, previous studies have confirmed that diasporic Filipinos remain haunted by colonization (Bischoff, 2012 & Ocampo, 2013). There is what Sheller (2004) has described as a constant “flickering” from the material to the virtual (p.49). In other words, the diasporic Filipino renegotiates cultural identities in the in-between of both worlds. Constantly in flux are identities created through community

building across time and space. Such renegotiations may find expression on Facebook as will be presented in succeeding sections.

Throughout my research, I retrace the diasporic journeys of my participants by moving around three locations (the Philippines, Canada and Facebook). As a Filipino diasporic living in Edmonton, I did more than just step into the world of Filipino diasporics. I became *hindi-ibang-tao*, one of them. In this manner, my research gives value to my own stories as a diasporic Filipino.

The endogenous nuances I have carefully embedded in my methodology (see Chapter 3) diverge from previous investigations. Commendably, McKay (2010a) and Komito (2011)—whose studies are most related to my own—have done ethnographies. The latter even covered a two-year period in the lives of his participants (Filipino and Polish residents of Ireland). Similarly, Dr. Deirdre McKay has devoted years of her career investigating Global Filipinos. Still, both scholars represent traditional ethnographers whose cultures are different from the peoples they have studied. My research, in contrast, offers an understanding of Filipino diasporic identities from a Filipino researcher who has become a diasporic Filipino.

In Chapter 3, I describe myself as a dweller on Facebook. This statement is founded on my belief that we experience Facebook as a real (though virtual) place. Our invisible attachments to geographic places may become visible through the virtual intervention of Facebook. While we may leave traces of our physical presence (our footprints for example) in the places we visit, these become eventually invisible over time. Facebook encourages us to reveal these invisible traces by asking us to name our hometowns and current cities as well as to geographically locate the spaces in the photos

we upload. To diasporic Filipinos, Facebook revelations about the places we've been to and the places we now occupy may reveal not just our locations in time and space but also who we were and who we are becoming.

But Facebook does more than just connect us to geographic places. It may be experienced as a real (although virtual) place. As Rob Shields (2003) has pointed out, the virtual is “ideal but not abstract, real but not actual” (p. 43). We can begin to analyze Facebook's placeness through Henri Lefebvre's triad of space which Shields (1999) translates to the more digestible terms “perceived, conceived and lived (in spatial terms: spatial practice, representations of space and representational space)” (p.40). Facebook was primarily created as a social network site meant to connect one to significant others. Thus, the website was also primarily perceived as such. But members needed to go a step beyond seeing Facebook as a social network site to a real place which they inhabit or live—completing Lefebvre's triad. This is no different from the way Martin Heidegger (1971/1975) describes how humans relate to their environments. He talks of both an external and internal union that is best represented by the concept of “dwelling.”² Social network members have learned to dwell in Facebook in various ways. We may spend countless hours on Facebook. Often, mobile dwellers are even connected through our devices 24/7. We may participate on Facebook by interacting with hundreds of millions of virtual objects (games, people and pages). We may also share various virtual content

² According to (1971/1975): “When we speak of man and space, it sounds as though man stood on one side, space on the other. Yet space is not something that faces man. It is neither an external object nor an inner experience. It is not that there are men, and over and above them *space*; for when I say “a man,” and in saying this word think of a being who exists in a human manner—that is who dwells....” (p. 156).

(photos, web links, news stories, original text content, etc.) with our contacts who are our co-dwellers in this place.

To understand Facebook's "placeness," we can reference other scholars from fields with special interest in place. Their focus, of course, is on concrete or physical places. But, as Shields (2003) points out, Facebook may be virtual ("not actual" or concrete) but it is still real. Thus, we see it reflected in how geographer Yi-Fu Tuan (1977) expounds on space and place:

What begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value. Architects talk about the spatial qualities of place; they can equally well speak of the locational (place) qualities of space. The ideas "space" and "place" require each other for definition. From the security and stability of place, we are aware of the openness, freedom, and threat of space, and vice versa. Furthermore, if we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place (p. 6).

Facebook is exactly that—pause on the Internet. It is bookmarked on our browser favourites. It may also be an icon that sits comfortable on our mobile devices. Some may check Facebook even more often than they do email. Even while surfing for information all over the Internet, Facebook has become like a home one is either simultaneously anchored in or revisiting regularly.

However it is much more than that if we consider what political geographer John Agnew (2002) has to say about places:

Place can be considered “bottom up,” representing the outlooks and actions of ordinary people. Typically, places are more localized, given that they are associated with the familiar, with being at home.... A place can be associated with three geographical elements. These combine both the particular qualities of the place and its situatedness in terrestrial space. The first is *locale* or setting in which everyday life is most concentrated for a group of people. The second is the *location* or node that links the place to both wider networks and territorial ambit it is embedded in. The third is the *sense of place* or symbolic identification with a place as distinctive and constitutive of a personal identity and a set of personal interests (p. 16).

Facebook provides the first and second geographical elements by virtually providing locale and location for interaction. The website’s design has, over time, provided synchronic qualities (a distinct look that users immediately recognize) as well as diachronic features that heighten interactivity through stability and novelty. It has been successful in producing a sense of place in a virtual environment. This is clarified in the way Facebook also fulfills anthropologist Marc Auge’s (1999) triple symbolism of place: 1. identity; 2. relationship; 2. history. Users instantly develop their identity once they join Facebook. They are required to provide personal information that identifies them as individual and unique dwellers. Relationships are also emphasized through the building of contacts. (Facebook is, after all, a social networking site.) And, history is reflected in the archive of virtual artefacts (photos, videos, status messages, comments, etc.) that can be reviewed at any time.

Facebook allows seepage of the material into the virtual. Digital objects (photos, videos, text, audio, etc.) translate physical objects (places, people, things, etc.) from the material world into the virtual environment. The most profound, of course, is how people are also translated from physical to virtual. This happens whenever we post any digital information on Facebook. The mediation of an individual's existence from material to virtual happens through what Nick Couldrey (2008) calls "digital storytelling." It refers to the episodic and inter-textual interpretation of some or all uploaded materials on Facebook. These may include, but are not limited to blogs, photos, videos, audio files, status messages, notes, comments and profiles.

Statement of my research problem

The focus of my research is on the renegotiation of diasporic identities through Facebook posts. Like other social media, this is the current venue of numerous relationships. This is where diasporic Filipinos simultaneously interact with left-behind loved ones in the Philippines, friends in their host countries and other diasporic Filipinos living around the world.

Diasporic identities may involve shifting, sometimes contradicting, forms of socio-economic class, status, culture, ethnicity and the like depending on one's relationship with others (Lan, 2003; Pe-Pua, 2003; Seki, 2012). Social networking sites (SNS) may offer transnationals more than just a venue to remain in touch with loved ones. Unlike other technologies (landline/mobile phones, email, instant messaging, voice-over IP service, etc.), the SNS design may also unconceal ambivalent facets of their identities previously segregated through one-on-one or one-to-few modes of communication. In SNS contexts, unexpected paradoxes, such as struggles against being

labelled an ethnic migrant in the host country while simultaneously resisting stereotyping as a prosperous immigrant in the home country, may become more evident.

McKay (2010a) has concluded that Filipinos on Facebook “renegotiate” who they are with various people in their networks primarily through their profile photos (p. 479). She has emphasized that: “Exchanging and manipulating digital images on social networking sites offers people new ways to renegotiate a wide variety of relationships.... Interactions on Facebook transform personhood and norms for relationships and belongings among a particular group of Filipino users (p.479).”

My research narrows in on the identity formation of Filipino diasporics on Facebook. I adapt her use of the term “renegotiation” to describe the repeated fashion identities are formed on a social network. But, while McKay provided the groundwork for recognizing Filipino identity through digital photos, I investigate more specialized forms of Filipino identity through various Facebook digital artefacts (photos, videos, text, likes, tagging, etc.). Furthermore, I pay attention not only to the Facebook experience of Filipinos themselves but also to select members of their networks who comprise their diasporic existence. Thus, I ask: How do young Filipinos permanently living in Edmonton renegotiate their diasporic identities on Facebook with loved ones in the Philippines, new friends in the host country and other Filipino diasporics around the world?

Answering such an expansive question means also investigating other avenues related to diasporic relations, locatedness and dislocatedness and the technology in the center of my research. The succeeding chapters of this dissertation address the following related concerns:

1. In what ways do Filipino diasporics display their diasporic histories on Facebook?
2. How do Filipino diasporics display Filipino-ness through status updates, tagging, photo-sharing and video-uploading?
3. How do Filipino diasporics renegotiate their cultural identities through associations and disassociations on Facebook?
4. How do Filipino diasporics and their contacts (left-behind Filipinos, other diasporic Filipinos and non-Filipino friends in Edmonton) perceive Filipino diasporic identities on Facebook?
5. What forms of Filipino diasporic identities emerge from the Facebook uploads of young Filipinos permanently living in Edmonton?

Notably, my attentiveness to diasporic identities on Facebook has been situated within my pedagogical concern for Internet ethics. As a media ethics instructor, I have been aware of the issues arising from social media. Such issues have not only implicated communication and media scholars but also those who have devoted time and effort on social networking sites. In the same way, the study of diasporic identities on Facebook will not only be significant to Filipinos but also to migrants from other cultural backgrounds in different parts of the world.

Mapping the dissertation

On the first day of his last phenomenology course at the University of Alberta in 2010, Max van Manen spoke of how we perceive lived experience through adumbrations. He lifted a student's water bottle to demonstrate by turning it slightly to one side and then placing it down. This was done several times to make a point—that our experiences can only be perceived partially at each juncture. Even so, each partial view acts as a

foreshadowing of other significant facets of the experience yet to be seen. According to Husserl (1900/2001):

The object is not actually given, it is not given wholly and entirely It is only given 'from the front,' only 'perspectively foreshortened and projected' etc.

While many of its properties are illustrated in the nuclear content of the percept, at least in the (perspectival) manner which the last expressions indicate, many others are not present in the percept in such illustrated form: The elements of the invisible rear side, the interior etc., are no doubt subsidiarily intended in more or less definite fashion, symbolically suggested by what is primarily apparent, but are not themselves part of the intuitive, i.e. of the perceptual or imaginative content, of the percept. On this hinges the possibility of indefinitely many percepts of the same object, all differing in content. (p. 306)

The concept of adumbrations kept haunting me as I tried to write my dissertation. My research experience, after all, involved foreshadowing, manifestation, foreshadowing and further manifestation of diasporic identities through Facebook posts. Many times, I was struck by what I learned along the way—as facets of the phenomenon slowly emerged.

But, having taught communication research for five years, I was forced to think of my dissertation as following the five-chapter format: Introduction, Review of related literature, Methodology, Findings and discussion, and Conclusion. This was the simplest way to ensure that all required content were presented in a logical manner. However, Stoller's caution about falling victim to "the dead hand of competence" (Janowitz, 1963, p. 151) and Frueh's reminder (1996) of my (and my reader's) intellectual demise gave me

pause. Filipino diasporic stories could easily drown in the vast sea of information culled from my research.

Of course, dissertation writing need not adhere to such strict chapter requirements. Kamler and Thomson (2006), for example, recommend conceiving one's argument as choreography. The final report can be organized as a map of moves in one's argument rather than chapters of exposition. I chose, therefore, to organize my dissertation by mapping out stories as links in a chain of narration. These are based on adumbrations that showed up in my year-long research on Facebook and the material locations of Filipino diasporics. Such narration follows the circular flow of Filipino-style communication. Each chapter attends to a particular theme from digital tales connected to material lives. Even so, the stories they tell are sometimes repeated and always connected.

Let me clarify that I still attend to the requirements of the five-chapter thesis format. This initial chapter has provided the conventional parts of an academic research paper introduction which includes the background of the study and the statement of my research problem. Chapter 2 (Viewing Filipino diasporic identities through *kapwa*) discusses my theoretical framework and ontological position as researcher. It also justifies the need for me to adapt a Filipino endogenous research approach. Such provides context for methodological innovation as detailed in Chapter 3 (Investigating virtual endography). In that chapter, I expound on how we (my participants and I) engaged in the investigation of Filipino diasporic identities on Facebook. Chapter 4 (Filipino diasporic identities on Facebook) served to present our stories as data under themes guided by the research question and concerns related to it (as enumerated in the

Statement of the Problem). Finally, Chapter 5 (Pulling strands together) refers to the Filipino *banig* as metaphor to describe the ultimate goal of my research. This mat, often used for sitting or sleeping, is made from interwoven natural fibers (often dried palm-like leaves). As a symbol, it brings up the themes of identity through place/territoriality (host land, Facebook and home land); Filipino diasporic identities on Facebook from multiple perspectives (Filipino diasporics themselves, non-Filipino contacts and Philippine-based contacts); and *kapwa* as fused identity (self-and-others). This chapter presents my conclusions, research implications and recommendations.

This map of my dissertation serves to lay out the landscape of my argument. However, I must emphasize that I do much more than simply answer the research problem. Though I may offer some understanding of Filipino diasporic identities on Facebook, I may also raise other questions for further re-search on diasporic identities in general.

CHAPTER 2: Viewing Filipino diasporic identities through *kapwa*

My transformation as an indigenous researcher manifested itself in my desire to explore methodology that suited the nuances of this study. Early on, I was convinced that my dissertation would involve virtual ethnography. Why not when this has been the popular choice of social science scholars doing Internet research? The list of such literature seemed to grow longer each time. Worthy of note were Daniel Miller and Don Slater's 2000 investigation of diasporic identity on Trinidad websites; Danah Boyd's 2008 study of American teen sociality on MySpace and Facebook and Tom Boellstorff's "fieldwork" on Second Life from 2004 to 2007. I began reading Christine Hine's work knowing she was *the* expert on virtual ethnography.

But things got "messy" (a word supplied by Cathy, one of my supervisors). During my first visit to Manila in 2011, I toyed with the idea of applying Filipino indigenous methods. It seemed logical given that my topic involved the expression of Filipino identities. The problematic bubbled slowly as an unarticulated question: Can virtual ethnography make room for indigenous methods? I had puzzled over this in my head for weeks without recognizing the issue. Elaine Simmt, my instructor in my doctoral research seminar, expressed her confusion about my plan. She bumped two fists against each other and asked: "Ethnography and indigenous methods, how?." That was, for me, a light bulb moment.

Ethnography, whether virtual or not, seemed an ill fit for understanding diasporic identities still haunted by the traumatic past. Simply put, I could not ignore the colonial history of ethnography (Behar, 1997; Smith, 1999; Vergara, 1995).

The links to imperialism were undeniable. In 1899, Rudyard Kipling's famous poem *The White Man's Burden* valorized the American occupation of the Philippines (Coloma, 2009). Its first stanza documented the ethnocentricity that fueled ethnography. Clearly drawn was the line between the White Man and his "savage" Brown Brother in need of salvation (Ick, 2008).

*Take up the White Man's burden--
Send forth the best ye breed--
Go bind your sons to exile
To serve your captives' need;
To wait in heavy harness,
On fluttered folk and wild--
Your new-caught, sullen peoples,
Half-devil and half-child (Kipling, 1919, p.371)*

A Filipino discomfort with ethnography

Thus, my chosen topic raised an ethical concern involving methodology. It took me months of careful thought, while preparing for candidacy, to acknowledge my discomfort with this research paradigm. The understanding, however, only came through catharsis. Consultations with my supervisors drove me dangerously close to tears. My frustration grew even more when I could not articulate what bothered me most about ethnography. Like Mendoza (2006), I was hit by "something very powerful...in the depths of my being" (p. xvii).

This illogical anguish surprised me. I could not blame my supervisors for asking pointed questions to provoke my thinking process. But answers did not come easy. I

recognized how deeply implicated I was by my research topic. Strong emotions impeded cognition. Thus, I purged myself in an effective yet unexpected way—by singing through my pain in my own language.

I was in such anguish that the only relief came through the songs of Aegis, an iconic rock trio of Filipina singers with booming voices. Their heart-rending tunes became the soundtrack of my reflections. I shared links to their music videos through my personal Facebook account without explaining why. It did not matter to me that the lyrics were in Filipino. To my surprise, some non-Filipino contacts (mostly friends in Edmonton) took notice. I offered no explanations to them or to my Filipino contacts who seemed amused despite their ignorance of my dilemma.

The words that I could not verbalize eventually found their way to my candidacy paper. I realized that my strong emotions came from my people's traumatic past. Through its evolutions, ethnography has investigated the exotic Other. Malinowski (1922/2002) and Boas (1922/1986) founded their work on comparisons between native cultures and modern civilization. To be fair, Boas resisted against ethnocentric research through the view of "each culture on its own basis" (p. 205). This was the same perspective adapted by his student, Margaret Mead (1928/2001), in her landmark research *Coming of Age in Samoa: A Study of Adolescence and Sex in Primitive Society*. In my earlier years, I believed anthropology was represented by her work. Still, Mead first became an expert of the primitive and strange before investigating more familiar ("modern") social groups (Lutkehaus, 2008). Decades later, Geertz (1973) channelled another turning point for ethnography. I would remember him particularly for proposing

the need for “thick description” (p. 16). More importantly, he suggested the stripping of exoticism in studying the Other. According to Geertz (1973):

...despite the surface strangeness of primitive men and their societies, they are, at a deeper level, not alien at all. The mind of man is, at bottom, everywhere the same: so that what could not be accomplished by a drawing near, by an attempt to enter bodily into the world of particular savage tribes, can be accomplished instead by a standing back, by the development of a general, closed, abstract, formalistic science of through, a universal grammar of intellect (pp. 350-351).

Seared in my memory through books, classroom lectures and documentaries is the disturbing thought that our Spanish colonizers considered us inferior beings. The most painful was the depiction of Filipinos as brown savages who resembled monkeys. Our American “brothers,” who ruled us with a velvet glove, were no different. Filipino scholars have lamented over the scars left behind by the 1904 St. Louis World’s Fair (Patajo-Legasto, 2008; Vergara, 1995). The curatorial exhibit displayed Filipino “tribes” in their ethnic glory. As human specimens, Filipinos were made to stage their exotic lives for the pleasure of audiences. Significantly, the Filipino showcase reflected the ethnographic efforts of American scholars. As Vergara (1995) noted: “The Philippines was considered a vast ethnological laboratory....” (p. 52). Conclusively, he also stressed: “The Louisiana Purchase Exposition was a showcase for America’s triumph. It involved, through anthropological legitimation, shrewd financial engineering, and massive government support, the display of the Philippines as embedded within a deeply imperialist (and patriotic) context (p. 136).”

Doing my own review of ethnographic studies, I came across Albert Ernest Jenks' *The Bontoc Igorot* (1905). The book's year of publication (during the American occupation of the Philippines) and its use of the derogatory term Igorot³ made me uncomfortable. One passage, in particular, confirmed that some ethnographic text depicted Filipinos in less than flattering ways:

Primitive man is represented in the Philippines to-day not alone by one of the lowest natural types of savage man the historic world has looked upon—the small, dark-brown, bearded, 'crisp-wooly'-haired Negritos—but by some thirty distinct primitive Malayan tribes or dialect groups, among which are believed to be some of the lowest of the stock in existence (p. 15).

Thus, despite current trends in research, I could not get past ethnography's tarnished past and how my education is implicated by it. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) effectively articulated what has been, for me, my biggest obstacle so far:

...I grew up in a world where science and our own indigenous beliefs and practices coexisted....although many indigenous writers would nominate anthropology as representative of all that is truly bad about research, it is not my intention to single out one discipline over another as representative of what research had done to indigenous peoples. I argue that, in their foundations, Western disciplines are as much implicated in each other as they are in imperialism. Some, such as anthropology, made the study of us into 'their' science, others were employed in the practices of imperialism in less direct but far more devastating ways.... Discussions around the concept of intelligence, on

³ According to McKay (2006a): "Peoples in the provinces of Ifugao, Kalinga, and Apayao generally reject Igorot identity. This rejection reflects the particularities of colonial history.... the Spanish colonial efforts began to produce the kind of group they had-falsely-imagined" (p. 296).

discipline, or on factors that contribute to achievement depend heavily about the notions of the Other (p. 11).

As a Filipino, I strongly resist applying a research tradition that once thrived on colonization. The struggle to build our Filipino identities despite the colonial past has been difficult on its own. Thus, I am certain diaspora would compound the problem further with issues of neocolonialism. Still, as a Southeast Asian scholar with a Western education, I could not disregard the value of ethnography in investigating culture. These considerations have urged me to integrate ethics as a fundamental part of this research.

Even Reyes (2012a) has acknowledged the compromises required of Filipino indigenous scholars. Like me, he has selected which facets of his scholarship resisted Western-style thinking and which adapted such. He further says: "...scholars reacting to American influence nevertheless had no other option except to use the resources which they have acquired through American style education. Virgilio Enriquez founded his Filipino psychology movement after taking a PhD in the Northwestern University....(p. 12)."

My indigenous research paradigm

I started my search for an appropriate research paradigm by focusing on the culture of interest. Filipino communication has been described as indirect, playful and profoundly non-verbal (Maggay, 2002). It was in this way that I found myself building a research framework around these cultural nuances.

Qualitative research upholds the power of the human life experience. Stories, narratives and lived experience descriptions are considered data by scholars investigating

the meaning of life from those living it (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Van Manen, 1990). But stories are not always told in a linear fashion with a clear beginning, middle and end.

One day, I was chatting with another foreign student about academic writing in Canada. Her process was exhausting. She would first compose her thoughts in her own language and translate them in English using a very limited vocabulary. Her Canadian husband was her reader and critic. In time, she was able to find the words that matched her thoughts. Still, her husband complained about how she put thoughts together: “Your stories go around in circles. Start at the beginning and keep going until you reach the end.” Sounding quite frustrated, she said: “He told me my professors and classmates won’t understand what I want to say. But, Almond, that is how we tell our stories in my country!” I gave her a knowing smile, relating fully with her experience.

English is my second, first language. The Philippine educational system was created in the likeness of the American model by American educators (Coloma, 2009; Constantino, 1977; Ick, 2008; Lumbea, 2008). Even when I teach courses, I use books in English. However, like my friend, I also tell stories in a circular fashion. It is not only for need of deeper context that our stories seem to meander. It is also because of their link to other stories in an endless chain of narration.

In some cultures, like hers and mine, the circle is a powerful means to communicate. Canada’s First Nations share stories while gathered around a fire. The community is bonded in the circle of trust (Battiste & Barman, 1995).

Data from this research was mainly composed of stories told through Facebook Timeline posts and uncovered in online, face-to-face and focus group conversations with

my participants. These stories did not follow a linear trajectory. Most, if not all, went around in circles.

As I reviewed my candidacy paper, the proposal from which my research grew, a veil was lifted. I realized why I held fast to these next two paragraphs despite the warning I had gone over the maximum number of pages.

My Southeast Asian culture predisposes me to looking at wholeness instead of separation. As Wilson (2008) suggested: "...a research paradigm is made up of four entities: ontology, epistemology, axiology and methodology. But rather than thinking of them as four separate ideas or entities, try to think of them in a circle" (p.70).

The image below represents how I view the four components of research as fused parts of a whole. Wilson (2008) further described this as rooted in "relationality" or how "...ontology and epistemology are based upon a process of relationships that form a mutual reality....(while) axiology and methodology are based upon maintaining accountability to these relationships" (pp. 70-71)

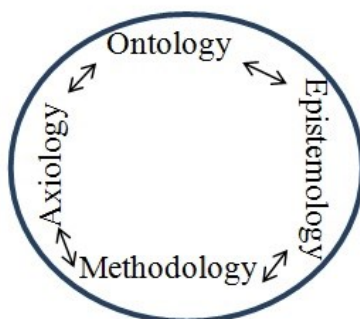


Figure 1. My research paradigm (from Wilson, 2008, p.70)

As I embraced an indigenous research paradigm, I was drawn to see wholeness in fragmentation; relationality in estrangement; and sameness in otherness. This steered me towards a Filipino research framework founded on these very themes.

‘Kapwa’ as root of Filipino identities

Filipino diasporic identities cannot be viewed separately from Filipino identities. This was obvious to me from the time I conceived my research topic. It was also this that attracted me to the Filipino notion of “*kapwa*” or shared identity. As a concept, “*kapwa*” was first identified by Virgilio Enriquez in the 1970s when he launched *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* (Filipino Psychology) as an academic decolonizing movement (Enriquez, 1992; Pe-Pua & Protacio-Marcelino, 2000; Pe-Pua & Ramos, 2012).

Enriquez, an American-educated Filipino professor at the University of the Philippines, began an academic movement in the 1970s called *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* (SP) or Filipino Psychology. It was also known as *Sikolohiyang Mapagpalaya* or Liberation Psychology for reasons that will be made obvious in the coming discussion. Aimed at decolonization, the project was highly interdisciplinary and involved fields like music, anthropology, history and communication. Ironically, it was a travel ban during Marcos’ martial law that inspired foreign-educated scholars to look for concepts and theories from the local culture (Mendoza, 2006; Pe-Pua & Ramos, 2012).

Sikolohiyang Pilipino resisted against a colonial understanding of Filipino psychology and culture. Simply put, it challenged the cultural applicability of Western-based social science by resurrecting indigenous wisdom (Enriquez, 1992). The primary critique was how American-style scholarship and education did not fully understand the Filipino world view. Filipino scholars, whose graduate degrees were completed in Western universities, questioned the very foundations of the Filipino academy.

Explained Enriquez (1997): “...*Sikolohiyang Pilipino* places greater emphasis on the

collective experience of a people with a common bond of history as opposed to its Western counterpart which gives inordinate emphasis to the individual psyche (p. 45).”

Importantly, SP resisted the influence of neo colonialism on the Filipino’s self-understanding (Enriquez, 1997; Mendoza, 2006; San Juan, 2006). Highly questioned was the applicability of Western theories and research methods to Filipino cultural values. Enriquez (1997) took to task researchers’ failure to “uncritically” apply “borrowed language, inapplicable categories of analysis, and a token use of local language and culture” (p. 58). An example was the labelling of Filipino behaviour using English and Spanish—languages that did not fully express cultural meanings. This resulted in the naming of such questionable indigenous values as “Filipino time” (habitual tardiness), “*delicadeza*” (social propriety), “*amor propio*” (pride) and the odd combination of English and Spanish in “*mañana habit*” (habitual procrastination) (p. 58). But the worse offense for Enriquez (1992) involved directly translating foreign label structures. He lamented: “The label is fitted, squeezed, and pushed into the mind-set concomitant to the foreign equivalent. The term’s real significance in the Philippine context is diminished, if not entirely lost” (p. 59).

Similarly, Enriquez felt this was true for other commonly-cited Filipino values “*hiya* (shame), *pakikisama* (yielding to the leader or majority), *utang na loob* (gratitude), *amor propio* (sensitivity to personal affront), and *bayanihan* (togetherness in common effort)” which he would later group together as surface values. Instead, he contextualized these as rooted in the core value “*Kapwa*” (Enriquez, 1993, p. 159).

By identifying this core concept, Enriquez earned the title Father of Philippine Psychology. Future scholars would later cite this as his greatest accomplishment

(Mendoza, 2006; Pe-Pua & Protacio, 2000; San Juan, 2006). For him, surface values carried little significance until one investigates its core—“a strong sense of human relatedness” (Enriquez, 1993, p. 159).

What is *kapwa*? Enriquez (1997) often defined it as an alternative view of the “other.” He explained:

...the Filipino word *kapwa* is very different from the English word ‘others.’

While the English word denotes a boundary between self and others, or an exclusionary term, *kapwa* is an inclusionary term stressing the unity of self with others. In the English language, others is used in contrast to self, and suggests the recognition of the self as a separate and distinct identity. *Kapwa*, in contrast, recognizes shared identity (P. 46).

Supporters of *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* used the concept of *kapwa* to refute the well-accepted belief that Filipino behaviour was motivated by the need for Smooth Interpersonal Relations (SIR). The concept was coined by Frank Lynch, an American psychologist and Jesuit priest who first documented it in 1961. In particular, Enriquez (1992) disagreed with Lynch’s belief that *pakikisama* (going along with the rest or joining the band wagon) was a core Filipino value.

In contrast, Enriquez (1992) offered a three-tiered value structure which identified *pakikisama* as a colonial/accommodative surface value. Like other Filipino values, its foundation was rooted on the value of *kapwa*. Presented in Table 2, on the next page, are the three tiers: Surface, core and societal.

Table 2. Enriquez's Filipino Behavioral Patterns and Value Structure
(From Enriquez, 1992, p. 75)

Behavioral Patterns and Value Structure: Surface, Core and Societal			
Colonial/ Accommodative Surface Value	<i>Hiya</i> (propriety/ dignity)	<i>utang na loob</i> (gratitude/ Solidarity)	<i>Pakikisama</i> (companionship/ esteem)
Associated Behavioral Pattern	<i>biro</i> (joke)	<i>lambing</i> (sweetness)	<i>tampo</i> (affective disappointment)
Confrontative Surface Value	<i>bahala na</i> (determination)	<i>sama/lakas ng loob</i> (resentment/guts)	<i>pakikibaka</i> (resistance)
Pivotal Interpersonal Value	<i>Pakikiramdam</i> (<i>pakikipagkapwa-tao</i>) (shared inner perception)		
CORE VALUE	<i>KAPWA</i> (<i>shared identity</i>)		
Linking Socio-personal Value	<i>Kagandahang-loob</i> (<i>Pagkamakatao</i>) (shared humanity)		
Associated Societal Values	<i>Karangalan</i> (dignity)	<i>katarungan</i> (justice)	<i>kalayaan</i> (freedom)
Reductionist/ Functional Interpretation	“social acceptance”	“social equity”	“social mobility”

To understand Enriquez's critique of Western-style psychology, one should note his belief that previous interpretations did not go deep enough into the Filipino psyche. This may be the simplest way to explain his use of words like “surface” and “core.” What helped me was referencing decolonization's aim to deconstruct oppressive colonial

structures (Smith, 1999). Enriquez's argument, summarized in Table 2, was that colonial accommodative or confrontative values were confused for core values. Thus, Enriquez made his most significant point in the third tier (societal values). It is there that he proposed associated societal values (view of society as collectivistic) as a more accurate reading compared to the reductionist/functional interpretation (society as individualistic).

Emphasis must also be given to the pivotal value of "*pakikiramdam*" (shared inner perception) which allows entry to the core of the Filipino (shared identity). Access would only, thus, be given to those able to intuitively respond to non-verbal cues and paralinguistic codes. Maggay (2002) and Mendoza (2004) later associated this with its dialectic "*pahiwatig*" which I would define as the sending of feelers. On one hand, Filipinos are adept at transmitting indirect messages (*pahiwatig*) through both language and action. And, on the other, they expect someone with the value of "*kapwa*" to have the decoding skill of *pakikiramdam*. As Mendoza & Perkinson (2003) underscored:

The surface perception of Filipino culture as smooth-seeking and serenity-entreating, in this particular case, is not merely Western mis-reading, but also protective Filipino mis-leading, safe-guarding a secret strength that offers its code only to a particular mode of participation. The code is not to be broken! (p. 291).

Enriquez further elaborated on "*kapwa*" by categorizing "others" under the two general groupings of outsiders (*ibang tao*, literal translation: other people) and insiders (*hindi ibang tao*, literal translation: not other people or one-of-us). The significance of these distinctions lies in how the "*kapwa*" concept is applied to social relations. Shown in Table 3, on the next page, are the expected and acceptable behavior based on the insider-outsider categories of *kapwa*.

Table 3. Eight behaviourally-recognized levels of collective interaction viewed from two categories of Kapwa

(Adapted from Enriquez, 1992, p 39-40)

Levels of social interaction based on collective identity		
Distance and lack of trust	“Outsider” category (Ibang tao or “other people”)	Insider/one-of-us category (Hindi ibang-tao or “not other people”)
	<i>Pakikitungo</i> (level of amenities/civility)	<i>Pakikipagpalagayang-loob</i> (level of mutual trust/rapport)
	<i>Pakikisalamuha</i> (level of “mixing”)	<i>Pakikisangkot</i> (level of getting involved)
	<i>Pakikilahok</i> (level of joining/participating)	<i>Pakikiisa</i> (level of fusion, oneness and full trust)
	<i>Pakikibagay</i> (level of conforming)	
	<i>Pakikisama</i> (level of adjusting)	
Intimacy, trust and shared identity		

In the above table, I have added the first column to demonstrate the movement from distance and lack of trust towards intimacy, trust and shared identity in the relationships of Filipinos (possibly also with non-Filipinos). Such emphasis was necessary to indicate how *kapwa* operates in both categories. The double arrow was chosen to symbolize a relationship path that that can lead to growth as well as to decline at any point. As Enriquez (1997) explained:

These levels are more than just interrelated modes of interpersonal relations. More importantly, they are levels of interaction which range from the relatively uninvolved civility *pakikitungo* to the total sense of identification in *pakikiisa*. The different levels of interpersonal relation do not only vary conceptually but behaviourally as well. All these levels of collective interaction are subsumed under the concept of *kapwa* (p. 45).

“*Kapwa*” characterizes my view of diasporic identities through a double lens of unity and segregation. I recognize that certain assumptions may be made about my intentions. Thus, I would like to clarify that I am not engaging in the heated discourse on otherness and alterity. These are arguments that I leave to more exceptional scholars like Bhabha (1994). On this issue, I would like to take Enriquez’s stance on remaining focused on the Filipino experience of identity. While he debated heatedly with other scholars about Filipino culture, the father of Filipino Psychology did not engage in external and universal debates on such topics. In fact, despite my reservations about ethnography’s colonial beginnings, I chose to engage with virtual ethnography.

Still, I must emphasize the relevance of investigating Filipino culture through a Filipino cultural lens. As Enriquez (1997) justified: “Language is not merely a tool for communication. Meaningful concepts for understanding a culture are most often identifiable in the culture’s own language” (p. 45).

Intentionally, I have aligned myself with an academic decolonizing movement that acknowledges the conflictedness of Filipino identities through both history (as discussed in the Introduction) and in possible future/s (see Chapter 4). *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* may have evolved from psychology, but it has spread to other social sciences (psychology, sociology, anthropology and communication). Research has mostly been confined in the Philippines (Pe-Pua & Ramos, 2012; San Juan, 2011). However, studies have also been conducted in various countries by Filipino scholars (Mendoza, 2006; Pe-Pua & Protacio, 2000).

Kapwa, the Filipino core value, provides the theoretical basis for my research. It has been provocative and controversial from the time Virgilio Enriquez elevated it to

scholarly discourse in the 1970s. The founder of *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* and his successors have underscored that it is organic to Filipino culture.

Proof of the above claim may be found in ethnographic studies about the Philippines. Even non-Filipino observers documented the various portrayals of *kapwa* without totally grasping its meaning. Theophilus Steward, an African-American chaplain assigned to the American army in the Philippines from 1899 to 1902, was the first to describe Filipinos as “hospitable to a fault” (Steward, 1901, p. 253). In dramatic detail, he described how Filipinos readily accepted two marginalized groups suffering great discrimination in human society at that time.

Steward, during a dinner party, was astounded when female guests freely mingled with their male counterparts. Even smoking, an activity that often excluded women, was jointly done by both sexes. The experience had a lasting effect on him, pushing him to write: “I cannot say...I have never seen an American woman with a cigar in her mouth. Experience has proven that English and American white men are ever against the elevation of others” (Steward, 1921, p. 315).

More significantly, he was moved by the Filipino respect and acceptance of “colored” peoples. Himself African-American, he related:

Arriving in Manila as among the first colored men wearing the sign of office on my uniform, I was almost embarrassed by the attentions shown me by the common people...I saw many times Filipinos [sic] place their hand along side of the hands of colored soldiers and say “igual,” equivalent to “All the same.” Men high in position and finely educated have done the same to me, pointing to their faces (p 345).

Eight decades later, French-American anthropologist Jean-Paul Dumont (1984) suggested an alternative form of ethnographic relationship whereby the ethnographer becomes a “tourist attraction” instead of a “tourist” (p. 139). This would mean applying the opposite of “Derrida’s *diférance*” through “*indiférance*” (similarity instead of difference). Without realizing it, Dumont was describing *kapwa* in the treatment he was given by residents of a small town in the Philippine island of Siquijor:

...my wife and I were their peers. And yet we were Americans, we remained outsiders, and we were consequently lumped together with any other strangers. This was indicated by the fact that every single tourist or official visitor...was brought...to our hut, as if this commonality of status was supposed to entail as well an empathic mutuality of compatible interests....For the people in the barangay, we were equal to but different from the town elite....we displayed a difference that did not make any difference. Their experience of us could not and did not register with them since, by being reduced to our similarities to the dominant social class, we were as good as not experienced by them at all. At a conceptual level as well as a practical one, the barangay people knew how to cope with the dominance of their patrons, which was the only otherness that their culture let them truly experience (pp. 143-144).

As seen in the previous examples, *kapwa* has long been observed in Filipino culture. It has, however, been misinterpreted by non-Filipinos as “hospitality to a fault”—a vulnerability “savored and abused” by Spanish colonizers (Agoncillo, 1973, p. 6). While the cultural value germinated organically in pre-colonial Philippines, it found resonance in Catholicism (Reyes, 2012b). *Kapwa* found “translation,” a concept I have

borrowed from Rafael (1988), in Jesus' teachings of loving others as you would love yourself. MacDonald (2004) boldly suggested that Christianity introduced a religious foundation to the moral values of polytheistic Filipino social groups. But, unlike him, I would not totally discount the existence of religious codes of ethics before the Philippines was Catholicized.

The above examples demonstrate how ethnographers were unable to recognize *kapwa* as an essential part of Filipino culture. Enriquez's contribution, thus, has been invaluable to Philippine studies. His death in 1994 has been considered a tragedy on many levels. Critics have even questioned the continued survival and progress of *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* as a robust movement (Church & Katigbak, 2002; San Juan, 2006). Despite such pessimism, Pe-Pua and Ramos (2012) have described it as "as one of the most advanced movements in the world in indigenization" (p. 408). This has been said alongside admissions of its shortcomings in developing and clarifying theories and methodologies. Church and Katigbak (2002) have raised the same point a decade ago.

More recently, Clemente (2011) provided an overview of published research by Filipino psychologists in the last three decades. His aim was to evaluate the progress of *Sikolohiyang Pilipino*. Agreeing with the above scholars, he observed that common forms of indigenization were limited to choice of topics (those relevant to the Filipino) and the application of Western theories to Filipino contexts.

Perhaps in answer to all of the above, recent years have seen a resurgence of interest in Filipino indigenous methods and *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* concepts. A new generation of Filipino scholars has emerged (Estacio, 2012; Nobleza, 2012; Ramos, 2010; Reyes, 2012b; Titular, 2013). As individuals, each member has sought to concentrate on

particular research interests. There has been no organized movement save for irregular efforts to seek out kindred minds. Individual efforts seem to address not only present and future applications of Filipino endogenous theories and methodologies but also a reinvestigation of their historical origins. As a member of this emerging group, I have focused my attention on decolonizing virtual ethnography through *kapwa* as both theoretical and methodological frame.

The theoretical foundations of *Kapwa*

The significance I have given to *kapwa* as the core of Filipino identities required me to take a closer look at its development not only in Filipino culture but also in Filipino scholarship. My initial problem was how to pin down its origins. Save for sparse references to general Western disciplines (Italian philosophy, Italian psychology and phenomenology), Enriquez seemed devoted to his aims of academic decolonization—severing ties from Western scholarship by not referring to any foreign sources. The published history of *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* goes no further than acknowledging that Enriquez had a Ph.D. in social psychology from the Northwestern University in Illinois (Pe-Pua & Protacio, 2000; Pe-Pua & Ramos, 2012). In passing, he once cited Wilhelm Wundt’s concern that psychology was more aligned with the natural sciences than the “cultural sciences” (Enriquez, 1997, p. 40). But he did so only to introduce Filipino indigenous psychology as a branch of the latter. Though Enriquez never claimed that *kapwa* and other concepts were exclusive only to Filipinos, he and his successors did not go beyond referring to their similar demonstration in other cultures.

Meanwhile, the evolutions of *kapwa* through Philippine colonial history reminded me a lot of the history of Filipino identity. Permutations were similar to what some

(MacDonald, 2004; Rafael, 1988) have interpreted as Filipino folk Catholicism. Reyes (2012a), for example, has shone a light on *kapwa*'s resemblance to St. Thomas Aquinas' virtue ethics. This comparison, Reyes insists, has only been to clarify Filipino philosophy through a familiar frame while avoiding simplistic replacement of one concept for another.

Despite Enriquez's silence on his Western influences, San Juan (2006) drew a connection between his ideas and those of C.S. Peirce (on "Secondness"), Bourdieu ("power and knowledge production") and Bakhtin ("language games"). Another name that Enriquez himself supplies is that of Filipino philosopher Ricardo Roque Pascual who was a student of Bertrand Russell at the University of Chicago.

I am inclined to think that Enriquez followed two particular traditions in philosophy: Pragmatism and phenomenology. Both have challenged Cartesian dualism which separates epistemology from ontology. Enriquez seems to emphasize the importance of being as part of knowing—an idea shared by C.S. Peirce, John Dewey and Martin Heidegger. These are scholars I have likewise considered my philosophical ancestors.

In fact, I have recognized commonalities between Heidegger's *dasein* and Enriquez's *kapwa*. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger (1962) offered an alternative way of being as "being-in-the-world'...(as) a unitary phenomenon" (p. 78). He further expounded on *dasein* as "every day being-with-one-another" (p. 164). *Kapwa* is also a way of being that fuses humanity with the world. But it diverts from *dasein* in its basic unitary assumption of a collective identity.

John Dewey (1922/2007), on the other hand, extended the philosophical debate to education. He emphasized the importance of lived experience to learning—reintegrating ontology with epistemology. Indirectly, he also suggested the addition of axiology (ethics) to this assembly.

The discourse on shared identity has certainly been taken up long before Virgilio Enriquez began his *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* movement in the 1970s. For instance, San Juan (2006) duly noted *kapwa*'s resemblance to Kant's Categorical Imperative in terms of that which brings people together despite their differences. There are, admittedly, some similarities between *kapwa* and Immanuel Kant's version of ethics. However, their divergence is subtle but nonetheless foundational. *Kapwa* begins with a collective consciousness suggested by the use of "us" in both categories of "others." The insider is, thus, considered "one-of-us" (*hindi ibang tao*) while the outsider is labelled as "not-one-of-us" (*ibang tao*). Categorical Imperative, on the other hand, begins with individual consciousness. This is evident in the way Kant (2002) philosophized: "...if I were that alone, all my actions would always be in accord with the autonomy of the will; but since I intuit myself at the same time as member of the world of sense, they ought to be in accord with it (p.70)...."

As mentioned earlier, Reyes' work as my contemporary Filipino scholar has been to study the philosophical roots of *loob* (inner self) as a Filipino virtue and the *kapwa* (collective identity) as a Filipino value. He (2012a) has suggested that these are hybrids—seeds of which germinated in endogenous culture but were further cultivated during precolonial and Spanish colonial periods. The Filipino philosopher has admitted:

...the Spanish tradition merely widened and enriched Filipino words, such as *Loob* and *Kapwa*, and did not replace the language with Spanish, or replace these terms with Spanish terms, it would seem that Spanish colonization was more complementary than detrimental...as though it managed to introduce new colors to a pre-existing tapestry without rending the tapestry itself (p. 11).

Much of my colleague's work has been aimed at understanding *kapwa* by dissecting its philosophical underpinnings. Reyes (2012a) has acknowledged its resemblance to the virtue ethics of ancient Greek philosophers and their medieval counterparts. He has proposed that these have more resonance to Filipino ethics, due to their "pre-modern" nature, than Kant's deontological ethics or J.S. Mill's Utilitarianism. Reyes has, thus, chosen to apply St. Thomas Aquinas' concepts to *kapwa* and *loob*. He has noted that *kapwa* is the telos or goal of Filipino virtues like "*utang na loob* (debt of gratitude), *hiya* (shame or propriety) and *bahala-na* (let it be) (p. 4)." Still, there are some differences between Filipino virtue ethics to that of St. Thomas Aquinas. Reyes has raised the basic issue of directedness. While Aquinas' virtue ethics are internally directed within the individual, its Filipino counterpart is outwardly directed towards Other that is not really other.

Primarily, Reyes has drawn a clear line between *kapwa* as the inclusion of *other* to one's self in stark opposition to more familiar conceptions of *other* as distant and different. This, he emphasized, has been "distorted through the eyes of liberal individualism, where individual will and liberty trumps any thought of harmony or oneness with others (Reyes, 2012a, p. 13)." Even so, Reyes has acknowledged the attempts of more contemporary scholars like Martin Buber and Emmanuel Levinas to

draw attention to human relations. However, echoing my own thoughts, he has noted a foundational difference between *kapwa* and such philosophical attention on associations between self and other:

...for us, this is not a postscript to our philosophical narrative, but the very starting point. And even at present, even with the voice of Levinas, this voice is still tied to individualism, because for him the encounter and recognition of the *l'autre* or other (which is not the same as *kapwa*) includes an endless difference and distance, the *infini* (Levinas). For him there is no hope of a genuine oneness with the other. But for us, the very reason why we call it *kapwa* is because at the very least, even in a weak way, there is already a thread of oneness present, which is why we use the prefix “ka-,” and we hope that this will one day grow to an even stronger and more committed oneness (Reyes, 2013, p. 8).⁴

This tendency to seek oneness has been so deeply ingrained in me as a Filipino that its philosophical contradiction caused me cognitive dissonance. In one of my doctoral classes, I chose to describe closeness in the words of Chilean poet Pablo Neruda (2007): “...only in this way in which I am not and you are not, so close that your hand upon my chest is mine, so close that your eyes close with my sleep” (p. 35). The pride and confidence I felt in finding the appropriate words to describe closeness were instantly replaced with confusion and self doubt. Instead of confirmation, my Canadian professor bewildered me with a warning: “No, no, no, Almond. That is not closeness. Levinas tells us that other is forever other.” My silenced opposition to such otherness only found articulation when I dove into my study of *kapwa* and *Sikolohiyang Pilipino*.

⁴ English translation of original Filipino text provided by Jeremiah Reyes.

In our email exchanges, Jeremiah Reyes and I have discussed the uniqueness of *kapwa* as an identity that fuses self with other(s). He has since clarified his thoughts about *pakikipagkapwa* (the mother method of this research) as “...not for the individual only, but for two or more people. When it involves several people, it is called *pakikipagkapwa*, when it is widened to an even larger extent, it becomes *bayan* or nation (Reyes, 2013, p.7).”⁵

The significance of the above to my interest in *kapwa* as the core of Filipino diasporic identities cannot be denied. Reyes has questioned what form *kapwa* may take outside the Filipino nation. He has noted that Enriquez aspired to one day find the existence of *kapwa* in non-Filipinos. Avoiding claims of cultural resonance among other peoples, Reyes has chosen to re-emphasize the difference between Western Philosophy and Philippine philosophy. While the former is founded on individuality, the latter emerges from *kapwa* or *pakikipagkapwa*.

But, to focus on what makes *kapwa* unique or different seems to betray what it represents—a view characterized by intimacy and familiarity. So let me, instead, acknowledge that this core Filipino value is also reflected in other cultures. According to Enriquez (1986b): “...the Filipino language has two pronouns for the English ‘we’: *tayo*, an inclusive we, and *kami*, an exclusive ‘we.’ As found in the national languages of Indonesia and Malaysia, *kita* includes the listener; *kami* excludes him” (p. 12).

As a Filipino indigenous scholar, my aim has been to contribute to indigenous research in several ways. The first has been to investigate the virtual and material manifestations of *kapwa* through Filipino diasporic identity renegotiation on Facebook. This has been an endeavour that potentially revises and alters indigenous concepts and

⁵ English translation from original Filipino text provided by the author (Jeremiah Reyes).

methodologies. The next section introduces my attempt to fit a Filipino endogenous (neocolonial) frame into a Western research tradition.

The ontology of the collective has not been confined to Southeast Asia alone. I have likewise found resonance in the cultures of Canada's First Nations. In fact, Cree scholar Shawn Wilson (2008) observed that: "So many of the conditions that we have faced as colonized peoples are the same, but more importantly to me, our views of the world seem to be so similar" (p. 28).

This reflection on similar worldviews, to me, has signified the importance of *kapwa*. While I may speak particularly of Filipino diasporic identities on Facebook, I may likewise echo the experiences of other diasporic people. But this echoing should not be taken as a duplication of the same thing. Max van Manen (2011) differentiated the representation of experience from the presentation of experience. Referring to vocative writing in phenomenology, he suggested:

But when evocation lets something present itself, we should not consider it as a rhetorical device that produces a presence or an absence of a presence (an alias of an original). The notion of evocation does not necessitate relational distinctions such as between original and copy, the real and the virtual, essence and appearance.... What is brought forth in an evocation is not an understanding mediated by a concept but an immediate (unmediated) resonance or awareness (p.2).

More significant to me as a researcher is how the concept of *kapwa* fits with my interest in Filipino cultural identities. Enriquez (1986) clearly said: "Concepts

indigenous to Filipinos are not necessarily peculiar only to the Philippines, but they have specific meanings which are closer to the Filipino experience” (p. 12)

That said, I do not oppose the application of all Western concepts and theories on the basis of cultural fit. Enriquez (1992) warned that: “Uncritical rejection is just as dangerous as uncritical acceptance of Western theories” (p. 30). Whether I admit it or not, to do so also contradicts the nature of my American-style education. My MA thesis, completed in 2006 at the University of the Philippines, integrated Stuart Hall’s Critical Cultural Theory, Marshall McLuhan’s Medium Theory and Herbert Blumer’s Symbolic Interactionism. The topic of that study was how Filipino long-distance relationships were redefined by the use of new media (the Internet and mobile phone). Closeness in distanced and mediated relationships was the site of my interest then. In this case, I have moved on to how social media (Facebook) offers what Bhabha (1994) calls a “Third Space” for the renegotiation of Filipino diasporic identities (p.56).

As a communication scholar, I find it necessary to acknowledge how *kapwa* also resonates with some communication theories. This short list is, admittedly, reflective of my own biases as a researcher. I have used these theories in previous research projects.

Obviously, Stella Ting-Toomey’s Face Negotiation Theory (1985) is the closest fit. Ting-Toomey, born in Hong Kong but educated in the US, is credited for her bringing “facework” into intercultural communication discourse. She suggested that individualistic (Western) and collectivistic (Eastern) cultures have different conflict management styles. The importance of saving collective “face” (reputation/dignity) is driven towards indirect communication. For individualistic cultures, the direct route is favored.

Another aspect of *kapwa* is reflected in the principles of Social Penetration Theory by Altman and Taylor (1973). Enriquez's distinction between surface and core values parallel the former's use of the onion metaphor in a collective identity. In the Western model, the intimacy between people is gauged through individual self disclosure represented by penetration from mere surface information to the depth of an individual's core exposure.

Despite the menu of communication concepts and theories available to me, I have chosen *kapwa* for its relevance to Filipino diasporic identities. As Enriquez (1986) has aptly justified:

...the language of the Philippines is a good starting point as any, if not better than most, for understanding Filipino behaviour. In any case, I would find it logical to look for a key concept for understanding Filipino behaviour in the Filipino language without discounting the possibility that such a key concept might be found in a non-Philippine language or that it may not even exist in any other language (P 7).

In the above discussion, I have acknowledged that *kapwa* is not exclusive and unique only to Filipinos. Other cultures may have similar values. But because of such similarity, my research may speak to the experiences of other cultural groups. Several concepts and theories (often Western) have already been applied to diasporic identities and virtual communities. In contrast, *kapwa* has not. Thus, this is research a gap I address by adapting *kapwa* as my theoretical frame.

Do Diasporic Filipinos embrace kapwa as a core value?

For some time, Filipino scholars have debated over the identity of Overseas Filipinos. Zeus Salazar, a Philippine historian with graduate and postgraduate degrees from Europe, argued that *Filipinoness* was determined by location. In the discourse, this meant intellectual space as well as geographic location. He did not consider scholars who spoke and wrote in foreign languages to foreign audiences as members of the indigenous movement. In the same way, Salazar believed Filipinos no longer living in the Philippines were no longer Filipinos (Pe-Pua & Protacio, 2000 & Mendoza, 2002). Such radical thinking later formed the *Pantayong Pananaw*, an inclusive paradigm aimed at developing one-ness through prioritizing the common Filipino through language and thought (Mendoza, 2006).

On the question of *Filipinoness*, I cannot agree with Salazar. I belong to a generation educated in a system where English was the medium of instruction. Unapologetically, I read and write better in English than in Tagalog (the language of my ancestors). My entire academic and journalistic career has been spent reading and writing in English as well. That I considered Canada my home for some time did not erase my Filipinoness. Thus, I defer to Enriquez (1997) whose belief was:

The Filipino has often been referred to as the ‘new Chinese’ because of an overwhelming number of Filipinos who seek their fortunes far from Philippine shores. Sikolohiyang Pilipino views these immigrants as no less Filipino than those who have opted to stay within the confines of the Philippine archipelago. Keeping this in view, the sikolohiyang Pilipino movement tries to strengthen and

develop awareness of expatriate Filipinos of their cultural heritage and indigenous identity (p 41).

Examples of *Filipinoness* in Filipino diasporic identities have been provided by scholars like Mendoza (2006). Importance given to *kapwa* was also observed in Filipino-Canadian patients by researchers from the University of Alberta's Faculty of Nursing (Pasco et al., 2004). Such was seen in their behaviour regardless of how long they had lived in Canada (from five to 40 years). Initially, they treated their nurses as *ibang tao* (not-one-of-us) by refusing to disclose significant information. Non-verbal cues, such as grimacing even when claiming they were not in pain, allowed nurses to understand the need for greater sensitivity. It was only after nurses fulfilled the protocol of personalized care that they were accepted as *hindi ibang tao* (one-of-us). Morales (2010) also discussed how Overseas Filipinos practised *pakikipagkapwa* (being one with others) through Twitter during the Ondoy Typhoon tragedy.⁶

Temporarily diasporic myself, I witnessed how Edmonton-based Filipinos enacted shared (diasporic) identities. My life in Canada began to heart-warming reception from Enterprise Square's Filipina cleaning ladies. Instantly, they said they were proud of my academic accomplishments. Succeeding days would have them boasting about me to non-Filipino friends. In the same way, my aunt and her friends regularly mentor Filipino newcomers they encounter in their daily lives. These people eventually become members of a Filipino network no different from extended families. Through the eyes of someone who spent all her adult life in the Philippines, these were

⁶ The typhoon, internationally known as Ketsana, hit Metro Manila in September of 2009. It brought record-breaking rainfall that submerged 80% of city. Over 300 lives were lost.

curious behaviour. Instead of Filipino camaraderie and fraternity, I expected rivalry and competition.

Such pessimism can be blamed on the belief in Filipino “crab mentality.” The metaphor refers to the behaviour of crabs in a boiling pot. To survive, each would climb over and push others out of the way. Mendoza & Perkinson (2003) would later expound on Enriquez’s (1997) argument against it by stating: “...SIR (Smooth Interpersonal Relations) complex of ‘social acceptance,’ ‘social equity’ (as in *utang na loob* or debt of gratitude) and ‘social mobility’ (crab mentality) are deemed merely reductionist/functionalist mis-interpretations of surface codes without regard for their deeper, underlying dynamic” (p.289).

Instead, Enriquez (1986, 1992, 1993, 1997) proposed that even negative behaviour could be seen through the lens of *kapwa*. This has been a distinct theme I have observed in the stories shared by diasporic Filipinos. A common complaint was how some distanced themselves from other Filipinos. At least three of my Filipino friends in Edmonton felt insulted by the persistent use of English by other Filipinos. “I kept talking to her in the vernacular but she kept answering in English. She did that even if I knew very well she moved to Canada as an adult,” my friend vented. Though I did not consider that a personal affront, she felt it was a subtle form of detachment. Similar incidents that, to me, seemed inconsequential were intricately laced with meaning.

Meanwhile, I also continued to hear examples of crab mentality—the bickering, the in-fighting and the back-biting. What I hardly noticed, however, was that the tales of Filipinos-gone-bad seemed to also function as warnings against the betrayal of *kapwa*. Enriquez chose to acknowledge the absence of this value in some Filipinos. Instead of

questioning the existence of *pakikipagkapwa* among all diasporic Filipinos, the absence of *kapwa* fit within his framework under the grouping of “not one of us” (*ibang tao*). The next section provides more details of these concepts.

Meanwhile, the existence of *kapwa* and *pakikipagkapwa* in social media platforms has been supported by previous research. Ramos (2010) investigated how young Filipinos in Manila categorize their Facebook contacts as *hindi ibang tao* (one of us) and *ibang tao* (not-one-of-us). My investigation applied such concepts in relation to the renegotiation of diasporic Filipino identities on Facebook.

Applying *Kapwa* as theoretical framework/ontological position

The concept of *kapwa* as well as its root movement, *Sikolohiyang Pilipino*, have been subjects of discourse since they were introduced by Enriquez in the 1970s (Church & Katigbak, 2002; Clemente, 2011; Mendoza, 2006, 2003; Mendoza & Perkinson, 2003; Pe-Pua, 2006; Pertierra, 2006; San Juan, 2006). In this section, I provide details of my theoretical framework/ontological approach vis-à-vis the scholarly debates that surround it. This required me to state my position on two popular criticisms against *kapwa*: Nativization/essentialism and cultural romanticism. To me, among the many issues raised against the concept I have adapted in my study, these two were the most significant to my interest in Filipino diasporic identities.

Much-deserved credit must first be given to S. Lily Mendoza, another Filipina scholar, for her landmark book *Between the homeland and the diaspora: The politics of theorizing Filipino and Filipino American identities*. Published in 2002, it is a compelling narrative of the roots, history, development and future potential of the Filipino indigenous movement vis-à-vis diaspora. For me, it was Mendoza’s voice that

stood out in the scholarly discourse. That these debates continue only prove that *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* and *kapwa* remain relevant.

One of the most repeated complaints against *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* involves nativization and essentialism. Such seems to stem from the very definition of *kapwa* as “shared identity.” Critics are particularly wary of the concept of “collective” culture. Pertierra (2006) expressed concern that the movement has neglected the important “differences within civil and global society” (p. 101). I consider this a misreading of *kapwa*. Though Enriquez labelled it a core Filipino value, he did not ignore differences amongst the Philippine social groups. In fact, he (1992) insisted that:

The philosophical position of *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* turns the problem of regionalism and language diversity in the Philippines into an advantage. Ethnic diversity and ethnic consciousness enrich national culture and help define the Filipino psyche. It is perhaps a happy coincidence that the majority of the/ contributors to the *sikolohiyang Pilipino* literature are actually non-Tagalogs....The concept of an indigenous psychology is precisely rooted in the reality of cultural diversity (pp 35-36).

Mendoza (2006) further clarified that “...indigenous proponents themselves are the first to acknowledge that what they are engaged in is not merely a process of ‘discovery’ (or even ‘recovery’) of a pre-constituted legacy from the past but rather a consciousness....(p. 221).” This consciousness is not characterized by fixity but by fluidity. It is the negotiated quality of *kapwa* that has, in fact, driven Church & Katigbak (2002) to comment that “different authors have presented different interpretations of

kapwa” (p 133). The said differences were observed in who were considered *kapwa*: Insiders and outsiders.

The confusion, I believe, is related to how cultural identities can be viewed as fixed or in flux. Mendoza and Perkinson (2003) have pointed out:

What Filipino *kapwa* gives us, in postcolonial permutation, is a complex codification of an on-going struggle, a mortal combat visited by the West on the rest of the globe for some five centuries now that continues to resist both political negotiation and verbal comprehension. Cultural ingenuity has had to go underground to survive, has layered masks over the tasks of meaning-making (p 290).

Another critique of *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* and *kapwa* involves their alleged romanticism. Admittedly, *kapwa* may paint a picture of cultural harmony. However, Enriquez (1992) acknowledged that not all Filipinos possess this value. He stressed:

One argument for the greater importance of *kapwa* in Filipino thought and behavior is the shock or disbelief that the Filipino registers when confronted with one who is supposedly *walang kapwa* (-tao) [no sense of *kapwa*]. If one is *walang pakisama* [having no ability to get along], others might still say, ‘He would eventually learn’ or ‘Let him be; that’s his prerogative.’ If one is *walang hiya* [no shame], others say, ‘His parents should teach him a thing or two.’ If one is *walang utang na loob* [no debt of gratitude] others might advise, ‘Avoid him.’ But if one is *walang kapwa tao* [no sense of *kapwa*], people say, ‘He must have reached rock bottom. *Napakasama na niya*. He is the worst’ (p. 61).

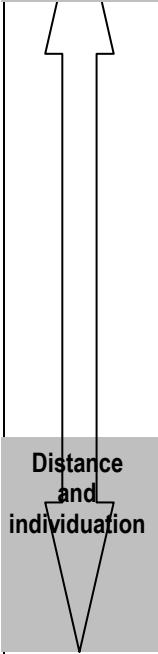
Enriquez (1997) associated this attitude to the abandonment of the indigenous culture for the colonial/neo-colonial ideal. Individuation, he asserted, also followed eight levels of social interaction under the *kapwa* frame. As shown on Table 4, on the next page, the levels lead not to intimacy and trust but to distance and individuation. Like in Table 3, I have added a double-sided arrow to indicate the fluidity of *kapwa* in allowing diasporic Filipinos to freely renegotiate from individualistic to collectivistic identities.

Enriquez (1997) firmly concluded that:

Without *kapwa*, one ceases to be a Filipino and human. This basic concept reaffirms the integrity of every individual regardless of his/her status. It refers to treating everyone with dignity and respect, not because they earn or deserve it, but because they are fellow human beings (p. 46).

In discussing issues surrounding *kapwa*, my aim has been to clarify how I apply it to my research on diasporic Filipinos. First, I consider Filipino diasporic identities (through the lens of *kapwa*) as fluid and under negotiation and renegotiation. This means allowing my participants to redefine Filipino identities in a manner responsive to their geographic and temporal location. Such displays my refusal to perpetuate archaic and historical accounting of Filipino culture. Second, I consider *kapwa* as possibly present or absent in the experiences of diasporic Filipinos. Notably, the core value of *kapwa* serves as my guide in understanding the diasporic identities of Filipinos on Facebook. I must emphasize, however, that I regard *kapwa* in this research as both a theoretical framework (the perspective from which I view my participants and their stories on Facebook) and an ontological position (the stance I take as a researcher). How *kapwa* is likewise the foundation of my method is further discussed in Chapter 3.

Table 4. Eight behaviorally-recognized levels of individualistic interaction viewed from two categories of Kapwa
(Adapted from Enriquez, 1997, p. 47)

Levels of social interaction based on individuation		
Intimacy, trust and shared identity	“Outsider” category (Ibang tao or “other people”)	Insider/one-of-us category (Hindi ibang-tao or “not other people”)
 Distance and individuation	<i>Pagsasarili</i> (level of individuation)	<i>Pagkukubli</i> (level of masking)
	<i>Pag-iwas</i> (level of avoidance)	<i>Pagwawalang-bahala</i> (level of lack of concern)
	<i>Paghiwalay</i> (level of separation)	<i>Pagsalungat</i> (level of disagreement)
	<i>Pagmamalaki</i> (level of autonomy)	
	<i>Pakikinabang</i> (level of self gain)	

Tables 2, 3 and 4 are used as guides for my analysis. Table 3 (“Eight behaviorally-recognized levels of collective interaction viewed from two categories of kapwa,” on Page 68) focuses on the renegotiation of diasporic identity as *kapwa* (collective identity) with Facebook contacts. Meanwhile, Table 4 (“Eight-behaviorally recognized levels of individualistic interaction viewed from the two categories of kapwa,” above) allows for the possibility that diasporic participants may not ascribe to the value of *kapwa*. Instead, focus is given to renegotiation of diasporic identity as displays of individualism through Facebook encounters with contacts. Still, this framework allows for the possibility of diasporic Filipinos may later fall back on their

collectivistic identity. Finally, Table 2 (Enriquez's Filipino behavioral patterns and value structure on Page 66) directs the discussion to renegotiation of diasporic identities on Facebook as cultural displays (behavior vis-à-vis cultural values).

The above explains the structure of this research. These three tables represent attentiveness to culture as both the theoretical and methodological bases of my investigation. However, it must be pointed out that integrating Filipino indigenous methods within a Western research tradition is not uncommon. This is especially true for studies investigating Filipino identity and culture. Titular (2013) used the *pamamaybay* approach, an indigenized form of phenomenology, in understanding the spiritual beliefs and lived experiences of Isla Verde residents. As presented in the next section, I chose to integrate Filipino indigenous methods within a virtual ethnographic framework to investigate Filipino identities on Facebook.

CHAPTER 3: Investigating virtual endography

My indigenous approach to research, rooted in *kapwa* as theoretical frame and ontological position, had subtle and profound implications. It meant researching not “on” my participants but “with” them. I joined my participants in investigating our diasporic identities on Facebook. In a superficial sense, it may seem like I applied the same data collection techniques as any ethnographer—focus interviews, focus group discussions, participant observation, discourse analysis and the like. However, following the lead of other *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* scholars, I made considerable use of *pakapa-kapa* (groping, feeling) and *pakikiramdam* (sensitivity to verbal and non-verbal cues) alongside these conventional methods.

In fact, I did more than merely copy previously-tested methods. I explored the potentiality of strengthening methodology through the direct application of theory. *Pakikipagkapwa*, the verb form of *kapwa*, became the foundation of these conventional methods. The research techniques I used lack context without the application of *pakikipagkapwa* (developing mutual trust through relationship building) as mother method. It was by treating participants as *kapwa* (no different from who I am) that my research design took shape.

The prefix “*pakiki*” suggests a constant request/invitation and acceptance of one’s participation in group activities (Enriquez, 1985). *Pakikipagkapwa* therefore, demands sensitively and constantly asking participants for their consent to engage in relationship building. According to Licuanan (1994), it essentially involves “justice and fairness” as well as “a concern for others” that are enacted through empathetic support and action (p.

36). Although ethics matters in all kinds of research, indigenous research applies “ethics as methodology” (Kovach, 2009, p. 54).

Taking an endogenous approach to virtual ethnography

While ethnography has certainly gone a long way from its Malinowskian beginnings, it continues to face various challenges (Boyd, 2008; Hine, 2000). These have led to transformations that answer particular criticisms against the research tradition (Behar, 1997 & 2003; Jackson, 1989; Stoller 1989, 2008 & 2012). For instance, I have been drawn to Public Ethnography—a new incarnation that calls for popularizing ethnography. The aim has been to address wider audiences through more creative means of reporting not limited to academic discourse. A network of scholars, headed by Royal Roads University’s Phillip Vannini, converged on the island of Victoria on June of 2012 for the first Public Ethnography conference.

Virtual ethnography, of course, is a growing branch of ethnography (Boellstorff, Nardi, Pearce & Taylor, 2012). Social science research of online cultures has been characterized by “innovation and anxiety” (Hine, 2005, p.9). Though gathering momentum in the last few years, ethnography of virtual worlds actually dates back to the late 1980s. But Boellstorff (2008) has lamented that “anthropologists, the supposed experts of the ethnographic method, have been latecomers to the conversation” (p. 66).

Of the three virtual ethnographers I mentioned in the introduction, only Boellstorff is an anthropologist. Hine, who has published books and journal articles on virtual ethnography, is a sociologist whose research interest includes technology and science. Danah Boyd, like me, specializes in media, communication and technology.

In truth, Christine Hine repeatedly emphasized that there is no prescriptive way to do virtual ethnography. Scholars have two opposing views: 1. That traditional research methods can easily be applied to online settings or, 2. That virtual worlds require a different kind of ethnography. For instance, Miller and Slater (2000) noted that conventional ethnography is highly applicable to online research. They have concluded that the Internet, just as the material world, is composed of various spaces wherein distinct cultures thrive. However, Sanders (2005) warned that:

...whether as a result of the way that social scientists learn qualitative methods, or due to lack of actual experience of ‘doing ethnography’ in the field, the principles of ethnography as a method of data collection are applied without astute attention to how such principles will react with the social conditions to which they are applied (p. 78).

Because there are no hard and fast ways to do virtual ethnography, scholars have applied their own research strategies (Boyd, 2008; Boyd, Boellstorff, Nardi, Pearce & Taylor, 2012). Neil Hair and Moira Clark (2003), both from the Cranfield School of Management, applied critical theory to heighten “participation, trust and commitment” in the virtual communities they investigated (p.1). It was through giving their research participants agency that they addressed what they called ethnography’s “crisis of representation” (p.1).

Boellstorff (2008), on the other hand, resisted calling his work on Second Life “virtual ethnography.” Though he used the same methods ascribed to that form of research, he preferred the term “virtual anthropology.” His contention was that the adjective “virtual” suggested this type of research is “less real (and ultimately less

valuable) than research conducted offline” (p. 65). He further emphasized that: “The ethnography of virtual life should not take the methodological form of ‘culture at a distance....’” (p. 65). In fact, he believed: “An anthropology of virtual worlds can be understood as a study of techne, even an exercise in techne” (p. 249).

It is perhaps with that in mind, that Hine (2005) stressed the importance of virtual ethnography as a growing tradition. To her: “...applicability of methods to online settings and the success of particular methodological claims have the potential to shape our understanding of what the technology is and who we as researchers are at the same time.... there are opportunities for reflexivity” (pp. 8-9).

In the very same book from which the above passage was published, Jankowski and Van Selm (2005) disagreed with this kind of optimism. They noted “the tensions at play between traditional social science research methods and Internet studies attempting to be innovative” (p. 203). The authors were, in fact, quite critical of this supposed innovativeness by virtual ethnographers. Instead, they suggested methodological gaps that need to be addressed. One of this spoke directly to my own interests as an online scholar. Jankowski and Van Selm (2005) suggested:

...continued work on the ethical issues embedded in Internet research. In the introduction to this volume, Hine elaborates on many of these issues and makes reference to the Association of Internet Researchers (AoIR) ethics committee work. As important as the contributions of this committee are, the relativistic stance taken by that committee is disturbing, when reduced to a position where all actions become ethically equal. Hine notes....that there is no universal set of

ethical principles for Internet research; this observation, however, cannot be taken as an ‘excuse’ for researchers doing whatever they want (p. 206).

This call for virtual research ethics resonates with my background as a media practitioner and a media ethics instructor. With this in mind, I propose the application of an indigenous approach to virtual ethnography. The term “indigenous” reflects the position of the researcher not as an outsider but as an involved insider. Instead of focusing on a culture (Boyd, 2008) or following where data leads us, the focus is on people. Such an approach involves *pakikipagkapwa* (developing mutual trust through relationship building). As Mackay (2005) aptly put it: “To my surprise, after completing my fieldwork I realized that ‘virtual communities’ seems to be much more an emic than an etic concept for the group I investigated (p. 147).”

Let me clarify that I am not accusing virtual ethnographers of having no concern for their participants. I acknowledge the work of other researchers in developing ethical ways to do online research. Boellstorff, Nardi, Pearce and Taylor (2012) devoted an entire chapter to ethics in their handbook on online ethnography. They suggested applying “the principle of care” within a power structure where the researcher is the main beneficiary of the research (p. 129).

While *pakikipagkapwa* certainly involves care, it does so based on relatedness and not on difference. The above authors noted that ethnography began with a curiosity on what makes humans different. In fact, they remind researchers to resist the “pressure to provide accounts of difference” (p. 63).

Kapwa focuses on what is common and shared by humans. Such relatedness becomes the basis for ethics that is tightly integrated into the research process. The

awareness of ethics goes beyond a required form to be filled out in the early stages of one's investigation or an after-thought during data construction. This is where Filipino indigenous methods divert from ethnography and participant observation. The difference lies in the importance it gives to similarity. It is in approaching the research participant not as an alien other but as "*kapwa*" (fellow human/fellow Filipino). According to Wilson (2008), "The relationship building that this sharing and participating entailed is an important aspect of ethical Indigenous research (p. 40)."

As mentioned in the previous chapter, I view *kapwa* as both a theoretical framework (providing an understanding of identity as collectivistic) and my ontological position (as a researcher who is one among other Edmonton-based Filipino diasporics on Facebook). It is likewise the foundation of my research methodology (as *pakikipagkapwa* or the extended action of my perspective and being as *kapwa*). This fusion of ontology, methodology and axiology may be seen in the way Max van Manen (2007) describes the phenomenology of practice as "...creating formative relations between being and acting, self and other, interiorities and exteriorities, between who we are and how we act (p. 11)."

In fact, *kapwa* sits in the middle of my research diagram (see Figure 1 on Page 62) as connected to the way Filipino indigenous research relates to my way of being-in-the-world (researcher as *kapwa* Filipino diasporic) and my being-in-the-world with others (*pakikipagkapwa*).

The above discussion of my way of researching comes from my awareness that methodology is significant because of the necessity for replication. On the surface level, one could say I apply participant observation and ethnography. But that is not the

complete picture. My Filipino indigenous approach is my research paradigm despite the superficial identification with virtual ethnography.

Indigenous seems much closer to who I am as a researcher. My identity is not only indigenous as a Filipino and, more so, as a *diasporic* Filipino but also as a long-time member of Facebook. Again, I borrow words from Cree scholar Wilson (2008):

I have a natural advantage in that participant observation in Indigenous communities has taken place all my life. In that sense this research is emic. Also, because I'm working within communities that I am already a part of, rapport had already been built and trust established. Relational accountability requires me to form reciprocal and respectful relationships within the communities where I am conducting research. The methodology is in contrast with observational techniques that attempt to be unobtrusive and not influence the environments studied (p. 40).

I must clarify my intention in contributing to virtual ethnography through my indigenous approach. This is how I am answering the call for more ethical ways to do online research. Even so, there is a potential to simultaneously attend to issues of data reliability and validity. The value of this indigenous protocol is reflected in an anecdote shared by Pe-Pua (1989) about her visit to a community in Hawaii:

I discovered that in putting my 'ulterior motive' aside and being genuinely interested in them and letting them be interested in me, I learned more. I came to appreciate the experiences of these Filipino migrant workers from the Philippines who came to Hawaii, their adjustment strategies, and how they managed to transplant much of their original culture to a new environment. After the

weekend, I went home not having any data recorded (except for some interesting pictures) but definitely richer in experience and perspective, confident that I can go back anytime and get the data that I want (p. 153).

My sensitivity to the deep-seated trauma of colonization and the compounding pain of diaspora prevents me from describing my work as autoethnography. The neocolonial underpinnings of my research topic make it impossible for me to consider “ethnography” as an appropriate label.

And, since I must be transparent and honest for research replicability’s sake, I need to state my discomfort in the use of the term “ethnography.” In previous pages, I have presented the reasons for this resistance. As Hine (2005) acknowledged:

“Methods...are not neutral devices...our knowledge of the new technologies would be shaped in significant ways by the methods through which we choose to know them and the underlying epistemological commitments on which those methods rely (p. 7).”

In laying out my planned research in the most transparent manner, I must be brave enough to locate my own scholarship. I have no illusions about sounding like Heidegger. But my former professor, David Geoffrey Smith (2003), once suggested that: “Special circumstances require language that may not exist in the operating lexicon of the day....” (p. 488). Like Boellstorff (2008), I will not label my work as “ethnography” even if, in many ways, it may be conceived to be such. My reasons have been clarified earlier in this section. Instead, I will apply a term coined by Virgilio Enriquez. I define my research paradigm as virtual endography. Enriquez (1997) suggested: “Since ‘indigenous’ has a negative connotation derived from the bias of colonizers against the native peoples, the term ‘endogenous’ is preferred. ‘Endogenous’ ...refers to ...within

the matrix of the native culture, based on the history, language, arts and common experience (p. 40).”

Labelling my methodology as “endography” is a political stance. My research resists against the persistent portrayal of Filipinos through a (neo)colonial lens. It likewise argues against the purist conceptions of Filipino identities as inextricably determined by geographic location. The word endogenous allows Overseas Filipinos to embrace Filipino diasporic identities despite physical distance from the Philippine archipelago. To describe one as indigenous requires being “sprung from the land” or “born in a country” (Online etymology, para. 1). Some of my participants consider themselves Filipino even if they were born in various parts of the world.

The issue of geography has spawned the question of inclusivity and exclusivity of Filipino identities. A heated debate erupted in the 1980s among Filipino scholars in the indigenizing movement on this unresolved issue (Mendoza, 2006). In Chapter 4, I present a digital perspective to this discourse. *Kapwa 2.0* introduces the kind of Filipino who remains connected to the Philippines through Facebook.

Meanwhile, I define virtual endography as online research guided by an endogenous (emic) approach that emerges or “grows from within” (Online etymology, para. 1). Significantly, it is research that focuses on people and believes that, in doing so, data will emerge. *Focusing on people* means generally doing *pakikipagkapwa tao*, a behaviour dictated by a deep concern for others as *hindi ibang tao* (one-of-us/not alien from me) or empathy. It involves relationship building through the development of mutual trust. An endogenous researcher allows the research design to emerge from her/his interaction with participants. Methods to be used are dictated by what feels most

natural to those participating in the research. Preference for certain techniques (interview, participant observation, etc.) may be expressed directly or indirectly. It is, thus, important for the researcher to apply sensitivity (*pakikiramdam*) through empathy (sharing their thoughts and feelings as one's own). *Pakikiramdam* or sensitivity is required for understanding what may be unspoken or indirectly revealed through non-verbal or paralinguistic cues. The comfort and ease of people are primary considerations for the type of methods to be used and the course the research will take. Underlying all these is the belief that participants should come before data.

Ethics is foundational to the endogenous approach. It is through relationship building that the research takes shape. But how can one use ethics as research methodology? This approach to data construction is something I developed as an interview technique during my years as a journalist.

Three years after I joined the newspaper straight from university, I was given the difficult task of interviewing the mother of a young woman gang raped and murdered. The story was sensational because the accused was a politician. A news editor facilitated my brief one-on-one with her only hours after the gruesome discovery of her daughter's body in a grassy ravine. I nervously approached her not knowing what to say. Without uttering a single word, I instinctively caressed her arm to express my sympathy. She grabbed my hand and, for over an hour, held it tightly while she spoke. I did nothing else but listen. There was no need to ask questions. She readily offered me everything without a second thought. The story that came out of that encounter landed on the front page; out-scooped the rival newspaper and impressed the news editor.

Over the years, without noticing it, I had applied this technique in many of my interviews. I once came face-to-face with a famous businesswoman whose father was a powerful and influential man in the Philippines. The assignment involved her generous donation to a shelter for battered women. I spent the first 45 minutes asking basic questions about her life as a businesswoman. Having established how successful she was, I asked her why she was supporting women whose lives were so different from hers. I would have accepted a less controversial explanation like wanting to give back or to help others. But, in response, she gave me an overdue tell-all that remained in the headlines for weeks to come. To my shock, she talked about being badly beaten by her former husband, a celebrated athlete. I was stunned to hear details about cuts, bruises, broken fingers and remaining silent for over a decade. The final revelation of her story created headlines in other newspapers and led to TV interviews. It was then, a decade after I first stumbled on the technique, that I realized the power of empathy.

By being sensitive to people's conditions, I prioritized *pakikipagkapwa* (showing empathy through relationship building) over data. And, as I said earlier and demonstrated in the anecdotes above, doing so allowed data to emerge.

Virtual endography grew from virtual ethnography as well as from Filipino indigenous research. While I have shaped ethnography to conform to the research topic, I have also made revisions to indigenous methods that at times begged for such. The next section discusses the adjustments I make to the research tradition founded by Enriquez in the 1970s.

Indigenous research, regardless of its ethnicity, has sought freedom from imperialistic structures that have labelled people "Other." As a Filipino researcher, I

struggle to free myself from being Other as well as treating others as Other. Thus began the methodological and theoretical explorations that drove my research.

A pilot study of virtual endography

It was with a combination of anxiety and anticipation that I launched a pilot study in the winter months of 2012. Though my field site was Facebook, I decided to expand it to geographic locations in Canada and the Philippines—the places where my Filipino diasporic participants also existed. This meant being both a physically embodied and virtually embodied researcher.

As a journalist and communication researcher, I enjoyed doing face-to-face interviews and group discussions. Doing online research also came easy for me having been a long-time netizen. In the mid 1990s, I joined the first batch of Filipino chatters on Internet Relay Chat, a synchronous conferencing platform. We were considered by many of our peers as computer nerds who wasted our time befriending strangers on our computer screens. It would take a few more years for chatting to become popular in my country. What I did as a hobby for years later gave me the skills to do online interviews for my MA thesis. Those interviews were done exclusively through instant messaging within the confines of a dedicated chat window. I knew that doing research on Facebook offered greater challenges.

Still, I was taken by surprise when an ethics reviewer strongly advised me not to post comments on my participants' Facebook timelines/walls. In my ethics application, I expressed the need to protect the privacy and anonymity of my participants on such a public platform. That meant planning to create a Facebook persona in the same way that Tom Boellstorff (2008) became Tom Bukowski on Second Life. In fact, I looked

forward to doing my research in the same immersive way he had done his. However, I understood the reviewer's concern about my comments being made "public" on Facebook. There was no way for me to prevent participants' contacts from reading our exchanges. That could lead to exposing their identities as well as drawing the attention of non-participants to engage with me as a researcher in disguise.

Thus, I initially felt forced to choose between one of only two potential roles as an online researcher—that of a lurker or de-lurker. Lurking and de-lurking were common virtual practices that researchers have used to approach Internet research. Rafaeli, Ravid and Soroka (2004) defined these dialectics on the basis of online participation. According to them, "...de-lurking...is transfer from passive participation (only visiting the forum to read) to active participation (actively posting opinions and thoughts on the forum)" (p.4).

Dwelling on Facebook as *saling pusa*. The ontological question behind lurking and de-lurking surfaced in investigating online forums years before my research. Since then, social media such as Facebook have revolutionized online communities. It was this shift that allowed me to become a dweller on Facebook. This was an idea I borrowed from Heidegger (1971/1975) who associated dwelling with the human activity of "building."

By building my identity as a member of Facebook, I contributed to and participated in the production of newsfeeds. Since my contacts were exclusively research participants, I was able to engage with only those who agreed to be part of my study. I did so by building who I was through my Facebook profile, status updates, photo and

video uploads. Though I changed my name and birthday, everything else still pointed to the real me as a diasporic Filipino in Edmonton.

This aligns with *kapwa* as in the case of individuals welcomed by a group through honorary status. Enriquez (1992) clarified:

The idea of inclusion vs. exclusion or membership vs. nonmembership is not unknown to the Filipino. He just draws the line in a more flexible manner.... In another culture, the concept of membership could be a matter of black or white with no intermediate gray. The Filipino can accommodate a non-member just as if he were a member.... The *saling-pusa* (informal member) is allowed to break some rules expected to be strictly followed by members.The Filipino concept of *saling-pusa* may be 'playful' in tone and may not be found in other cultures, but it is nonetheless significant. It indicates the value attached to the feelings of *kapwa* so hypocrisy in social interaction is avoided (p. 55).

Two simple Filipino words are used to refer to someone who is both an insider and an outside. *Sali* which means to join or participate and *pusa* which refers to a cat. Though my participants and I never mentioned the word in our conversations, we embraced my inclusion in the face of my obvious exclusion from their group. They always welcomed me at their events and accommodated my research. In return, I did my best to accept their invitations to participate in group activities minus the formality of membership.

Dwelling on Facebook took the unusual form of being both researcher and researched (a Filipino diasporic). Many times, I was logged in on one browser window as Almond Aguila and as my researcher persona on another. I had to consciously remind

myself to remain present in the phenomenon I investigated. Muting my voice as a researcher had become habit. My research training in the Philippines required me to view data from a distance without the contamination of my own experiences.

But, in the early months of my PhD program, my appreciation for my own lived experiences became influenced by phenomenology. For two terms, I joined a class of 19 students exploring phenomenology through the patient guidance of Cathy Adams (my supervisor) and Max van Manen (her mentor). Through them, I learned the value of the “lived throughness” of phenomenological text (Van Manen, 1997, p. 351). This quality concretized experience in the mind/heart of the reader through the evocation of relatable experience. Van Manen further described this as having “...the effect of making us suddenly ‘see’ something in a manner that enriches our understanding of everyday life experience” (p. 345).

From the time I began my diasporic life in Canada, I was keenly aware of what it felt like to be away from home. My reflections, naturally, involved my Facebook experience. But it took a painful loss for me to “see” what it really meant to be away from home on Facebook.

September 7, 2012 was a Friday. I had decided to stay “home” to work on a research paper. Mid morning caught me still in my pajamas hunched over my laptop in the kitchen where I just had breakfast. My housemate was away on holiday. Though I had been alone for some weeks, I appreciated the silence of an empty house.

I was not totally alone, however. On the Internet, a place where I went each time I switched on my computer, I manifested my presence on Yahoo! Messenger, Skype and Facebook. Most days, I welcomed hellos from contacts who knew nothing about what

pressing work needed to be done. But, that day, I was possessive of my time—unwilling to even take my usual morning commute. I was, thus, far from pleased when I heard the Facebook chat alert sound. It was my cousin’s husband saying hello from Manila.

Nothing about the interruption seemed like he had something important to say. We were on friendly terms but rarely chatted on Facebook. I quickly glimpsed at my laptop clock (set to Manila time since I arrived in Canada) and my irritation grew. It was close to midnight on that side of the world.

I took a minute to reply with a friendly “hi.” Without a warning, he immediately stated he had “bad news.” I said a frantic prayer, instantly worried for the welfare of my dad. Like many other diasporic Filipinos, I dealt with the guilt of leaving behind an ageing parent. I lost my mom to cancer in 2003. As an only daughter, despite the great distance, I could not shake the responsibility of being my father’s primary caregiver. I compensated for this abandonment by talking to him on Skype daily. He appreciated video chatting since it allowed us to both see and hear each other. To him, it was the closest thing to actually being together. Though I communicated with other loved ones on Facebook, I depended more on Skype for that emotional connection to home.

At that moment, however, I felt my Facebook experience truly become real for me. I braced myself for the worse. My biggest fear, upon leaving Manila, was to lose my only living parent while I was away. That I would be given “bad news” through Facebook seemed poignant, ironic and somewhat cruel.

My cousin-in-law’s third consecutive message revealed, with some consolation, that his news did not involve my dad. In the late hours of that Friday night in Manila, we lost my uncle to a massive heart attack. His death was my second biggest fear as a

migrant daughter. After my mom's death, my uncle became my dad's constant companion—sitting with him every afternoon even when no words were exchanged. I left my dad knowing he would not be alone so long as his brother was around.

Yet, on that mid morning, I felt a painful force dragging me from Edmonton to my distant home. My dad was asleep in his bed, blissfully unaware of our family's great loss. I was told our house, just a few meters away from my uncle's, remained dark despite frantic shouts from outside. Phone calls remained unanswered. Eventually, someone turned on the lights and my dad learned his brother was gone.

Meanwhile, I helplessly waited for him on Skype. Months before, I had planned an extended trip to Manila in time for Christmas that year—the first I would spend with my family since 2009. I was to fly home in early November. It was the soonest I could leave without disrupting work. Despite my uncle's death, I knew I could not be with my family. So, I kept my vigil on Facebook and Skype. This was what it meant to be diasporic, I realized in a house that became painfully empty.

I kept my dad company on Skype during the first dreadful hours. We talked about nothing in particular. A few times, my voice broke and tears rolled down my cheeks. But he remained calm and collected as always—swearing he was fine as I worried about him a continent away. Eventually, we both needed to return to the normalcy of our lives even on such an abnormal day. I suggested we keep our Skype connection open—minimizing our chat window on two computer screens. On another window, I was still on Facebook as Almond Aguila.

Described above was how I answered Ruth Behar's call (1997) to do research that would break my heart. Echoing my own emotions, she confessed (2003):

When the news came that my grandfather had died and that I could not get back to Miami Beach in time for the funeral, it was as if my heart was screaming....Afterwards I was stricken by guilt, rage, and moral confusion. I suddenly found the displacement of anthropology to be cruel and senseless.... And then it became clear to me that the loss of my grandfather...and my research findings...could not be separated. They were, they had to be, the same story. Identification and connection rather than distance, difference and otherness are what I would seek as an ethnographer. I would use not only the observational and participatory methods of classical anthropology but the subtle forms of knowledge found in ineffable moments of intuition and epiphany (p. 23).

Great loss was also the catalyst that pulled Renato Rosaldo into the world of the Ilongot headhunters in Northern Philippines years after he completed his ethnographic research. His wife Michelle died while doing further fieldwork with him in the Philippines. Before he was catapulted into the depths of his grief, Rosaldo did not fully grasp how mourning could move men to headhunt:

Probably I naively equated grief with sadness. Certainly no personal experience allowed me to imagine the powerful rage Ilongots claimed to find in bereavement. My own inability to conceive the force of anger in grief led me to seek out another level of analysis that could provide a deeper explanation for older men's desire to headhunt. Not until some fourteen years after first recording the terse Ilongot statement about grief and a headhunter's rage did I begin to grasp its overwhelming force (Rosaldo, 2004, p. 168).

In practice, it has been a struggle to acknowledge myself as a human researcher. My scholarly training predisposed me to render myself invisible in the very phenomenon I was experiencing. Stoller (2012, June), in his key note address at the Public Ethnography conference, lamented that some forms of research were robbing the human experience of its heart and soul. Quoting Janowitz (1963), he blamed his initial failure in doing ethnography as a young scholar on “the dead hand of competence” (p. 151). His success came only after he surrendered himself to *the experience of* rather than to *the protocol of* ethnography (Stoller, 1989). Frueh (1996) likewise warned that the obsession with rigor may become synonymous to “rigor mortis” and may later render one an “intellectual corpse” (p. 4). This balancing act--of remaining true to social science research without detaching epistemology from ontology--placed me between power and vulnerability.

Revising and updating Filipino indigenous methods. My pilot study, beginning January and extending until September of 2012 (the start of my dissertation research), became the testing ground for virtual endography. I conducted my investigation using an alternative approach—one that did not focus on the data (though that is still what I did by fully disclosing my research purpose) but on my participants. How am I sure this is what I did? My participants confirmed this without being asked. After several emails and Facebook private messages, one of my participants started referring to me as “*ate*” (ah-teh) or older sister. Although my consent form stipulated that I would only analyze publicly-accessible wall posts, I was told by another participant that he had given me full access to all his posts—a privilege he did not afford to all his contacts.

Pakikipagkapwa was also reflected in the way I was asked to become judge at a talent show organized by my participants' youth group. They too followed social "protocol" by courting the request not through my participants (who would have been sensitive to me feeling coerced or obligated to say yes). Instead, the request came from my gatekeeper who helped me during my pilot recruitment but did not become a participant until much later.

As researcher, I have applied indigenous ethics through *pakapa-kapa* (literally translated as groping or touching; being sensitive to non-verbal cues) and *pakikiramdam* (sensitivity to the feelings of people). These two have guided me on when to pursue participants and when to back off. My concern for people, taken from the Filipino worldview, carried more weight than the quest for data.

The difficulty of describing my flexible and emergent research design showed up in the early stages of my pilot study. Initially, I attempted to apply the indigenous method *pakapa-kapa* as "blindly" doing search. This was how Filipino indigenous scholars have described this "suppositionless" approach to research (Pe-Pua, 2006; Pe-Pua & Protacio, 2000; Pe-Pua & Ramos, 2012). But, it became obvious that I was making revisions to the indigenous methods described in the literature.

Instead of making no assumptions about my research, I became fully aware of my own biases. This has been framed by my communication technology background as well as my pedagogical concerns. Thus, I made an effort to situate myself in the discourse on migration with no discrimination against Western research. After all, I have been shaped in many ways by my North American-style education. I also acknowledged that, as an

Overseas Filipino, I am an insider to the Filipino diasporic experience. Therefore, my authentic voice and my personal story were also part of my research.

The previous paragraphs describe deviations from *Sikolohiyang Pilipino*. Some scholars of this tradition do not review previous literature on their research topics. Their belief is that cultural contexts can only be discovered through “suppositionless” research. While they likewise take the “insider” position as researchers, they do not consider their self-reflection as part of the findings.

That said, I have made revisions to some of the indigenous methods introduced to me by *Sikolohiyang Pilipino*. I must note that the tradition stems from psychology, a field of study focused on cognitive behavior. As a communication scholar and pedagogue, I am more inclined to study social discourse. These differences may explain my alternative views of *pakapa-kapa* (groping), *pakikipagkapwa* (development of mutual trust through relationship building), *pakikipagkwentuhan* (sharing of stories) and *pagtatanong-tanong* (informal asking of questions).

In my version of *pakapa-kapa*, I did not walk into the research “blindly.” I had an understanding of the phenomenon of diaspora not only through my own experience but also through the literature I have read. It was in this way that I applied researching “in the dark,” a concept Max van Manen introduced to me as a form of qualitative writing. So, despite an awareness of my biases, I was open to letting lived experience appear in its own form. Though I planned to apply particular research methods, I remained sensitive to the verbal and non-verbal cues of my participants. Their action and inaction allowed me to make adjustments to the ways in which we interacted. For example, instead of

doing a virtual focus group discussion, I organized a face-to-face gathering based on the unresponsiveness to my initial invitation.

Doing my pilot was exactly that--researching “in the dark” (Van Manen, 2002, book cover). It felt like I was walking into a vast, dark space with my arms stretched out. My hands often reached out for things to touch gently at first. Once I was sure they wouldn't break, I became more confident and aggressive—holding and, then, grabbing. Throughout all these, I tried to remain sensitive to my participants as *kapwa* (other people as part of my being). More accurately, I was not groping and feeling in the dark for “things.” That *pakapa-kapa* often refers to people and not objects often leaves Filipinos in a fit of naughty giggles. In colloquial English, it is the same as “feeling someone up.” This technique has tethered me as a researcher. It has reminded me that my participants are not objects of research but humans with feelings and opinions that matter. These matter even if expressed indirectly through verbal and non-verbal cues. Getting a “feel” of people is, for me, the basis of my Filipino indigenous approach. This is how I applied *pakapa-kapa* in my research.

But the research techniques I used lack context without the application of *pakikipagkapwa* (developing mutual trust through relationship building) as mother method. It was by treating my participants as *kapwa* that my research design took shape. I did this by having a genuine interest in them as people and not simply as participants. In having a concern for their well-being, I became sensitive to what research techniques made them most comfortable.

I was also making revisions to Filipino indigenous methods through online research. The need to assess paralinguistic and non-verbal cues became more

challenging in this way. Boellstorff, Nardi, Pearce and Taylor (2012) have noted that online interviewing involves “textual listening” which requires a researcher to be adept at “rich textual communication practices” (p. 101). As an IRC chatter, I was convinced that online culture was not the only consideration in textual listening. Filipino communication is known to be particularly indirect and phatic (Maggay, 2002). *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* was founded on these nuances through embodied communication. Thus, I became even more sensitive to prompts such as silence, avoidance, politeness and the like in the virtual conversations I engaged in. Often, I took the side of caution by repeatedly asking (directly or indirectly) if s/he was willing to answer my questions or if I had understood what was being said.

In 2010, Filipino psychologist Pia Ramos conducted a study of *pakikipagkapwa* on Facebook. Her investigation was focused on how individuals perceived concepts of one-of-us (*hindi ibang tao*) and not-one-of-us (*ibang tao*) on Facebook. The research respondents were Filipino university students taking psychology classes. They were first given a lecture on *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* and the concept of *kapwa*. Immediately after, they were divided into small groups where they identified who they considered one-of-us (*hindi ibang tao*) and not-one-of-us (*ibang tao*) on Facebook.

In my pilot and in my dissertation research, I did not orient my participants on *kapwa*. It was my aim to see if the concept would naturally emerge from posts and in our conversations. I also did not explicitly ask my participants to identify who they consider to be one-of-us (*hindi ibang tao*) and not-one-of-us (*ibang tao*). I allowed such distinctions to surface on Facebook through friending, unfriending, blocking and the like.

Since context is important to any form of communication, I chose to do research in the natural settings of these interactions (Facebook and in face-to-face gatherings).

My active role as a participant in my research was something that also deviates from *Sikolohiyang Pilipino*. While Filipino indigenous researchers have considered *pakikipagkwentuhan* (sharing of stories) as a method that is only reserved for participants, I deliberately included my own stories as part of the research. This was a technique I learned from phenomenology. Sharing my experiences had multiple purposes. It helped participants recall similar incidents. Revealing my personal stories likewise earned the trust of those who were initially hesitant to share intimate details about their diasporic lives. My confessions also contributed to the development of mutual trust between me and my participants. Importance given to personal stories as intersections of experience and sites of renegotiating diasporic identity was also reminiscent of *metissage*.

Data, in my pilot as well as my main research, emerged from relationship building. By prioritizing humans not as subjects or objects, I was given access to my participants' inner world—something that may have remained unreachable using other methods.

Virtual endography: Research as *techne*. In this short section, I further discuss some techniques I applied as an endogenous researcher. My focus on people over “things” (including data) also meant being sensitive to how technology could get in the way of “feeling” participants.

My first attempt at doing an online video interview failed miserably. Difficulties with web cameras, microphones, speakers and erratic Internet connections made it

impossible to establish rapport. Technology remained a distraction as glitches focused our attention from each other to the malfunctioning computer hardware and software. My participant and I, both surprisingly in Edmonton at that time, experienced the same interruptions regardless of the platform—Skype, Google Talk and Yahoo! Messenger. The source of the problem, it turned out, was unavoidably still related to diaspora. My participant's family, having only migrated to Canada in the last two years, was living in a rented basement. This was a common story lived by members of the Filipino community during their struggling years. Conceding that his location in Edmonton was not ideal for video conferencing, he offered to meet me in person instead.

After my disastrous attempt at doing that online interview, I thought of combining text chat with a muted video connection. But, I quickly decided that the bi-sensory yet split mediation—text and video—would only heighten distance rather than connection. So, instead, I fell back on text-based chatting—a tried and tested method I had used since my IRC days. This was, after all, also what my participants habitually relied on when chatting with people on Facebook. Synchronous (text-based) chats were useful since they helped establish mutual trust with my participants. They also made my online presence a regular part of my participants' Facebook experience.

Meanwhile, even in my face-to-face encounters with participants, I remained mindful of our technology use. The focus group discussion I conducted for my pilot was not focused on collecting data per se. Instead, it applied Albert Borgmann's (1984) concept of focal practices as an act that is a "radiating and force" (p. 197). He further referred to it as an "engagement" (p. 42) that "...discloses the significance of things and the dignity of humans, it engenders a concern for the safety and well-being things and

persons” (p. 220). As Shawn Wilson (2008) has said: “...research is ceremony. In our cultures, an integral part of any ceremony is setting the stage properly” (p. 69).

I made an effort to prepare for the gathering of humans rather than the gathering of data. Instead of writing an interview guide, I memorized my research question and my assumptions about diasporic identities on Facebook. This was more aligned with endogenous interviewing than with the conventional research protocol. The questions and answers, thus, spontaneously emerged in conversation. At times, I allowed other topics to be discussed as a means of developing rapport in the group. My intention was to focus on the discussion rather on the information required by the research.

It was also for this reason that I meticulously set the stage for significant forms of interaction. One focal practice I included in the group discussion was eating together. Food helped me set the mood. It kept things casual. I did away with formalities by welcoming each participant with an offer of cookies and a juice box. Serving something that required the use of bare hands was purposeful.⁷ My aim was for them to feel comfortable.

Another focal practice involved “being” on Facebook together. I deliberately chose a conference room to be our venue. This allowed Facebook to have a commanding presence through a Smart Board with Internet connection. It was an unspoken reminder of the obvious focus of my research. My participants often referred to Facebook uploads and pointed to the interactive screen. Despite our engagement with the virtual platform, I also made sure there were no barriers to our physical interaction. With the help of some participants, I set aside tables and arranged chairs in a circle so everyone could easily look at each other directly.

⁷Pre-colonial Filipinos ate with their bare hands (Fernandez, 1986).

Face-to-face conversations were also conducted with the focal practice of “being” on Facebook together. This seemed important not only to me but also to my participants. One of my interviewees even insisted on bringing his laptop. He carried it on the train despite being told we had access to a computer. But, if Facebook was part of the interview process, food wasn’t. Instead of being a focal thing, I believed it would be a distracting object. There was no need for an additional activity to develop rapport. The interaction was already confined to just me and another person. It was enough to directly ask: Can you show me some Facebook uploads that you consider reflective of your diasporic identity?.

I did not need an interview guide since other questions emerged in conversation. In fact, the sharing involved much more than just information. Our previous (even if limited) online interactions already established familiarity. Thus, we shared funny and touching stories about our lives as diasporic Filipinos. The casualness of our interaction was evident in the way we often teased the other even in the face of serious topics. At the end of the interviews, my participants had become my friends. One of them invited me to his birthday party. The other promised to teach me boxing. A female interviewee said she would try my suggestions on how to deal with her nightmares (something she thoroughly complained about on Facebook).

In Manila, my face-to-face conversations seemed to downplay being on Facebook together. I arrived at each of the scheduled meetings with my laptop. However, in all four instances, participants focused more on our conversation and whatever else we shared. Public places, often a coffee shop at a mall, became venues for these interviews. At the very least, we had to order drinks. Thus, my participants seemed comparatively

engaged in the ritual of sharing stories and breaking bread with me rather than on being on Facebook together. In such terms, my focus on relationship building as a method determined the forms of interviews I conducted.

Conclusively, there were several facets of my methodology that only became clear during the research process. Taking an endogenous approach demanded heightened sensitivity to cues directly or indirectly conveyed by my participants. Even when I was sure one method would work, I opted to use alternative techniques responsive to my participants. These subtle negotiations only surfaced through *pakikipagkapwa* (developing mutual trust through relationship building).

Building a virtual network from a material community. Until I did my pilot, I gave little importance to face-to-face interviews and offline participant observation. My initial stance as an online researcher aligned with that of Boellstorff (2008). He investigated Second Life communities solely online since he believed such communities were significantly situated on the Internet. Though I knew my participants had relationships outside of Facebook, I initially thought our distanced interaction would be closer to the diasporic experience. I failed to consider that a diasporic community may be both a virtual network and a material community.

As Boyd (2008) warned: "...we do ourselves a disservice if we bound our fieldwork by spatial structures—physical or digital—when people move seamlessly between these spaces. Both mediated and unmediated fieldwork should have as their goal a rich understanding...." (p. 53).

Walking blindly into my pilot led me to many unforeseen discoveries. I learned a lot about Filipino diaspora and Facebook despite being an insider. Discussed below are some of my insights and how such informed my main research.

As Pe-Pua (1989) has pointed out, an indigenous approach to research has many demands on the researcher. This includes the patience to develop mutual trust with participants—a task that may take longer than one’s original plan. More importantly, like all qualitative research, it requires constant self-reflection and flexibility. This became painfully clear to me during the recruitment process. Marco Adria, my supervisor, advised me to revise my original recruitment letter since it sounded too formal and detached. When weeks passed with hardly any response, I decided to change more than just the letter but my actual approach to research. I talked about myself as a fellow diasporic Filipino instead of merely providing information about the study. Included in the digital invitation was a video link to a Facebook paper presentation I recently did with a colleague. I likewise invited questions instead of ending with the request for participation. Such openness, I thought, would start a conversation. My objective was to extend a personal, though virtual, handshake.

This was, I think, the turning point for me. It made me aware that *pakapa-kapa* meant feeling my way in and retracing my steps when I faltered. More so, the approach required being in a heart-mind state of heightened sensitivity to others. What it did not call for was presenting myself as a distanced researcher. My approach had to be personal and intimate. I had to step into the world of my future participants. That world, I discovered later, was not confined to Facebook. But to speak of that requires going back to a serendipitous encounter.

In October of 2011, while planning my pilot study, I received email from a young Filipina I have named Maria. A poster announcing the special Canadian screening of a Filipino film caught her eye. I hand-carried the DVD of the movie from Manila and was going to introduce it to an Edmonton audience. Maria was excited that its title (*Boses* or *Voice*) and my name sounded Filipino. As a member of a local Filipino youth group, she was convinced the event was “a great opportunity” to enlighten other Filipinos on Filipino culture. I met her a few weeks later when she showed up at the event with two other young Filipinas. After the movie, they approached me to say their obligatory hellos. In the weeks to come, Maria and I continued exchanging emails to discuss her group’s interest in re-screening the film. Our messages were generally polite and perfunctory. These eventually stopped when I introduced her via email to the Philippine-based filmmaker.

In January of 2012, when I received ethics approval for my pilot, I emailed Maria to ask for help in recruiting participants. One of her friends became my first key informant. But Maria did me a bigger favour. She sent me a Facebook invitation to a public debate on a burning political issue in the Philippines. It was one of the regular events hosted by the Filipino youth group. During the event, I realized that what happened in the Philippines concerned these Edmonton-based Filipinos.

My interest in the youth group and their activities was genuine. During the years I repeatedly visited (1992, 1997, 2009 and March of 2010) and later moved to Edmonton (September 1, 2010), I was exposed to an older segment of the Filipino community. My aunt and uncle’s friends were generally mid lifers and seniors with children and jobs and various preoccupations. Those who were not my Facebook contacts before my research

were either inactive or non-members of the social network.⁸ Meeting young Canadian-Filipinos actively in search of their Filipino identities intrigued me. The event gave me a glimpse of the world created by these diasporic Filipinos.

Admittedly, I also attended the event to do *pakikipagkapwa* (relationship building). By showing an interest in their activities, I was no longer viewed as an anonymous researcher but as a diasporic Filipino. More significantly, I was treated like a fellow diasporic Filipino who just happened to be a researcher. But this only happened dramatically after I materialized before them in flesh and blood. Few actually responded to my research invitation sent through email and Facebook private message before meeting me in person. Within hours of my face-to-face self introduction, I was no longer troubled with a lack of research participants. Members readily accepted my invitation and extended it to their Facebook contacts. One volunteer sent me a Facebook friend request with this short introduction: “Hi. I heard you're conducting a research study. Feel free to use me as one of your participants.” Then, when asked why she agreed to be my key informant, another participant replied: “Because the mandate of our youth group is to help Filipinos.”

Five members became my pilot participants. They were later joined by two other young Filipinos who were based in Edmonton. But I looked to Vancouver for two more participants. This was my way of testing the viability of expanding my research to other parts of the world. After all, why was I limiting myself to Canada when Facebook gathers Filipinos from all over the world?

⁸ To ensure the anonymity and privacy of my participants, I avoided the public display of our connections. Thus, I could not recruit members of my personal Facebook network. Instead, I registered a research-dedicated Facebook account using a pseudonym.

While conducting my pilot study, I regularly attended the youth group's activities. These offline interactions heightened familiarity and made it easier for me to earn the trust of particular participants. Though I repeatedly asked for permission to use their Facebook uploads, at least two participants assured me: "You can use any uploads that you need. You don't need to ask." Personal information, even if those not directly related to my research topic, was also shared with me during casual conversations in online and offline encounters.

Meanwhile, that connection with Edmonton participants did not happen with my Vancouver participants. Despite my attempts to step into their "world," I failed to gain full access. The ingredients were there—their Facebook uploads were revealing personal stories. On my side, I tried to reach out. Unfortunately, *pakikipagkapwa* was difficult to do through geographic and temporal distance. Save for occasional synchronous and asynchronous messages on Facebook, I did not fully connect with my Vancouver participants. They were hardly on Facebook to respond.

This was the stark opposite of my relationships with Edmonton-based participants. I saw them both online and offline. The constant interaction was possible through Facebook since they were often around when I was there. I spent each day (sometimes several times a day when I had the time) observing their daily uploads. These included status messages, video and photo uploads, links, comments, likes, tags, profile information and wall-to-wall posts.

The local youth group's members were all young—between the ages of 18 and 25. If I had to identify them in a group of Southeast Asians, I would be doing guesswork at best. They shared the same physical features with migrants from that region.

However, I could easily conclude they had lived in Canada for some time. None of them had a discernable Filipino accent. Some still uttered a few words and phrases in a Filipino language (one of over 100).⁹ The slippage from what I imagined to be host to mother tongue sounded either dramatically distinct or intricately infused in diction or grammar. I later confirmed that such audible differences, especially for those who only spoke in English, hinted at their location of birth. They described themselves as having been born in the Philippines or in a foreign land. That label, however, was neither a compliment nor an insult. By virtue of their affiliation, they were all proud to be Filipino. What drew them together was the shared desire to identify with their Filipino roots.

From pilot study to dissertation research. Midway through my pilot, I realized I had stumbled upon a significant population of diasporic Filipinos. Members of this material community likewise comprised a web of linkages on Facebook. Conveniently, I have already established rapport with the group. Findings from my pilot enlightened my main research. Practical considerations, however, were not the sole reasons why I chose to investigate their community. Members were naturally bonded by their shared desire to negotiate their Filipino identities within their Canadian existence. While that seemed suitable for my purposes, I was motivated to make the research mutually beneficial to all of us. Thus, I did not discourage them from asking me questions as well.

Three of my participants have separately asked me to recommend books on Philippine history. On occasion, they have consulted me about some issues related to

⁹ According Thomas Headland (2003), there are “between 100 to 150 languages spoken in the Philippines” (p. 1).

Filipino identity. In this way, my research aligned with liberation psychology, the movement that gave birth to Filipino indigenous methods.

My first brush with the material community of my participants happened less than a year after the birth of their youth group. I was surprised to see so many young people united by a common interest in the Filipino culture. Not all of them were actually Filipino. I correctly assumed that some, due to their physical appearance and the way they spoke English and Tagalog, were Canadian or European. It was harder to differentiate the Koreans whose Asian appearance made them blend in with Filipino members. As I spent more time with the material community, I began discovering these lines of difference that seemed inconsequential to the group.

Activities were a mainly social in nature. There was always food to share. This was an expectation expressed by members who believed that Filipino gatherings must involve eating together. It didn't have to be fancy meals. Pizza, chips and soda were served at three or four of the events I attended. These always ended with more than a few who stayed behind to finish the leftovers and chat. Members often joked that Filipinos arrived late but stayed longer than expected.

Meanwhile, the group was also deeply committed to diasporic philanthropy. Fundraising events included talent shows, dances and dinners serving Filipino cuisine. Ticket sales benefitted Filipinos in the Philippines. Such projects were usually organized ahead of time. However, instant plans were hatched to respond to calamities like typhoons, earthquakes or floods in the Philippines.

In its short history, each year's activities were capped with an immersion trip to the Philippines. Only a handful of members were chosen as Summer volunteers to tutor

Filipino streetchildren. A non-profit organization headed by a European social worker housed these kids and sent them to a rural public school.

The year and a half I spent with the material community allowed me to witness the leadership of two sets of officers. Their preferences and advocacies influenced the types of activities as well as beneficiaries chosen. The first president, for instance, had travelled to his hometown in the Philippines to do volunteer work. His desire to share that enriching experience with his fellow Filipino-Canadians led to the immersion trips of the youth group. Expectedly, volunteers were chosen to assist the same non-profit organization.

Despite the changing of the guards, the group's objectives remained the same: 1. Raise awareness on Filipino culture and identities among Filipino and non-Filipino youth in Edmonton; 2. Encourage the discussion of relevant Philippine issues; and 3. Support marginal communities in the Philippines through fundraising activities celebrating Filipino culture and identities. The group opened its doors to anyone who wished to participate—even those who were not Filipino. Thus, I was welcomed not only because I was Filipino but also because my research shared some of the group's goals.

Filipino diasporics and their Facebook contacts

By the time I began dissertation research recruitment, three of the five youth group members who participated in my pilot were no longer available. One of them slid into inactivity both in the group and on Facebook due to her busy work life. She politely declined my invitation. The other two, to my amazement, continued with their diaspora by taking graduate studies in Europe. They were in the midst of packing their bags when I was given research ethics approval.

Thus, only two participants from the pilot study joined me for my main research. Maria, who had introduced me to the group, enthusiastically volunteered to also participate. She later recruited another member who showed particular interest in my chosen topic. Lia, whose family hails from a province in close proximity to Metro Manila, visited the Philippines while I was in the country. We had our first face-to-face conversation at a local restaurant in her hometown. She and her Edmonton-based friend, Victoria, were the most helpful in recruiting their Facebook contacts. Completing my six primary participants was Lino, another group member, who I met at one of the gatherings of their youth group.

As diasporic Filipinos, my six primary key informants were uniquely different. Two of them were of mixed parentage. One was born to an Italian-Canadian father and a Filipina mother in Edmonton. The other was born to a Chinese-Filipino father and a Filipina mother in the Philippines. Four of the six were naturalized Filipinos with Filipino parents. They migrated to Canada when they were from the ages of eight to 16 years old. None of them came from the same geographic location in the Philippines. Quite unique was the case of a young Filipino born in the Middle East who later moved to Edmonton as a toddler. He and another male participant belong to one-child families. Only a few of them still speak a Filipino language fluently. Six out of six can understand when their parents speak to them in a Filipino language. Two of them had just become officers of the youth group at the time of my research. The rest attended events regularly but were unable to devote more time to group activities.

Ten more participants, Facebook contacts of the six youth group members, became my secondary key informants. In general terms, they were either Filipinos or

non-Filipinos living in various geographic locations (in Edmonton or other cities in Canada, the Philippines and the US). Notably, one of the secondary key informants had also been a participant in my pilot. He too seemed eager to continue working with me on my research.

Table 5, on Page 128, presents the scope of primary participants' Facebook networks that became sites of this research. Primary and secondary key informants are identified only by pseudonyms chosen by me but approved by each one. The size of diasporic Filipinos' micro networks depended heavily on the willingness of their contacts to also accept the research invitation. Four additional (secondary) key informants initially gave their consent but stopped responding to messages in the middle of the research. One participant was dropped due to ethical issues that will be discussed in a succeeding chapter. Thus, primary key informants had as many as nine to as few as three contacts participating in the research.

I was, at first, frustrated by this lack of uniformity. My original plan was to recruit 24 participants—4 contacts from each of the six key informant's network. But I also imposed strict criteria for secondary key informants. They should represent Philippine-based loved ones, Filipino diasporic friends abroad or non-Filipino contacts in Canada. Participants, later, pointed out that this did not reflect the true nature of their Facebook networks. Some admitted they had a small number of contacts still living in the Philippines. A few even described these connections as weak or distanced. Thus, only three Filipinos based in the Philippines became secondary key informants.

In the end, I surrendered to the practical constraints of recruitment. It became obvious that the Facebook networks of these diasporic Filipinos did not conform to my

cookie-cutter expectations. Each network, after all, grows from personalized connections. I realized that the nuances of each network also reflected Filipino diasporic identities of my participants.

Table 5. Diasporic Filipinos based in Edmonton and their Facebook contacts

	Basil (9) FB since May, 2009	Lia (8) FB since March, 2007	Eli (5)	Lino (3) FB since Jan 2008	Maria (3) FB since Jan 2007	Victoria (4)
PRIMARY KEY INFORMANTS						
Basil*		1	1	1	1	
Lia	1		2		2	1
Eli*	2	2		2		
Lino	3		3			
Maria	4	3				
Victoria		4				
NON-FILIPINO MEMBERS OF YOUTH GROUP (Edmonton-based)						
Saldy	5	5				
Martin	6	6	4		3	
NON-FILIPINOS LIVING IN CANADA						
Isabel		7				2
Sally			5	3		
FILIPINOS IN THE US						
Nena		8				
Bernard	7					
NON-FILIPINO IN THE US						
Phil	8					
FILIPINOS IN THE PHILIPPINES						
Alfie	9					
Pia						3
Espie						4

*Also participants in the pilot study (January-September, 2012)

Though I co-constructed data with these 16 participants at the height of my research, I also gained much understanding from the 10 participants who helped me during my pilot study. Even so, the diminished number of research participants did not do justice to the quality of data culled from such a tightly-knit community.

Significantly, primary and secondary key informants were linked through inter-network membership. They were, in other words, each other's contacts. It was not surprising that, as offline friends, they also shared several contacts in common. I felt this was the best way to investigate the emergence of diasporic identities—by focusing on a specific diasporic community living in the same geographic location (Edmonton).

My interest in the connection between place and diasporic identity also drove me to seek participants who lived around the globe. Figure 2, see p. 131, is the visual depiction of my participants' geographic locations. I have included four of the pilot participants (not counting Basil and Eli who were primary participants in my pilot and main research) whose insights were integrated in the succeeding chapters. Thus, there are 20 participants in the figure. Meanwhile, places (Canada, the US and the Philippines) are the physical portals from which they entered Facebook. Located in the center of the figure are my primary participants who are members of the youth group based in Edmonton. Each additional sphere represents geographic distance from the Philippines (the homeland) in the outer-most shell. The host country (Canada) is located in the inner-most shell of the figure to symbolize the physical location of these diasporic Filipinos vis-à-vis the home land (the Philippines). The dotted arrows symbolize the simultaneous virtual and material interconnectedness of participants. Since I had limited my data gathering on Facebook, only those who lived in the same country were able to have face-to-face interactions. Contacts living in other parts of the world were limited to Facebook and other virtual platforms. Their connections are represented by solid arrows. Notably, several participants belonged to smaller groups within their networks. The shaded core of the image highlights participants who are members of the youth group. Other group

formations, however, are also visible. For instance, Basil belonged to an online gaming group composed of Bernard and Phil (living in the US) and Alfie (living in the Philippines). Victoria also belonged to a small grouping with her cousins Pia and Espie (sisters living in the Philippines).

Meanwhile, as a researcher, I began my investigation in Edmonton as a diasporic Filipino. This was where I conducted my pilot study, completed recruitment and developed virtual and material friendships with participants. I flew to Manila on November 9, 2012 to conduct face-to-face interviews and do further research on *Sikolohiyang Pilipino*. Thus, I was a *balikbayan* (homeland returnee) in the tropics when my primary participants were revealing their Filipino diasporic identities on Facebook from freezing Edmonton.

Home was in Manila where my family lived. Still, I had loved ones back in Edmonton. There, in fact, remained a strong feeling of living out of my suitcase. Reminders had been constant. My laptop clock was set to Edmonton time—causing me to often feel disoriented. During the Philippine tax season, I submitted my income tax return to the Canadian Revenue Agency electronically. Bills from Canada were sent to my email address. I paid them regularly from Manila via my Canadian bank accounts. Thus, I still lived part of my days on Yahoo! Messenger, Facebook and Skype. Even so, I stopped struggling against the discomfort. There was an appreciation for how my location of weakness heightened sensitivity to the dislocations of diaspora.

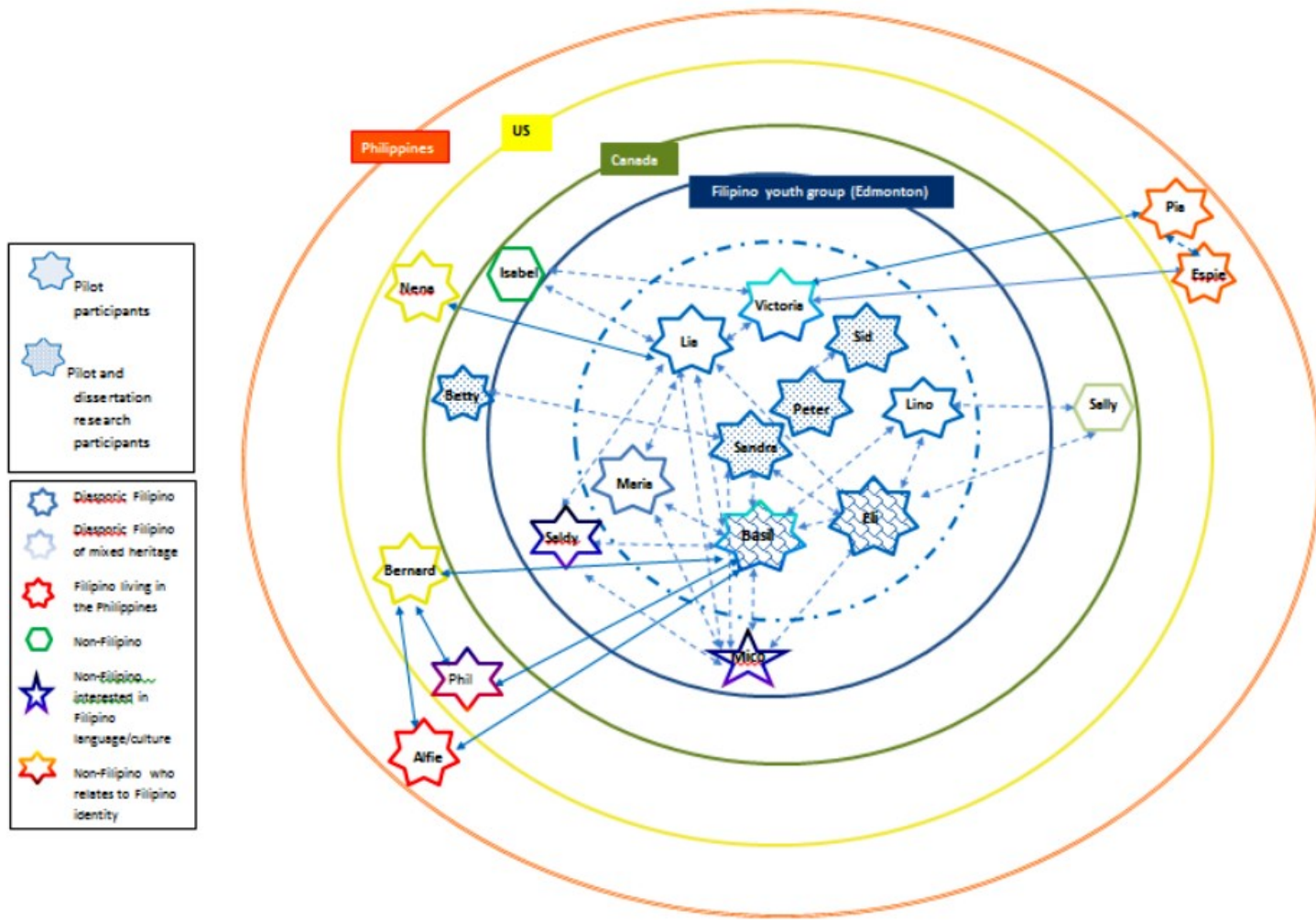


Figure 2. Visual map of participants

Personal experiences as liminal researcher and *saling pusa*

My endogenous approach to this research has involved more than just a geographic movement from one part of the world to another. It has been profoundly an ontological shift as well. Other ethnographers have lived closely with their participants for years without becoming complete residents of the communities they investigated. In 2010, I became a diasporic Filipino two years before conducting my research on Filipino diaspora. That time was spent unconsciously immersing myself in the experience of the phenomenon I sought to understand.

Because I was already a member of the general diasporic community of Filipinos, I did not follow the trajectory of research interaction suggested by Virgilio Enriquez (see Table 3, p. 68). A researcher applying an indigenous/endogenous approach would begin with the level of mutual trust/rapport (*pakikipagpalagayang-loob*); proceed with the level of getting involved (*pakikisangkot*); and, then, attempt to achieve the deepest level of fusion, oneness and full trust (*pakikiisa*). In a sense, I had already become fused with my participants' identities by being a diasporic Filipino. That was my entry point to this research. I moved ahead by getting involved in the youth group's various events. On these occasions, I found that I was simultaneously developing mutual trust and rapport.

Membership to the youth group was indirectly offered to me towards the end of my pilot. By then, I had been a regular attendee to their events. There was no formality to the invitation. I showed up at the election of their executive officers one late afternoon in Edmonton. Two of my participants casually said hello and asked if I wanted to cast my vote. Though touched by their gesture, I declined for two reasons. I was embarrassed to join a youth group whose members were the same age as my own

students. More importantly, I was quite aware of my position as a researcher. I did, however, promise to support their activities.

That short exchange confirmed my assumptions about my role in this research. I have previously emphasized how I occupied between spaces as a researcher--places of strength according to Stoller (2008). Despite the privilege of breaking group rules as *saling-pusa*, I remained respectful of this honorary membership. I only attended events to which I was invited. In fact, there was only one occasion when I showed up at the group's office and club house—when I was asked to be a talent show judge. Consciously, I did not impose my presence or overstay my welcome in the physical realm. This was because I recognized my existence also had a virtual element which may seem even more intrusive.

Meanwhile, Facebook became the site for documenting my participation in their events as well as in establishing friendships with my participants. I developed two research-devoted accounts: Phyllis Alberto for my pilot (January-September 2012) and Patty Quitco for my main research (September 2012-December, 2013). The summary of my virtual activities are presented in Figure 3, on the next page. As Phyllis Alberto, I spent an average of four hours daily on Facebook. This was regularly between the hours of 6 to 10PM on weekdays. Sometimes, I would be logged in while working during the daytime at home or at my office in Enterprise Square or at a computer lab on main campus. Weekends were exceptional as I spent nearly the entire day on Facebook hoping to bump into participants. I usually initiated online chats by saying hi. However, there were also occasions when my participants started conversations. In keeping with my endogenous approach, these were casual in nature and did not adhere to a strict set of

questions. I allowed conversations to develop. There were times this was helpful since trust was built.



Figure 3. My Facebook research personas

For instance, a male participant slowly revealed that he was avoiding members of a Filipino gang both online and offline. The story was shared voluntarily but only after we had established rapport over the course of several online (text) chats. These were not necessarily focused only on the research topic. We often engaged in small talk. Once, he alluded to being bullied by a few Filipinos in Edmonton. When I asked direct questions, he gave vague answers and, eventually, changed the subject. Sensing his discomfort, I chose not to pursue the questioning. Though I was tempted on several occasions to follow up on the issue, I waited for him to reveal the details at his comfort. My sensitivity and patience were eventually rewarded with the entrustment of his story.

Pagtatanong-tanong (casual asking of questions) was often done online through serendipitous encounters on Facebook. If I bumped into my participants online, I often typed a quick “hi” to see if they were open to having a conversation. Sometimes I asked questions which were directly related to my research. Other times, I simply engaged in

small talk as a means of building rapport. Responses helped me adjust my approach. My modification of my actions was reflective of *pakapa-kapa* (groping or researching in the dark).

In the menu of data collection methods available to an online researcher, participant observation was the least problematic for me. The informed consent signed by participants clearly stated that I would view their Facebook wall/timeline posts. At first, I acted as a lurker since I was not sure if my online presence would be welcomed. The approved ethics plan stipulated I would not comment on wall posts. I could, however, post updates on my own Facebook wall.

My first research account was actually bare except for two profile photos: A cake (the first one I used) and a portrait of a much younger me. So was my profile which only stated that I was living in Edmonton, Alberta. But this slowly changed in response to my participants. To test the waters, I posted a safe and mundane status message: “Hi,ho, hi ho, it's off to work I go!.” It got a “like” from a non-Filipino participant. But it wasn’t until halfway through the pilot that I became more confident with my posts. By then, I was engaging in spontaneous online conversations with many of my participants. More importantly, I felt welcomed by them during online and offline interactions. Quoting Homi K. Bhabha (1994), I typed: “And the state of emergency is also always a state of emergence” (p.59). This message got the attention of the youth group’s leader. He responded not only with a “like” but also with the comment: “[I am a] huge fan of his ‘third space’ thesis.” Such a reaction encouraged me. I updated my status not only using text messages but also through photos (of scenery and weather conditions taken and uploaded through my Smart phone). Had my posts been ignored, I would have stopped

posting more messages on my Timeline. *Pakapa-kapa* (groping, feeling) would require me to change my approach. I was aware that, for Filipinos, silence may be a negative response (Maggay, 2002). This was also why I initially lurked rather than dwelled on Facebook. My focus was to develop relationships with my participants.

These discoveries were all part of applying *pakapa-kapa* (researching in the dark) to get a “feel” of participants. I allowed them to show me what data collection techniques suited them. For instance, they seemed unresponsive to emails and private messages. Online chats, however, were welcomed. These allowed us to interact without disruptions to our offline lives. I did household chores (cooking and doing the laundry) while chatting. My participants told me they were listening to music; completing important tasks (though I immediately ended the chat as soon as they said this); or eating a snack while on Facebook. Unscheduled chats were preferred over pre-arranged ones. Somehow, setting an actual time for an online chat also made them conscious of how much time lapsed. They often asked to end our conversations right away. In contrast, they were usually willing to stay longer whenever we accidentally met on Facebook. Still, I asked them every now and then to tell me if they were busy. Some participants admitted they were habitually on Facebook even if they were doing something important. Having established a rhythm to our conversations, I consciously allowed them do what felt natural to them online.

By applying the above research methods, I was also dwelling on Facebook by building my own identity as a member of a virtual community. This was similar to the way Boellstorff (2008) did research on Second Life. But the major difference was that his virtual persona was fictional. Except for the name I used on Facebook and my

reported birthday, my identity was a reflection of my offline existence as an Overseas Filipino living in Canada. There were even times I simply duplicated my status updates from my personal account.

Meanwhile, I recognized the value of allowing spontaneous conversations to take place during virtual and material encounters. Participants were receptive and, often, enthusiastic whenever we bumped into each other. An unscheduled meeting even occurred during my morning commute when I found myself beside a participant at the bus stop. Through our half-hour journey, we were able to discuss her early days as a diasporic Filipino in Canada and on Facebook. So, while I schedule some interviews (especially with Philippine-based key informants), I also relied on serendipitous conversations.

One-on-one conversations were, in fact, easier to organize than group discussions. I was excited, at one point, to do a virtual focus group discussion through Skype. A participant had casually mentioned that some of them simultaneously chat on two platforms—Facebook and Skype. So, I sent out invitations to his co-participants. Two weeks went by with strangely luke-warm replies. It felt like they were not as excited as I was. Instead of directly asking if they preferred to gather together offline, I simply revised my invitation by suggesting a face-to-face gathering. It was only then that I confirmed my suspicion. Within two days, my five participants committed to a common time and favored place.

Meanwhile, the bulk of my online observation was focused on the Facebook uploads of my participants from March 1 to 31, 2012. These digital artefacts included

Facebook profiles, status updates, photo/video uploads, shared links, wall-to-wall posts, and the like. I archived these as screen shots.

Data analysis for my pilot study was mainly done through conversation. This is similar to the way *metissage* prioritizes personal story. Posts, which I and my participants identified as significant to diasporic identities, usually had untold stories to tell. These were revealed during casual conversations with the ones who owned the stories and those who heard/read/saw them on Facebook. Timing was always determined by participants. On occasion, I attempted to probe further on the meaning of such posts. If I felt the topic was not of a sensitive nature, I asked directly but instantly backed off at a mere hint of discomfort. To avoid offending my participants, I gently and indirectly addressed posts that may be too personal or too delicate to discuss. I did so using Filipino ways of communicating my interest such as through the sending of feelers (*parinig*) and humor. Examples will be provided in the next chapter. Simply put, I attended to the various voices in the ongoing conversation of Filipino diaspora on Facebook--those of participants, their Facebook contacts (Filipinos and non-Filipinos) and my own as a researcher and fellow Overseas Filipino

What I learned from my pilot directly fed into my main research. I created a new Facebook account under the name Patty Quitco on September 2, 2012. Immediately, I was uploading photos and posting status updates. Scheduled and unscheduled interviews began with basic questions on diasporic identities and Facebook uploads that often evolved into casual conversations. This was true for online chats as well as for my face-to-face interviews. Often, I said hello on Facebook without any concrete plans to ask questions. My main concern was to develop trust through relationship building.

Monitoring of primary participants' Facebook posts was done from November 1 to December 31, 2012. At times, I directly asked participants what they thought of specific uploads. This was a variation of my previous ritual of asking them to label each and every post as Filipino, Filipino-Canadian, Canadian or non-culture specific. I learned from my pilot that this protocol made the conversation more like a task. Instead, I compromised by asking them to identify posts they felt were reflective of what they perceived the primary participant to be—Filipino, Filipino-Canadian, Canadian or any other formulation of cultural identity. I would sometimes draw their attention to posts which I thought was telling about someone's identity. That usually triggered further discussion wherein we did not always share the same opinion. I encouraged them to elaborate and clarify their thoughts without forcing my ideas on them.

Throughout my main research, I had from one to seven significant conversations, with each of my participants. These did not include chats about other topics which mainly served to develop rapport and mutual trust. Majority of these conversations took place on Facebook. While in the Philippines, I did three face-to-face interviews: Two with secondary participants and one with a diasporic Filipino on vacation.

With more time to devote on my research, I was logged on for an average of four to six hours daily from late afternoon to late evening in Edmonton (morning to afternoon in Manila). Those hours were spent uploading my status updates, viewing the posts of my participants and having online chats with some of them. Even when I was busy working on other things on my computer, I was available to chat as Patty Quitco on one of my browser windows. I regularly jumped back into Facebook whenever I heard the

message alert or when I felt like checking in on my participants. This ritualistic dwelling was consistent from mid November, 2012 until the early weeks of March, 2013.

Unforeseen developments in my life kept me from pursuing my plans of holding another focal group discussion in Edmonton. Fortunately, I was able to physically meet five of my six primary participants before and during the research. While recruiting participants for my main research, I met a male member of the youth group at the group's forum on Overseas Filipino Workers. He had a lot to say about the struggles of contract workers since his father had been one even before he was born. After the event, we stayed behind to share our personal migration stories. He became my research participant soon after. The fifth participant saw me in the Philippines while she was on vacation. We finally met face-to-face after being Facebook friends for almost four months. On the other hand, my conversations with my sixth primary participant were confined to Facebook. Even so, she entrusted me with a secret that she kept hidden from most of her friends and Facebook contacts. I had felt her open up slowly over the course of several months of online chats.

Meanwhile, online research may be experienced with the dual advantage and disadvantage of voluminous data. Even virtual anthropologists have admitted that digitized information were simultaneously the strength and weakness of their investigations (Boellstorff, 2008; Miller & Slater, 2000). I dealt with this challenge by relying on virtual endography's emphasis on people over their stories (data). My thoughts were organized around who my participants were based on relationships we built in our virtual and material encounters.

Although I focused mainly on developing these relationships, Facebook posts and private (Facebook and face-to-face) chats became the means through which we got to know each other as fellow diasporics on Facebook. These were the main sources of my data (stories about Filipino diaspora). Notably, supplementary information also came from my participation in the offline activities of the youth group as well as from the sole focal group discussion that occurred during my pilot study.

Once I had put together the diasporic stories behind identified posts, I applied thematic analysis which I learned from phenomenology. I grouped together stories that seemed to point to the same experiences about diasporic identities. Analysis was done also in conversation with my participants who I consulted about various interpretations (mine and other participants) of posts and the Filipino diasporic identities they seem to create. To go deeper into their meanings, I consulted Filipino scholars whose work provided more insights into particular facets of my dissertation topic. Primarily, I used Tables 2, 3 and 4 to reference Dr. Virgilio Enriquez's understanding of *kapwa* as a foundational element of Filipino identities.

Generally, Virtual/material endography was an adaptive and responsive methodology that required me to surrender my calculated control of this research. Countless times, I followed the lead of my participants only to be rewarded with the entrustment of their most personal stories. In the process, I found myself also sharing my own diasporic struggles in what became a conversational analysis of Filipino diasporic identities on Facebook.

CHAPTER 4: Filipino diasporic identities on Facebook

This chapter discusses Filipino diasporic identities as renegotiated on Facebook by Filipino participants based in Edmonton, Alberta with Filipino (co-diasporics and those based in the Philippines) and non-Filipino contacts in Canada. To dig deeper into the digitized form of Filipino diasporic identities, I have organized this chapter using three subheadings: 1. Digital footprints of diasporic identities; 2. Renegotiation of diasporic identities on Facebook and; 3. Renegotiated forms of diasporic identity on Facebook.

The three sub sections address my main research problem. However, each one also attends to particular related concerns which were stated in the Introduction. *Digital footprints of Filipino diasporic identities on Facebook* answers the question: In what ways do Filipino diasporics display their diasporic histories on Facebook?. Focus is given here to the Facebook profiles of the Filipino diasporic participants. Meanwhile, *Renegotiation of Filipino diasporic identities on Facebook* addresses related concern #1 (In what ways do Filipino diasporics display their diasporic histories on Facebook?), related concern #2 (How do Filipino diasporics display Filipino-ness through status updates, tagging, photo-sharing and video-uploading?) and related concern #3 (How do Filipino diasporics renegotiate their cultural identities through associations and disassociations on Facebook?). In contrast to the first sub section, the second one attends to primary participants' Timeline/wall posts. *Renegotiated forms of Filipino diasporic identities on Facebook* completes my presentation of research data by enumerating forms of Filipino diasporic identities that seem to emerge from the Facebook uploads of young Filipinos permanently living in Edmonton (related concern # 5).

Given my attentiveness to identity as *kapwa* (fusion of self and other), all of three of the subsections shed light on how Filipino diasporic identities are co-created through identity renegotiations between Filipino diasporics and their Filipino and non-Filipino contacts on Facebook. This attends to related concern # 4 (How do Filipino diasporics and their contacts (left-behind Filipinos, other diasporic Filipinos and non-Filipino friends in Edmonton) perceive Filipino diasporic identities on Facebook?). It was important to do so when viewing the various adumbrations of Filipino diasporic identity. This research, as stated in the previous chapter, analyzed data through conversations with participants (Filipino diasporics and their Filipino and non-Filipino Facebook contacts) whose voices are involved in the renegotiation of Filipino diasporic identities on Facebook.

Digital footprints of Filipino diasporic identities

I began investigating Filipino diasporic identities by initially tracing the material and digital histories of my participants' diasporic experiences. On Facebook, as Phyllis Alberto and Patty Quitco, I did so by reviewing online profiles. This routine is familiar to many dwellers of Facebook (Donath & Boyd, 2004). In fact, diasporic and non-diasporic participants have confirmed that they usually checked new contacts' profiles upon addition to their network. One's profile may, thus, function as a virtual handshake and as a means to get to know others.

Presented here are facets of my participants' Facebook profiles that have directly or indirectly alluded to their diasporic histories. To be introduced are 10 diasporic Filipinos (six primary participants from my main research and four other youth group members from my pilot study) living in Edmonton. For context, I have included stories

shared with me during our numerous online and face-to-face conversations (focus interviews and the focal group discussion with pilot participants).

Hometowns, current cities and history of migration. Palmer (2012) concluded that the web allows for national histories to be archived and accessed. The same applies to personal histories on Facebook. Diaspora, I later realized, appears clearly through the implied movement from one's hometown to current city of residence.

Even while I appeared online as my research personas, I automatically declared Edmonton as my current city of residence and Quezon City, Philippines as my hometown (see Figure 4, below). Some time after, while reviewing my participants' profiles, I realized I had also digitized my diasporic history.



Figure 4. Traces of my diasporic history on Facebook

Figure 5, on the next page, plots participants' hometowns on the world map. Majority (six out of eight) are located in the Philippines. These are clustered in the Northern island of Luzon while only one is in Visayas. The two hometowns in two different continents (Riyadh, Saudi Arabia in the Middle East and Edmonton in Canada) suggest other kinds of diasporic journeys.



Figure 5. Filipino diasporic hometowns on Facebook

As a Filipino, I was struck by my participants' geographic origins in the Philippines (shown in Figure 6, on the next page). It may not be obvious to non-Filipinos that such locations not only reflected contrasting living conditions but also suggested a range of Filipino languages and cultures. Teodoro Agoncillo (1973), in agreement with Pedagogy of Place, explained:

That the milieu or environment exerts an influence in moulding the character of the people is proved in the Philippines where different regions exhibit different and, oftentimes, opposite traits. These traits, which may be termed regional, have been the upshot of economic and social factors. Thus, in poor isolated regions, the inhabitants are frugal and industrious; while in more opulent areas, the people are known for their careless abandon and love of the finer things in life (p. 15).

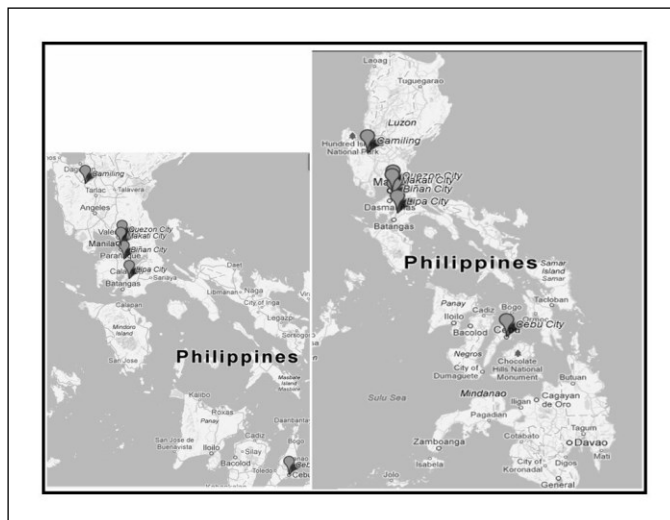


Figure 6. Filipino diasporic hometowns in the Philippines

Metro Manila is the urban center of the Philippines. It is comprised of 17 populous cities: Manila, Caloocan, Mandaluyong, Pasay, Quezon, Las Piñas, Makati, Malabon, Marikina, Muntinlupa, Navotas, Parañaque, Pasig, Pateros, San Juan, Taguig, and Valenzuela (Metropolitan Manila Development Authority, 2013). Though the City of Manila is the official capital of the country, Metro Manila has been labelled the National Capital Region. In this way, Filipinos who refer to themselves as coming from “Manila” may actually live in any of the above cities.

Only three participants came from Metro Manila. Two of them, Eli and Maria, came from my hometown of Quezon City. Two things have been highlighted in Facebook’s description of our hometown (shown on Figure 7, on the next page)—that it is the richest Philippine city and one of the most densely populated. According to the official website of the city government, there were close to three million residents living in the 161 square-kilometer land area when I left Quezon City in 2010 (Local government

of Quezon City, 2013). The City of Edmonton (2013), though spanning 700 square kilometers, only had a population of 800,000 during that year.

Our move to Edmonton changed our lives. We were used to a city that hardly sleeps. Shopping malls operated daily from as early as 10AM to as late as 10PM on weekdays. Weekends and holidays meant extended hours with the occasional midnight sales drawing crowds and snarling city traffic. West Edmonton Mall, previously called the largest mall in the world and the busiest in this city, is open from 10AM to 9PM (Mondays to Saturdays). On, Sundays and holidays it operates from 11AM to 6PM. The sluggishness of weekends in Edmonton was a common complaint of Filipinos I met there.



Figure 7. Quezon City as hometown on Facebook

Eleven years before my move to Edmonton, in 1999, Maria and her family migrated to Canada. They first lived in Winnipeg where they had distant relatives. She was only eight years old. They soon moved to Edmonton where her father landed a job. In the early years, she had minimal exposure to Filipinos her age. Maria did not have Filipino classmates in elementary and high school. She only mingled with the children of

her parents' Filipino friends who were younger than her. As she grew older and connections to relatives and friends in the Philippines weakened, she began to see Canada as home. Maria confessed:

I used to always want to go back home, to the Philippines, since our relatives were there. But now that my cousins have their own lives and families, and my grandparents gone, it probably won't be soon that I'll be back. I think I was still too young to develop close friendships with other Filipino migrant children. Other members of our youth group, like Basil and Eli, came here in the middle of their high school years. So they were able to seek out Filipino friends who were undergoing the same adjustments to Canada.

Her Facebook history began on January 8, 2007. Then a high school student, Maria was intrigued by the website's growing popularity among her friends. This curiosity led to her creating an online account.

Eli, now 21, opened his Facebook account in June of 2007 upon the invitation of cousins based in the Philippines. His primary motive was to stay connected to them. He had moved only the year before from Quezon City to Edmonton. Prior to that, his family was briefly separated when his dad began working in Canada. He was 14 when he and his mom left the Philippines. Unlike Maria, he attended an Edmonton high school with a large population of Filipino students. Eli credits Facebook for keeping him in touch with relatives and a few, "very close," friends in the Philippines. However, he found it difficult to recruit them for this study. In the years that have passed, his Facebook activities have become more focused on connecting with his Canada-based friends.

Only one other participant, Basil, came from Metro Manila. He moved to Edmonton with his family in 2010, around the same time I did. Basil was then 17 years old. His hometown, Makati, is described on Facebook (see Figure 8, on the next page) as “the 16th largest city in the Philippines” and the “41st most densely populated city in the world.” As the primary financial district, it is also considered the Philippine capital of cultural sophistication and modernity.

Basil’s diasporic history was likewise accessible through the appearance of his Chinese name in his Facebook profile. His migration story goes back several generations. His paternal grandfather travelled to the Philippines from mainland China. Basil considered himself a Filipino-Chinese. Though his hometown is in the Philippines, he also acknowledged the Chinese culture as an important part of his identity. Chinese-Filipinos (also called *Tsi-noys*) have long been integrated into the Philippine society. Chinese merchants began trading with Filipinos before the arrival of Spanish conquerors. They established businesses and started families in the Philippines. Unavoidably, some Filipinos have descended from Chinese ancestors. Basil represented those whose families mixed both Chinese and Filipino cultures. However, others only inherited Chinese physical features. My family, for example, has never imbibed the culture of our Chinese ancestors. We have never seen ourselves as anything but Filipino.

According to Basil, his father was the last of the Filipino-Chinese siblings to leave the Philippines for further migration. They, in turn, moved to Canada from the Philippines—leaving behind his grandparents to whom he was emotionally attached. Basil visited them in 2011 and 2013—the same years I came home. Basil created his Facebook account in May of 2009 so he could communicate with his friends. Some of

them left the Philippines ahead of him. Thus, he already had contacts living around the world before he migrated to Edmonton. Some of them, including his cousins, were based in Canada.

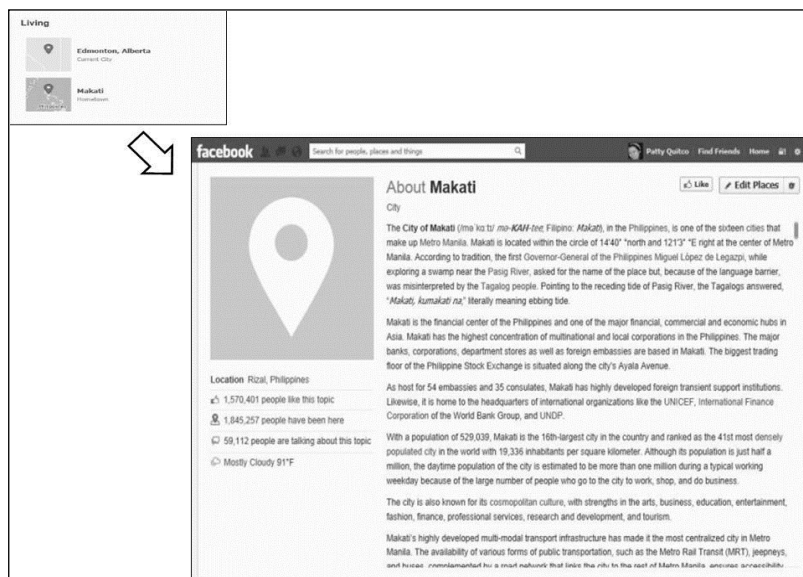


Figure 8. Makati City as hometown on Facebook

Lia, 25, lived in a small town near Metro Manila before migrating in 2005. Asked about the context behind her naming Biñan, Laguna as her Facebook hometown (see Figure 9, on the next page), she replied: *“I’m proud to be from there. That’s where I grew up even if I was born in Manila.”* Though Lia was just 17 when she left the Philippines, she was involved in her family’s decision to migrate. Her mom originally wanted to work for relatives living in Canada. However, her application for a work permit was never granted. Instead, she convinced her family to consider permanent migration. Lia joined her mom and siblings in convincing her hesitant dad. Like some of the other participants who moved to Canada after high school, she was forced to

complete an extra two years due to perceived deficiencies in Philippine secondary education.¹⁰

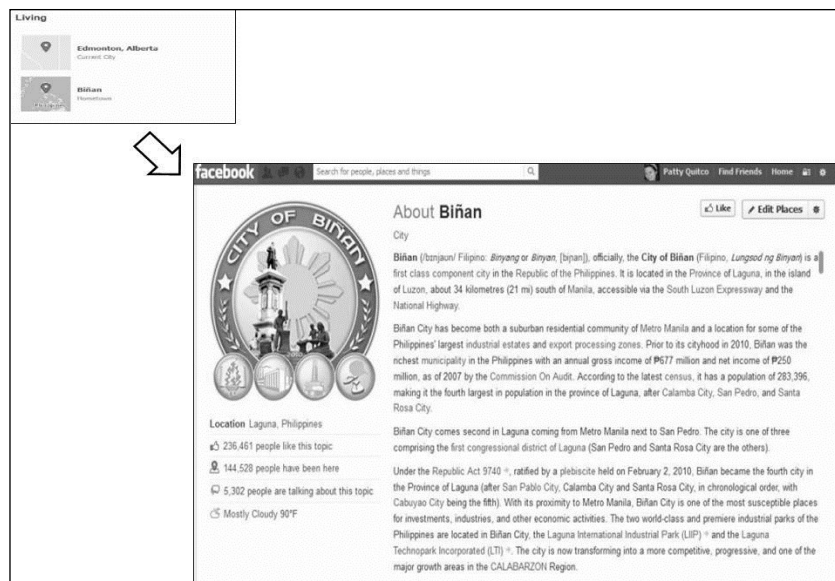


Figure 9. Biñan, Laguna as hometown on Facebook

Adjusting to life in Canada was difficult. The shy Lia recalled instances when she felt bullied in high school. As a newly-arrived migrant, she experienced being ostracized when two girls—one Caucasian and the other Asian (possibly Filipino)--started whispering while staring at her. Another unfortunate incident involved a boy she liked. She later learned that her younger siblings also experienced bullying in the hands of classmates in Canada. This was starkly different from their hometown where they belonged to a tight community of friends and relatives.

Hoping to sustain these distanced relationships, Lia created a Friendster account on October of 2005--a month before flying to Canada. She was pressured to do so even if

¹⁰ This has been remedied through a law passed by President Benigno Aquino, Jr. mandating the K to 12 program (<http://www.gov.ph/k-12/>).

she thought the social networking site was “corny.” In 2007, when Facebook became the social networking preference of Filipinos in the Philippines, Lia followed suit.

Also coming from Southern Luzon, from her hometown of Lipa City (see Figure 10, on the next page), Betty moved to Canada in 2003. She was only 14 when her family hurriedly left the Philippines. It took them four years to apply for immigration. But, once their documents arrived, they were given only a few weeks to move. Betty remembers leaving most of their belongings with an aunt. She and younger sister went straight from school to the airport. Their school bags, filled with photo albums, were their carry-on luggage. Betty recalled:

Our parents told us: ‘We’re moving for you. This is for your future.’ So, we kinda did not have a say. In the beginning, I didn’t like it. I cried. I was already a bit of a teenager. I was having such a good time in the Philippines. School wasn’t that bad and I had a lot of friends. And, then, I had to leave. It was not fun.

Toronto was the first city they lived in. They stayed in the basement of a relative’s home for several months until they could rent a place of their own. Her father, a successful engineer in the Philippines, had a difficult time finding a job. To make ends meet, he took the night shift at a factory. This meant working from 7PM until 7AM—hours that kept him away from his family. Living with relatives was likewise stressful. Betty and her sister followed very strict rules in a house with no other children. They were repeatedly told to keep quiet and to pick up after themselves. Not wanting to elaborate further, she admitted that it was an uneasy setup. They felt the tension building among household residents who were never really close to begin with.



Figure 10. Lipa as hometown on Facebook

Even Toronto society did not seem very welcoming. Betty experienced culture shock from being transplanted to the big city from a hometown that seemed more like an intimate neighborhood. She and her sister were born in a housing complex of a local company where her father was employed. They went to school and played with the kids of her father's co-workers. The company's office was so close to their home that their dad spent his lunch break there. His constant presence was replaced with a persistent absence in Canada. After struggling to find a job in Toronto, he was hired by an Alberta-based oil firm. The position was similar to what he left behind. But it forced them to live apart for four years.

Eventually, they were reunited in Edmonton. Betty was getting good marks up to that point. Things took a turn when she went to high school in Edmonton. She attended a Catholic school where students grouped themselves according to ethnicity. The atmosphere was, Betty insisted, rife for bullying. She recounted:

When I was in grade 12, I heard that there was going to be a showdown between Filipinos and some white people. My former boyfriend was participating. I told him: "Don't get involved." And he said: "No, they're really mean. They're throwing food at our other friends." One of my friends got arrested. I think he actually punched somebody or made threats. It was a nightmare.

To keep in touch with her friends in the Philippines, Betty also opened a Friendster account before leaving Lipa City. She later moved to Facebook in May of 2007 before leaving behind her friends in Toronto. While few knew about Friendster in Canada, Betty noticed most of her peers were on Facebook. Filipinos in the Philippines would also eventually abandon Friendster for Facebook. Even so, Betty was drawn to the social network to connect with her new friends in Canada.

Twenty-four-year old Peter declared Cebu City, the second major city in the Philippines, as his hometown on Facebook. The description provided on the next page (see Figure 11) has emphasized Cebu's historical significance as the premier centre for Spanish colonial rule. Peter spent his childhood there. In his early teens, his family moved to Africa before finally settling in Canada. He joined Facebook in 2008, just after high school graduation. His motivation was to keep in touch with friends in Canada. Though still sentimental about his hometown, he admitted that migrating to two different countries in two different continents left him confused about his Filipino identity:

When we moved, I tried to remain nationalistic. I'd read (Jose) Rizal, Emilio Aguinaldo and all the history stuff daily. But then, transitioning into a new world, the information I had became obsolete. When I came Canada, it was more like: What does it mean to be a Filipino here in North America? And I thought it was

really a difficult question to answer. The Filipinos in the Philippines are very different from the Filipinos here.

Peter, the only participant whose Philippine hometown is not located in Luzon, continued his diasporic journey in September of 2012. As I write this, he is in the United Kingdom pursuing graduate studies.

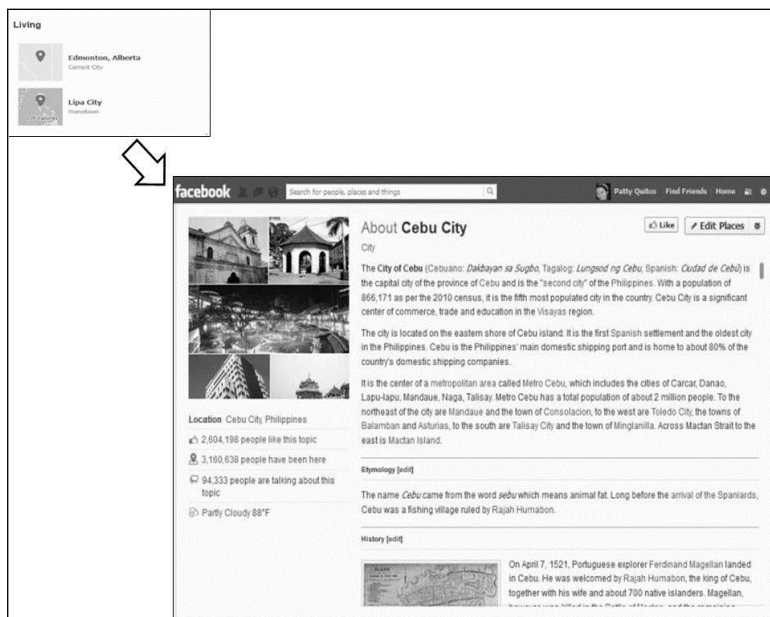


Figure 11. Cebu as hometown on Facebook

Also in his mid 20s, Sid was only nine when his family migrated to Edmonton. He was, among the pilot participants, the most vocal and passionate about being Filipino. It was a surprise to know that he traced his roots to Camiling, Tarlac, where he helped his parents plant crops and care for livestock in their modest farm (see Figure 12, on the next page). Without hesitation, he admitted they were poor and often went hungry. Sid contextualized his hometown declaration on Facebook:

My pride in being Filipino happened in first and second year of university. Not so much in high school coz I went to mostly Asian schools so I was Filipino right away. But when I got to university, it was like (I was a) small fish (in a) big

ocean. I had to differentiate myself in a certain way. And the best way I could do it was to say I'm Filipino. So, I put Camiling, Tarlac up on Facebook. I think that's as Filipino as my profile gets.



Figure 12. Camiling as hometown on Facebook

Sid joined Facebook in 2007. At the time, he was intensely involved in aiding poor families in the Philippines. Thus, he viewed Facebook as a means to network professionally. The appearance of his hometown in his profile seemed the most personal information available to most of his contacts. Sid heavily filtered his Facebook account—only allowing complete access to three people in his network.

Only one participant was neither born in Canada nor in the Philippines. Lino's profile page identified Riyadh in Saudi Arabia as his hometown (see Figure 13, on the next page). He spent the first four years of his life in the Middle East. His parents migrated to Edmonton, Alberta in 1997. Despite his vague memories of Riyadh, Lino still acknowledged the place of his birth as his hometown.



Figure 13. Riyadh, Saudi Arabia as hometown on Facebook

Lino's father was an OFW in Saudi Arabia in the late 1970s. His parents had been co-workers in the Philippines before his father left to find his fortune abroad. The couple got married in 1986 and remained apart until 1991 when his mother flew to Riyadh. Lino was born two years after. Even while in the Middle East, he says he was raised with Filipino values. His mom's brothers found jobs in Riyadh, surrounding Lino with Filipino relatives. Meanwhile, his mom's sisters lived in the US and in Canada. They constantly persuaded the young family to join them. His dad received a tempting job offer from an oil company in Alberta. Thus, Lino's parents packed their bags for Canada in 1997. But behind that decision was their desire to give their son a better future.

Though Canada had much to offer Lino, it wasn't as welcoming to his parents. They were forced to take further training and certification for jobs they had mastered for years. Lino proudly shared that his dad "challenged" the system by demanding to take

the qualifying exam before completing the required training. His father, reported the proud son, vindicated himself by passing.

Meanwhile, Lino spent his early years in a multicultural school setup where there were few Filipinos. This changed in his teens when he was enrolled at a Catholic high school with a large number of Filipinos. Lino and Eli were in the same peer group composed mostly of other Filipinos. After graduation, Lino's social circle grew to include Asian friends. One of his cousins living in the US invited Lino to join Facebook in 2008. His primary incentive was *"to keep in touch with my relatives in the Philippines and here in North America."*

On the other hand, the two remaining participants were both born in Edmonton. Still, Sandra and Vicky only declared it as their current city of residence (see Figure 14 on the next page). They remained silent about their hometown for different reasons. In the latter part of 2012, after my pilot study, Sandra deleted personal information from Facebook. She felt the site had become "too public." Vicky, meanwhile, confessed she did not particularly love her hometown. To her, it was a matter of time before she would soon leave it:

...home is where my heart is and my heart isn't in Edmonton but I don't want to count my chickens before they hatch so I don't want to put my ideal city yet lol [laughs out loud]. You never know what will happen or where your feet will take you lol.

Their common stance about not declaring Edmonton as their hometown did not seem odd to their contacts. Most knew the two never lived in any other city and simply assumed they found it redundant to repeat the obvious. Sandra, whose parents are both

Filipino, still considered herself Filipino despite being born in Canada. Vicky felt differently for a valid reason. While her mother was Filipino and her father was Italian, she felt more Asian-Canadian than Filipino.

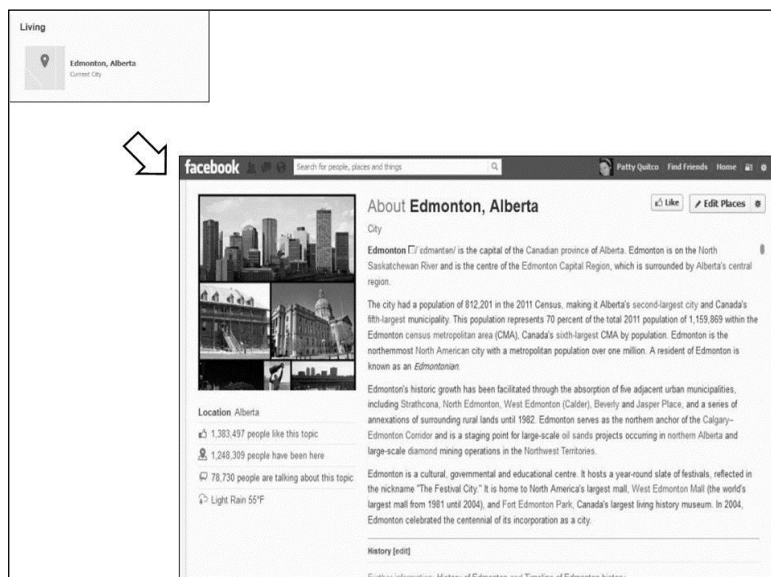


Figure 14. Edmonton as current city on Facebook

The two joined Facebook at a time when their friends in Edmonton were active on the social network. Soon after Vicky created her account, in September of 2007, she sent out numerous friend requests to practically everyone she knew. Espie and Pia, her Philippine-based cousins, were among her first contacts. That same year, Sandra opened her account to join other friends who had done so.

To Filipino secondary key informants, reading Edmonton as the current city of a Facebook contact meant different things. A Philippine-based participant expressed a strong desire to migrate to Canada. To her, life in North America was ideal and, thus, enviable. Two other Filipinos living in the Philippines did not fully agree. Though they admitted that diasporic Filipinos usually enjoy financial rewards, they were wary of the costs of migration. Both enumerated the sacrifices of leaving behind families and competing in a place where one remains a “second-class citizen.” To the Filipina

diasporic based in the US, declaring a current city not located in the Philippines may be a painful reminder of being away from home. Nena had been in San Francisco for only two months when I invited her to be a research participant. She confessed to being on Facebook constantly to alleviate her homesickness.

On the other hand, all eight primary participants who declared their hometowns on Facebook were proud of their histories. This did not seem to be the case for the two participants who were born in Edmonton. One of them even went as far as saying she did not like her hometown and was planning to move some day. In general, the Filipino diasporic participants deliberately identified or distanced themselves from their hometowns on Facebook. These social adjustments seemed to indicate a hidden yet accessible narrative about diasporic identities.

Friends/family lists. Crucial to one's profile are two lists that summarize connections to members of one's network: Family and friends. Friends are loosely defined as "people you connect and share with on Facebook" (Facebook Help Center, 2014).

Regardless of the ways we declare our connections, we are still encouraged to view people on social networking sites as social capital (Ellison, et al., 2007). Donath and Boyd (2004) stated that: "Displaying connections is a form of 'social climbing' or 'name dropping'" (p. 72). Research has shown that the quality of friends is a better gauge of popularity or trustworthiness than the quantity of friends (Boyd, 2006; Utz, 2010).

Interestingly, our relationships comprise who we are on Facebook (Boyd & Heer, 2006; Palfrey & Gasser, 2010; Zhao et al., 2008). Even more telling is how comparisons

are made between friends' lists. According to Utz (2010), "...people expect people to have similar friends..." (p. 326). Boyd (2006) came to the same conclusion in her study conducted four years earlier.

There has been a shift in people's attitude towards Facebook (Dey, Jelveh & Ross, 2012). There has been a preference for being more private about personal information. This applies as well to displaying social connections through one's profile.

Table 6, below, indicates whether or not participants have made their friends' and family lists available to their contacts. An equal number of participants—seven out of 10—displayed these lists with only one participant hiding both. The presence or absence of such information may have an impact on identity perceptions. Even if a participant hides her or his friends' list, a contact can still view their common friends. These connections may actually hold more meaning since they focus on people familiar to the contact viewing a participant's profile. On the other hand, most of the family lists displayed by participants included siblings as the closest blood relations. Only Eli and Lia showed connections to their parents' Facebook accounts. Most family members were cousins and aunts/uncles. Interestingly, Eli and Basil declared some of their closest friends (including non-Filipinos) as brothers and sisters.

Table 6. Visibility of friends' and family lists on Facebook

	Friends' list	Family list
Sandra*	✓	×
Peter*	✓	✓
Sid*	×	×
Betty*	✓	×
Eli**	×	✓
Basil**	✓	✓
Lia	✓	✓
Lino	✓	✓
Maria	×	✓
Vicky	✓	✓

*Pilot participants

**Pilot and main research participants

Among the seven participants who displayed their friends' lists, Betty had the most number of contacts at over 1,000. This was followed by Veronica (822), Basil (705), Lia (643), Lino (475), Sandra (455) and Peter (380). It would be easy to make assumptions about such numbers without knowing contextual information. For example, Sandra and Peter had the fewest contacts. They both admitted to not having close connections to Philippine-based friends or relatives. This was to be expected since Sandra was born in Canada while Peter has lived most of his young life abroad. He emphasized: *"I didn't have real friends when I left."*

Meanwhile, the friends' lists of the other participants reflected a network of friends and family members in the Philippines and around the world. Lino estimated that from 1/3 to 1/2 of his Facebook contacts were Filipinos. Most of the Filipino diasporic participants also said they were more active in other platforms like Skype and Twitter. However, they chose to maintain their Facebook accounts since this was the preferred social networking site of Filipinos in general. Vicky, who had never lived outside of Edmonton, had the most number of Canadian friends. The only Filipinos in her network were relatives on her mother's side. Betty and Lia were teenagers when they arrived in Canada. To them Facebook functioned as a means to reconnect with old friends they left behind in the Philippines. Some of these friends also moved to other countries—strengthening their renewed bond through the common experience of diaspora. Betty, as if to explain the size of her Facebook network, said:

I still feel Filipino even if I'm not homesick as I used to be. I still feel a connection. I think it's partly too because I'm not friends with a lot of Filipino people. So, to me, it's like: 'Oh, I'm the only one here so I'm Filipino.' So my

goal on Facebook was to keep in touch with my friends in the Philippines. I added a lot of school friends from the Philippines. And I came from a pretty big school. Sometimes, I find out that they've moved to Vancouver or they moved to Toronto. So I think, for me, it was an opportunity to start talking to them. Like: "How are you doing? How are you liking it there? Maybe I can help you." I think it's very reassuring even if I haven't been back home for the eight years that I've been here.

Unlike the other youth group members who showed either their friends or family lists, Sid has made these inaccessible. His efforts to make his Facebook account highly private came from his concern for others. Sid insisted:

That's to protect my friends and to make sure that people are not creeping them out. Only three of my closest friends have full access to everything in my account. I also protect my family. For me, there's a demarcation between personal and professional. And Facebook is professional. There might be a picture of me and my sister. But you don't see pictures of my parents. Even my close friends from university do not know how my parents look like or even how my other sister looks like. As a general rule, I don't share personal stuff.

On the other hand, including close friends in their family lists allowed Eli and Basil to honor strong connections with people who were more like family to them. The Facebook design afforded them the option to do so without need for actual legal or biological proof. In fact, I later learned some of their declared brothers and sisters were not even Filipino. Still, what really baffled me was the fact that Eli was an only child.

When asked about his family list, he simply replied: *“Friends started sending me requests to be on my family list and I would go: ‘You’re close enough to me anyway.’”*

Throughout the pilot study and my main research, I witnessed the playful face-to-face and Facebook exchanges between Basil and Eli. But they had not declared each other brothers as expected. Basil later explained that there was no need to do so. For Eli, it was a simple matter of failing to update his family list.

Vicky, similarly, declared some of her friends as siblings. Their names appeared on her family list in October of 2012 but disappeared in May of 2013. Worried that people may assume these were her real siblings, she decided to delete their names from the list. Vicky also suggested that she may have been mad at one of them during that time. So, there were only three names left on her family list--an aunt, a cousin (neither of the two secondary participants) and a relative whose connection to her was not specified. All of them were Filipinos even if Vicky has Italian relatives on her father’s side. She clarified that there could be more names on her family list if she hadn’t been “too slow” in accepting friend requests from relatives in the Philippines and around the world. When she was new to Facebook, she added as many contacts as she could. But that initial enthusiasm eventually waned. Significantly, Vicky did not include her mother or siblings in her family list even if they all had Facebook accounts. A profound reason kept her from doing so. After a few months of constantly chatting with me on Facebook, she entrusted a family secret that gave me clarity.

Only Eli and Lia included their parents in their Facebook networks. Both did not hesitate to display their closeness to their families. Peter, who made his family list visible on Facebook, clarified that he was not concerned with public perception about his

family life. Instead, his family list allowed him to establish stronger connections with some of his relatives.

Meanwhile, Betty said her parents told her a few years ago that it was ok for her not to include them as her Facebook contacts. They understood that, as a teenager, there were things she may not feel comfortable sharing with them. The Filipino parents of other participants, however, were reportedly insulted by their children's refusal to accept their friend requests. Sid, who did so to "protect" his family from fallout from his very public advocacies, likewise said his mom found it hard to accept his decision to distance himself from her on Facebook. This online shunning, fortunately, was not reflective of the strength or weakness of their offline relationships. Instead, it mainly established the generational gap that naturally exists between parents and offspring. This explanation is a confirmation of Ramos' (2010) conclusion that Filipino youth may consider their parents *hindi ibang tao* (one-of-us) outside of Facebook but *ibang tao* (not-one-of-us) on the online platform.

Even so, the influence of Facebook on our offline lives has been undeniable. In 2009, "unfriend" was declared 2009 word of the year by The New Oxford American Dictionary (Goldsmith, 2009). This act has since been ingrained in both language and thought.

Why someone would choose to unfriend a contact was the subject of the investigation of Sibona and Walczak (2011). They concluded that more survey respondents did so for online rather than offline reasons. Particularly mentioned was how "the person they unfriended posted too often about unimportant topics" (p. 10). While social networking sites do not always host genuine friendships, online unframing may

not be as trivial as it seems. The authors suggested that: “Unlike real world relationships that may simply fade without either member making a conscious decision about the dissolution, online unfriending is a conscious and public decision” (p. 2).

The hurtful and very public declaration of unfriending was avoided by my Filipino diasporic participants. Instead, they have opted to block undesirable contacts for reasons to be discussed later in relation to *pakikipagkapwa* on Facebook.

In general, friends and family lists on Facebook contributed to Filipino diasporic identities despite participants’ efforts to control such information. Secondary participants, as their contacts, often concluded that being Filipino was synonymous to having Filipino friends and family members.

Basic information. Eight fields fall under basic information in one’s Facebook profile. Filipino and non-Filipino participants did not associate personal information (sex, birthday, relationship status, interest in women or men and political views) to culture. Thus, this section has focused only on work & education, language and religious views which emerged as themes in our various discussions.

Only two Filipino diasporics (Basil and Lia) did not include the schools they attended as part of their profile. Peter, Betty, Sandra, Sid, Lino, Maria and Vicky enumerated the Edmonton schools they attended. Among them, only Betty and Sid were enrolled in Philippine schools at some time in their lives. Eli, in contrast, was the only one to post his Philippine and Canadian schools on Facebook. Like Lia and Basil, he arrived in Edmonton as a teenager. Notably, only Vicky identified the company she worked for. Its Facebook page, however, did not indicate its location and could not be deemed important to her diasporic identity.

In online and offline conversations, I was struck by the importance given by all 10 participants' to their education. As mentioned earlier, previous studies have concluded that Filipino migrant children feel a strong obligation to perform well in school (Fuligni & Masten, 2010; Kim et al., 2008). The general value for education can be traced to the shaping of the Filipino mind through colonization (Coloma, 2009; Constantino, 1976).

Our Philippine educational system was created in the same mold as the American education system. In this way, Filipinos became ideal colonial subjects (Constantino, 1976). From the start, education was meant to respond to external labor demands first in the service of the US economy and, later, the world economy. Gonzalez (1992) emphasized the disparity in implementing such a system from an industrial country to a highly agricultural one. Such incompatibility has resulted in the lack of jobs for graduates taking popular degrees that are geared towards overseas employment. These have included medical professions and engineering.

Until I lived in Canada, I didn't realize that our value for education was a cultural trait. One day, I was talking to my cousin's Armenian-American father-in-law. A professor emeritus at a prestigious American university, he was interested in my pursuit of a doctoral degree. I explained that I had been an instructor at the University of the Philippines which, I added, was also the alma mater of my father, two aunts and an uncle. Candidly, he said: "Oh, I didn't know you came from a highly-educated family." Baffled by his surprise, I informed him that all members of my family, including relatives, had university or college degrees. Guessing his next question, I added: "Filipino parents do everything they can—even work abroad—to send their children to school. Even poverty is not considered a reason to give up on one's education."

In academic conferences, I have often been asked why Filipino migration has continued to rise. The simple answer would have been to say there are not enough jobs for Filipinos in the Philippines. However, at the heart of this problematic is an educational system that encourages overseas employment (Gonzalez, 1992). Good education, viewed as the only sure way to ensure a promising future, costs money. Some parents work abroad to send their children to school. Others take the radical step of family migration. The Philippine educational structure also encourages overseas employment. In various ways, the value for education fuels migration.

Even when Filipinos have become diasporic, education remains an important issue. Statistics Canada (2007) has confirmed that: “Canadian adults of Filipino origin are much more likely than the rest of the population to have a university degree” (para. 22). Sid observed:

The values we learned from the Philippines educational system have stuck with us. When I was in business, it was ok. My parents could accept that. But when I took my after degree in the Faculty of Arts, people couldn't understand it. Too much importance has been given to finding a career with large salaries. My sister became a nurse because she was expected to be in the healthcare field. She gave up an arts scholarship even if she's a great artist. When I tell people that I'm taking political science, they tell me I'm the weirdest Filipino they've ever met.

At the Faculty of Education, I was only one of two Filipino PhD students. We had often wondered where all the other Filipino students were—sure that most Filipino parents would encourage their children finish university or college degrees. The answer

came after I met my participants. None of them had graduated with degrees in the arts or the social sciences.

My Edmonton-based cousin, a kindergarten teacher, had also walked down the halls of the Faculty of Education. A decade prior, she was the sole Filipino student there. Her Filipino friends from high school pursued business, nursing or engineering. Her older sister finished her business degree also at the U of A.

Five of the primary participants have degrees in the medical field. Two have pursued business. Two completed degrees in general sciences. One has taken engineering. Many of them expressed a desire to further their education by going into law, medicine or various graduate programs. Most of the participants have depended on their parents to finance their education. Sandra typed: “*This is the Filipino way lol [laughs out loud].*” However, a handful took the initiative to support themselves by working or applying for student loans.

Language, meanwhile, was a consistently sensitive issue connected to Filipino identity (Constantino, 1976; Gonzalez, 1992). Though only three of the 10 participants enumerated the languages on Facebook, there were pertinent stories hidden beneath the online profiles they created.

Vicky was born in Edmonton to a Filipina mother and an Italian father. But on Facebook, she declared that she spoke Mandarin Chinese, English and Korean. Distinctly missing were Filipino and Italian—her parents’ mother tongues. In stark contrast, Lino said he spoke Tagalog, Batangas Tagalog and English even if he was born in the Middle East and raised in North America. These were languages to be expected of someone born in the Philippines.

Betty, who lived in the rural Philippines until she was 14, announced that she spoke Filipino, English and Japanese. Lino spent his first four years of life in Riyadh surrounded by his Filipino parents and close relatives. As expected, all three spoke English. Only Betty and Lino referred to Filipino languages with an interesting difference when it came to terminology. Lino, whose own parents left the country in the 1990s, opted for Tagalog but also added the specific dialect of his mother's hometown (Batangas Tagalog). Betty used "Filipino," indicating her understanding of a unified language. Curiously, she did so even if her hometown (Lipa, Batangas) belongs to the Tagalog region (provinces that spoke Tagalog). Meanwhile, Vicky and Betty both indicated they knew other Asian languages. They sought to learn specific ones that attracted them. Being surrounded with diasporic friends who spoke these languages also influenced their interests.

Lino and his parents only spoke Tagalog at home. The Catholic high school he attended exposed him to other Filipinos his age. Even so, this did not mean he automatically spoke to these school friends in Tagalog or Filipino. Some of the new students who just arrived from the Philippines spoke English very well. For example, Eli did not have a problem transitioning to his Canadian school when it came to language. English was, as in many Philippine private schools, the medium of instruction. Occasionally, there were Filipino students who felt most comfortable speaking only Filipino languages with each other. But, Lino noted that *"as they integrated more and more, they shifted to English."*

Meanwhile, Canada-born and bred Vicky was aware that her languages field in her Facebook profile (“Mandarin Chinese, English and Korean”) did not reflect her actual heritage. She declared:

This is the funny anomaly all my Flip¹¹ friends laugh at...I'm actually only really fluent in Mandarin and English. My Tagalog is horrible. I also don't speak my dad's language. Since I was five, I started learning Mandarin and was around Chinese people and Chinese culture. Sadly, I know more about Chinese history and culture than I really do about Filipino. Some Chinese people have said that I could do well if I lived in China on my own. But I only know a bit of Tagalog. I can't even reply. I may only understand about 20-40% of what is said.

Meanwhile, Lino and Betty did not have to explain the differences of the Filipino languages to curious contacts. Facebook provided hyperlinks to information from Wikipedia. Among these, Tagalog Facebook community page (the top portion of Figure 15, on the next page) provided extensive detail. It showed a portion of the Philippine map indicating where speakers of the language lived. Also included were the language's history (including an image depicting the alibata, the Tagalog pre-colonial alphabet), accent, classification, dialects (plus sample phrases showing differences), Taglish (colloquial combination of Tagalog and English), and the like. Facebook goes as far as including its own statistics (number of people who “like” and are “talking about the topic” and the number of people who “speak” Tagalog). Like Wikipedia, Facebook allows a community page visitor to suggest revisions to the information currently online.

¹¹ Slang term referring to a Filipino or a person from the Philippines. The word is sometimes considered derogatory because it alludes to an insane person.

The screenshot shows the Facebook page for 'About Tagalog'. The page title is 'About Tagalog' and it is categorized as a 'Language'. The page has 6,384,829 likes, 7,175,384 users who speak this language, and 97 people talking about it. The main content includes a map of the Philippines, a description of Tagalog as an Austronesian language, and a section on the history of the language. A table shows the Tagalog Baybayin script for the letters A, E/I, O/U, Ba, Ka, Da/Ra, Ga, Ha, La, Ma, Na, Nga, Pa, Sa, Ta, Wa, and Ya. The text explains that the word 'Tagalog' derives from 'tagalog', meaning 'native of' and 'ilog' meaning 'river', thus 'river dweller'. It also mentions the first written record of Tagalog in the Laguna Copperplate Inscription (900 A.D.) and the first known book written in Tagalog, the *Doctrina Christiana* (1593).

Figure 15. Tagalog language Facebook community page

The Batangas Tagalog community page (seen in Figure 16, below) did not contain as much information. Though this was to be expected from a mere dialect, no map of Batangas was shown to clarify where in the Philippines this was spoken. Instead, a hyperlink to the Facebook community page of Batangas was provided. Even so, sample words and phrases were listed.

The screenshot shows the Facebook page for 'About Batangas Tagalog'. The page title is 'About Batangas Tagalog' and it is categorized as a 'Language'. The page has 34,502 likes, 31,000 users who speak this language, and 1 person talking about it. The main content includes a flag icon, a description of Batangas Tagalog as a dialect of Tagalog, and a section on grammar. A table compares Standard and Batangan Tagalog for the root word 'kain' (to eat) and 'tawag' (to call) across syllabication, conjugated forms, and written variants.

	Standard	Batangan	Standard	Batangan
root word	kain (to eat)	kain (to eat)	tawag (to call)	tawag (to call)
syllabication	ka-in	ka-in	ta-wag	ta-wag
conjugated	k-um-a-ka-in	na-ka-in	t-um-a-ta-wag	na-ta-wag
written variant	kumakain	nakain	tumatawag	natawag

Figure 16. Batangas Tagalog language Facebook community page

I learned two things from seeing Batangas Tagalog described on Facebook. The first involved its proper name—Batangan. It was a term I had never heard of in all my life even if I had close ties to the province. Even more significant was a bit of information that had a profound impact on my own Filipino identity. Though my family history was deeply entwined with that of Batangas, I had not given much importance to the kind of Tagalog my grandfather and father spoke. One reason may be that I considered their characteristic “Batangas” accent as the main distinction of the dialect from its mother language. Having been raised in Metro Manila, I was regularly surprised when Filipinos (both in the Philippines and abroad) would ask me to define certain words I habitually used. Facebook confirmed what I should have known—that my family spoke an ancient form of Tagalog that not all Filipinos could understand.

Facebook, however, has failed to capture the passionate discourse surrounding the contentious Filipino language. Instead, Figure 17 (on Page 175) has given an impression of consensus about a national language based primarily on Tagalog. It has disregarded issues raised by various ethno-linguistic groups which believe they and their languages should also be acknowledged. One participant once interrupted me in mid sentence to ask why I kept referring to our language as Filipino. He commented, to my disappointment: “*Isn’t Tagalog the same as Filipino?*” This confusion has been reflected in the Filipino Facebook community page in the following sentences:

In practical terms, Filipino is the formal name of Tagalog, or even a synonym of it. It is sometimes described as “Tagalog-based”, part of a *political fiction* that the national language is based on an amalgam of Philippine languages rather than on Tagalog alone. It is usually called Tagalog within the Philippines and among

Filipinos to differentiate it from other Philippine languages, but it has come to be known as Filipino to differentiate it from the languages of other countries; the former implies a regional origin, the latter a national (Facebook, 2013, para. 13).¹²

The University of the Philippines, my alma mater, has raised my awareness about the significance of Filipino as an emerging national language. Its evolution has been made known to me through the years as a student (undergraduate and graduate), a faculty member and, later, a returning alumna completing my dissertation on Filipino diasporic identities. In fact, I had attended a campus forum in January of 2013 which highlighted the interconnections between Filipino language and identity. Filipino scholars, including Sikolohiyang Pilipino pioneer Dr. Rogelia Pe-Pua, were among those who expounded on how Filipino academic research impacted the lives of the common Filipino. Of specific interest to me was the discussion on the new Mother Tongue Based Multilingual Education (MLE) to be incorporated in the government's K to 12 program. I asked if the Filipino language project had been abandoned in the process. The esteemed panel members said it was alive in language of the Filipino people and their popular media.

On Facebook, language also played a significant role in the renegotiation of Filipino diasporic identities. This was more clearly seen in Timeline posts than in the Facebook profiles of my participants. Of the seven participants who did not indicate their languages on Facebook, only two had a hard time speaking a Filipino language. Maria said she understood Tagalog but had a difficult time translating her thoughts in her mother tongue. Sandra was the same. Even so, she understood the importance of language on cultural identity. She explained: "*Filipino identity is rooted*

¹² I have italicized these words to emphasize the main point of this description.

on the language. If you spoke Filipino or you also ate Filipino food that makes you Filipino. And if you're parents are Filipino, then, obviously you are Filipino."



Figure 17. Filipino language Facebook community page

Language proficiency may become problematic for Filipinos born outside the Philippines or uprooted before they could develop the skill. As Eli concluded: *“Most Filipinos (Filipino-Canadians) I know are able to fully understand spoken Filipino but are not good at speaking it.”*

Peter, the other hand, associated speaking a Filipino language to being nationalistic. He recalled refusing to speak English to foreigners as a young boy in Cebu. But his determination to hold on to this part of his identity wavered when his family moved to Africa. English became his only means to communicate with his host community since there were very few Filipinos living there. By the time they again moved to Canada, English had become second-nature.

Lia, Basil and Eli were quite fluent in the Filipino languages of their parents. Tagalog was still used in the home of Lia. Like Betty and Vicky, she too sought to learn an additional Asian language. She was drawn to Korean by her love for Korean pop music and dramas. Her efforts to learn it pushed her to register in a non-credit course. Since it did not affect her academic performance, she felt she had belonged to the class only as “*saling pusa*.”¹³ Meanwhile, Basil already spoke Chinese even before leaving the Philippines given his ancestry. Though he did not directly say this on Facebook, his profile prominently displays his Chinese name. Finally, Eli said he spoke both Tagalog and Ilokano—his parents’ native languages--at home.

Both Lia and Basil avoided filling in some available fields in their profile pages. To the latter, it was a matter of privacy. But, for Lia, certain information (like her birthday, the languages she speaks and her religion) was already accessible to those who knew her outside of Facebook. Eli admitted that he created his Facebook profile some time ago. When the social networking site added new fields, he was simply lazy to fill in his information. Even my Facebook research accounts did not announce what languages I spoke. In my case, I did not feel it was necessary to declare what was already obvious on my Timeline. My posts were written in English, Filipino or Taglish (Tagalog mixed with English).

Unlike us, Sid’s silence on his languages seemed more connected to his resistance against Filipino stereotypes. He was actually quite fluent in Kapampangan, the language of his hometown of Camiling, Tarlac (proudly announced on his Facebook profile). But that he chose not to declare this as part of his online persona had a lot to do with his

¹³This term was supplied by the participant without any prompting from me.

offline encounters. Behind it was a series of traumatic experiences in the hands of other Filipino diasporics. Recounted Sid:

This has happened to me pretty much everywhere I've been around the world. Filipinos will try to speak to me in Tagalog. If I answer them in English, and you can tell from my English that I'm not faking it, they think I'm a snob. Once, I tried explaining that I am from the Philippines but I grew up speaking Kapampangan. I thought this would end the issue. Instead, I was asked: 'But you're still Filipino, right?.' And I walked away super angry. I can't speak Tagalog coz I wasn't raised Tagalog. Just because I can't speak your language, stop holding it against me.

The above statement showed me a glimpse of how deeply sensitive my participants were about language. And, though most of them did not directly address their linguistic roots in their profile, there were a few (including Lia, Eli and Basil) who wrote their posts and comments on their Timeline in either Tagalog or Filipino. I observed that Eli only limited himself to Tagalog on Facebook even though he also spoke Ilokano. Asked why, he admitted with a laugh: *"I speak fluently but I am not good at written Ilokano."*

The issue of language has been deeply rooted in the formation of Filipino identities. As Agoncillo (1973) noted: "Manila, the...political capital of the Philippines and the center of cultural and commercial life, is at the heart of the [Tagalog] region. It is this historical accident that makes the Tagalog feel 'superior' to the rest of the Filipinos (p. 16)." I observed a tinge of Filipino regionalism in my private conversations with a few participants. Impressively, Sid seemed well versed with Agoncillo's stance that

Spanish colonizers encouraged regional conflict as a means to “divide and conquer” Filipinos (p. 13).

Compared to other fields in my participants’ Facebook profiles, “religious views” seemed the most contrary to Filipino diasporic identities. Catholicism has been an essential component of Spanish colonization and Filipino identity (Bernad, 1971; Daguimol, 2010). The Catholic Church has also provided Filipino migrants around the world a safe haven for Filipino community building (Caponio, 2005; Lanza & Svendsen, 2001).

Asked to describe Filipino identities, a non-Filipino participant included Catholicism as a distinct feature. He further complained that his Filipino co-workers (not participants of this research) seemed overly interested in religion. They separately took him to task for putting “none” under religious views on Facebook. In contrast, they all proudly announced themselves Catholic on Facebook.

Statistics Canada (2007) reported that the Filipino community has largely been composed of Christians. Eighty-one per cent of these were Catholic. Zhou and Xiong (2005) likewise said that many of their Filipino respondents (adult children of migrants) in San Diego were Catholic. Like other Asian migrants of the same age in America, they had the same religious affiliations as their parents.

Though nearly all my participants were Catholic, only three posted their religious beliefs on Facebook. This did not align with what I knew about them. During my pilot study, Peter even posted a Timeline farewell warning his contacts about his intended social media “fast.” He had decided to do so as a personal sacrifice for Holy Week (April 1 to 7, 2012). His profile even showed that he was a member of a Catholic apostolic

group's Facebook community page. A few months later, in November of 2012, Basil posted a call for friends to go snowboarding with him that coming Monday. When asked why he chose to do it then instead of Sunday, he simply typed: "Church."

Meanwhile, Eli, Lino and Vicky had different ways of expressing their religious views on Facebook. Eli and Lino, both Catholic, described themselves as "Catholic" and "Christian" respectively. Vicky, a member of the Church of Christ (Iglesia ni Cristo), wrote "other" as her religious view.

Though all Catholics are Christians, not all Christians are Catholics. This conclusion could easily be made by simply clicking on the Facebook hyperlinks. Navigation to the community pages (Figure 18, below) would allow one to gain some understanding about someone else's religion. Lino was brought up by Catholic parents who took him to Catholic Church regularly and sent him to a Catholic high school. The way he chose to describe his religious views intrigued me. Upon further investigation, I realized this mystery was tied in with how other participants dealt with this field in their Facebook profiles.



Figure 18. Facebook description of Catholic and Christian religions

Facebook did not provide a hyperlink for “other” as religious views. One would be left to just wonder exactly what a contact meant by this declaration. Once, I engaged Vicky in a long discussion about her religion. This happened several months after I began my research. After reviewing our online chats, I apologized for mistakenly assuming on several occasions that she was Catholic. Still sounding friendly in her chat text messages, she assured me that this was not unusual since most Filipinos are Catholic. Her openness in discussing her religion was a sign I could probe further.

The Church of Christ (Iglesia ni Cristo or INC) was founded in the Philippines by Felix V. Manalo, a charismatic leader who became highly influential in local society and politics. Its website describes it as “the largest entirely indigenous Christian church in the Philippines” (Iglesia ni Cristo, 2013, para. 1). Its members in the Philippines are known to be devout and nationalistic. Politicians running for office often seek the endorsement of the INC. Its members practice bloc voting. Thus, I was surprised that none of Vicky’s religious beliefs seemed to permeate on her Facebook posts. Saying she was not strictly INC as other Filipinos I knew, she explained:

I don't think my religion is the right one. I am religious but it's only a part of who I am--not my entire being. I just...respect my friends. I won't spam their feeds with quotes from the bible or religious things because I don't know their beliefs.... In my own personal life, talking with friends, I'll say things related to religion or talk openly about my religion if i'm asked.

The above attitude seemed to resonate with other participants’ decision to remain silent about their religion. It also seemed in tune with Lino’s preference for the term Christian rather than Catholic. This mindfulness in accepting and respecting other

people's religious beliefs on Facebook seemed reflective of global society's influence. Beyer (2006) concluded that "migration helps to pluralize and universalize particulars" (p. 60). Canada, as a global society, has portrayed itself as multicultural and secular. These Filipino diasporics lived in a material society where unity in difference has been celebrated. But they also resided in a virtual society that projects itself as global and multicultural.

Religious differences don't seem as welcome on Facebook. In fact, Lauri (2012) noted that religious posts by Dominican diasporics did not get as much responses on Facebook if contacts did not share the same views. There may also be those who, like some of my participants (Lia, Basil, Sid and Sandra), consider religion as a private matter. Lino, who declared himself Christian instead of Catholic, confirmed: "*Being in a very multicultural and secular country, preference is placed on keeping one's religious beliefs private in respect to others who may practice different faiths.*"

Discussion of religious beliefs on social media seemed to similarly require sensitivity to those who comprised one's network. Young, Dutta and Dommety (2009) suggested this was based on what kind of contact you wanted to attract. Even more important was the avoidance of appearing too different and alienating to contacts. Bobkowski & Pearce (2011) raised the possibility that the personal declarations through social media may be inclined "toward(s) more socially desirable portrayals (p. 758)." This argument, again, has brought us back to Canada as the current location of these diasporic Filipinos.

Interestingly, the values promoted by material and virtual societies likewise aligned with the Filipino core value of *kapwa* (similarity of self with others). The next

sections attend to how such complementary values seeped from the offline lives of Filipino diasporic participants into their Facebook existence.

Likes. Another way the Facebook profile contributes to identity is through documenting one's preferences (movies, TV shows, books, groups, advocacies, etc.). The act of liking a Facebook page renders it part of one's image until one decides to unlike it at some point. This can be done with such speed and lack of afterthought that one can easily forget what one has liked. One Filipino diasporic even admitted:

"Sometimes, I like a page because someone requested it. If I don't see any harm in it, I do it. Often, I even forget why I liked it."

Only half of the primary participants (Sandra, Peter, Maria, Lino and Lia) liked the Filipino youth group's Facebook community page. Lia joined the material community first before expressing her online alliance. Maria did the opposite—aligning with the group initially on Facebook before participating in its offline events. Even so, they shared a strong desire to reach out to Filipinos their age in Edmonton. Both had attended schools where there were few Filipino students. Lia, with some friends, even tried to create her own youth group. She failed to find members. Thus, she was eager to join the already established group of Filipino youth in Edmonton. Maria's search for Filipino friends, on the other hand, ended on Facebook when a contact requested her to like their community page. Asked to elaborate on her experiences as a member of the group, she said:

I didn't really have Filipino friends and I wanted to be connected more with the Filipino culture. Sometimes, my friends can't guess where I'm from. I think their view of Filipinos is so stereotypical. When I tell them I'm Filipino, they're first

reply is, "But you're not dark." The youth group has helped me understand who I am. I've become aware of important issues happening in the Philippines. Our events have also reinforced my Filipinoness.

Some of the participants were not as active in the Filipino youth group. Though Lino was a member and declared it through liking the group's community page, he did not want to be an officer of the group. Sandra, who also liked its Facebook page, declined my invitation to extend her pilot study participation to my main research. Though she sporadically attended events, she considered herself an inactive member.

On the other hand, neither Vicky nor Betty liked the Facebook community page. Vicky admitted she did not formally join the Filipino youth group. She was declared a member at the first event she attended. While she could have easily declined the instant membership, she decided not to say anything. Betty had also remained silent about her decision to withdraw from the group. Both still attended some of the group's events out of Filipino solidarity. Their distancing from the Filipino youth group will be discussed further in the next subsection.

The other participants were committed to the youth group even if they did not openly like its Facebook community page. Eli had been at almost all the youth group's events I attended. His failure to register his approval online was more due to laziness than anything else. For Basil and Sid, it had more to do with their privacy concerns. The two were deliberate about what information they shared and what they concealed. It was, therefore, not surprising that they also did not formally declare their affiliation with the group.

Aside from liking the youth group's Facebook community page, some participants expressed preference for entertainment, groups, advocacies and other online materials which were obviously Filipino. For example, Lia was a fan of Filipino TV shows which she regularly watched. She documented this by liking the Facebook pages of her favorite shows (see Figure 19, below).

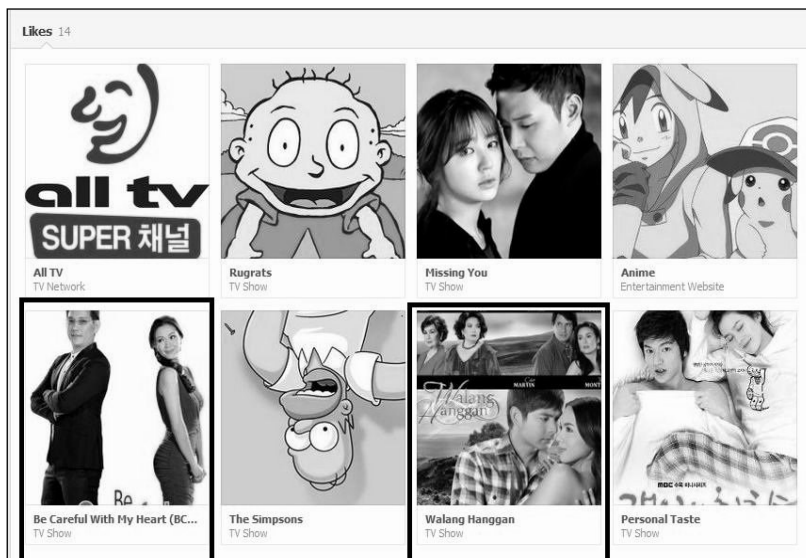


Figure 19. Liking Filipino TV shows on Facebook

But there were also some materials which my participants attributed to being Filipino even if they were not obviously Filipino. The love for Korean popular music, shows and movies was interpreted by some participants as reflective of Filipino identities. Maria, Lia and Eli separately said that the devotion of Filipinos in the Philippines surpassed that of other fans around the world with the exception of Koreans in Korea. Maria further noted that her Filipino friends were bigger K-pop fans than her Korean friends in Canada. Lia, also a K-pop fan, said this was proven by the number of Korean artists who kept visiting the Philippines. Korean superstar Psy, whose song “Gangnam Style” had become a worldwide sensation in 2012, held a pre-Valentine

concert in Manila on February of 2013. She was in the Philippines at that time but was unable to attend the show. However, Lia still considered herself lucky she was able to watch the Philippine concert that brought together the biggest Korean pop bands. Eli clarified that it wasn't Korean pop itself but the attitude towards it that reflected Filipinoness. According to him:

What is Filipino about it is how Filipinos jump on whatever is popular or trendy.

I also consider it very Filipino that one publicizes or displays one's latching on to a trend. It's like saying: 'See, I am quite familiar with that.'

Vicky, whose profile and Timeline was heavily populated with Korean entertainment content, saw this as an expression of her Asian-Canadian identity. Shown in Figure 20, on the next page, are some of the Korean artists she openly liked. Espie, her Philippine-based cousin, said their common addiction to Korean dramas was a way for them to get reacquainted on Facebook. They had only seen each other face-to-face once—as young kids. Vicky's family went the Philippines for a one-month visit. They were closest in age among their cousins and instantly became playmates. But, the bond that developed between them easily weakened over time as the two grew up in starkly different countries. It was, expectedly, awkward for them to reconnect as adults on Facebook. Espie said that immediately changed when she reviewed Vicky's profile. Upon discovering they liked the same Korean soaps, the two fell into the habit of exchanging notes about their favorite shows whenever they saw each other on Facebook. Their shared love for K-pop gave them a second chance at becoming close.

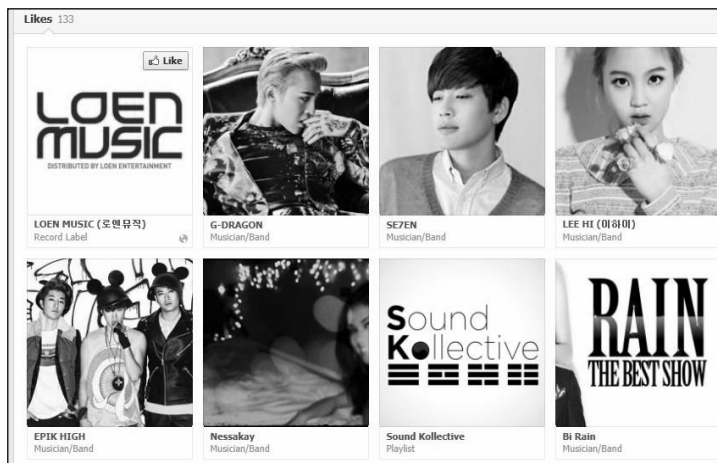


Figure 20. Liking Korean popular entertainment

Facebook likes seemed to serve two purposes for Filipino diasporics and their contacts. On the surface, such declarations made their Philippine roots a visible and audible part of their identities. These cultural connections may not be shared during physical encounters with some of their contacts. It may be especially true for non-Filipino contacts to whom they do not reveal the specifics of their culture(s). A more significant purpose served by their Facebook likes has been as intersections of similarity and familiarity. Though Vicky did not see her love for K-pop as reflective of her Filipino identity, a number of her contacts felt otherwise. Her cousin Espie even described their shared love for K-pop with a kind of fanaticism related to being Filipino. Meanwhile, Nena interpreted Maria's continued preference for Filipino TV shows as a positive sign. Though her friend had lived in Canada for close to a decade, her Facebook likes hinted at strong connections to Filipino culture and language. Facebook likes, thus, allowed Filipino diasporics to remain relatable to Filipinos living in the Philippines and around the world.

Facebook groups. Like other sections of their profiles, Facebook groups directly and indirectly reflected participants' diasporic identities. Easiest to spot were

memberships to groups with a variety of interests ranging from entertainment to advocacies. These were generally focused on people, places or issues clearly involving Filipinos and the Philippines.

The directness and simplicity of the said groups were contrasted by other Facebook memberships that seemed more telling of my participants' liminal identities. Interestingly, religious affiliations surfaced here even if most participants avoided openly declaring their religion under basic information (see previous section). Several participants were members of Christian and Catholic Facebook groups. Vicky, who wrote "other" as her religious view, was a member of the Iglesia ni Cristo (INC) Facebook group. Notably, as seen in Figure 21, below, the church was described as "indigenous" to the Philippines.



Figure 21. Facebook group for Iglesia ni Cristo

It was, therefore, here that Vicky revealed her religious beliefs—highlighting a connection to Filipinos and the Philippines on Facebook. That she concealed her religion in one section of her profile and later revealed it in another may be more consistent than contradictory. Both actions gave value to convergence over divergence. The “religious views” field of her basic information, prominently displayed in the upper part of her

Facebook profile, was presumably integral to who she was as an individual. To declare her religion as Iglesia ni Cristo may seem like an act of withdrawal from contacts who do not share the same views. Declarations in this section may appear strongly divergent given its focus on the individual. On the other hand, Facebook groups would seem naturally predisposed towards shared identity with others.

Finding unity in multiplicity may have a lot to do with Canada and Facebook being global societies. Both communities celebrate multiculturalism, secularism and democracy. Even so, in a way, such descriptions may also reflect *kapwa*. This perceives other(s) as not alien or different but similar and familiar.

Filipino diasporic participants seemed to avoid declaring their religious beliefs. And, yet, they accepted membership in groups that highlighted attachment rather than detachment from their contacts. In fact, Vicky joined the Iglesia ni Cristo Facebook group upon the invitation of a friend. Accepting such requests, she explained, was something she readily did: *“I am mixed (and) I know what it’s like to be different. And I know how cruel some people can be. So I try my best to make people never feel what I felt.”*

Meanwhile, memberships to other Facebook (open or public) groups also dug deeper into the diasporic struggle for recognition. Prime example was Vicky’s affiliation with JYJ Canada, an online movement appealing for a Kpop band to visit Canada (see Figure 22, on the next page). Hidden beneath that call was an expressed need for the recognition of Asian-Canadians as a social group.



Figure 22. Facebook group of Asian-Canadian Korean pop fans

Also quite revealing was Eli's membership to the Facebook group Far East Movement (FM). Its members, though born and raised in the US, were visibly and openly Asian-American. Figure 23, below, shows how the group's Facebook page has highlighted the diasporic desire for transnationalism.

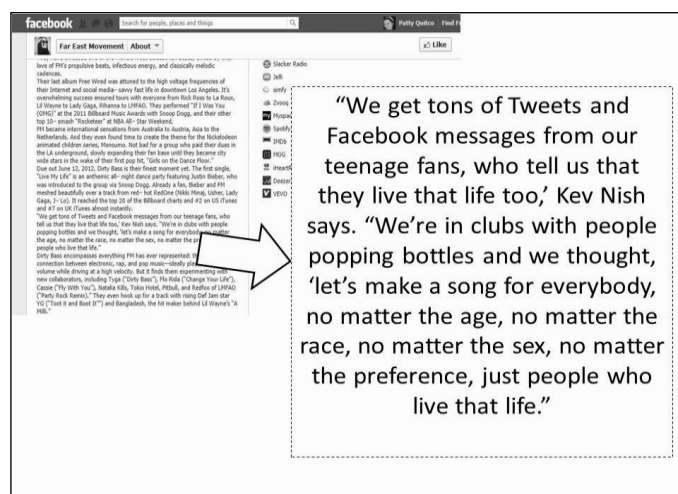


Figure 23. Asian-American band espouses transnationalism on Facebook

The significance of group membership to youth identity formation has been confirmed in previous research (Hunt, Moloney & Evans, 2011). Bischoff (2012) even

concluded that hip hop has united Filipino-Americans in their resistance against “oppression” (p. viii). Furthermore, Ing (2013) noted that: “The children of...immigrants are greatly influenced by their environment, and in some cases become able to employ their own hybridized identities to help their new found culture evolve.” Uniquely, Far East Movement represented an Asian-American lifestyle atypical of gang violence and drug addiction (Hunt, et al., 2011; Ing, 2013).

The group’s international success¹⁴ seemed, at first glance, also representative of Eli’s personal ideal as a diasporic. On several occasions, he said he distanced himself from the depraved activities of other Filipino diasporics his age. This was echoed by his fellow participants whose membership to their own Edmonton-based Filipino youth group was indicative of their shared aspiration.

But, asked about Far East Movement’s alternative Asian-American identities, Eli denied being aware of it. Instead, he seemed pleasantly surprised that the music he loved came with a diasporic aspiration similar to his own. Vicky, who liked the FM Facebook page, said she was also drawn to the music with no understanding of the band’s ideological foundations. She pointed out that none of its song lyrics directly said anything about that. However, she relented that the members’ personas and who they chose to work with seemed more telling.

In similar fashion, Vicky and Eli connected with Far East Movement without consciously realizing what it may mean to their contacts. For instance, it made perfect sense to me that they were drawn to this kind of music (a unique combination of hip hop, pop and techno) and its accompanying lifestyle. Over the course of my research, I had

¹⁴Far East Movement, according to its Facebook page, was the first Asian-American band to top popular music charts and Internet downloads. It has collaborated with famous artists like Justin Bieber and toured with Lady Gaga and Rihanna. In 2011, Far East Movement performed at the Billboard Music Awards.

gotten to know each one's personality and interests. They enjoyed having fun even without alcohol, drugs or aggression. That they lived the life espoused by their favorite band seemed reflected in their membership to this Facebook group. The hyperlink provided by Facebook would allow any of their contacts to follow a trail that may speak volumes about their diasporic identities.

As shown in the previous examples, diasporic Filipinos' beliefs on essential topics including diaspora became visible in the Facebook groups they joined. Filipino diasporic participants were amazed at how much they revealed by providing such information on their Facebook profiles. Of most interest to me was how such portrayals closely resembled their true personas outside of Facebook. Unlike Second Life where identities may be created independent of real-life identities, Facebook profiles seemed to provide snapshots of my participants' actual lives.

Of course, there were still facets of their profiles that remained invisible to many if not all of their contacts. Basil's membership to a Facebook group devoted to his favorite online game did not appear on his profile. I only learned about it from three secondary participants, his contacts, who were also members of the group. US-based Phil and Bernard and Philippine-based Alfie separately said their group mostly posted Timeline messages in Filipino. Basil's behavior in their Facebook group, though only seen by its members, contributed to how they viewed his diasporic identity. In fact, I had to persistently remind them to limit their observations to Basil's posts on his personal Facebook account. This raised the possibility that hidden Facebook group memberships may contribute to Filipino diasporic identities in very particular ways to very particular Facebook contacts.

Meanwhile, some Filipino diasporics chose not to reveal themselves on Facebook. Sandra and Basil, both pilot participants, deleted many of their private information from Facebook several months after they became my contacts. Basil was highly concerned with identity theft by unscrupulous characters prowling the web. On the other hand, Sandra was more wary of people she already knew and how much control she had during social situations:

This is just a violent personal reaction to the self-publishing, selfies and vanity trips that happen on Facebook. I like knowing things about people and I like poking around Facebook to see who is with what friends or doing what things etc. When you realize how open-booked your life has become, and that anyone can walk in and connect a few dots, it's more than alarming. It's scary to think your entire life can be deduced by a single look at a webpage. I'd rather go into a new social situation with some idea of the people there, and remain incognito so I can slip out without talking to anyone I don't want to talk with.

Efforts to limit access to personal information and, thus, heighten privacy have recently been observed on Facebook (Dey, et al., 2012). Unfortunately, even cautious social network dwellers fall victim to unintentional disclosures resulting from confusing Facebook design features (Madejski, Johnson & Bellovin, 2012). This happened to some of my Filipino diasporic participants who belatedly realized how much they revealed in their profiles. That Facebook rapidly, persistently and quietly morphed countered their efforts to control their privacy on the social network.

The Facebook slippage of personal information challenged my assumption that diasporic identities were being intentionally renegotiated on Facebook. It was obvious

my participants controlled some of what they concealed and unconcealed. However, it was also just as apparent there were some things they unconsciously revealed about themselves without their explicit desire to do so. In most cases, such resulted from the Facebook design being driven towards sharing and self revelation. Still, what remained astounding was how closely connected these disclosures were to their offline lives. Summarized in Table 15, in the appendix, are the Facebook profiles of the 10 Filipino diasporic participants.

Renegotiating Filipino diasporic identities on Facebook

After tracing the digital footprints of Filipino diasporic identities on Facebook profiles, this next subsection presents the renegotiation of Filipino diasporic identities through Facebook Timeline posts. The difference between Facebook profiles and Facebook posts are artificial. They serve only to organize my narration. In practical terms, these may contribute to one unified image created by participants through Facebook and perceived by their contacts through their interaction.

Three predominant themes from our diasporic stories draw attention to human agency in the shaping of diasporic identities: 1. Diasporic identities through Facebook friendships and distancing; 2. Celebrating Filipinoness on Facebook and; 3. Filipino-style communication on Facebook. I present our stories in this way to emphasize how we Filipino diasporics may employ creative means to renegotiate our identities with our Filipino (those based in the Philippines and around the world) and non-Filipino (those living in Edmonton, Alberta in Canada) contacts.

Diasporic identities through Facebook friendships and distancing. As a social network, Facebook encourages people to establish social ties. Connections are made

through the sending of friend requests and the acceptance of such. However, the creation of a social network also allows one to limit associations through disassociation and distancing. These can be done through blocking and unfriending people or ignoring/rejecting friend requests.

The above elements of the Facebook design seemed, from the start, reflective of *pakikipagkapwa*. One of my research assumptions was that renegotiation of diasporic identities would be enacted through the dynamic connecting to or distancing from people. I was convinced that my participants could best classify “others” under the two sub groups of *kapwa*: 1. Insiders/one-of-us (*hinding ibang tao*), or 2. Outsiders/not-one-of-us (*ibang tao*) of their social network. Cultural affiliations and distancing could also be unavoidably interpreted as part of cultural identities on Facebook. It was in this way that I imagined *pakikipagkapwa* as the renegotiation of diasporic identities.

The succeeding discussion of cultural association and disassociation on Facebook found guidance from Enriquez’s concepts as summarized in Table 3: Levels of collective behavior viewed from two categories of *kapwa* (p. 68), Table 4: Levels of individualistic interaction viewed from two categories of *kapwa* (p. 89) and, Table 2: Enriquez’s Filipino behavioral patterns and value structure (p. 66). A summary of the data presented in the two succeeding sub sections of this chapter appear on Table 7, Collectivistic identity (*kapwa*) behavior of Filipino diasporics viewed from two levels of *kapwa*, on Page 210.

Associations on Facebook as pakikipagkapwa. The most visible form of *pakikipagkapwa* on Facebook involved declarations of associations and affiliations. Participants confirmed that associations on Facebook take on a cultural interpretation.

Betty, a primary participant, noted that her non-Filipino contacts were often struck by how family-oriented she was. This was based on her consistent sharing of family photos on her Timeline. Generally, key informants quickly considered the posting of group photos (with Filipinos and non-Filipinos) on Facebook as a Filipino trait.

In fact, Facebook associations reflected *pakikipagkapwa* in significant ways. Filipino diasporic participants demonstrated the three levels of collective interaction enumerated by Enriquez in Table 3 (Mutual trust/rapport, involvement and fusion/oneness and full trust) when it came to their most significant others (*kapwa* as a collective part of who they were). Table 7, on Page 210, presents collectivistic behavior by Filipino diasporics on Facebook as viewed from the two categories of *kapwa*. Enriquez has suggested three ways Filipinos behave when dealing with *kapwa* they consider insiders or one-of us (*hindi ibang tao*): *Pakikipagpalagayang-loob* (having mutual trust and offering support), *pakikisangkot* (getting involved) and *pakikiisa* (fusion of identity with others). Comparatively, there are five manifestations of *pakikipagkapwa* through collective identity when dealing with outsiders (*ibang tao*): *Pakikitungo* (level of amenities/civility), *pakikisalamuha* (level of “mixing”), *pakikilahok* (level of joining/participation), *pakikibagay* (level of conforming) and *pakikisama* (level of adjusting).

Pakikipagpalagayang-loob or the level of mutual trust/rapport was demonstrated through the declaration of connections. Friending became the means to establish cultural identification with other Filipinos. Thus, having Filipino contacts in one’s Facebook network was enough to create a perception of Filipinoness. Participants were conscious that this was, in fact, part of their identities. Though Eli did not often post family photos,

such appeared on his Timeline through his mom's uploads in which he was tagged. As Basil explained: *"As Filipinos, we still associate ourselves with our parents because that's how we were brought up."*

In some cases, one's Filipinoness attracted Facebook friend requests from other Filipinos. Phil, the US-based (Korean) friend of Eli and Basil, was often mistaken for a Filipino since he often hung out with Filipino friends with whom he spoke a few Filipino words. This experience was repeated many times on Facebook. The Filipino contacts of his Filipino contacts sent him friend requests based on the assumption that he too was Filipino. On the other hand, Lia admitted immediately establishing a virtual connection to Vicky right after learning of the latter's Filipino hybridity. She confirmed: *"Vicky teases me about only wanting to befriend her because she is partly Filipino. Actually, I was initially intimidated by her until she told me her mom is Filipino. That made a big difference. Now our friendship extends to Facebook."*

Meanwhile, not all participants considered the cultural composition of their Facebook networks as a conscious declaration of their cultural identities. Some expressed the importance of keeping in touch with Filipino family and friends whose relationships they wanted to nurture through the distance. Even so, they remained aware of what others in their network would think about their cultural identities based on such associations. The variability of intentionality in making Filipino connections made me consider that, at times, perceived cultural renegotiations may be unconscious or unintentional on Facebook.

More visible yet less direct ways of declaring Filipino association and affiliation also appeared on Facebook Timelines. Among the eight participants who were members

of the Filipino youth group, only five (Filipinos: Maria, Lino and Lia; non-Filipinos: Saldy and Miko) liked the group's Facebook page. The rest established connection to the group through photo and video uploads, promotion and attendance of events and the reposting of messages. The same was true when it came to having Filipino friends as Facebook contacts. While some participants chose to hide their friends' lists (an option on Facebook), they could not prevent revealing their Facebook connections through Timeline posts (theirs and those of their Filipino contacts).

Significantly, the use of a Filipino language on Facebook developed mutual trust and rapport among those who spoke and understood the same language. Participants were conscious about who they were addressing with their Filipino messages. A few even said they adapted the language preference of their contacts. Posts written in a Filipino language directed them towards responding in the same way. For Betty, it was important to consider the other person's comfort. She was considerate of Filipino contacts who may not feel as confident with their English proficiency. Having grown up in rural Philippines, she remembered her early struggles as a Canadian migrant suddenly forced to speak only English in school.

Such mindful use of language reflects sensitivity to and empathy for others (*pakikiramdam*)--the necessary ingredient from which *pakikipagkapwa* blossoms. That these adjustments are being done intuitively shows an avoidance of shaming their contacts by forcing them to reveal their purpose in using a specific language. While it may be assumed that such behaviors are other-oriented, *pakikipagkapwa* places emphasis on the sharedness of identity and experience. Shame here is avoided as it is experienced together, not separately.

Echoing Enriquez's level of involvement (*pakikisangkot*), participants further demonstrated their diasporic identities through online activities. The most common form of involvement was the virtual reunion. Referred to in Filipino as the *umpukan*, this informal and spontaneous gathering was often recreated in the comments sections of Timeline posts. Conversations would instantly occur among Filipino commenters who suddenly talk candidly about topics related or totally unrelated to the original post. For Nena, Lia's US-based contact, Facebook was helpful in alleviating her homesickness: "*I like joining instant reunions that happen among our high school friends on Facebook. They are Filipinos now also living abroad. It makes me feel like I am with them instead of being by myself in a foreign country.*"

In a similar fashion, some participants chose to play games on their Facebook Timelines. Eli and Basil challenged each other with the mobile application Draw Something. Its integration to Facebook allowed them to make what is usually a private activity into a social and public one. Eli explained: "*We post the drawing on Facebook when we can't guess what it is; when we want our friends' help or when we want to show off something funny. My cousin in the Philippines plays with me. Sometimes, I play with friends. Since it's on Facebook, it doesn't matter where you are.*"

Wall-to-wall posts and tagging were other means by which participants did *pakikipagkapwa* by drawing people to engage in online conversations. Asked why he and Eli preferred to address each other through wall-to-wall posts, Basil confessed they enjoyed inviting others to join them on Facebook. Sending public rather than private messages was their way of including others. Eli confirmed: "*Sometimes, we would tag people in our wall-to-wall posts especially when our contacts can relate to whatever*

we're teasing each other about. Then, we start tagging others so they too can be part of our funny exchanges."

Filipino diasporic identities on Facebook, however, seemed to go beyond simple sharing of experiences. Participants spoke of instances when the level of fusion, oneness and full trust (*pakikiisa*) was achieved. Such happened when the Facebook persona resulted from collaborative creation of a shared identity. Eli and Basil often "took over" each other's Timeline by filling this with wall-to-wall posts. Neither made any attempts to resist the other's invasion of his private domain even if it entailed a simple deletion of posts. The same was true for the comments section of participants' Timelines. Contacts often "took over" these spaces to hold virtual reunions of Filipinos across the globe.

Sometimes, Facebook posts were co-constructed by participants and their friends. This was how Basil explained the sudden appearance of Jejemon¹⁵ on his Timeline post. A status update in Taglish, a blending of Tagalog and English, was supposed to appear as "*Ang cute ng kabayo ko*" ("My horse is cute"). Instead, it was posted as "*Ang kyut ng kabayo ko.*" Basil claimed the uncharacteristic spelling was suggested by his Philippine-based friend. Thus, in such a simple manner, he allowed an episodic co-creation of his Facebook persona. But could he also be unconsciously espousing Filipino rebellion against the rules of the English language? By challenging the living symbol of American hegemony, Basil may have been co-creating his Filipino identity by subverting its code. His personal project of renegotiating his diasporic identity was a guarded secret. It was only over time, after I earned his trust through *pakikipagkapwa*, that he entrusted me with its revelation.

¹⁵ "*Jejemon* language – which often breaks grammar rules – is used by the *jejemon*, who is defined in an Inquirer article as "a new breed of hipsters who have developed not only their own language and written text but also their own sub-culture and fashion" (Geronimo, 2013, para. 4).

Basil also once permitted a more radical invasion of his Facebook persona during the period of my research. One day, he was walking with three friends at a mall in Edmonton when they spotted the girl he had a crush on. Teasing ensued when Basil received a text message from her. His friends conspired to grab his smart phone; to pass it around and; to post the cryptic message “*kilig*” as his Facebook status. The Filipino word referred to the thrill of something romantic happening to you. Curiously, only one of the pranksters was Filipino. The other two were Korean. Still, they were in on the joke as soon as they were told what it meant. Basil, meanwhile, decided to allow the prank, what some may consider identity theft, to remain documented on his Facebook Timeline. Asked why, he said: *“I didn’t think of deleting the post after coz I felt it was a memory worth keeping.”*

Posting indirect messages on Facebook was another means by which Filipino identities involved *pakikipagkapwa* through the giving of full trust. On several posts, Basil referred to his closest friends (Filipinos and non-Filipinos) as “*anak*” (my child). This term of endearment, known to only a chosen few, encapsulated his willingness to watch over, guide and protect them as if they were part of his own family. Mico, a non-Filipino, heard Basil call some people “*anak*” in face-to-face encounters. However, being more of an acquaintance, he was not privy to its true meaning and essence. Basil later told me that the founding leader of their youth group used to call newcomers like him “*anak*.” Being taken under someone’s wing when he was still undergoing the early struggles of migration may have been something he greatly appreciated. Thus, he continued the tradition in his desire to pay it forward.

My cousin and I have also used an obscure endearment on Facebook. Born and raised in different countries (she in Canada and I in the Philippines), we have continued to live apart (she in Canada and the US and I in the Philippines and Canada). Some years ago, she applied the Jejemon-version of a lewd Filipino word as a special term of endearment for me. It was the same one her mother and her Filipino bestfriend called each other in Canadian public spaces. In our younger days, we would laugh hysterically whenever we heard this exchange. Reading it on our Facebook Timeline would instantly conjure shared memories that broke the distance of time and space.

Participants likewise admitted that the appearance of certain Filipino words on Facebook was enough to inspire nostalgia and the longing for home. Lia named her Canada-born dog after her favorite snack from her Philippine childhood. Her Timeline was filled with various cute photos of her pet. She was often asked by her Filipino contacts about the origin of its name. Such conversations would eventually lead to sharing of fond memories and a mutual desire to return to the Philippines.

Diasporic Filipinos, observed Nena, commonly expressed such feelings on Facebook. These were implied in posts fully understood only by those who have undergone the diasporic experience. Betty once shared the “It’s more fun in the Philippines”¹⁶ campaign video on her Timeline. She confessed that she often envied her Filipino friends who posted photos of their vacations in the Philippines. The same tenderness towards the homeland has periodically emerged on Facebook during times of calamity. Betty said she often shared calls for donations and assistance on her Timeline. The first to take action were usually her diasporic Filipino contacts. Prevented by time

¹⁶ The campaign was launched by the Philippine Department of Tourism at the start of 2012. It promoted the Philippines as a fun destination with fun-loving people. Its immense impact came from crowdsourcing.

and money to fly back to the Philippines, Betty indirectly expressed her longing to do so through Timeline posts.

Basil, on the other hand, chose to control the revelation of his diasporic struggles on Facebook. Events in his life, from his preparation to his eventual arrival in and transition to Canada, were made visible on his Timeline posts. His digital narrative, in keeping with Couldry's understanding (2008), was told through status updates, photo and video uploads. However, there were untold parts of his story he only shared when asked privately on Facebook.

A number of Basil's Filipino and non-Filipino contacts believed that he had integrated quite well into the Canadian society. Mico, in fact, felt that the young Filipino followed the "usual" track of diasporics (regardless of ethnicity) who slowly shed their native cultural identities as they were assimilated by their host society. He pointed to the way Basil spoke English with an accent and adapted the lifestyle of his Canadian friends. In varying degrees, Basil's other contacts also felt he was moving towards a hybrid identity highly influenced by his Canadian surroundings.

Even I was caught by surprise when he finally shared with me the evolving nature of his diasporic identity. Basil hinted at his process of deep reflection on Facebook. But during our chats in early 2012, he said he would move to Ontario or British Columbia after earning his university degree. Hidden behind his various photos of Edmonton Winter was his desire to escape the harsh Alberta weather. Another incentive was to live closer to his Filipino cousins in a more temperate part of Canada.

A few months after participating in the focal group discussion for my pilot study, Basil asked me through Facebook chat about Enriquez's book. He was interested to

know more about *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* and Filipino identities. A conversation with his dad got him thinking about the brain drain caused by Filipino diaspora. Basil noted that many Japanese voluntarily returned to their country after gaining training and education abroad. Sensing his yearning for more understanding, I told him to read Renato Constantino's *The Miseducation of the Filipino*.

On the last day of 2012, Basil posted a very telling photo on Facebook (Figure 24, below). It was a beautiful shot of Makati, his hometown in the Philippines. He made it his cover photo with the accompanying message "Home is where the heart is." Unanimously, participants who were his contacts referred to this post as reflective of his diasporic identity. But it still failed to express his deep longing and desire to return to the Philippines. In fact, when Sandra reminded him that he "left" his heart in Edmonton, Basil agreed.

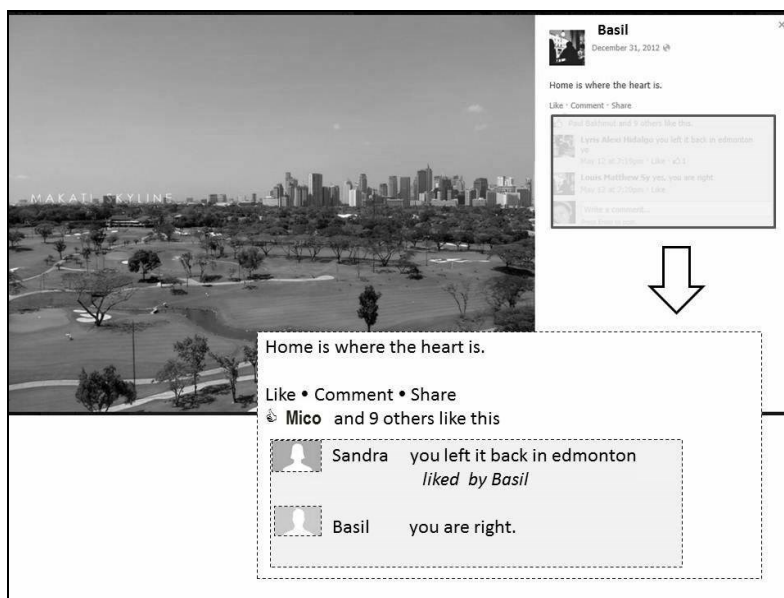


Figure 24. Basil displays his *home* on his Facebook Timeline

But what further hinted at his changing mindset was a video shared on his Timeline. It was an Asia Business Channel feature on the Philippines' improving economy. Basil reaffirmed this with the message: *“Home is where the heart is. Definitely a must watch.”*

Basil went back to the Philippines in May, 2013. It was his third time since moving to Canada in 2010. His timeline was, as expected, filled with posts that documented his numerous reunions with friends and relatives. This homecoming strengthened his resolve to take a more radical step. In a private Facebook chat, he admitted:

Instead of moving to another part of Canada, I'll move back to the Philippines. I believe in making a difference. Other Filipinos talk badly about our country. But I have not lost hope. I saw, with my own eyes, the positive changes that have happened since I left.

Aside from patriotism, his motivation was his affinity and loyalty to his grandparents who still live in the Philippines. Concern for his family, ironically, also kept him from divulging his plans on Facebook. In his face-to-face encounters, especially with his parents, Basil remained tight lipped about his plans to abandon their North American life. He wanted to show rather than to tell them of his intentions. This stance seemed to apply as well on Facebook.

Similarly, Peter emphasized that his diasporic identity also came with a *“desire to go back to the Philippines and to stay connected to other Filipinos living around the world.”* Though his cultural identity may be visible on Facebook, he insisted that its renegotiation happens in both his virtual and physical encounters with people.

Sally, a Canadian key informant, considered filial closeness as common to her Filipino friends Eli and Lino. These were facets of their lives that were, however, revealed to her more directly on Facebook. In face-to-face interactions, they hardly spoke about their families. To Lia, posting of group photos with family members as well as friends was a Filipino trait. She admitted to doing so quite naturally without even a second thought. Meanwhile, Philippine-based Pia admitted she made conclusions based on the unusual number of group photos she saw. In particular, she noticed the *Filipinoness* of names and faces that appeared on Vicky's Facebook pages. This was her way of relating to her cousin who was born in Canada to an Italian father and a Filipino mother. As a whole, these interpretations of Filipino identities resonated with the concept of *kapwa* being a fusion of self-and-other. That being Filipino meant associating with other people seemed to suggest that Facebook may be a nurturing place for *pakikipagkapwa*.

Interestingly, participants did not consider how other people in their networks (non-Filipinos and non-diasporic Filipinos) felt about posts that referred to diasporic identities. None of the primary participants said they spoke in their native tongue in front of non-Filipinos at a physical gathering. This was generally described as rude, impolite and socially unacceptable. Interestingly, they saw nothing wrong with posting messages on Facebook in their native tongues even in plain view of their non-Filipino contacts. By breaking offline social rules, participants performed their diasporic identities to non-Filipino friends through the use of their native languages. In this way, they also categorized their Facebook contacts as *kapwa* (insider vs. outsider) .

Such seepage, meanwhile, was welcomed by Mico who enjoyed this seemingly uncensored display of Filipinoness. The budding linguist insisted: “*Facebook has made Filipino language (s) and culture more accessible to me.*”

Meanwhile, Filipino diasporic participants still treated their non-Filipino contacts as *kapwa* despite their otherness as *ibang tao* (*not-one-of-us*). This was done through *pakikitungo* (level of amenities/civility) by accepting these outsiders as members of their Facebook networks. On a deeper level, they also allowed them a certain level of participation (through *pakikisalamuha* or “mixing”) by allowing them to witness their Filipino diasporic identities through their Facebook posts. They used language to both conform (*pakikibagay*) and adjust (*pakikisama*) to their non-Filipino contacts through the posting of English messages and culture-neutral materials (photos, videos, etc.). However, it was notable that they did not volunteer translations of Filipino posts on Facebook. Unlike their collective interaction with contacts they considered insiders to their Filipino diasporic experience, their Facebook interaction with *kapwa* they identified as outsiders (*ibang tao*) did not seem to reach the same level of intimacy.

Even so, Filipino diasporics were perceived by their Filipino and non-Filipino contacts not just as Filipino ethnics or Canadian citizens but as Filipino-Canadians based on their social network connections. These engagements likewise reflected how they renegotiated who they were through their Facebook posts in reference to *kapwa* as significant others. However, it remained questionable if these renegotiations were intentional or merely based on interpretations by their Facebook contacts. Table 7, on Page 210, summarizes the data described above.

Distancing on Facebook and pakikipagkapwa. Renegotiating Filipino diasporic identities may certainly require more than just maintaining ties with Filipinos and Filipino cultures. The diasporic nature of participants' identities may also involve their membership to the Canadian society as well as to the Filipino diasporic community on a global scale. While the previous section may show how diasporic identities are performed through Facebook associations, presented below is how *pakikipagkapwa* is performed through distancing.

The dynamism and emergence of Filipino diasporic identities may be seen in participants' disassociation from some Filipinos and non-Filipinos. But even when others are considered not-one-of-us, they are still treated as *kapwa*. Some participants said they remained civil (applying *pakikitungo*) even with those who were not their significant others. Vicky swore she has never blocked or unfriended anyone on Facebook. When someone has said or done something to offend her, she would quietly retreat. She explained:

You'll probably stay a contact unless you delete me. In real life, I'm like that too. I'm friends with everyone until someone tells me we are done. I don't tell people they're not my friends anymore. I try to be very understanding. I always try to see/seek the good in people. I like to give people the benefit of the doubt.

Eli also chose to be polite on Facebook. But, instead of simply backing off, he would do so by blocking contacts. This, he said, was a better option than unfriending. Blocking allowed him simply to "disappear" from the Facebook experiences of those he wished to disassociate from. While there seemed to be a very subtle difference between

the two options, Eli felt blocking allowed him to distance himself without declaring an all-out war. Further friction and harm, then, may be avoided.

Filtering was another means participants defined their contacts as insiders (*hindi-ibang-tao*) and outsiders (*ibang tao*). This helped some “mix” (through *pakikisalamuha*) with both types of *kapwa* without having to reject friend requests or unfriend/block contacts. For example, Vicky applied self censorship. She only posted materials she was willing to share with everyone in her network. Thus, she did not rely on Facebook’s available filters. Sid, on the other hand, maximized the use of these design features. He made an effort to control his personal information. This was because he used Facebook for his advocacies which necessitated a wide social network. Sid only allowed common contacts to appear on his friends’ list. Family photos did not appear on his Timeline. In fact, he emphasized that only 10% of all his Facebook uploads have been accessible to majority of his contacts. He gave full access to only three of his closest friends. As a precaution, Sid continued to reject his mother’s friend request despite her protests.

A number of participants actually distanced themselves from their parents on Facebook. Some did so by rejecting friend requests. Others filtered their parents’ access to their posts. They felt some of their posts may cause unnecessary worry. I also had the impression that the young adults did not welcome parental involvement in their personal lives. By filtering certain posts, they were able to conform (through *pakikibagay*) to the kinds of information welcomed by their Filipino elders. They were likewise sensitive to hurting their parents’ feelings by rejecting their friend requests. This was reflective of *pakikisama* (level of adjusting)--the highest level of social interaction under the outsider category.

On Facebook, Filipino parents may be considered outsiders (*ibang tao*) by their Filipino children. But they may often be treated as insiders (*hindi ibang tao*) in face-to-face encounters. These participants said they were quite close to their parents in their offline lives. The variable ways parents have been categorized as *kapwa* echoes the conclusion in Ramos' study (2010) of Facebook use by Filipino university students. She traced this seeming disconnect between filial loyalty and distancing to the hierarchical nature of Filipino relations. Parents' moral ascendancy has made it difficult for their children to relate to them as peers on the social network. As Lia surprisingly confirmed: "I don't post group pictures if I'm with old people."

Even so, on Facebook, some participants reached the highest level of interaction with their parents as outsiders (*ibang tao*). The intensity of their engagement may suggest that these outsiders may eventually become insiders (*hindi ibang tao*). The fluidity of *kapwa*, therefore, seems to confirm renegotiation of identities on Facebook. Some participants, already in their 20s, admitted their non-Filipino friends were amazed that they still sought permission from their parents to participate in social activities. In fact, several participants (Filipinos and non-Filipinos) considered extremely close family ties characteristic of the Filipino culture. Participants may continue to follow their parents' strict rules in their offline social behavior. But, on Facebook, they were able to gain independence and create alternative social personas through filtering.

Although Filipino diasporics may categorize their contacts as insiders or outsiders, they sometimes did so while still applying collectivistic identity behaviors as seen in the above examples. The above findings are summarized on Table 7, on the next page.

Table 7. Collectivistic identity (*kapwa*) behavior of Filipino diasporics viewed from two levels of *kapwa* (Adapted from Enriquez, 1992, p 39-40)

Levels of social interaction based on collective identity		
	“Outsider” category (Ibang tao, “other people”)	Insider/one-of-us category (Hindi ibang-tao or “not other people”)
Distant	<p><i>Pakikitungo</i> (being civil)</p> <p>Filipino diasporics allowing non-Filipino and non-diasporic Filipino contacts and their parents to be part of their Facebook networks.</p> <p>Filipino diasporics merely blocking or filtering access to their posts or remaining silent on Facebook. They chose these options over unfriending.</p>	<p><i>Pakikipagpalagayang-loob</i> (sharing of mutual trust and offering support)</p> <p>Filipino diasporics...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> feeling instant connections with other Filipinos on Facebook through shared identities as Filipinos or Filipino diasporics. displaying the above through Facebook friending, tagging, photo uploads of group photos, liking of the Filipino youth group’s Facebook page and posting in Filipino languages.
	<p><i>Pakikisalamuha</i> (“mixing”)</p> <p>Filipino diasporics displaying their Filipino cultural identities to non-Filipino and non-diasporic Filipino contacts through their Facebook posts (e.g. language they use, Filipino contacts in their social networks and photo uploads displaying connections to other Filipinos and Filipino culture).</p>	<p><i>Pakikisangkot</i> (getting involved)</p> <p>Diasporic and non-diasporic Filipinos...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> holding virtual reunions and candid discussions on Facebook Timeline posts and comments; playing online games on their Timelines; holding visible conversations on their Timelines through tagging and wall-to-wall posts;
	<p><i>Pakikilahok</i> (joining/participating)</p>	<p><i>Pakikiisa</i> (level of fusion, oneness and full trust)</p> <p>Filipino diasporic participants and their Filipino diasporic contacts co-creating each other’s identities on Facebook by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “taking over” another’s Timeline through flooding of wall-to-wall posts and allowing of such by the one who owns the account; collaborating on Facebook posts through suggestion by one Facebook contact and the application of suggestions by another (e.g. use of Jejemon language); posting of materials on another’s Facebook Timeline by pretending to be the account owner and the decision of the owner to retain such posts. indirectly referring to shared Filipino diasporic identity through nostalgia and conjuring of treasured Filipino memories.
Intimate	<p><i>Pakikibagay</i> (level of conforming) – Using English in Facebook posts. Filtering their posts to avoid offense</p>	
	<p><i>Pakikisama</i> (level of adjusting)—Using culturally-neutral materials as Facebook posts. Accepting friend requests from those they considered not-one-of them.</p>	

It must be emphasized, however, that Filipino diasporic participants did not always exhibit collectivistic identity behaviors on Facebook. There were also instances when participants performed individualistic behavior. Such actions were sometimes interpreted by their contacts as demonstrations of self-contained identities. Examples of these will be presented in the next part of the discussion on distancing and *pakikipagkapwa*.

Distancing on Facebook also happened through individualistic identity behavior. The succeeding discussion analyzes data based on Enriquez's concepts (see Table 3, on Page 68). Facebook disassociation reflects how some Filipinos may adapt behaviors that may not fully accept *kapwa* (collective identity). I have chosen to use alternative English translations of the Filipino terms suggested by Dr. Enriquez. These, I believe, were more applicable to the data.

Some Filipino diasporics distanced themselves from insiders (*hindi ibang tao*) such as other Filipinos through *pagkukubli* (masking or hiding), *pagwawalang-bahala* (lack of concern), *pagsalungat* (disagreement). They likewise disassociated from outsiders (*ibang tao*) on Facebook through *pagsasarili* (independence), *pag-iwas* (avoidance), *paghiwalay* (distancing from other Filipinos), *pagmamalaki* (boasting and showing off), *pakikinabang* (focus on self gain). For a summary of the succeeding discussion, please refer to Table 8 (Individualistic identity behaviors of Filipino diasporics on Facebook viewed from the two categories of *kapwa*), on Page 219.

Language was a natural filtering tool for participants. There were times they posted cryptic messages on their Timeline without their parents realizing what they truly meant. They applied the same principle when using Filipino languages in their Timeline.

Even participants not fluent in Filipino posted the occasional word in Filipino.

According to Peter: *“I’ve kinda developed this skill where I segment my Filipino identity from my Canadian identity. When I wanna talk to a particular audience, then it would definitely be the Filipino language. I don’t mind other people reading those messages since they can’t understand it anyway.”*

Majority of the diasporic participants said the use of their mother tongue on Facebook made it easier to relay not only information but also to share emotions. Betty complained that one profound Filipino word, when translated in English, would require one paragraph. Basil similarly expressed his frustration in failing to make non-Filipino friends understand Filipino values.

Thus, participants freely used whatever language they fancied on their Timeline. Their thoughts were focused mostly on whoever they wanted to address. Rarely did they consider the rest of their social network. In fact, those who used Filipino in their posts denied they would speak Filipino in a physical gatherings attended by non-Filipinos. This, they insisted was impolite and rude. All of them said they would excuse themselves or avoid speaking in such a manner. Filipinos would often prevent other people from feeling left out. Thus, they spoke only in English in a mixed crowd. Such mindfulness can be traced to the core value of *kapwa*. That they defied this rule on Facebook was another way for their diasporic identities to be revealed to their non-Filipino friends. Designed to encourage self exposure and sharing, the social networking site has allowed the private use of Filipino languages to become public to non-Filipinos.

Interestingly, participants pointed out that Facebook has become a venue for the general use of languages other than English. Filipino diasporics were not the only ones

exposing their mother tongue on their Timelines. I have witnessed Facebook conversations in languages I hardly ever heard in my face-to-face encounters with my non-Filipino friends. This unique yet familiar occurrence may imply that diasporic identities could potentially emerge on Facebook in ways hidden from sight and sound in our offline lives. The socio-cultural norms against using a code (language) in front of non-code users no longer apply in a socio-cultural milieu (Facebook) where information/revelation is the currency.

Several participants confirmed they used Filipino languages to express thought and emotion that could not be translated in English. At times, they echoed experiences common to Filipino diasporics. Language brought them closer to this community through resonance on Facebook. Ironically, the language also became a barrier keeping their non-Filipino contacts from knowing or understanding their struggles.

Occasionally, this distancing was intentional. Some participants posted messages in Filipino languages to protect their privacy. Language, as a natural filter, allowed them to target posts to a particular segment of their Facebook network.

It was, however, not always possible to do on the online platform. A participant said he could only post in one of the two Filipino languages he spoke. That was because he never took formal writing lessons in his father's mother tongue. His knowledge was limited to verbal conversations that did not include spelling or grammatical acumen. That limitation, thus, kept him from demonstrating this part of his diasporic identity on Facebook.

Even so, non-Filipino participants generally acknowledged they viewed posts written in any Filipino language as "cultural" expressions. Though they could not

interpret meanings, these served to remind them about the diasporic histories of their Filipino-Canadian friends.

Individualistic identity behavior (lack of kapwa) and diasporic identities

Facebook. Remarkably, Filipino diasporic identities on Facebook involved not only the enactment of *kapwa* but also the recognition of its absence. Participants distanced themselves from diasporic Filipinos whose behavior they considered highly individualistic. They did so to sanction those who no longer acknowledge the value of *kapwa* (fused identity of self-and-other).

Kapwa, as described by Virgilio Enriquez in 1990s, has remained flexible and relevant through its view of culture as evolving rather than unchanging. Thus, as shown in Table 4 (see Page 89), it may still still apply to those who negate its enactment through self-benefitting behavior. And, even when others do not recognize *kapwa*, those who value *kapwa* still view them through this lens. To *kapwa*-honoring Filipinos, *Others* may continually shift from being insiders (“*hindi ibang-tao*”) and outsiders (“*ibang tao*”).

The perceived betrayal of the Filipino core value may explain why, among their tales of discrimination as diasporics, primary key informants seemed most affected by those they suffered in the hands of other diasporic Filipinos. Some participants complained about Filipinos who rejected their Filipino heritage. This was, key informants claimed, expressed through the refusal to speak in Filipino languages regardless of length of stay in Canada. At least three participants recounted being rebuffed publicly by other Filipinos who pretended they did not understand when spoken to in a Filipino language. Interestingly, one participant offered an opposing view. Sid complained:

I don't speak Tagalog because my family speaks Kapampangan.¹⁷ We don't watch The Filipino Channel at home. But, just because I can't speak Tagalog, they shouldn't hold that against me. I can understand the language fluently but I can't speak it well. When I try to speak the few words I know, I sound awkward and they think I'm pretending. So, I just respond in English. When I do that, they think I'm being snooty. A few have even questioned my being Filipino. But I know I'm Filipino.

As implied by the above statement, participants mainly decided which diasporic Filipinos to associate with based on how they welcomed or rejected others. Filipino regionalism was seen mostly through the divisiveness of language. This reflected *paghihiwalay* (separation) enacted on outsiders (*ibang tao*) according to Enriquez (see Table 4, on Page 89). Sid responded to this on Facebook in two ways. First, he carefully chose which Filipinos to add as contacts. More telling was the way he remained silent about what languages he spoke despite openly naming his hometown.

Disregard for Filipino values was also seen by participants as a betrayal of *kapwa*. The gravest of offenses seemed to involve “*pagmamalaki*” (boasting or showing off). Beyond being judged as conceit or arrogance, these behaviors were viewed as self-centeredness at the expense of shaming and belittling others. Filipino diasporic participants enumerated countless examples from their dealings with Filipino diasporics. However, current experiences uniquely mixed both physical and virtual permutations. A few participants were quite critical of photo uploads that seemed to flaunt material wealth gained by Filipino diasporics through migration. Sandra, who has lived all of her 20-

¹⁷ The language spoken by people living in some parts of Luzon. This was the language the participant spoke while still living in the Philippines as a child.

something life in Canada, shared her disgust at how some Filipino diasporics portrayed exaggerated versions of life outside the Philippines: “*Once, I saw a huge house complete with real gold fixtures.*”

Instead of being awed or impressed with such luxuries, at least two Philippine-based Filipinos drew other conclusions. They separately assumed that such uploads may serve to divert attention from sacrifices made by Filipino diasporics. Such interpretations, they admitted, were based on private Facebook chats with diasporics.

Yet another possibility is that Filipino diasporics may be dealing with the guilt of leaving behind home and country. This may be justified through evidence of their improved lives. As I have done before, Filipino diasporics may justify how their migration was a necessary and inescapable option for them. Either way, such boasting (*pagmamalaki*) by an outsider (*ibang tao*) may be interpreted as masking (*pagkukubli*) by insiders (*hindi ibang tao*) to honor *kapwa*.

Meanwhile, prioritizing education was commonly considered a desirable Filipino trait. Thus, primary key informants were critical of their peers who chose lucrative (yet menial) jobs over earning university or college degrees. Taking such shortcuts to success seemed a form of betrayal. By dropping out of school, these young diasporics had deprived the Filipino community of their potential accomplishments. Their actions were easily interpreted as self-centered and materialistic. A participant hid a contact’s timeline posts from his newsfeed for that reason. The said Filipino complained of not having enough money even if he had just boasted of splurging on “unnecessary purchases.” A few other participants said they were careful not to be associated with certain types of Filipinos. They distanced themselves from those they felt did not represent the best of

Filipinos in the global society. Behavior that merited disassociation included drug or alcohol abuse, promiscuity, ethnic gang mentality and other illicit activities.

Special mention was made of those who took advantage of Filipino *pakikisama* (solidarity) for self-gain. Sid complained about Filipinos demanding special treatment from fellow Filipinos. These favors often involved the breaking of rules. His refusal to give in to these requests often result in him being labelled a traitor and “*walang pakikisama*” (no sense of *kapwa*). Having associated *pakikisama* with such experiences, Sid has interpreted it as a negative Filipino trait.

Enriquez, however, argued that *pakikinabang* (self gain) should not be associated with *pakikisama*. Instead, it was an extreme form of individuation adapted by some Filipinos. They would only acknowledge *kapwa* as a value for self-serving reasons—a misinterpretation and misapplication. Sid was expectedly cautious about allowing such individuals to gain access to sensitive information on Facebook. Thus, he used filters to protect himself, his family and his friends on the social networking site.

Notably, at least two key informants concluded that some diasporic Filipinos have become “white-washed.” The term was doubly derogatory—condemning the diasporic Filipino who gave up good Filipino values and “whites” whose strong influence turned the good Filipino into a bad one. On Facebook, Filipinos with photo uploads depicting excessive and uncensored partying were labelled “white-washed.” Participants either ignored friend requests from them or filtered their Timeline posts from their newsfeeds.


Unfriending, interestingly, was not an option taken by primary key informants. They believed such would be tantamount to declaring all-out war. Instead, they restricted access of erring Filipino contacts through Facebook privacy filters and blocking.

Shielding his Timeline posts, argued Eli, was less noticeable. He said his contact may easily assume he did not post anything new. Blocking was considered another indirect way of distancing. Once you block someone, that person will no longer find you on Facebook. Inversely, you will no longer see that person on the social networking site. Participants seemed to prefer this kind of distancing—one wherein they could quietly disappear from the Facebook experiences of those they wished to avoid. They chose to mask their displeasure (*pagkukubli*) to avoid offending the offensive party. Such adjustments in behavior seemed to still align with the view of others as *kapwa* even if they were not treated as *kapwa*.

Even so, Filipino diasporic participants were conscious that their contacts contributed to who they were on Facebook. Thus they severed ties from Facebook contacts (more particularly Filipinos) whose actions could potentially be associated with them. Shown in Table 8, on the next page, are the individualistic identity behaviours of Filipino diasporics on Facebook. Notably, not all kinds of individuation behavior enumerated by Enriquez (see Table 4, Page 89) were observed by participants on Facebook.

Membership to the Filipino youth group, on the other hand, allowed them to project themselves as ideal Filipinos. As an officer of the group, one participant uploaded a photo of their members participating in a fundraiser to benefit flood victims in the Philippines. Under the image, he included an inspiring quotation from Philippine national hero Emilio Jacinto: “*Genuine virtue consists of being charitable, loving one’s fellow men and being judicious in behavior, speech and deed.*”

Table 8. Individualistic identity behavior on Facebook by Filipino diasporics viewed from two categories of kapwa (adapted from Enriquez, 1997, p. 47)

Social interaction based on individuation		
	“Outsider” category (Ibang tao or “other people”)	Insider/one-of-us category (Hindi ibang-tao or “not other people”)
 <p>Distance and individuation</p>	<p><i>Pagsasarili</i> (independence)</p> <p>No examples given</p>	<p><i>Pagkukubli</i> (masking)</p> <p>Filipino diasporic participants used language to conceal messages not meant for their entire Facebook network. Boasting of Filipino diasporics through Facebook posts were seen as ways to mask the difficulty of their lives and/or guilt over leaving behind the Philippines and loved ones.</p>
	<p><i>Pag-iwas</i> (avoidance)—Filipino diasporics merely stayed a safe distance from some contacts instead of unfriending them. Instead, they either chose to remain silent on Facebook or to unblock certain contacts.</p>	<p><i>Pagwawalang-bahala</i> (lack of concern)</p> <p>No examples given</p>
	<p><i>Paghiwalay</i> (distancing from other Filipinos)</p> <p>Filipino diasporics carefully chose which kinds of Filipinos they added on Facebook as contacts. They did so by ignoring their friend requests or blocking these Filipinos’ Facebook posts on their Timelines. To avoid issues, Filipino diasporics did not reveal some information about their Filipino diasporic identities (e.g. their religion or the Filipino languages they spoke).</p>	<p><i>Pagsalungat</i> (disagreement)</p> <p>No examples given</p>
	<p><i>Pagmamalaki</i> (boasting and showing off)</p> <p>Filipino diasporics boasting about their lavish lifestyle and success abroad through Facebook updates, photos, etc.</p>	
	<p><i>Pakikinabang</i> (focus on self gain)</p> <p>No examples given</p>	

Three of my research participants were tagged in the said post. They all allowed it to appear on their Facebook Timeline. Thus, it had the potential to project an alternative image of Filipinos on Facebook. Notably, the quotation reflected a value that they said was no longer applied by some diasporic Filipinos in Edmonton. I recognized this to be rooted in *pakikipagkapwa*.

Several key informants also confessed that the youth group helped make sense of their diasporic existence. Sid attributed the misbehaviour of young Filipino migrants to their “lost Filipino identity.” Peter said the issue was not as simple as retrieving an identity available to them in the home country. Even in the Philippines, he claimed, their Filipino identities were in states of crises. Left unsaid was our shared understanding as Filipinos that we were once “in but not of Asia” (Hogan, 2006, p. 115).

Among the aims of their group was to provide Filipino diasporic youth the role models their members did not have as new migrants. The only Filipino-Canadian idols they claimed to have in their Canadian high schools were gang leaders. These were individuals who became bullies to avoid being bullied. They dealt with racial discrimination through violence, alcoholism, drug addiction and other illegal activities. Thus, participants felt a strong the need to provide alternative role models to other Filipino diasporics. Their collective efforts to co-create ideal forms of Filipino diasporic identities found expression on Facebook.

So far, attention has been given to how participants renegotiated Filipino identities through Facebook associations and disassociations. The following paragraphs go further into the co-construction of Filipino diasporic identities. To be highlighted are some novel ways in which participants and their contacts actively renegotiated diasporic

identities through social networking. Examples have been organized under two headings: Celebrating Filipinoness on Facebook and Filipino-style communication on Facebook.

Celebrating Filipinoness on Facebook. The celebratory nature of diasporic Filipinos, according to participants, was often revealed on Facebook. Primarily, Filipino cuisine received more focused attention from Filipino and non-Filipino contacts. Some of their friends have, occasionally, seen them partake of Filipino dishes at physical gatherings. But the appearance and discussion of Filipino food on their Facebook Timelines highlighted their personal attachment to their endogenous culture.

Initially, participants enumerated particular dishes as being uniquely Filipino. But Vicky clarified that not everything may be as they seem (see Figure 25, below). For one, she denied that the photo of spring rolls she posted on Facebook was exclusively Filipino as her Philippine-based cousin assumed. Her mom, from whom she learned its preparation, called it by its Filipino word *lumpia*. However, spring rolls are pretty common in a few other Asian cuisines. Vicky extended the same argument to a brand of crackers I said was Philippine made. It was displayed alongside other dishes she prepared for New Year's Eve.

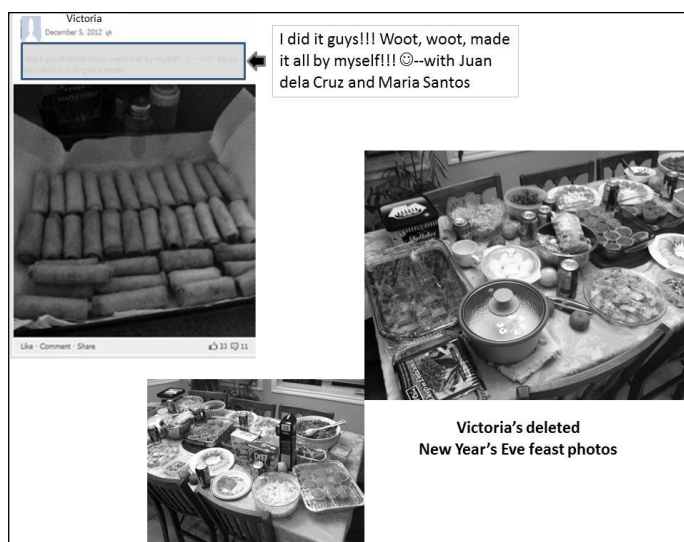


Figure 25. Vicky denies her food posts are Filipino

As I probed deeper into the cultural nature of Filipino food photos on Facebook, I realized that there was something more essential about these images. Participants' contacts were not only being exposed to Filipino cuisine but also to the foundational Filipino value of *kapwa*. Cooking and eating were not individual but collective experiences. This was suggested by the persistence of photos showing people gathered at feasts. As Enriquez (1977) stressed: "Food is more social than biological in the Philippines (p.12)."

Even when photos only depicted food, the act of sharing was implied (see Figure 26, below). Sally could not forget seeing an entire roast pig among Lino's New Year's Eve photos. On the other hand, Vicky was conscious that she liked posting photos of the food she prepared as a means to share these with her friends. What she was unaware of was how much of her identity she revealed. I noted that she always seemed to cook enough food to share with others.

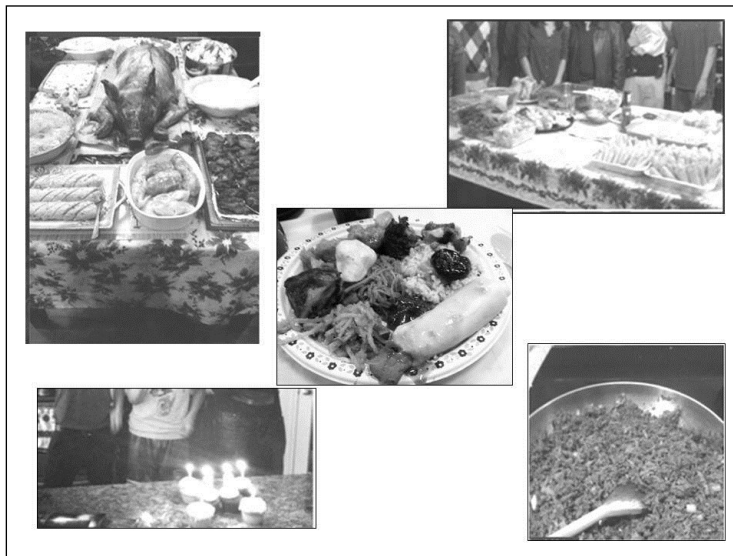


Figure 26. Photo uploads suggesting the sharing of food

Both Filipino and non-Filipino participants considered food as an essential part of Filipino culture. Doreen Fernandez (1986), expert and leading scholar on Filipino cuisine, concluded that the Filipino experiences often involve food. She believed that the mention of Philippine-based people, places and events may instantly trigger sensory flashbacks of favorite dishes.

On Facebook, the diasporic Filipino's longing for the homeland may find expression through food cravings. Posts and uploads may inspire a retrieval of Philippine memories. This was most apparent in Basil's Timeline photo on March 10, 2012 (see Figure 27, below). He and some youth group members recreated what he described as "Filipino-style fried chicken." At a mall food court, they bought some KFC fried chicken which came with gravy. They, then, scoured food stalls in search of rice they could buy separately. Basil noticed that Filipinos working at the mall guessed what they were doing and handed them a cup of free rice. They plated it with the chicken; poured gravy over the rice and took a photo which they uploaded on Facebook.



Figure 27. Recreating Filipino-style fried chicken

The previous image displays a specific way Filipinos eat fried chicken. Such may have been adapted from some regions of the Philippines. In Batangas, my dad's home province, people commonly pour liquid (usually coffee or hot chocolate) over rice. Out of habit, I hardly ever eat rice without soup or any kind of sauce.

But the dish itself was not the only thing Filipino about Basil's post. In various ways, it also highlighted eating as a social activity. Facebook tagging allowed him to acknowledge those who helped him recreate and retrieve a Filipino memory. The comments section completed the tale of how they later enjoyed the meal together. By posting food on a social network, this sharing has been extended to other contacts—Filipinos and non-Filipinos wherever they may be in the world.

The virtual sharing of meals may also build relationships through *pakikipagkapwa* on Facebook. Fernandez (1986) has pointed out that Filipino meals are collaborations between “the cook” and the “cooked-for” (p.28). This may be seen in the way the latter may freely flavor dishes by making a unique concoction from available ingredients (fish sauce, soy sauce, vinegar, shrimp paste, fresh chilli, native lime, etc.) served on the table. The Filipino cook takes no offense in the creation of the cooked-for's personal “*sawsawan* or dipping sauce.” Such may, however, seem like an insult to a French cook whose expertise must be accepted without question (p. 27).

Cooking and eating as shared experiences were seen more pronouncedly in the wall-to-wall posts of Basil and Eli. They performed a “food fight” (the English translation of Filipino terms they used in their posts) on their Facebook Timelines in March of 2012 (see Figure 28, on the next page). The innocent game began spontaneously after Eli posted a photo of his afternoon snack—instant Filipino sautéed

noodles topped with fried egg. By the time Basil asked for some on Facebook, his friend had finished the entire bowl. His “revenge” was posted on Facebook a month after—a photo upload of instant noodles with two slices of white bread. Basil tagged Eli and taunted him with the message: “This challenges your pansit canton.” Such encouraged the latter to respond a few hours after with a photo presenting another tempting version of the instant noodle dish.

Basil later explained that the virtual back and forth between them mimicked an activity he used to do with close friends in the Philippines. Whenever they were gathered together, they had impromptu cooking contests testing their innovativeness as amateur cooks. This was all done for fun. The winner was often rewarded with nothing more than bragging rights.

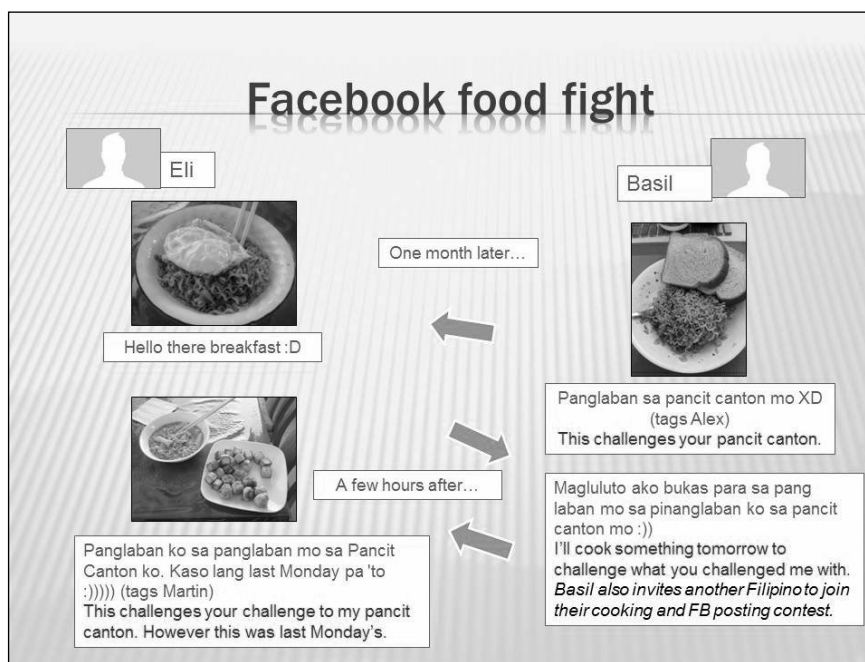


Figure 28. Facebook food fight between Eli and Basil

Humor has many functions in the Filipino culture. Some assume it grew out of the “harsh experience of colonialism” (translated from Maggay, 2002, p. 57). In fact, the

act of “*bidahan*” (one-upmanship) was documented in Rizal’s *Noli Me Tangere* (1999, p. 176 and p. 328) as a common practice in social gatherings. Later, Filipino popular culture perpetuated the sharing of stories about a main character outdoing all others. *Eat Bulaga!*, a popular daily TV show in the Philippines, had regular segment where hosts boasted about their grandfathers’ accomplishments. Asked if their food fight was done in the same spirit of fun and camaraderie, Basil and Eli were first surprised by the suggestion. However, each admitted it helped develop their rapport.

That they chose to bond over food on Facebook may not be coincidental. Filipinos prefer indirect means of communication (Maggay, 2002). Instead of openly declaring their desire for friendship, the two applied *pakiramdaman* by sending each other feelers. They cautiously watched out for signs that the attention they gave was welcomed. Confirmed Fernandez (1986): “Food is better than language...because it hardly ever offends, and yet its meaning is unmistakable. It is the kind of non-verbal communication the Filipino prefers; it is non-confrontative, causes no pain, and so does not disrupt harmonies (p. 34).”

To Filipinos based in the Philippines, such displays assured them that diasporic Filipinos had not forgotten their Filipino roots. Facebook uploads seemed to exude nostalgia over the sensual experience of food preparation and consumption without being preoccupied with the strict delimitations of Filipinoness. Fernandez (1986) has argued that, while Philippine cuisine has unavoidably been influenced by foreign cultures, what makes it unique is what Filipinos have done with these influences. Thus, the Filipino may appear very similar to various other ethnicities (Asian, North American, Hispanic) and cultures that have gone through the colonial experience. Having the mindset of

kapwa means viewing others through a lense of similarity and not difference. Such likewise applies in the reverse when it comes to selfhood and identity. In this way, Filipino identities are framed by the tendency to prioritize what is common among us rather than what sets us apart.

Even Sally, Eli's non-Filipino Facebook contact, identified one of the food fight uploads as a Filipino artefact. Though she failed to witness the entire exchange between the two young men, she was struck by how Filipinos generally enhanced their sense of community through the sharing of food. Sally said her Filipino friends constantly invited her to eat with them in physical gatherings. Photo uploads on Facebook seemed to suggest the same thing to her.

During the focal group discussion for my pilot, a Filipino diasporic participant insisted:

Food is the lifeblood of the Filipino family. It brings everyone together. It's a very, very Filipino thing to eat together. While other cultures may also value that, it may not be to the same extent. If you're Filipino, you have to sit at the table. You have to share the rice. You have to have the fish. You have to have the pansit canton.

Filipino diasporics are likewise dictated by this basic value for community. Thus, even innocent Facebook posts may have dire consequences. Vicky realized this after her mom requested her to delete some Timeline posts displaying the New Year's Eve feast she prepared. Their family traditionally hosted their clan gathering. However, that year, her mom decided to celebrate with some friends in Las Vegas. Relatives were told in advance that their usual New Year's Eve party was cancelled. But Vicky and her siblings

chose to still mark the event with an intimate dinner. Her photo uploads only captured images of a table brimming with holiday goodies. There were no details about those who shared the meal. The concern of Vicky's mom was that relatives may mistakenly think they were not invited to the party. Understanding her point, Vicky immediately deleted her Timeline posts.

Mother and daughter seemed commonly empathetic towards others. I quickly concluded such came from the Filipino core concept of *kapwa*. But, again, Vicky argued that this value is not exclusive to the Filipino culture:

My mother always said that I'm the kinda of person who puts others before myself; the kind of person whose friends are just as valuable as her family. Based on my past and the fact that I am mixed, I know what its like to be different. And, I know how cruel some people can be. So I try my best to make those people never feel what I felt.

There were also other types of Facebook posts that celebrated the Filipino culture. These did not necessarily involve the sharing of food. Still, the focus remained on the sense of community through shared experiences. Even on Facebook, the Christmas season brought out diasporic Filipinos' devotion to the Catholic faith and their fondness for celebrations. Lino uploaded photos of his family's famous Christmas lights display. Sarah, his non-Filipino contact, liked it on Facebook without realizing its cultural underpinnings. The family tradition began in 2009 after years of enduring lackluster Christmases in Edmonton. Lino's dad, perhaps wanting to recreate jubilant memories of Christmases in the Philippines, began decorating the façade of their house in the manner he was accustomed to. He even imported some of the decorations—like the Philippine-

made *parol* (Christmas star)—from his home country. Defying the Canadian Christmas season, he opted to follow the Philippines’ version of celebrating it from November 1 until until the middle of January. This extended time frame allowed the family to share their Christmas spirit with everyone who admired their display. Over time, their house has attracted local tourists who would take photos to adorn their Facebook Timelines.

A clearer example of *pakikipagkapwa* was reflected in a wall-to-wall post sent by Maria to Basil. She invited Basil to go “beer-drinking” which involved different beers enjoyed “Filipino style.” What instantly came to my mind was *tagay*—a customary way of drinking alcohol in the Philippines. Filipinos would often sit in a circle and pass around one glass. Each person would take a shot and hand it to the next individual. I later realized drinking wasn’t the focus of the activity but the sense of community. But Maria had something else in mind—another customary way of drinking alcohol which still served to build rapport. *“I’ve heard there’s a specific way Filipinos drink beer. Instead of drinking straight from the bottle, they like to pour it into a glass with ice. I haven’t seen anyone drink beer this way except this one time when I saw Filipinos watching a boxing fight.”*

As discussed in previous paragraphs, Filipino diasporic identities on Facebook involved community building through celebrations and feasts (see Table 9, on the next page). Highlighted are the ways in which Filipino diasporics expressed their identification with Filipino culture and their strong sense of community with other Filipinos (diasporic and non-diasporic) through shared experiences. In some ways, Facebook allowed them to simultaneously reach out to their *kapwa* regardless of geographic distance. Participants could, thus, perform *pakikipagkapwa* in a venue where

their various communities (Filipino diasporic community around the world, left-behind loved ones in the Philippines and Canadian-based friends) could converge.

Table 9. Novel ways of depicting Filipinoness on Facebook

Surface content of Facebook posts	Novel ways of displaying Filipinoness on Facebook
Timeline posts about food (updates and photo uploads)	<p>Filipino cuisine as reminder of Filipino culture and identity.</p> <p>Appearance of large amounts of food meant for sharing with others (<i>pakikipagkapwa</i>) and other Filipino ways of eating (Filipino-style fried chicken eaten with gravy-topped rice) and drinking (beer in a glass with ice)</p> <p>Co-creation of dishes through tagging, wall-to-wall posts and photo uploads (food fight between Eli and Basil).</p>
Photo uploads depicting celebrations	<p>Photos showing Filipino diasporics with their families and/or Filipino friends</p> <p>Photos showing Filipinos' characteristic (extreme) fondness for celebrating Christmas.</p>

Filipino-style communication on Facebook. Face-to-face communication among Filipinos has been studied through the lens of *kapwa* (Maggay, 2002). Mendoza (2003) went further by addressing the inherent ambiguity behind the communication style of Filipino-Americans. This section will combine both research themes. To be discussed are some cultural aspects of Filipino diasporic communication on Facebook. Primary participants, in fact, applied novel ways to project their indirect style of communication on Facebook. It was interesting to witness how they seemed motivated by *kapwa*—simultaneously protecting one's ego from rejection while avoiding offending others.

Filipinos usually manage uncomfortable messages by using humor through *biro/tukso* or joking/teasing (Maggay, 2002). Basil's trip to Vancouver in December of 2012 allowed him to visit Goldilocks, a famous Filipino bakeshop, where he bought Filipino goodies. While still enjoying his vacation, he uploaded the image of *polvoron*, a Filipinized version of Spanish shortbread made of toasted flour, powdered milk and sugar, on his Timeline (see Figure 29, below). Some Filipino contacts were contented with simply liking the photo. But others teased him to “share” not just the Facebook photo but the actual *polvoron*.



Figure 29. Basil is teased to bring *pasalubong* (homecoming gift) from Vancouver

The previous exchange shows that Filipino-Canadian participants may employ gentle persuasion to oblige the Filipino traveller to give them *pasalubong* (homecoming

gifts). The social expectation can be traced back to precolonial Filipino culture. Filipino folk heroes would leave their villages to courageously fight battles. A huge feast would often welcome them back as victors. Heroes, in turn, would share the spoils of war with village mates (Tolentino, 2006). In today's Philippine society, this expectation is intensely felt by the *balikbayan* (returning Filipino diasporic) at every visit to the homeland (Fresnoza-Flot, 2009; Tolentino, 2006).

Participants appreciated learning about the *pasalubong's* historical roots. They had previously complied with this (Filipino) social expectation unquestioningly despite their trepidations. Not knowing its cultural significance, they were left with the impression that the *pasalubong* did not honor their struggles as migrants in a foreign land. Life, after all, was not as easy for them as conceived by those still living in the Philippines. Thus, learning they may instead be recognized as victorious heroes able to thrive in the global society was comforting. Such conflictedness among diasporic Filipinos about the *pasalubong* thus required sensitivity best shown through humor.

At times, spontaneous teasing erupted in the comments section of Timeline posts. These exchanges may even divert from the original author's topic of concern. Maria recounted how she and her other Filipino contacts fondly taunted a Filipino-Canadian about her Facebook addiction. Such ribbing was meant to indirectly assure her that she was not the only one suffering from homesickness. Maria admitted that social networking has been quite helpful in bringing Filipinos closer:

Facebook is so versatile. You can post photos; upload videos; chat and; send messages. It makes it seem like you haven't left home at all. I see Filipinos

chatting with their friends back home during their lunch break. The good thing about Facebook is that nearly everyone in the world has it.

Facebook, as in previous examples, may allow diasporic Filipinos to remain in touch with their distant loved ones. But it may further provide means to build rapport with other diasporic Filipinos through *biro/tukso* (joking/teasing). Humor has been a general communication strategy used by Filipinos for the mutual face (self and others) management (Maggay, 2002). Eli and Basil confirmed that their close friendship quickly developed through their playful exchanges on Facebook. This conclusion was easily made by those who witnessed their friendly banter online. Lia also demonstrated how she used *tukso* (teasing) as a friendly gesture. Her photo upload (see Figure 30, below) made fun of her friend's huge feet. She even tagged him in the post drawing his and other Facebook contacts' attention.



Figure 30. Lia teases friend on Facebook

Preference for indirect forms of communication arises from the Filipino value structure. Enriquez (1992) has drawn connections between Filipino behavioral patterns and values (see Table 2, p. 66). *Biro/tukso* (joking/teasing) may be proactive or reactive

to the value for *hiya* (honor/dignity). Masking a request/favor behind humor would allow both the sender and receiver to save face should the response be unfavorable. In a similar manner, *parinig* (deliberately letting someone hear an implied message) indirectly relays messages to preserve the mutual dignity of the sender and the receiver. This form of communication may be used to hide uncomfortable messages. For example, something may be said aloud in the presence of the intended receiver under the guise of targeting a different receiver. If the intended audience cares about other people's feelings (through *pakiramdam* or sensitivity), they will not only take note of the *parinig* but listen to its hidden meaning.

Several times, Lia applied *parinig* to mask her romantic feelings for unsuspecting contacts. She even showed a mastery of concealing the identity of her crushes through vague posts. Once, she shared a photo of her favorite soap opera stars (see Figure 31, on the next page) with a cryptic message. The *parinig* was so deeply cloaked it would be impossible to uncover its hidden meaning. I was surprised to learn that the guy she liked had a similar name as one of the actors. More often, she posted her musings in Filipino as if she was either talking to herself or talking out loud to no one in particular. Some of her comments mentioned an unnamed individual who was, presumably, her romantic interest. Lia said she resorted to *parinig* to express her suppressed feelings. She deflected the message to her confidantes who were privy to its hidden meaning. Reminded about the possibility that her crush may correctly interpret her messages, she said she didn't mind since it would mean he cared enough to decipher her code.



Figure 31. Lia uses a photo upload as *parinig* (implied message)

Meanwhile, Filipino participants said only a few contacts have asked them to explain their posts. Saldy, a non-Filipino member of the youth group, confirmed he would sometimes consult language translation websites to interpret interesting posts. But, believing most messages in foreign languages were not meant for him, he often ignored these.

A different version of *parinig* appeared on Eli's Timeline through a wall-to-wall post addressed to a friend: "*You are a devoted friend who I can take pride in because of your kindness. Thank you for your support*" (translated from the Facebook post, March 28, 2012, of Eli in Filipino). The indirectness of communication, in this case, did not lie in addressing a message to another person but in concealing the meaning of the message itself. Eli resorted to showering his friend with compliments to remind him of an owed favor. The former privately requested the latter to introduce him to a pretty (non-

Filipino) friend. Instead of directly reminding him of such, he hinted at this through an excessive display of appreciation for the said friend's kindness.

Mimicking Filipino face-to-face communication, *parinig* through Facebook posts sometimes alluded to painful situations which Filipinos avoided discussing directly. Prime example was Eli unexplained request to relatives living in the Philippines to take him “away from” Canada “for the sake of happiness” (see Figure 32, below). Guessing it involved a sensitive issue, I gently requested him to share his reasons for the post. He vaguely said something “bad” happened between him and his friends. This episode made him want to distance himself from them. The polite yet undetailed reply seemed to confirm he was not ready to share the incident with me. Respectfully, I backed off by wishing him a speedy resolution to his problem. Relatives he tagged in the post, meanwhile, resorted to humor (*biro/tukso*) in their comments. No one asked him to explain his mysterious yet public cry for help. Eli cheerfully responded to all the humorous comments by joining in on the playful banter. As stated in Chapter 3, Eli later entrusted me with his full story after I earned his trust through *pakikipagkapwa*.



Figure 32. Eli tags relatives in the Philippines asking them to take him away from Edmonton

Meanwhile, the complementary acts of *lambing* (indirect showing of affection) and *tampo* (indirect expression of hurt feelings towards *kapwa* for neglecting to follow through with expected behavior) were behind Lia's resistance against public displays on Facebook. By choice, she did not include her birthday on her profile. The same reason kept her from posting customary greetings on her friends' Timelines. People's dependence on technology to direct their actions, she insisted, demeans personal relationships. Those who truly love her would never forget her birthday even without Facebook's intervention. Lia confessed feeling hurt (*tampo*) when loved ones fail to make her feel important on her birthday. That's because she goes the extra mile for them on theirs.

One late night, I bumped into Lia on Facebook. She was counting down the minutes to greet her friend a happy birthday at precisely midnight. Such reminded me of the Filipino custom called asalto. Named after the Spanish word for "assault," it refers to the act of surprising birthday celebrants in the early morning hours of their birthdays. Lia usually preferred greeting friends on the phone. She considered this more personal than a Timeline post. But, on that night, she forgot her mobile phone in her car. It was freezing outside so she decided to send a private Facebook message instead.

Lia's thoughtfulness comes from the value for *pakikisama* (camaraderie). According to Enriquez (1992), *tampo* is founded on the expectation that, as *kapwa*, we will be treated with as much kindness and appreciation as we have shown others. We may avoid violation of *pakikisama* through sensitivity. Lia was, thus, mindful of the way she communicated with her friends on Facebook.

Less obscure forms of Filipino communication patterns showed up in the comments section of Basil's Timeline. Playfully, he called Maria's attention by tagging her in his "KFC + gravy + rice= pinoy style" (see Figure 33, below). She responded to the *parinig* by sarcastically thanking him for remembering to invite her. By sugar-coating her displeasure, Maria was able to express her *tampo/lambing* at being left out of the fun activity. She pointed out that she was actually near the place where the group enacted their Filipino-style fried chicken dish. There was also an implied sweetness (*lambing*)—an emotion only felt for and expressed to significant people in one's life (*kapwa*). Instead of directly apologizing, Basil deflected blame by teasing (*biro*) Maria for being out on a date. He offered that as an excuse for not inviting her. Such was an example of how humor may be used to soothe hurt feelings. Eli even joined in on the teasing, turning it into *tuksuhan* (ribbing). This cultural communication pattern is documented by Enriquez in Table 2 (p. 66).

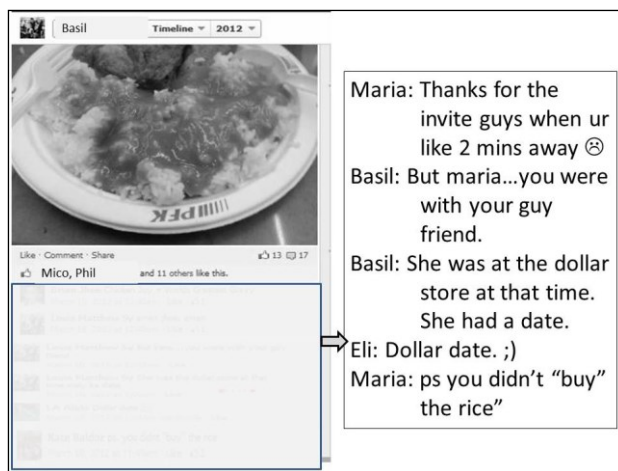


Figure 33. *Biro-tampo-lambing* on Facebook

Summarized in Table 10, on the next page, were Filipino communication patterns used by Filipino diasporics to negotiate their relationships with their contacts. Notably,

all these encourage a continuous communication through adjustments based on the sensitivity towards others as *kapwa*. The indirectness of Filipino communication can be attributed to the desire to preserve not only one's own dignity and honor but also the dignity and honor of others. In this way, these renegotiations also speak of identity renegotiations as Filipino diasporics. At the heart of these observed patterns is the importance given to community building.

Table 10. Filipino communication patterns on Facebook

Filipino communication patterns observed on Facebook	Examples cited	Function
<i>Biro/tukso</i> (joking/teasing)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group teasing of other Filipinos in comments section of a Timeline post • Eli and Basil's food fight posts • Lia's photo upload of friend's huge shoe 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building rapport • Reminding others of Filipino values and culture • Avoidance of offense (preservation of honor/dignity of self and others)
<i>Parinig</i> (sending of feelers or indirect messages)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lia's status messages and photo uploads that hint at hidden meanings. • Eli's use of flattery to remind friend of a favor. • Eli's use of cryptic message as a cry for support from Filipinos in the Philippines. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoidance of offense (preservation of honor/dignity of self and others) • Masking issues that may potentially be shared in private conversations if Facebook contacts are sensitive enough to realize nature of posts and cautious enough to ask.
<i>Biro-lambing-tampo</i> (joke, indirect expression of affection, indirect expression of hurt feelings for neglect by significant other)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maria's complaint at being left out of recreation of Filipino-style fried chicken 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building rapport • Reminding others of Filipino values and culture • Avoidance of offense (preservation of honor/dignity of self and others)

Meanwhile, nuances of Filipino communication seemed more observable on Facebook. Some non-Filipino participants admitted they gained greater awareness of their friends' culture through Timeline posts. The technology facilitated such through archiving. Time and space no longer dictated one's social presence. More importantly, the tacit aim for sharing lifted the veil masking Filipino diasporic identities.

This chapter has, thus far, presented how Facebook may seem to encourage *pakikipagkapwa* through social networking. However, none of the participants credited the technology for building rapport in their relationships. Some participants even claimed they were more active on Twitter than on Facebook. A non-Filipino contact even said her diasporic friend seemed "more" Filipino on the microblogging site. Vicky further pointed out that the diasporic experience itself may develop a deeper understanding of *kapwa* through the experience of otherness. Facebook may host expressions of Filipino diasporic identity through virtual enactment of *pakikipagkapwa*. But Filipino diasporics themselves remained the driving force behind such instead of the technology itself.

Even so, it was obvious that the Facebook device paradigm drew attention to particular virtual artefacts over others (Borgmann, 1984). While Sally missed the rest of the Facebook foodfight between Eli and Basil, she took notice of one particular post because of its reappearance on the newsfeed. Facebook's invisible structure makes it possible for archived materials to be revived whenever it is liked or commented on. In effect, one's Facebook uploads become temporally (alluding to relevance in one's present life) and substantially (comprising the content) part of your identity transformations.

Meanwhile, my co-diasporic participants were drawn to each other by a common search for their Filipino identities. Both Peter and Sid, founding members of the youth group, stressed that it was already complex for them to comprehend what it meant to be Filipino in the Philippines. Diaspora further added to their conflictedness. On one hand, they were expected to leave behind their Third World lives to succeed in the First World. Even so, they were forever imagined to be “other” in their Filipinoness—forever labelled diasporics. This was the case even for participants who were born in Canada. Still, to succeed in a global society, they were compelled to mute their cultural identities. According to Lino: *“Living in Canada is a very unique experience that enables one to adopt many different cultures. One develops a unique-hybrid identity where it’s difficult to assess where one’s tendencies and habits stem from.”*

Facebook, thus, allowed them to renegotiate their identities in what they chose to reveal to and/or conceal from contacts across the globe. Participants were sometimes conscious and deliberate in how they conducted themselves on the social network. However, there were also occasions when they unconsciously revealed more than they intended (often due to the technology). This slippage may hold greater significance given that their Facebook posts were often (with rare exceptions) simultaneously accessible to their entire network.

Interestingly, diasporic Filipino participants generally believed that their identities were dynamic and evolving. Vicky described hers as a work in progress:

Being the oldest child in a Filipino mixed family, in a Chinese bilingual program, it was difficult growing up and finding my ‘identity.’ Was I Chinese? Was I Filipino? Was I white? At this point, at my age, my identity is a melting pot of

cultures, of races. I'm not one or another. I am a kaleidoscope--forever changing and forever learning and accepting.

Diasporic identities on Facebook seemed to have varied interpretations. Table 16, in the appendices, summarizes how participants (rows) described the Facebook identities of Filipino diasporic key informants (columns). Notably, diasporic participants (Filipinos and non-Filipinos) seemed quite conscious of hybrid identities. Many of them described Filipino diasporics as having blended (hyphenated) identities inclined towards a particular culture (Filipino or Canadian). At times, they compared the intensity of one participant's Filipinoness to that of another.

Both Maria and Eli noted that their identities depended on who they were addressing on Facebook. Thus, they could appear as more Filipino to their Filipino contacts but more Canadian to their Canadian ones. Lino, born to Filipino parents in the Middle East, said he was a Filipino-Canadian who was generally more Filipino than Canadian. However, he also noted that he was "less" Filipino than Eli and Basil who were born and raised in the Philippines. Interestingly, Philippine-based participants seemed to seek remnants of Filipino culture in the Facebook posts of their Filipino diasporic contacts. This caused them to commonly conclude that certain participants were "still" Filipino despite their absence from the homeland.

Of the six Filipino diasporic participants who were part of my dissertation research, only two did not consciously display distinct identities on Facebook. Eli and Maria, as mentioned above, adapted their posts to the culture(s) of those they targeted on their networks. The other four participants were more decisive about the identities they projected through their Facebook posts. Lia said she deliberately injected a "Korean or

Spanish flavor” to her Filipino diasporic identity on Facebook. Vicky, on the other hand, insisted she was just as Asian on Facebook as she was offline. Ironically, her Philippine-based cousins believed that some posts showed she still possessed Filipinoness from her maternal lineage. Even without me pointing out such discrepancies, all three participants suggested that cultural identities are subjective. None seemed bothered that their opinions may not be shared by other participants.

As Basil explained: “*Posts are often interpreted based on one’s perceptions of the uploader. Some people know me to be Filipino because I am very active in our Filipino youth group. Thus, they assume my posts reflect Filipino culture.*” This seems to confirm my initial notion that investigating Filipino diasporic identities on Facebook would involve understanding some of its adumbrations.

Renegotiated forms of Filipino diasporic identities on Facebook

Despite varied interpretations of Filipino diasporic identities, there were four forms that seemed to converge and, then, emerge on Facebook. This section presents these as renegotiated forms that challenge stereotypes of the Filipino migrant. It must be noted that Filipino diasporic participants deliberately assumed such identities based on who they considered *kapwa*. In such cases, they viewed others as not really “other” but as part of their diasporic identities. A summary of these forms, as interpreted through the lens of *kapwa* (based on Table 2 on Page 66), are presented in Tables 11 to 14 at the end of each corresponding discussion. Attention has been given to surface, core and societal values and behaviors. These are based, according to Enriquez (1992), on who Filipinos identify with as *kapwa* (significant other). The four renegotiated forms of Filipino diasporic identities on Facebook to be discussed below include *Pan Filipino diasporic*

identity, Neo Filipino diasporic identity, Pan Asian diasporic identity and Global citizen identity.

Pan Filipino diasporic identity. Place and language were two issues that haunted Filipino diasporics' identity formation on Facebook. Even regionalism, described by one participant as a remnant of Spanish colonial rule, persisted in the Filipino community in Edmonton. Primary participants said there was pressure to converge and diverge based on one's Philippine hometown and ability to speak certain Filipino languages. Sandra, who was born in Edmonton and only spoke English, traced Filipinos' bad behavior to their regionalistic characteristics. It seemed clear she was repeating what her Filipino parents and other elders told her. Sid, as mentioned earlier, was often discriminated by other diasporic Filipinos. He was offended by the repeated doubts about his Filipinoness based on his inability to speak Tagalog. The age-old hegemony of the Tagalog region, he insisted, excluded many Filipinos from being acknowledged as Filipinos.

Majority of the participants resisted against this divisive attitude among Filipinos. Having spent the first 14 years in the Philippines, Eli said he was aware of regional stereotypes. However, he was quick to point out that he was the product of a happy marriage between a husband and wife from rival provinces.

Rejection of regionalism was done individually through what participants revealed and/or concealed on Facebook. Sid chose to declare his hometown without identifying his regional mother tongue. Some participants succumbed to regional divisions through the information they shared. But they still renegotiated their Filipino identities by associating with a Filipino youth group conceived as Pan Filipino.

On Facebook, such became apparent through their endorsement of the group's events. This was most visible in their acts of diasporic philanthropy in support of various calamity-stricken areas of the Philippines. By declaring their membership to the Filipino youth group, they were likewise defining themselves as Filipino regardless of their home towns/place of birth and the languages they spoke.

The group, in fact, seemed to truly espouse the value of *kapwa*. Shared Lia: *"Members come from different backgrounds. But such no longer matter once you join the group. You become close to other members. The group feels like family."*

Naturally, it is the shared diasporic experience that has united group members. Together, they declare themselves as ("still") Filipino despite being diasporic. Several participants admitted that Facebook posts have allowed them to display their Filipinoness to their Filipino contacts in the Philippines and around the world. It is in this way that they renegotiate themselves as Pan Filipino regardless of current geographic location.

One participant lamented that his diasporic Filipino identity on Facebook did not always translate to his offline encounters. Though he remained connected to his Philippine-based friends at a distance, things were different when they came face-to-face. Some of them considered him arrogant all because he spoke to them in English during a physical reunion. They were offended by his unconscious habit of responding in a foreign language even when spoken to in Filipino. He was perceived as having rejected the Filipino culture through his complete acceptance of the Canadian culture. Basil has since severed ties on Facebook with these particular contacts. But not all of his friends in the Philippines have reacted to him in this way.

The imagined rivalry between Overseas Filipinos (as outsider) and Philippine-based Filipinos (as insider) is not uncommon. Sid recalled that such also happened whenever someone from his hometown would return from the big city (Manila) speaking Tagalog instead of Kapampangan. Townmates (insiders) often viewed the returnee as acting like an outsider (*ibang tao*) and betraying the value of *kapwa*. The same applies on a larger scale to the way diasporic Filipinos may negatively be perceived by Filipinos still based in the Philippines. This kind of attitude is challenged by the Pan Filipino identity formation of Filipino diasporics. Details of how such is renegotiated on Facebook appear in Table 11, below.

Table 11. Kapwa and Pan Filipino diasporic identity on Facebook

Filipino diasporic identity	Surface values and behaviors	Core values and behaviors	Societal values and behaviors
Pan Filipino (Filipino diasporic as Filipino regardless of region of birth, current geographic location and spoken languages)	<i>Pakikibaka</i> (resistance) against Filipino identity being determined by place of birth, languages spoken and current geographic location.)	(<i>Kapwa</i> defined as...) Filipinos are Filipinos regardless of place of birth, languages spoken and geographic location. Some expressions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Declarations of Filipinoness on Facebook (languages, hometowns, etc.) • Diasporic philanthropy (assistance to needy Filipinos in the Philippines) • Acceptance of different kinds of Filipinos (those born outside the Philippines, speak other languages and live outside the Philippines) 	<i>Karangalan</i> (dignity) coming from social acceptance as Filipino despite location of birth, languages spoken and current geographic location <i>Katarungan</i> (justice) through social equity of Filipino diasporics as Filipinos regardless of location of birth, languages spoken and current geographic location <i>Kalayaan</i> (freedom) of migration (social mobility) without surrendering Filipino identity

Facebook may, thus, allow participants to renegotiate their identity as Pan Filipino amid their diasporic existence. Their virtual presence has given them opportunities to constantly refute misimpressions about their Filipinoness. To Pan Filipinos, identity is composed of self and all Filipinos (regardless of geographic location and languages spoken) as *kapwa*. The values of “*karangalan* (dignity), *katarungan* (justice) and *kalayaan* (freedom)” apply in particular to diasporic Filipinos to be acknowledged as true Filipinos.

Neo Filipino diasporic identity. Some Filipino youth group members resisted against neocolonialism reflected in the Filipino culture and identity. They voiced their criticisms on Facebook not only to ventilate their protests but also to suggest alternatives. Thus, aside from projecting themselves as Pan Filipinos on Facebook, they redefined themselves as Neo Filipinos presenting an improved form of Filipino culture.

Some participants shared posts that documented their search for Filipino identity through self re-education. As a founding member of the group, Peter shared quotations from Filipino heroes other than the US-approved Jose Rizal. In one post, he quoted Emilio Jacinto: “*Genuine virtue consists of being charitable, loving one’s fellow men and being judicious in behavior, speech and deed*” (Peter, March 3, 2012, Facebook profile post). Sid, meanwhile, has heavily filtered most of his Facebook account. But he has allowed majority of his contacts to access photos taken during a return trip to the Philippines in 2009. During the focal group discussion, he stressed that that life-changing trip gave him a different understanding of his Filipino identity. The sensory experience of his hometown and historic locations in his home country challenged what

he learned in the history books he read as a child. These were books, he insisted, were written from the perspective of the former colonial rulers.

Facebook allowed participants to praise and criticize the Filipino, the Philippines or the Filipino culture. Peter went on a “Facebook fast” for Holy Week in 2012. This devotion to the Catholic faith seemed unusual even for a young (male) Filipino in the Philippines. It seemed even more uncommon among young diasporic Filipinos. But only a one week before, he shared a Youtube video (see Figure 34) alluding to the Filipino’s misguided dependence on religion. Citing a Filipino cleric’s statement “I’m Filipino and I’m inherently Pelagian,” he commented: “So sad, so true.” Peter agreed with Fr. Nicanor Austriaco’s observation that, as a Pelagian, the Filipino “...basically believes that if you wanna get to heaven, you gotta work really hard. And, so, if you didn’t pass the test, it’s because you didn’t pray hard enough. Or, if you didn’t get something, it’s because you didn’t do that extra rosary” (Austriaco, 2010, 18:36 to 19:04).



Figure 34. Peter shares his thoughts on Catholicism and being Filipino

Though Peter still held fast to his Catholic faith, he expressed criticism against religiosity taken to the extreme. This was related to an issue Sid raised during the focal group discussion. At that time, he noted that Spanish colonizers mainly used force to

subjugate Filipinos. In the above post, Peter seems to hint at how Philippine Catholicism continues to enslave Filipinos in unnoticeable ways.

These subtle shifts from praise to criticism of Filipino culture also appeared on Betty's Timeline. She proudly shared videos and photos of "It's more fun in the Philippines" tourism campaign. The Philippine Department of Tourism launched this novel crowd-sourcing project in January of 2012. Betty joined other Filipinos in instantly making it a top trending topic (GMA News Online, 2012). Even so, she defended an American whose YouTube upload of his gripes about living in the Philippines caused the ire of Filipinos on Facebook. As shown in Figure 35, below, Betty encouraged Filipinos on Facebook to take a more positive attitude towards such comments.

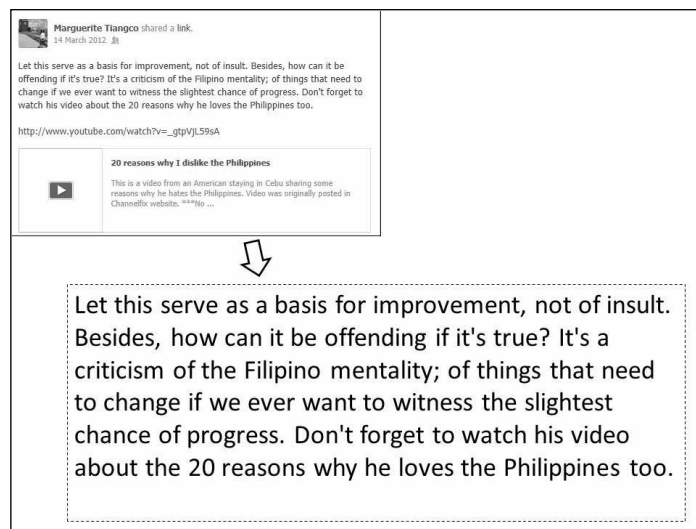


Figure 35. Betty on the need for Filipino mentality and the need for change

Just like the Filipino youth group to which they belonged, participants promoted a new kind of Filipino identity that acknowledged and acted on the need for change. Associated societal values (*karangalan* or dignity, *katarungan* or justice and *kalayaan* or freedom) were applied to both Filipinos and non-Filipinos as *kapwa*. Those who shared the vision of a Neo Filipino identity were classified as *hindi ibang tao* or insiders. To the

participants, these mostly included members of their youth group without excluding other Filipinos (diasporics or those based in the Philippines) and enlightened non-Filipinos. Consequently, Filipinos unaware and/or unwilling to reimagine what it means to be Filipino were considered outsiders or *ibang tao*. The same classification was conferred to non-Filipino Facebook contacts who adhered to Filipino stereotypes. Thus, the Facebook uploads of some participants either supported or enlightened *kapwa* with displays of their Neo Filipino identity. Such protested the persistence of colonialism in the imagining of what it means to be Filipino. Filipino diasporic participants resisted against neocolonialism through the Neo Filipino identity (see Table 12, below).

Table 12. Kapwa and Neo Filipino identity on Facebook

Filipino diasporic identity	Surface values and behaviors	Core values and behaviors	Societal values and behaviors
Neo Filipino identity (Filipino diasporic as enlightened Filipino)	<i>Pakikibaka</i> (resistance) against continued influence of neo colonialism on Filipino identity	<p>(<i>Kapwa</i> defined as...)</p> <p>All Filipinos (and members of the youth group) commonly searching for new forms of Filipino identity as a resistance against neo colonialism. Also included are non-Filipinos who welcome the Neo Filipino identity.</p> <p>Some expressions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Association with the Filipino youth group • Praising laudable facets of the Philippines, Filipino culture and identity through Facebook posts. • Criticism of the Philippines, Filipino culture and identity. 	<p><i>Karangalan</i> (dignity) coming from social acceptance as Filipino who is no longer a victim of (neo)colonialism</p> <p><i>Katarungan</i> (justice) through social equity of Filipinos whose culture and identity can be viewed on their own terms (without continued influence of colonialism)</p> <p><i>Kalayaan</i> (freedom) as social mobility to rise above long-term effects of colonialism on Filipino identity</p>

Pan Asian diasporic identity. Several participants, on the other hand, reflected a Pan Asian diasporic identity on Facebook. Most of them freely expressed their fondness for Asian popular culture through Timeline posts. Such entertainment preferences, according to Hunt, Moloney and Evans (2011), may serve other purposes. Like Asian American youth, diasporic Filipino participants may actively “negotiate” their identities “through their participation in particular social networks, through their displays of taste, style, and consumption, and through the insightful interpretations that they themselves offer in their narratives” (p. 298).

Their digital narratives may take various forms on a social networking site (Couldry, 2008). These may include photo and video uploads, status messages, web links, likes, groups, etc. Though such posts in themselves may appear trivial and meaningless, each one contributes to an evolving story. There are invisible threads that connect these seemingly independent posts.

When probed further, Filipino diasporic participants admitted that some Asian pop stars represented their diasporic ideal. They were better role models than other Filipino-Canadian youth who, they claimed, resorted to drugs, alcohol and violence. Instead, their Asian idols achieved success without giving up their Asian values. Filipino diasporic participants seemed to gravitate towards the same kind of clean fun reflected in the songs, movies and shows they enjoyed. These, they insisted, were starkly different from the lives led by those who joined Filipino-Canadian gangs. For these reasons, they may sometimes prefer being labelled as Asian diasporics.

Acceptance of their Asian diasporic identity seemed to also stem from physical and social similarities among certain ethnic groups in Canada. Many of the participants

have mistaken other Asians such as Vietnamese, Chinese or Cambodians for Filipinos. A number of them said they liked hanging out with co-Asians since they seemed to share the same values as Filipinos. Also undeniable was the common experience of diaspora by peoples whose home nations may have similar topographies, histories and socio-economic structures. The Pan Asian diasporic identity may, in fact, be renegotiated on Facebook as an alternative to negative Filipino diasporic stereotypes. *Kapwa* would generally include all diasporic Asians. Labelled as insiders (*hindi ibang tao*) are Asian-Canadians representing what participants aspire to be as diasporics. On the other hand, Filipino-Canadians-gone-bad are specifically labelled as outsiders (*ibang tao*).

In December of 2012, Basil posted an unusual profile picture on Facebook. The image showed him with an arm around a Korean friend as if to embody the fusion of their identities. Asked why he chose to this over a solo picture, he simply said: “*He’s a close friend.*”

Filipino diasporic participants have described their Asian friends as their brothers and sisters. I witnessed this through Facebook posts that documented the intimacy and playfulness in their relationships. Comparatively, they did not seem particularly close to their North American or Hispanic friends. Such seems to challenge the perception that (Spanish and American) colonization has kept the Filipino from becoming a true Asian (Hogan, 2006; Ocampo, 2013). Facebook may allow Filipino diasporics to renegotiate their Asianness amid the popular belief that they are from “but not of Asia” (Hogan, 2006, p. 115). Filipino diasporic participants resisted against being associated with Filipino-Canadian gang behavior by adapting a Pan Asian identity. Details of how such has been renegotiated on Facebook appear on the next page.

Table 13. Kapwa and Pan Asia identity on Facebook

Filipino diasporic identity	Surface values and behaviors	Core values and behaviors	Societal values and behaviors
Pan Asian (Filipino diasporic as Asian)	<i>Pakikibaka</i> (resistance) against association with Filipino youth gangs through connections with Asian diasporics whose values and behavior are deemed more ideal.	(<i>Kapwa</i> defined as...) Asian diasporics whose values and behavior are deemed more ideal Some expressions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liking materials and joining groups devoted to Asian popular media (TV shows, movies, music, etc.). • Use of Asian languages and Asian popular materials as Facebook posts. 	<i>Karangalan</i> (dignity) coming from social acceptance as a member of the Asian diasporic community. <i>Katarungan</i> (justice) through social equity of Filipinos as Asian diasporics. <i>Kalayaan</i> (freedom) as social mobility to move freely within the Asian diasporic community.

Global citizen. Filipino diasporics also projected themselves on Facebook as global citizens. This may seem a logical development given the social network's nature as a multicultural platform. On their Timelines, participants demonstrated how the global society blurs lines between cultures—allowing people to focus more on similarities rather than on differences. Uploaded photos displayed their associations with friends of various ethnicities. A number of them were shown participating in activities on an international scale.

A Hispanic diasporic participant, the contact of two primary participants, habitually changed her Facebook name throughout the research. These constant identity

transformations, she explained, helped her avoid home sickness. At one point, she adapted a Japanese persona for an extended length of time. Embracing the character of a popular anime heroine on Facebook allowed her to control her emotions. For brief instances online, she could deal with her sadness in the same gentle manner of the Japanese instead of the passionate actuations of the Hispanics.

In a similar manner, Filipino diasporic participants also learned to imbibe characteristics of other ethnic groups. Some of their contacts even suggested that many of them appeared to be truly Canadian even if they still identified themselves as Filipino. Peter admitted his identity was obviously Canadian despite having retained his Filipino culture. *“I’m able to segment my Filipino identity from my Canadian identity. I can be Canadian for the most part. Linguistically, logically, lawfully I consider myself Canadian through and through. But there are some aspects of Filipinoness that I’ve kept.”*

Meanwhile, Lia admitted that she deliberately added Korean and Spanish “flavor” to her Filipino identity on Facebook. This shows how one could create a personalized version of one’s culture.

The blurring of cultural lines was also apparent in the way the Filipino youth group welcomed non-Filipino members. Participants insisted this was aligned with Canadian multiculturalism. Still, I was struck by the passionate interest of non-Filipino participants in learning Filipino culture and languages. Saldy offered a glimpse of his global identity which partly reflects his own identification to *kapwa*:

I come from several generations born in Canada. But I have French ancestry. I dislike my French roots and avoid it altogether. I didn’t like some French

relatives when I was growing up. I never took French classes, and have no interest in visiting Quebec or France. I don't speak French at all but I understand a bit of Filipino. I can relate to both Canadian and Filipino cultures. I have a unique connection to the Philippines in that my Dad has lived there for the past 18 years. I have been there to visit many times. When I was 18, I decided to stay a year to fully immerse myself in Filipino culture. I even attended a local university rather than an international one to get a good sense of what it means to be Filipino.

Hinting at a more radical version of this global identity, Vicky (born to a Filipino mother and an Italian father in Canada) seemed baffled by my interest in dissecting her diasporic identity. Instead, she insisted: *“I was raised to be open to other cultures and have an openmindedness towards people. So, I guess I don't really classify myself.”*

This view is reflective of the postmodern belief in the death of nations due to economic forces (Ōmae, 1995). Guéhenno (1995) has emphasized that human mobility has revolutionized our understanding of nationalism and nationhood. In a global system where geographic location is fluid, ethnic and cultural identities are no longer determined by attachment to land. Table 14, on the next page, provides details of how Filipino diasporics renegotiated their global identity on Facebook.

By projecting themselves as global citizens on Facebook, diasporic Filipinos seemed to subscribe to more than just the transnational ideal. The social acceptance, social equity and social mobility encouraged in social networking may align as well with the Filipino associated social values of dignity (*karangalan*), justice (*katarungan*) and

Table 14. *Kapwa* and Global identity on Facebook

Filipino diasporic identity	Surface values and behaviors	Core values and behaviors	Societal values and behaviors
Global citizen (Filipino diasporic as citizen of the world)	<i>Pakikibaka</i> (resistance) against discrimination of people along lines of ethnic difference	<i>(Kapwa</i> defined as...) Other global citizens Some expressions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adoption of the values of different cultural groups. • Displays of Canadian multiculturalism through Facebook posts • Facebook posts showing acceptance of non-Filipinos as members of the Filipino youth group. 	<i>Karangalan</i> (dignity) coming from social acceptance as a global citizen rather than as an ethnic migrant. <i>Katarungan</i> (justice) through social equity of Filipino diasporics as equal to Canadian citizens. <i>Kalayaan</i> (freedom) as social mobility afforded to all other global citizens.

freedom (*karangalan*). That these find rootedness in *kapwa* may suggest Facebook's potential to allow Filipino diasporics the rediscovery of their endogenous culture.

Profoundly, this seems just as applicable to the three other forms of Filipino diasporic identities renegotiated by participants on Facebook.

CHAPTER 5: Pulling strands together

In June of 2012, during my candidacy exam, I used the *banig* (a Filipino woven mat for sitting or sleeping) as a metaphor to illustrate my aspired contribution to scholarship. I referred to migration studies as solitary strands separately focused on migrants (permanent or temporary) or left-behind loved ones or members of the host society. Before I started my PhD studies in 2010 until its completion in early 2014, there has been an absence of research providing a multiperspective view of diasporic identities.

I immersed myself in the Facebook networks of Filipino diasporics to pull these strands together. Purposefully, I listened to the various voices involved in the renegotiation of Filipino diasporic identities. By doing so, my aim was to weave together the differing views on Filipino diasporic identity based on Facebook posts and uploads.

Pakikipagkapwa and ethics

This research investigated not only the renegotiation of diasporic identities but also the manner in which I choose to perform online research. It considered my recommendations for virtual endography and *ethics/relationship building as methodology* as questions to be explored. From the start, I was candid about my concern for media ethics—a subject area I taught from 2005 to 2010. And, after I earn my PhD, something I will return to with more to contribute than when I left it. That surrounded the kind of research I have done alongside my participants.

My application of *kapwa* as both my theoretical and methodological frame came from my interest in ethics. Such was also why I integrated a culturally- appropriate research approach to virtual ethnography. This supported a highly sensitive manner of data construction where participants were given a more active role in the research. The

casualness of our interaction allowed them to openly express their discomfort or distress. Even so, I remained vigilant in reading verbal and non-verbal cues. At the sign of a participant's distress, I stopped asking questions and re-directed the conversation. As a general rule, I did not expect participants to surrender their stories to me just because of a signed consent form. I believed my role was not to attend solely to information I gathered but to those whose lives I investigated. My priority was to develop mutual trust. This meant sacrificing significant data upon the request of participants. Even when such requests were not made, I made their welfare my top priority. My goal in doing this research was not only to enrich myself as a scholar but also to benefit my participants. That, to me, was what it meant to apply research “ethics as methodology” (Kovach, 2009, p. 54).

As a testing ground for my research methods, my pilot was designed specifically to ask the same question as my proposed dissertation. My general question was: How do diasporic Filipinos renegotiate their diasporic identity through social media?. But this was further narrowed down to a more manageable scope. Thus, I instead asked: How do Edmonton-based Filipino diasporic members of a youth group renegotiate their diasporic identity through social media?

Primarily, I focused on the issues of privacy and anonymity in my research ethics application—the first I have ever been required to complete. These ethical concerns were what I considered my biggest challenges as an online researcher. To face such, I thought of creating a research-dedicated Facebook account. This would, at least, lower the chances of my participants being directly associated with me through my personal account. Such a connection, I believed, could reveal their identities. My plan was well

received by the Human Research Online (HERO) reviewer with an assuring comment:

“The proposed study is intriguing and seems very worthwhile to me. In general, issues of privacy, confidentiality and consent are well dealt with. You've done a good job, I think, of assuring privacy and confidentiality within the unavoidable limitations posed by Facebook itself.”

As if to prove this point further, a minor incident occurred as I was using my personal Facebook account. Two of my personal Facebook contacts began discussing my research on their Timelines. I was alarmed by how publicly my research was being discussed. My fear was that other Filipinos on Facebook would read the exchange and would be discouraged to participate in my research. To neutralize the situation, I sent both parties separate private messages requesting them to delete their posts. One quietly and respectfully obliged. But the other sent an indignant reply with a long lecture on online research ethics and “the nature of the social media beast.”

Though there were no further incidents that happened after, I became even more cautious in safeguarding my participants' identities. One way was to cloak the “friends” list of my Facebook research account. This made the membership of my research network (except for our common contacts) invisible even to members (participants) themselves. Another step I took was to delete all identifiers from the data. Aside from using pseudonyms to refer to my participants, I also avoided presenting raw screen shots at my supervisory committee meetings. Apologetically, I refused the friend requests of participants who wanted to be part of my personal Facebook network. They, fortunately, understood that being declared “my new contact” on Facebook may deprive them of their anonymity. Perhaps a step further than that was my attempts to still have an active

presence in my personal Facebook account. Such was something I did to prevent assumptions from being made by personal contacts aware of my research.

My use of *Kapwa* as a theoretical frame was likewise helpful in addressing ethical issues. It meant being keenly aware that I was not investigating “on” my participants but “with” them. My research techniques were shaped by *pakikipagkapwa* (developing mutual trust through relationship building) as mother method. In Tagalog, the language of central Luzon and of Virgilio Enriquez, “*paki*” is a polite request. To use “*pakiki*” as prefix, thus, suggests a constant request/invitation and acceptance of one’s participation in group activities. *Pakikipagkapwa*, therefore, required me to sensitively and constantly ask participants for their consent. This was not only a requirement of research ethics but also part of the research design itself.

But, just like any technology, *pakikipagkapwa* as research approach brought simultaneous costs and rewards. I was compelled, as researcher, to constantly be sensitive to participants’ thoughts and emotions especially when such were not openly expressed. This created a huge challenge on Facebook due to the lack of non-verbal and paralinguistic cues. To build trust meant devoting precious time to making small talk and developing a sincere interest in the lives of others. My successes came with the eventual surrender of profound diasporic stories. But even these were sometimes marred by minor failures that threatened to break whatever mutual trust had been built. Thankfully, participants forgave me for my transgressions each time I showed remorse through words or actions. In fact, the concern I showed participants as my *kapwa* was reciprocated. Many of them exerted extra effort to provide me with the assistance I needed. Countless times, participants chatted with me on Facebook for hours even in the dead of winter

nights. During the height of my family crisis in Manila, some expressed support by offering prayers and boosting my morale.

The intimacy developed between me and my participants was, however, not always beneficial to my research project. There were a few occasions when I became uncomfortable with the excessive friendliness of Filipino and non-Filipino secondary key informants. My approved ethics plan, though accessible for review online, was unable to provide a protocol for dropping participants from the research. Instead, I relied on *pakikipagkapwa* to gently but decisively do so without harming them, their Filipino diasporic contacts or my investigation.

In the end, *kapwa* proved to be a most effective ethical guide post for my research and relationship building on Facebook. Its flexibility and adaptability allowed me to see the humanity behind my impersonal computer screen. Such served me well not only as a Facebook researcher but also as a Facebook dweller.

But will *pakikipagkapwa* work for other researchers doing virtual or material endographies? I firmly believe, just like Virgilio Enriquez did, that it may be just as rewarding for those willing to commit to it. In workshops I have done in the Philippines, even Filipino researchers unfamiliar with Filipino indigenous methods were apprehensive about their abilities to apply these. Some claimed they do not have the “personality” or the social acumen to pull “it” off. I have assured them these skills, just like statistical training, are learnable.

Kapwa, as a theoretical frame and (research) ontological position, and *pakikipagkapwa* as a research approach are the foundations of virtual endography. This means enacting respect, honesty and sincerity in the way we do research. Instead of

imposing our research protocols on our participants and the cultures we study, we adapt to their ways of being as means to understand their perspectives. Concretely, we may do so by designing research methods around the activities that are natural to them. As discussed in previous chapters, there are ways to ensure research rigor without having to limit ourselves to the protocols used in conventional social science research. It is likewise ideal for us to speak the same language. If this is not possible, we may rely on native speakers to be our translators. Even so, we must at least learn key terms that reflect the meanings relevant to our research topic. The main purpose of endographers is to earn participants' trust through sensitively attending to the practices of an outsider seeking insider acceptance. There are no hard and fast rules to do this except to always be sensitive to others through empathy. The genuineness of care required of an endogenous researcher is no different from that established by social research.

As an example, Pe-pua (2006) cited how some Filipino indigenous researchers had to respectfully negotiate entry into their research field by adapting to the unspoken "dress code" of "garbage scavengers" (p. 113). Through empathy, they realized they could not dress exactly like their participants. It may have the opposite effect of distancing themselves from the culture and offending those whose trust they want to earn. At the very least, they would appear deceitful and manipulative in their attempt to assume an insider identity without earning such privilege. The falseness of this action may accentuate socio-economic differences between researchers and the researched. Instead, indigenous research approach called for these empathetic outsiders to adapt to their participants by dressing down in "casual jeans and t-shirts" (p. 113). While still adapting

to the environment and the people being studied, they remained true to who they were and simultaneously expressed respect for the protocols of the culture.

Respect, honesty and sincerity are ethical values generally espoused by social science research. In endography, all three are embedded in the process of research. Researchers imbibe and enact such in their ontological positioning and their approach to research participants. Genuineness of care for others is not simply imposed by an approved ethics proposal form as periodic reminders (pre-planning and crisis management). Appropriately, “ethics” is “ research methodology” (Kovach, 2009, p. 54).

Summary and Conclusions

Several issues related to my main research problem were addressed primarily in Chapter 4 (Filipino diasporic identities on Facebook) under the headings *Digital footprints of Filipino diasporic identities*, *Renegotiating Filipino diasporic identities on Facebook* and, *Renegotiated forms of Filipino diasporic identities*.

More specifically, the five questions that guided my investigation culled the following insights about Filipino diasporic identities on Facebook:

1. In what ways do Filipino diasporics display their diasporic histories on Facebook?

Filipino diasporic history of participants were easily revealed and accessed through their declarations of hometowns and current cities. The simple posting of one’s geographic origin as well as one’s present location allowed contacts to recognize migration as an experience documented on Facebook. Friendships and family ties with Filipinos also exposed ethnicity by referencing the Philippines as Mother Land. Facebook profiles, meanwhile, brought to light Filipino cultural values through languages spoken, religious beliefs and high regard for education.

Even when Filipino diasporic participants avoided emphasizing their Filipinoness, they unconsciously and indirectly did so through other Facebook design features. Some participants were surprised to learn that their contacts interpreted their memberships to Facebook groups and their liking of Facebook pages as part of their diasporic identities. In some cases, they did not even remember having associated themselves with these through such online actions.

The archival nature of the social networking site allowed materials to remain visible long after the posting, liking and membership had faded in Filipino diasporic participants' memories. Thus, contacts could review diasporic histories in ways that may not be possible in common material encounters.

2. How do Filipino diasporics display Filipino-ness through status updates, tagging, photo-sharing and video-uploading?

There were direct and indirect ways of displaying Filipinoness through Facebook behavior. On the surface, it was obvious which posts were related to Filipino identities and cultures. However, participants were also able to express their Filipinoness in more meaningful ways.

Some photo uploads and comments allowed certain facets of Filipino cultures to be revealed. For instance, Basil's Facebook posts about his Vancouver trip inspired his Filipino contacts to express their expectation that, as a Filipino traveller, he would bring them souvenirs from his journey (*pasalubong*). Such applies to regular Filipinos who go on vacations but still return to the Philippines. But it applies even more to *balikbayans* (Overseas Filipinos returning to the Philippines). Filipino diasporic participants felt negatively towards such

expectations from their left-behind loved ones. However, they seemed to appreciate its deeply-rooted meaning in reference to Filipino folk tales which I shared with them. They could relate to folk heroes leaving their villages to engage in battle (diaspora) and later bring home the spoils of war to share with their village mates.

Meanwhile, Facebook behavior reenacted material ways of developing of rapport in participants' offline relationships using the website's available features. Filipino-style communication was recreated through wall-to-wall posts (e.g. the food fight between Eli and Basil), tagging (e.g. Lia publicly teasing a friend for having big feet), status updates (e.g. targeted jokes and sending of feelers) and the like.

3. How do Filipino diasporics renegotiate their cultural identities through associations and disassociations on Facebook?

Participants were mindful of how, on a social networking site, the composition of their networks may affect their identities on Facebook. Thus, they were cautious about the kind of Filipinos (diasporic and non-diasporic) they accepted as contacts. Filipino diasporic participants separately criticized those whose attitudes and behaviors may contribute to the proliferation of Filipino stereotypes. They were most wary of other Filipino youth who gravitated towards illegal activities and gang membership. Also avoided were Filipinos who fully accepted Canadian culture and abandoned Filipino values. A special category was the Filipino diasporic who used Facebook to boast about material wealth in

the land of milk and honey. Filipino participants, regardless of where they were in the world, generally found that attitude of superiority repellant.

On Facebook, distancing from *kapwa* as not-one-of us (outsiders) was done through ignoring friend requests, filtering of Facebook access or unsubscribing to the newsfeeds of the Filipino contact. Unfriending was not an option taken by Filipino diasporic participants even when they decided to sever Facebook ties. This, they believed, was rude and antagonistic. Unfriending was perceived as an announcement of displeasure. One participant said it was tantamount to “declaring war” on the other party. Instead, Filipino diasporics opted for blocking contacts as an extreme form of distancing on Facebook. It was in this way that participants quietly disappeared from the Facebook experience of those they wished to avoid. The indirectness of such seemed to align with Stella Ting-Toomey’s Face Negotiation Theory (1985). Through Facebook blocking, Filipino diasporics may simultaneously avoid conflict while maintaining respect for others as well as for themselves. As diasporics, they reflect both individualistic and collectivistic identities—reflecting cultural hybridity.

4. How do Filipino diasporics and their contacts (left-behind Filipinos, other diasporic Filipinos and non-Filipino friends in Edmonton) perceive Filipino diasporic identities on Facebook?

Research participants (Filipino diasporics and their contacts) shared similar and, sometimes, varying interpretations of Filipino diasporic identities on Facebook (see Table 16 in the appendices). They were, however, aware that these interpretations are subjective and may not necessarily form consensus. Thus, they

did not claim that they fully grasped the diasporic identity of the person behind the Facebook persona.

Even so, they often compared the Filipino diasporic identities of their participating contacts based on who were “more” or “less” Filipino or Canadian. Such seemed to depend on place of birth (Philippines or elsewhere), languages spoken, age at the time of migration and cultural values. However, there was an understanding and acceptance that such diasporic identities continue to evolve over time.

5. What forms of Filipino diasporic identities emerge from the Facebook uploads of young Filipinos permanently living in Edmonton?

There were four forms of Filipino diasporic identities on Facebook that seemed to emerge from posts and underlying stories shared with me: *Pan Filipino*, *Neo Filipino*, *Pan Asian* and *Global citizen*. Through the lens of *kapwa*, such formations seem to be rooted in who Filipino diasporics considered *kapwa* (insiders and outsiders) and what Filipino diasporic stereotypes they were resisting against.

Pan Filipino identity was adapted by those who believed that Filipino identity should embrace all Filipinos, regardless of languages spoke, birth place and current geographic location. It resisted against regional and diasporic discrimination of Filipinos.

Neo Filipino identity was adapted by those who believed that Filipino identity must rise above its colonial and neocolonial permutations. Filipino diasporics considered other Filipino youth group members as one with them

(*kapwa*) in their quest to redefine themselves as enlightened Filipinos. Also considered *kapwa* were non-Filipinos who welcomed this new permutation of Filipinoness.

Interestingly, *Pan Asian* identity seemed to address the resistance against stereotypes of Filipino youth as gang members and juvenile delinquents. Since Filipino diasporic participants felt that they could not find role models among their Filipino diasporic peers, they sought to attach themselves with more ideal Asian diasporics.

Finally, *Global citizen* identity seemed to develop from the Facebook posts of those who celebrated the multiculturalism of Facebook and Canada. Filipino diasporic participants and their contacts recognized such as progress towards a democratic, non-sectarian, multi ethnic society.

The stories we shared on Facebook about our lives as Filipino diasporics have so far pointed to the development of these four identity forms. However, I must emphasize that these are not mutually exclusive. There have been times when we have simultaneously appeared as two or more at the same time. For instance, I would consider myself as Pan Filipino, Neo Filipino and, in some ways, Pan Asian in my posts. There are also times when I may want to project myself as a Global Citizen when addressing certain international issues. More importantly, these four forms are not the only possible permutations of Filipino diasporic identities on Facebook. The idea that identity is continuously renegotiated online opens the future to more potential identity forms.

Primarily, *kapwa* became both the form and content of this research. Digital stories on Facebook shared in previous sections confirmed my initial assumptions that: 1.) Filipino diasporic identity is not homogenous or fixed. It is evolving and heterogenous. It is being renegotiated on Facebook; 2.) Diasporic identity is renegotiated through identification with and distancing from people; and 3.) Filipino diasporic identity is expressed in creative and novel ways on Facebook.

However, at the end of my research process, there was one significant insight I was unable to articulate. While defending my dissertation, I realized the conflictedness of being Filipino also came from a tendency to imagine a homogenous identity despite the obvious fragmentary and heterogenous natures of our people. This, yet again, goes back to the Filipino core concept of *kapwa*. Viewed from Curriculum of Place (Chambers, 1999 & 2006), the singularity of our plural identities may escape the imagination of someone who does not have roots in an archipelago where numerous islands make up one nation state. Thus, I came to recognize that we are not seeking one singular Filipino identity but several, evolving, Filipino identities.

The tendency to imagine fusion, wholeness and commonalities with *Others* highly contextualize the Filipino diasporic identities emerging on Facebook. Stuart Hall (1990) has added further understanding of colonial/postcolonial cultural identities as political projects for people seeking recognition. For me and my Filipino diasporic participants, our identities were co-produced through renegotiating who we were and who we were becoming through strategically associating ourselves with significant Others (ideal Filipinos, ideal Asians, Filipinos imagining a reformed kind of Filipinoness and ideal global citizens).

Furthermore, Hall (1990) appropriately concluded that cultural identity does not refer “to an essence but a *positioning*” (p.226). The strategic positioning of our diasporic identities often involved associating ourselves with Others. This has made it impossible to pin down what distinguished us from those we considered *kapwa*. Such may also explain why my research does not conclude with a clear definition of what it means to be Filipino.

Like Clifford and Marcus (1986), I believe that: “Culture is contested, temporal and emergent” (p. 19). The four Filipino diasporic identities described in this research, therefore, provide snapshots of the positions we have taken at this particular juncture in our diasporic histories. I stake no claims about their permanence, continuity or acceptance.

Reimagining future of Filipino diaspora

I approached this research armed with an insatiable ambition carried over from my previous investigation on Filipino diaspora. But, in the three years it took to conclude this dissertation, I have uncovered even more questions than answers. This final section discusses some potential threads of scholarship for me and like-minded scholars.

Primarily, the provocative correlation between place and identity seemed organic to research participants’ diasporic stories. Filipino diasporics struggled against having to identify themselves as “still” Filipino because they no longer lived in the Philippines. Even so, some of them considered their Filipino peers “less” Filipino for being born outside the home country. An undeniable fact is that more and more Filipinos are being conceived in the heart of their parents’ diaspora. To some of them, Facebook may serve

as a meaningful place where they may enact and demonstrate their Filipinoness. Lino, raised in Canada but born in the Middle East, argued:

I don't think the Canadian environment detracts from my culture at all. Rather, I believe it strengthens my identity as a Filipino because you have to put in more effort to retain those values than if you were living in the Philippines. My identity on Facebook, while it has inherently become more of a confluence of external influences and different cultures, is more Filipino than Canadian.

The interweaving of our material lives into our virtual existences may seem typically part of our lived experiences as Internet dwellers. Such developments in computer-mediated communication challenge dystopian predictions that the virtual is detaching us from what is real and concrete. Facebook is a good example of how the virtual may allow us to redefine what it means to live in the material world.

Furthermore, globalization is now an essential feature of diasporic displacements. It troubles not only our conceptions of identity as inextricably linked to physical/material places but also the significance we confer to nationhood and nation states. Guéhenno (1995) lamented that territoriality remains central to the way we view the world as composed of independent nations. In this way, vestiges of colonialism and imperialism still exist alongside the supposed freedoms of globalization. However, he also recognized the radical yet unobserved potentiality of the virtual: “The Internet, the emergence of virtual communities, raises the possibility that we are...moving from our old nation states to a bigger continental state, but that something more fundamental is happening, which is altogether making geography less relevant (Guéhenno, 1998, p. 137).”

Komito (2011), more specifically, named two changes in the networked diasporic. He believed that social media has allowed migrants to maintain “ambient presence” through “a passive monitoring of others, through the circulation of voice, video, text, and pictures, that maintains a low level mutual awareness and supports a dispersed community of affinity (p. 1075). One could imagine such to be heightened “absent presence” (Gergen, 2002, p. 227)—a persistent, routinary and taken-for-granted form of existence much like being physically beside others in public (geographic) spaces. Social media may, in fact, transform diasporics into “virtual migrants” whose “physical locality can be irrelevant for their identity, as they continue to participate in the various dimensions of their home community, regardless of where they (or other people they grew up with) currently live” (p. 1084).

My participants and I still carry passports (theirs Canadian and mine Philippine) labeling us as citizens of a particular nation state. But, on Facebook, we can defy these material constraints by redefining ourselves through the networks we create and the identities we develop. In effect, we may challenge geo politics through associating ourselves strategically with people we name as our *kapwa*. As Guéhenno (1995) concluded: “The essential is not to master a territory but to have access to a network.... This revolution of the economy diminishes the value of space and increases the value of men...the space that is now at a premium is that where actual meetings can take place” (pp.8-9).

The formation of diasporic identities, already a dynamic process, seems to happen even more rapidly online. Facebook posting, sharing and archiving of digital information may continuously allow renegotiations of identity in relationships across time and space.

Thus, the four forms of Filipino diasporic identities previously enumerated are in no way meant to be fixed or finite. Just as participants recognized their continuous cultural evolution, I must acknowledge the possibility of other incarnations yet to be co-created and discovered. This may likewise apply to non-Filipino diasporics with unique histories and cultural values.

Essentially, on Facebook, we are all diasporic—allowing a sense of equality not always provided in our physical encounters. That this research focused only on this virtual place does not exclude all others as sites of diasporic identity renegotiation. Participants also drew my attention to other social media such as Twitter, YouTube and Skype. In some cases, secondary key informants felt that diasporic Filipino participants were “more” Filipino on such platforms. Primary key informants also confessed they were simultaneously logged in on several social media at the same time—enhancing their presence on the worldwide web and, likewise, their “ambient presence” (Komito, 2011, p. 1075).

Although my research did not fully uncover the inner workings of technology, it caught glimpses of how our Filipino diasporic identities were influenced by Facebook’s design features. Sally, a non-Filipino participant, failed to follow the entire Facebook food fight between Basil and Eli even if it happened over a few weeks. But she belatedly paid attention to one of Eli’s photo uploads. That particular post was revived on the newsfeed when it received an overdue like. Thus, on Facebook, archived information may remain present as part of one’s recurrent story.

The well-guarded algorithm of Facebook (and any other social media for that matter) comprises the “ground” on which the “figure” of our identities’ emergence

(McLuhan and Fiore, 1967, p. 2). We cannot pay simultaneous attention to both “figure” and “ground” which may, obviously, influence who we are becoming on such virtual places. Managing our diasporic identities and the networks from which they are created requires attentiveness to both the “figure” (who we are through our contacts, posts, uploads, likes, etc.) and the “ground” (Facebook as technology). Adding more complexity is how Facebook’s design regularly and silently morphs. There is, thus, an unspoken expectation for dwellers to learn how to be on Facebook by being on Facebook.

The complexity of identity renegotiation on social media involves more than just human agents. Originally, I considered viewing my research through the lens of Latour’s Actor-Network Theory (Latour, 2005). But later, as I familiarized myself with my topic, I chose to investigate diasporic identity through *kapwa* as core Filipino value. I was, therefore, drawn to the human actants of identity renegotiation. This path led me away from investigating technology as an active and powerful agent in identity formation as other scholars have done (Cheney-Lippold, 2011; Introna, 2011; Jones, 2013; Marichal, 2012; Van Dijck, 2012). That said, I must emphasize that our diasporic identity renegotiations not only happened *on* Facebook but also *with* Facebook.

Social networking sites delude us into thinking we are in control of how we enact our online identities (Cheney-Lippold; Marichal, 2012). Sid, for example, insisted that he was decidedly private on Facebook—limiting full access to a small number of contacts. But he seems unaware of how he surrenders his data to a corporation. His digitized self does not only dwell on virtual spaces accessible through computer screens but also in a data warehouse whose physical/geographic location is controlled by a business entity (Hogan, 2013).

Facebook not only sells our data to other corporations but it also analyzes our personal information (materials uploaded by us about ourselves or those uploaded by others about us) to create a “profile” of we are (Hogan, 2013). These assessments determine what Facebook highlights in our news feed (stories from contacts whose Timelines we often comment on, like or visit and products and services related to our perceived interests); which of our contacts it may suggest we tag in your photos; the kinds of potential contacts it may show us and applications that it promotes on our Facebook pages (Facebook, 2014). Such “suggestions” become part of our “personalized” and “targeted” Facebook experiences that may unconsciously frame identity renegotiations. By choosing which digital artifacts to draw our (and our particular contacts’) attention, Facebook participates in identity renegotiation (whether diasporic or not).

This is not to say we cannot resist the constraints of technology. Our mediated identities demand a different kind of human agency. As Introna (2011) suggests: “To extend agency we have to submit to the demands of encoding and kidnap that encoding simultaneously...” (P. 113). This means continuously learning the evolving affordances of Facebook so we may alter its design to suit our needs. For example, Basil and Eli persistently used tagging and wall-to-wall posts to engage specific contacts. This made it possible for their uploads to appear not only as on fleeting newsfeeds but also as potentially longer-lasting posts on their contacts’ Timelines. Additionally, the two Filipino diasporics defied social conventions by declaring alternative brothers and sisters with those they shared emotional rather than biological ties. Thus, we become

“plagiarists” of Facebook’s code (Introna, 2011, p. 113). Though we may resist the technology, we are still playing within its structured rules.

In fact, by and large, we may simply accept Facebook design elements as the only way to be on Facebook (Jones, 2013; Marichal, 2012). We may even be encouraged to view technological intervention as natural to our human lives. Facebook uses familiar language to mask algorithms that may not be as benevolent and neutral as we imagine (Jones, 2013). Thus, we may not think twice about face-recognition protocols that hide behind “photo tagging.” Concerns about surveillance and invasion of our privacies may likewise be overpowered by “the threat of invisibility” imposed on us by the structure of the technology (Bucher, 2012, p. 1). Similarly, we may also take the news feed at face value—forgetting Facebook’s active role in deciding what stories appear on our “news feed” as comparatively more relevant to us and about us. The ubiquity and manifold participation of technology in our identity renegotiations certainly require further investigation.

Just as relevant, the universal applications of *kapwa* as value, theory and methodology may also demand further study. Such was the unfulfilled aspiration of Virgilio Enriquez. His death in the prime of *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* has left a void that current Filipino scholars around the world seem inclined to fill. However, to say that this endeavor is exclusive only to the Filipino scholar is again a betrayal of *kapwa*. A researcher does not need to be Filipino to recognize and apply *kapwa* as theory and methodology. In the same way, *kapwa* may find congruence in non-Filipino cultures in both material and virtual spaces.

Finally, I was also left questioning of my own research question. One of my primary participants did not agree with my use of the word “renegotiating” to describe what was happening to diasporic identity formation on Facebook. The issue, I believe, derives from the contrasting views of Facebook as a platform (one-way/linear communication) or as a venue (two-way/transactional communication). Also influential is the explicit desire for freedom of expression and agency offered by the Internet. This suggests that further investigations may look into the psychology and sociology of diasporic identities on Facebook. As this key informant tellingly insisted:

I think as with all media outlets, it's not so much as renegotiating as exploring-- exploring the different facets of who they are as beings and exploring other peoples ideas and identities. I know who I am. And, if people don't like it or have judgement on me, I've learned to ignore it haha. Maybe just realization (not renegotiation)...a lot of people are aware of other cultures but [are] not sure of what each culture actually is or entails. Facebook kinda is a small window into that person's cultural home.

Meanwhile, the concept of “home” was further problematized in the lives of three Filipino diasporic participants. During the writing of this dissertation, they each moved from Edmonton to other cities (one in Canada and two in other countries) to pursue further studies. This has left me to wonder about the future of Filipino diasporic identities and communications technology. Even so, I remain optimistic of human agency in the digital age.

Figer (2009) has pointed out that the Internet may allow Filipino identification to extend beyond Philippine shores, but it did not invent Filipino identities. Neither

diaspora nor the technology that allows it may take credit or blame for what we are becoming in our material or virtual lives. We must rage against the limits imposed by cultural, perhaps even technological, stereotypes to become who we want to be.

In its various incarnations since I began my research, Facebook has remained consistently vague about ethnic and cultural identity. It does not directly state such in our profiles. Instead, we are asked to post our pictures and those of our families and friends; to name our birth place, hometowns, current cities, Facebook friends and the languages we speak; and to display the places we go to, our thoughts and feelings about our lives. Perhaps such is done as an act of political/social politeness to avoid offense. Maybe Facebook celebrates the democratic promises of the Internet. The reason behind such ambiguities may no longer be important anyway. Such may, instead, be viewed as spaces for us to creatively renegotiate our cultural identities. For us Filipino diasporics (as well as other diasporics), it's the potentiality of revising and reforming who we are in the way we want to; when we want to; and from wherever we are that truly matters.

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Appendix A: Research ethics

Background

This endography of Filipino diasporic identities on Facebook began with a pilot study on January of 2012. That preliminary project was meant to explore various facets of the main research including ethics, design, method and target participants. During data construction, I recognized that the pilot was leading towards the main research. Thus, the research ethics approved by the University of Alberta's Research Ethics Board 1 was extended to September of 2012—a date that overlapped with the commencement of my dissertation research (August of 2012). The research ethics described below reflects almost the same research ethics applied to my pilot study.

Overview of the Research Project

Facebook has become an international venue for multicultural interactions. It currently hosts half a billion netizens from at least 60 countries (Facebook, 2011). But, as an emergent transnational space, Facebook lacks scholarly attention (Freishtat & Sandlin, 2010; McKay, 2010; Palfrey & Gasser, 2010). Recent studies have argued that online activities do not always divert us from issues prevailing in our offline lives (Miller, 2010; Palfrey & Gasser, 2010). Specifically, Facebook is inherently liminal as it acts as a threshold between the virtual and physical worlds of its users.

Overseas Filipinos experience a sense of “placelessness” (Parreñas, 2008, p. 98) common to other transnationals. For this diasporic community, Facebook has become “an alternative place where geographic location no longer determines one's presence” in the Filipino community (Aguila, 2011b, para.11). In fact, McKay (2010) has noted that Filipinos on Facebook posts reflect a growing awareness of their cultural identity. Uploaded photos depict not only their childhood memories but also historic photos connected to their homeland and to their left-behind loved ones. McKay used virtual ethnography and critical discourse analysis. While she limited herself only to Filipinos on Facebook, the study explores cultural identity as perceived through Facebook by left-behind loved ones in the Philippines as well as their contacts in Canada.

This project focuses on the multi-perspective view of diasporic Filipino identity on Facebook. What interests me the most about Facebook is how it offers transnationals a venue to simultaneously renegotiate their cultural identity with left-behind loved ones in the Philippines, with Edmonton-based non-Filipino friends and Overseas Filipinos in other countries. Thus, I ask: “How do Filipinos in Edmonton renegotiate their cultural identity on Facebook?”

Method:

Aside from addressing the research question, my study aims to further explore an alternative way of conducting virtual ethnography (through indigenous methods). This

was something I began using in my pilot study conducted in Winter 2012. Virtual endography (an indigenous approach to ethnography) is the main method. This is supplemented by Filipino indigenous methods such as *pakapa-kapa* (groping or feeling your way in), *pagtatanong-tanong* (asking questions in a conversational manner) and *pakikipagkwentuhan* (sharing stories). However, the heart of this method lies in *pakikipagkapwa* (development of trust through relationship building).

Filipino indigenous methods are often described as informal, casual and participatory. Thus, these call for conversational forms of interviews and, if possible, group discussions. There are only a few identified questions with the researcher acting essentially as the research instrument. She allows the conversation(s) to develop while being cognizant of the main research topic. In the process, other tangent topics may be raised.

Procedures:

1. The researcher will be using a Facebook account dedicated to the research. Though I will upload photos and information connected to who I really am, I will be using a pseudonym. In this way, none of the research participants will be associated with my personal Facebook account. (Here I am avoiding the public announcement of my new contacts as Facebook repeatedly does.)
2. Research participants will be recruited from a youth group based in Edmonton (the same group from which I recruited participants for my pilot study). During the initial contact, they will be informed that some participants from their FB networks (left-behind loved ones, friends in Edmonton and other Overseas Filipinos based in other countries) will likewise be recruited.
3. Once recruited, the primary key informants will be asked to forward my invitation to their contacts who fit the description above.
4. I will only send messages to the second batch of key informants once they respond to my call or give their approval to forward their contact information to me.
5. After recruitment, the researcher will join the networks as a participant observer using the dedicated FB account. (This step is only for new participants since participants from my pilot study are already my Facebook contacts.)
6. The researcher will follow the primary research participants' (Edmonton-based Filipinos') Facebook wall posts that reflect cultural identity. Likewise, attention will be given to responses from other research participants (left-behind loved ones, non-Filipino friends in Canada and other Overseas Filipinos based in other countries).
7. Impromptu interviews with research participants will be conducted synchronously through Facebook chat or video call.
8. Face-to-Face interviews and focus group discussions will also be scheduled with some participants.
9. Transcripts of the said interviews will be shown to research participants throughout the data gathering process for confirmation and validation.
10. The final research report will also be made available to all research participants, upon their request, for the same reasons.

Study Objectives:

This research generally seeks to investigate how Overseas Filipinos in Edmonton re-negotiate their cultural identities through Facebook.

More specifically, it aims to:

1. Discover how their (public) Facebook uploads (profile, text, photos, videos, audio) contribute to the formation/re-negotiation of their cultural identities from the perspectives of left-behind loved ones, their (non-Filipino) contacts in Edmonton, other Overseas Filipinos (in other countries) and the primary research participants themselves.
2. Apply Filipino indigenous methods to the virtual ethnography of Facebook.
3. Explore the strengths and weaknesses of endography (indigenous approach to ethnography).
4. Investigate how diasporic Filipinos apply the concept of Kapwa (shared identity or fusion of self-and-other) through identification and distancing from contacts on Facebook.

Participants:

Key informants are all active members of Facebook no younger than 18. Primary research participants are Edmonton-based Filipinos belonging to a Filipino youth group. Secondary research participants are chosen representatives from their contacts (left-behind loved ones in the Philippines, Overseas Filipinos in other countries and non-Filipino friends in Edmonton).

Digital stories on Facebook as data:

Data in this research is delimited to shared (as opposed to private) posts by Edmonton-based Filipinos on Facebook. These include profile information, text, photos, videos, links and other digital uploads relevant to cultural identity. Also analyzed are Facebook comments and responses to such posts by left-behind loved ones, non-Filipino friends in Edmonton and Overseas Filipinos in other countries. Simply put, research data include digital stories shared on Facebook by Filipino diasporics about their diasporic identities.

Risk Assessment and Management

The risks are negligible compared to the benefits of participation. Since all research participants are already Facebook inhabitants, they are not exposed to extra ordinary pressures or expectations from the researcher. In other words, their habits and behaviors are meant to be observed in their natural state.

Given the topic of cultural identity, the following research participants may experience the following risks and discomforts:

- Edmonton-based Filipinos/Overseas Filipinos in other countries--embarrassment due to how particular Facebook uploads reveal their cultural identities.
- Left-behind loved ones--feeling of cultural estrangement from Overseas Filipinos

- non-Filipino friends in Edmonton--embarrassment at sounding racist or judgmental

Steps will be taken to guard the privacy and anonymity of participants. The researcher will use an alternative Facebook account dedicated solely to the study. In this way, participants will not be easily associated with the researcher's personal Facebook account. Recorded interviews will be transcribed personally by the researcher. Such transcriptions will not reveal the actual names of the participants. These will instead reflect the pseudonyms chosen either by the researcher or the participants. Even if the researcher will only collect Facebook uploads on the primary key informants' walls, she will assure research participants that they may withdraw their consent at any time. At any point, they may also request that certain posts, comments or statements not be used for the research report. In extreme cases where the anonymity of participants has been breached, the researcher will revise names/descriptions (male instead of female; old instead of young, etc.) to mask the actual identity of the participant. Images/videos used by the researcher for publication or presentations will be blurred to avoid identification of people in said images.

Indigenous methods support a highly sensitive manner of data construction where participants have an equal control of the direction taken by the research. The casualness of the interaction with the researcher will allow them to openly express their discomfort or distress. Even so, the researcher will watch out for verbal and non-verbal cues of distress during the interviews. At the sign of participant's distress, the researcher will stop asking questions and offer to re-schedule or re-direct the interview. She will also remind the participant of his/her option to review the interview transcript and reasonably request that certain statements or Facebook uploads not be included in the research analysis.

Benefits Analysis

Benefits to participants may include being able to contribute to knowledge and understand more about themselves. No other benefits are expected.

This study seeks to expand discourse about cultural identity through online venues such as Facebook. The use of indigenous methods for virtual ethnography is also experimental and could be innovative. Additionally, I am applying the Filipino concept of fused identity (*kapwa*) to the identity formation of diasporic Filipinos on Facebook. Such has not been done before. Even for Filipino indigenous scholarship, my study has the potential of updating concepts and contributing new ones.

Online research ethics:

1. *Describe how you will identify potential participants*

Recruitment will be done online through email/Facebook message. To ensure anonymity and privacy, those to be recruited must not be in the researcher's personal Facebook network. Instead, I will recruit some participants from my pilot study (contacts of my Facebook research account). They will also be asked to recommend other members of their youth group as participants.

2. How will people obtain details about the research in order to make a decision about participating?

Contact will be made through a third party or intermediary (including snowball sampling). An intermediary is appropriate given the requirement that the main key informants come from a particular Filipino youth group in Edmonton (name withheld). Voluntary participation will be ensured through a recruitment letter stipulating the details of the research and what is expected of the participant. In that letter, I will emphasize that participants may retract their acceptance at any time. They may also request that certain posts, comments, statements not be used in the research report. The second phase of recruitment will involve all primary key informants sending out my invitation to particular members of their network (left-behind loved ones, non-Filipino friends in Edmonton and Overseas Filipinos in other countries). By doing recruitment through them, I am respecting the privacy of their contacts. It will also be less awkward for unwilling recruits to decline indirectly.

3. How is participant consent to be indicated and documented?

While recruiting participants for my pilot, I discovered that most people preferred giving their informed consent through email or Facebook message. I have kept our email/Facebook exchanges along with other digital data as documentation of such. For this research, I will provide my participants both options.

4. If at any time a participant wishes to withdraw, end, or modify their participation in the research or certain aspects of the research, describe how their participation would be ended or changed.

Participants wishing to withdraw from the research will be reminded that they may reasonably request that certain Facebook uploads, comments and interview responses be stricken from the record. Should they still wish to withdraw, all materials from these participants will no longer be used for the report.

5. How will you ensure that non-participants are not included in the study? How will you ensure that data from non-participants are not used in the study?

The wall posts of primary research participants (Edmonton-based Filipinos) will determine what other data will be used from their Facebook site. Only comments made by other participants will be analyzed. Comments made by others will not be used. Interviews with participants will generally be done privately through various Internet platforms such as text chat, video call, etc. Additionally, face-to-face interviews and focus group discussions will also be done privately.

6. How will you provide appropriate activities for non-participants?

No need. I'm joining their Facebook network where they already do what is natural to them.

7. *How will you address discomfort or disadvantage, if any, arising out of non-participation?*

If they fit the research criteria, I will consider them as backup in case some participants withdraw from the study. I will also assure non-participants that my research findings will be made available through future publications and presentations.

8. *Will your interaction with humans occur in private spaces (eg. members only chat rooms, social networking sites, email discussions, etc)?* YES

9. *Will these interactions occur in public space(s) where you will post questions initiating and/or maintaining interaction with participants?* NO

10. *Describe how permission to use the site(s) will be obtained, if applicable:*

The primary research site is the Facebook network of Overseas Filipinos to be recruited for the study. Their permission will be obtained even before the research begins.

11. *If you are using a third party research tool, website survey software, transaction log tools, screen capturing software, or masked survey sites, how will you ensure the security of data gathered at that site?*

Transcripts of online interaction with participants will be saved in Word or other similar software. Files will be kept in a computer folder and later saved on storage devices which will be kept in a secure location. However, since all participants (including the researcher) have consented to using Facebook as platform, the researcher is not in complete control of all the uploaded materials used for the study. This, however, is a danger that all Facebook inhabitants must accept when using this platform.

12. *How will you protect the privacy and confidentiality of participants who may be identified by email addresses, IP addresses, and other identifying information that may be captured by the system during your interactions with these participants?*

Aside from creating a dedicated Facebook account for this research, I cannot guarantee that the Facebook system itself will not use the data and other materials uploaded by the participants on their networks.

13. *In research where total anonymity and confidentiality is sought but cannot be guaranteed (eg. where participants talk in a group) how will confidentiality be achieved?*

As said before, the researcher will use a research-dedicated Facebook account. This will prevent other people from identifying participants from her personal account. Interviews with participants will be conducted privately through Facebook chat, message or video

call. A one to two-page summary of each primary participant's diasporic identity on Facebook will be written based on these interviews. Each summary will be shared with the primary participant whose diasporic identity has been described. But participants whose opinions and perceptions have been included will first be shown sections of the summaries pertaining to their interviews. No direct quotations or references will be made to participants. Participants may generally be described as "contacts based in the Philippines" etc. Each participant will be allowed to approve, revise or delete their opinions from the summary. General descriptors may also be deleted upon their request.

14. How will confidentiality of the data be maintained? Describe how the identity of participants will be protected both during and after research.

From the onset, participants will be asked to choose pseudonyms for use in the research analysis and write up. General descriptors (e.g. contacts based in the Philippines) instead of pseudonyms will be used in the summaries (describing diasporic identity on Facebook) to be shared with primary participants. Data to be stored will already reflect these pseudonyms. The researcher will also create a dedicated Facebook account so participants will not be easily identified through her personal FB network.

On the use of digital uploads from Facebook

1. If this study involves secondary use of data, list all original sources:

Some Facebook uploads may include links to public websites/blogs such as YouTube, Philippine newspapers, etc.

2. If you are collecting any of the above, provide a comprehensive rationale to explain why it is necessary to collect this information:

The study will be done on Facebook where real names are used as account names. Uploads by participants will be basis for analysis and thus may include photos, videos, etc. Ethnic background, citizenship and residential status are also important details related to main focus of the study (cultural identity).

3. If identifying information will be removed at some point, when and how will this be done?

At the onset of the research, participants will given the option to pick pseudonyms to hide their identities. The researcher will provide them a pseudonym if they wish. These will be applied to transcripts and other materials to be stored. A list of their actual names and chosen aliases will be kept in a safe place.

4. Specify what identifiable information will be RETAINED once data collection is complete, and explain why retention is necessary. Include the retention of master lists that link participant identifiers with de-identified data:

There is no need to retain any such information after the dissertation has been written.

5. *Explain if consent obtained at the beginning of the study will be sufficient, or if it will be necessary to obtain consent at different times, for different stages of the study, or for different types of data:*

There will be no need to obtain formal consent at different times other than in the recruitment process. While, the researcher will use chosen images/links (uploaded on the Facebook walls of participants), these are all publicly-accessible on Facebook. Even so, she will make sure that sound, video and image uploads to be referred to in the research report will not reveal the identity of the participants or any humans depicted in such. Efforts will be made to protect their identity by blurring or masking faces. The participants may also withdraw from the research at any time or reasonably request that certain materials not be used. Given my use of Filipino indigenous methods, informal consent for the use of Facebook uploads (even those that have been made available to all members of the said network) will regularly be obtained. During my pilot, I found that participants appreciated being asked even if they felt that they had given me blanket consent (to use their Facebook wall uploads) in accordance with my consent form.

6. *At what stage, if any, can a participant withdraw his/her material?*

Participants may, at any stage, request that particular images not be used for the report. However, the researcher may refer to these in the text by providing a description approved by the participant.

7. *If you or your participant's audio- or video-records, photographs, or other materials artistically represent participants or others, what steps will you take to protect the dignity of those that may be represented or identified?*

Technology will be used to blur or mask faces in photos and videos.

8. *Who will have access to this data? For example, in cases where you will be sharing sounds, images, or materials for verification or feedback, what steps will you take to protect the dignity of those who may be represented or identified?*

Materials are already uploaded for public access on Facebook. Still, the researcher will only refer to these materials when interviewing participants in the same network where such were uploaded.

9. *When publicly reporting data or disseminating results of your study (eg presentation, reports, articles, books, curriculum material, performances, etc) that include the sounds, images, or materials created by participants you have collected, what steps will you take to protect the dignity of those who may be represented or identified?*

Faces and voices of people in the images or videos will be masked through use of technology.

10. *What opportunities are provided to participants to choose to be identified as the author/creator of the materials created in situations where it makes sense to do so?*

The researcher will allow participants to choose pseudonyms as alternatives to using their real names.

11. *Describe how research data will be stored, e.g. digital files, hard copies, audio recordings, other. Specify the physical location and how it will be secured to protect confidentiality and privacy.*

Digital files will be saved in storage devices such as flash drives or CDs. These will be stored in a locked filing cabinet. Original computer files will eventually be deleted once copies have been made and stored.

12. *University policy requires that you keep your data for a minimum of 5 years following completion of the study but there is no limit on data retention. Specify any plans for future use of the data. If the data will become part of a data repository or if this study involves the creation of a research database or registry for future research use, please provide details.*

Researcher plans to use some of the data for conference presentations and research publications.

13. *If you plan to destroy your data, describe when and how this will be done? Indicate your plans for the destruction of the identifiers at the earliest opportunity consistent with the conduct of the research and/or clinical needs:*

Computer files will be stored in removable devices (such as flash drives or CDs). After these have been securely kept in a locked filing cabinet, the researcher will delete all files in her computer. Identifiers will be destroyed after final research contact with participants (sharing of final report for confirmation, validation and approval).

**Invitation to Participate in Dissertation Research
(Primary Key Informant)**

Date

Dear (Name of Potential Participant),

Mabuhay! I would like to invite you to participate in a study about Facebook. (Name of Edmonton-based member of the target youth group) suggested that I get in touch with you. I am Almond Pilar N. Aguila, a PhD student at the University of Alberta doing research on the cultural identity formation of Overseas Filipinos through their Facebook wall uploads.

Your acceptance will allow me to join your network to observe the Facebook uploads you post on your wall and the comments these get from your contacts for a period of one month. Occasionally, I may engage you in informal conversations on Facebook via text chat. You will likewise be asked to join two focus group discussions to be attended by other participating members of (name of youth group). One will be scheduled in mid October and the other in late January. This will be more like an informal gathering rather than a formal group discussion. However, I will be using a digital audio recorder for this. Such will help me accurately quote you whenever needed. Transcripts of these will be shown to you for approval.

My research will also focus on how your contacts (left-behind loved ones, non-Filipino friends in Canada and Filipinos in other countries) perceive your Facebook uploads. Thus, I will be recruiting research participants from your Facebook network. Online and face-to-face interviews with them will likewise be conducted at their convenience and in their venue of choice.

To safeguard your privacy, I have created a dedicated Facebook account for this study. This will prevent people from easily associating you with my personal Facebook network. You will also be referred to in my research report (and future publications or presentations) by a pseudonym which you may choose or allow me to choose for you. Since your participation is voluntary, you may refuse to answer any question I ask or request that particular uploads not be used. Withdrawal from the research may be expressed at any time.

You will be notified of what particular wall uploads (text, photo, video, hyperlink, etc.) I will be analyzing. Any identifying details on these uploads will be deleted or altered to protect your privacy as well as others depicted in these. Transcripts, images, videos or hard copies of such will be locked in a secure place for a maximum of five years following completion of this research activity.

I do not foresee any serious harm resulting from this activity. Instead, people often find the opportunity to reflect on their experiences to be beneficial. It is possible, however, for you to feel some discomfort with regard to certain uploads. Please be assured that I will

respect your privacy if you prefer that these not be included. I will also share with you the notes I write to clarify themes or insights I develop in my analysis. If you are interested then I would share with you the paper I write on this topic.

If you have any further questions about this research, please feel free to contact my PhD program supervisor, Dr. Cathy Adams, Associate Professor of Secondary Education, University of Alberta, cathy.adams@ualberta.ca, (780) 492-5769. You may also directly send me inquiries to aguila@ualberta.ca.

Sana ay tanggapin mo aking imbitasyon. Mahalaga sa akin ang iyong tulong. (English translation: I am hoping you will accept my invitation. Your help means a lot.)

Umaasa (English translation: Hoping),
Almond Pilar N. Aguila

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Office at (780) 492-2615. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, please feel free to contact my PhD program supervisor, Dr. Cathy Adams, Associate Professor of Secondary Education at the University of Alberta. You can reach her at cathy.adams@ualberta.ca or (780) 492-5769. You may also reach me at aguila@ualberta.ca or (780)-2462959.

**Invitation to Participate in Dissertation Research
(Secondary Key Informants)**

Date

Dear (Name of Potential Participant),

Mabuhay! I would like to invite you to participate in a study about Facebook. (Name of Edmonton-based Filipino) suggested that I get in touch with you. I am Almond Pilar N. Aguila, a PhD student at the University of Alberta doing research on the cultural identity formation of Overseas Filipinos through their Facebook wall uploads.

Your acceptance will allow me to consider your comments and observations about the Facebook wall uploads of (primary key informant) as part of her/his cultural identity formation. Let me assure you that none of your own Facebook uploads will be used in my study. Occasionally, I will be engaging you in informal online conversations on Facebook. Should there be a need, I may request a face-to-face interview at your convenience at the venue of your choice (at home, in the office or at a coffee shop). This will be more like a casual conversation rather than a formal interview. However, I will be using a digital audio recorder for this. Such will help me accurately quote you whenever needed. Transcripts of interviews will be shown to you for approval even if Facebook text chats can also be saved from your end.

To safeguard your privacy, I have created a dedicated Facebook account for this study. This will prevent people from easily associating you with my personal Facebook network. You will also be referred to in my research report (and future publications or presentations) by a pseudonym which you may choose or allow me to choose for you. Since your participation is voluntary, you may refuse to answer any question I ask or request that particular uploads not be used. Withdrawal from the research may be expressed at any time.

You will be notified of what particular wall uploads (text, photo, video, hyperlink, etc.) I will be analyzing. Any identifying details on these uploads will be deleted or altered to protect your privacy as well as others depicted in these. Transcripts, images, videos or hard copies of such will be locked in a secure place for a maximum of five years following completion of this research activity.

I do not foresee any serious harm resulting from this activity. Instead, people often find the opportunity to reflect on their experiences to be beneficial. It is possible, however, for you to feel some discomfort with regard to certain comments, likes and wall-to-wall posts. Please be assured that I will respect your privacy if you prefer that these not be included. I will also share with you the notes I write to clarify themes or insights I develop in my analysis. If you are interested then I would share with you the paper I write on this topic.

If you have any further questions about this research, please feel free to contact my PhD program supervisor, Dr. Cathy Adams, Associate Professor of Secondary Education at the University of Alberta. You can reach her at cathy.adams@ualberta.ca or (780) 492-5769. You may also directly send inquiries to me at aguila@ualberta.ca.

I am hoping you will accept my invitation. Your help means a lot to me.
Sincerely,
Almond Pilar N. Aguila

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Office at (780) 492-2615. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, please feel free to contact my PhD program supervisor, Dr. Cathy Adams, Associate Professor of Secondary Education, University of Alberta, cathy.adams@ualberta.ca or (780) 492-5769. You may also reach me at aguila@ualberta.ca or (780)-2462959.

**Forwarded invitation to secondary key informants
(through primary key informants)**

Hi, (name). Thanks for agreeing to be part of my research. I've attached the informed consent form for you to review. It says practically the same thing I've told you earlier. But please feel free to ask me questions or express your concerns. You may return the consent form with a digital signature or take a digital picture of the signed form. But you can also just clearly state your informed consent by replying to this message.

My next request is for you to send the message below to your Facebook contacts who most often respond to your posts (with text comments or "likes"). For your privacy and anonymity, please don't post the invitation on your wall. I would suggest you send it out through private messages to the following types of contacts: Left-behind loved ones in the Philippines (family, relatives, friends, etc.), Overseas Filipinos in different countries and non-Filipinos based in Edmonton. It would be ideal for you to send the message to six contacts in all (two for each type). Maraming salamat ulit! (Again, many thanks!)

Please copy and paste below to a new private message addressed to your most active contacts:

Hi. I'm participating in groundbreaking research about the cultural identity of Filipinos on Facebook. This is being done by Almond Aguila, a PhD student at the University of Alberta, who is also an Overseas Filipino. The link below shows her presenting one of the papers she has written about Facebook.



<http://www.mact.ualberta.ca/en/News/2012/March/TheTwoFacesofSocialNetworking-AComparativeAnalysisofFacebookandRenren.aspx>

For this study, she will be mainly observing my wall posts and the comments of my contacts who agree to participate as well. I'm hoping you will also help us understand how Overseas Filipino identity is perceived on Facebook. You don't have to do anything other than your regular Facebook activities. With your consent, she will be analyzing your comments to some of my posts. There will be times when she may chat with you on Facebook or request for a chat session at your convenience (time and platform of your choice like Google chat or Skype). Almond will be using Filipino indigenous methods which are very casual and accessible. She will be adjusting to how we do things on Facebook rather than imposing activities on us. Instead of formal interviews, she will be

engaging you in casual conversations where you can also ask her questions or suggest other ways of looking at cultural identity on Facebook. If you are interested, please send a friend request to XXXX (my research-dedicated Facebook name) which is a Facebook account dedicated to the research. This is her way of respecting our privacy and anonymity. You can even choose your own pseudonym since we won't be called by our real names in any of her reports. I hope you're as enthusiastic about this research as I am and that you send her a friend request soon. Please mention that you are my contact. Thanks!

INFORMATION LETTER and CONSENT FORM

Study Title: Diasporic Identity formation through Social Media

Research Investigator: Almond Pilar. N. Aguila, PhD student
Supervisor : Catherine Adams

ADDRESS:
347 Education South
University of Alberta
Edmonton, Alberta T6G 2G5
Canada

ADDRESS:
347 Education South
University of Alberta
Edmonton, Alberta T6G 2G5
Canada

aguila@ualberta.ca
(780)-246-2959

cathy.adams@ualberta.ca
(780) 492-5769

Background

You are being asked to be in this study because of you are an Edmonton-based Filipino who is active on Facebook with Facebook contacts including left-behind loved ones in the Philippines, non-Filipino friends in Edmonton and Filipinos residing in other countries. Other research participants representing the said types of contacts will also be recruited from your network. (for primary key informants)

Or

You are being asked to be in this study because of your Facebook connection to (name of primary key informant).

I have approached you for this study upon the recommendation of (name of the person who referred).

This research marks the completion of my PhD program. Data from this study will also be used for future publications and conference presentations as a means to share what I have learned.

Purpose

The purpose of research is to discover how Overseas Filipinos are perceived by their contacts (left-behind loved ones, non-Filipino friends in Edmonton and Filipinos based in other countries) on Facebook based on their wall uploads (text, photos, videos, hyperlinks, etc.)

This study will also test the applicability of Filipino indigenous methods (“pagtatanong-tanong” or casual interviews, “pakapa-kapa” or feeling your way into the research site and “pakikipagkwentuhan” or sharing of stories) in achieving the objective mentioned above.

I foresee the following as contributions to be made by this study: 1. Understanding how various types of people view Filipino identity on Facebook and 2. Usefulness of Filipino indigenous methods in online research (a pioneering effort).

Study Procedures

I will be joining the Facebook network of an Edmonton-based Filipino. The wall uploads (of this Edmonton-based Filipino) and comments of particular contacts will be observed for three months. Casual interviews about these will be done on Facebook at your convenience.

Whenever necessary (this choice is open to both you and I), a face-to-face meeting may be scheduled at a time and place most convenient to you. This will also be more of a casual conversation instead of a formal interview.

(Only for primary key informants) Two focus group discussions will be scheduled with all primary key informants (Edmonton-based Filipinos who are members of XXX—the youth group). The first will be done some time in the middle of October and the other at the end of January, 2013). These will be at a designated time and place that most convenient to you.

Data to be collected are interviews (both online and face-to-face), Facebook wall uploads of Edmonton-based Filipino (text, photos, videos, links) and comments to such by other research participants to these uploads. Only uploads from October 1 to December 31 will be considered.

Facebook text chat sessions will be used as data. Face-to-face interviews and focus group discussions will be recorded using a digital audio recorder. These recordings will be transcribed by the researcher such that no other person will hear what you have said. Transcripts will be shown to you for approval.

I will inform you on a regular basis which uploads will be chosen for analysis. You will also be asked to suggest other uploads that you think are important to *your identity formation on Facebook (primary key informant) or perceptions about the Edmonton-based Filipino (secondary key informant)*. Interview transcripts will be shown to you for verification. I will likewise share with you the themes that I think are suggested by the data we are constructing together. You may suggest other themes you think are important.

Benefits

The biggest benefit for you is participating in cutting-edge research on Facebook. It may also benefit you to know that your participation helps me in completing my PhD. I hope the understandings we gain from this study will help us better understand how cultural identity is viewed on a popular online platform like Facebook.

Risk

There may be risks to being in this study that are not known. If I learn of anything during the research that may affect your willingness to continue being in the study, I will inform you right away. Please feel free to also call my attention if you encounter some risks as the research unfolds.

Voluntary Participation

You are under no obligation to participate in this study. The participation is completely voluntary.

You are also not obliged to answer any specific questions that make you uncomfortable. You may likewise reasonably request me not to use certain uploads, comments or statements in my research.

Even if you agree to be in the study, you can change your mind at any time. You can use any form of communication to indicate this (email, text message or phone call).

Confidentiality & Anonymity

Data from this research will be used to produce my dissertation as well as future publications and presentations. You will be referred to in all of these by a pseudonym (chosen by you or chosen for you by me).

Correspondence (interviews, messages, chat sessions) between us will be kept confidential. Recorded interviews will be personally transcribed by me. Transcripts and other such documents will only use the pseudonym and be kept in a locked drawer for a period of five years following completion of the research project. Electronic data will be password-protected.

However, I will be using a Facebook account devoted only to this research. Thus, the chances that you can be seen by my other Facebook contacts (unless they are also your contacts) are slim.

Details that may identify people in image, video, text uploads will be masked by blurring or concealing such.

Data will eventually be destroyed in a way that ensures privacy and confidentiality. This may be done by using shareware that allows the complete eradication of the research-devoted Facebook account. This will ensure that all correspondence between us will not be accessible to other people.

I cannot guarantee your full anonymity since Facebook, a public platform, is the main research site. Outline the safeguards in place for the security of data (e.g. data will be kept in a secure place for a minimum of 5 years).

Further Information

If you have any further questions about this research, please feel free to contact my PhD program supervisor, Dr. Cathy Adams, Associate Professor of Secondary Education at the University of Alberta. You can reach her at cathy.adams@ualberta.ca or (780) 492-5769. You may also directly send inquiries to me at aguila@ualberta.ca.

Consent form

Two copies of this form have been provided:

One for you to return to me and the other as your personal copy.

Research Project Title: Diasporic Identity Formation on Facebook

Investigator: Almond Pilar N. Aguila

_____ No, I do not choose to participate in the internet research.

_____ Yes, I agree to participate in the internet research.

I have read and understood the invitation letter. I give my consent for the researcher to use my publicly-posted Facebook uploads and to interview me on Facebook about such. These uploads may be of various digital forms (Internet links, text, audio, video, photo, etc.). All details that may identify me, my contacts or other people depicted in such will be deleted or blurred. I understand that only the investigator, Almond Pilar N. Aguila, will have access to any transcripts of my private exchanges with her on the said topic. I understand that the information I provide will be kept anonymous by not referring to me by my name, but by using a pseudonym. I understand that the information I provide may be used not only in the research report but also for future conference presentations and publications. I understand that transcripts or written material will be locked in a secure place for a maximum of five years following completion of this research activity. I understand the interview notes will be shared with me to clarify themes or insights. However, I am also aware that the researcher cannot make any guarantees that the Facebook system itself will not use any of the same materials in ways that may identify me.

I understand that I may withdraw my consent at any time. Likewise, I may request to have certain Facebook uploads or statements I have made about such be stricken off the record. I may also refuse to answer specific questions with the understanding that my participation in any aspects of the study is strictly voluntary.

I also understand that there will be no serious risks involved in this study. I may, in fact, benefit from reflecting upon my experience.

Name of participant (Please print) _____

Signature of participant _____

Date _____

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Office at (780) 492-2615.

Appendix B: Filipino diasporic identity on Facebook

Table 15. Facebook profiles of Filipino diasporic participants

Participant	Hometown	Languages	Family	Schools attended	Work history	Religion	Other relevant information
Betty (pilot participant but not an active member of youth group)	Batangas City (In Timeline profile)	Filipino, English and Japanese	Not identified but sister and relatives are contacts	All schools in Edmonton but does not mention Philippine schools	Not stated	Not stated but cites a quote from Bible	<p>Of 2,306 Facebook places mentioned in her profile, only four were in the Philippines. Majority of the locations were in Canada, the US and Australia.</p> <p>Her hometown in the Philippines appears with her date of birth.</p> <p>Joined the Facebook group “IRC adik ka kung” (You’re an IRC addict if…)—a Filipino group addicted to internet relay chat.</p>
Peter (pilot participant who moved to Europe by the time of the main research)	Cebu city (uses regular wall)	Not stated	Identifies family members (brothers, sisters, cousins)	Does not mention schools	Not stated	No stated but posts a lot of Catholic videos, images, comments and is a member of a Catholic apostolic community on Facebook	<p>But mentioned “Operation Smile Philippines” as one of his interests. The organization funds surgical treatment of children with cleft pallet. Peter’s best friend was a beneficiary.</p> <p>Only three of the Facebook places in his profile numbering over 100 were located in the Philippines. The others were in North America.</p>

Participant	Hometown	Languages	Family	Schools attended	Work history	Religion	Other relevant information
							<p>Likes some Filipino and/or Catholic Facebook pages as well as the Filipino youth group FB page. Also likes some Facebook pages related to Africa (where he lived before Canada).</p> <p>Member of a Catholic apostolic community page on Facebook.</p>
Sandra (pilot participant)	Not stated but identifies Edmonton as current city of residence	Canadian English, Filipino. She later took this down (i took down everything i could take down except for name/city/school no outside influence made me take it down, other than wanting to minimize the ease of access to my personal life)	Identifies mother, sister, aunt and cousins (one is non-Filipino and unrelated). She later deleted her family connections. See previous column	All Canadian	Not mentioned	Catholic—she later took this down	Information provided was bare minimum and unrelated to diasporic identity.

Participant	Hometown	Languages	Family	Schools attended	Work history	Religion	Other relevant information
Sid (pilot participant)	Camiling, Tarlac	Not stated	Friends and family lists hidden	All Canadian schools	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	Only 20 Facebook places in profile. Three of these, including his hometown, were in the Philippines..
Basil (pilot and main research participant)	Makati	In 2013, during the main research, he no longer included the languages he spoke. But his Chinese name is part of his account name. His former Facebook profile originally said he spoke Canadian English and Tagalog.	Identifies brother and cousins as well some friends as brothers. He names a non-Filipino friend as sister.	None mentioned	None mentioned	None mentioned	His Facebook profile cover photo is of his hometown—Makati City (Philippines) Of the 347 places he checked into on Facebook, 312 were in Canada and 33 were in the Philippines Member of a Filipino-Chinese Facebook group whose members live in Canada
Eli (pilot and main research participant)	(Parents are Ilocano and Batangueña) Quezon City (In timeline profile)	Not stated	Identifies mother, father, cousins but also names close friends (some of whom are not Filipino) as brothers and sister even if he	Ateneo de Manila University (Catholic school in the Philippines) Canadian	Not mentioned	Catholic	Of the 164 places he checked into on Facebook, 148 (51 in Canada and 97 in Las Vegas) were in North America. He declared himself in 13 locations in the Philippines. Is a member of Facebook group FM is Far*East Movement, a successful Asian-

Participant	Hometown	Languages	Family	Schools attended	Work history	Religion	Other relevant information
			is an only child	schools attended Lists two obviously fictitious schools related to a popular movie and an online game			American hip hop band whose members are descendants of Asian migrants from China, Japan, Korea and the Philippines. They all consider themselves Asian-American. Is a member of the Facebook group Rhian Ramos, followers of a Filipino entertainer who appears on Philippine TV and movies. Is a member of a Facebook fan page of a Filipino dance group based in Edmonton. He was made a member by a friend. Is a member of Facebook groups devoted to female Korean popular artists.
Lia	Biñan, Laguna	None mentioned but Timeline posts are in English, Filipino and Korean	Identifies real family members. She does not declare friends as brothers or sisters.	None mentioned	None mentioned	Catholic	Of the 550 Facebook places she has checked into, 377 were in Alberta and 165 were in the Philippines. Likes musicians from around the world—the US, Korea, etc. But has liked a Filipino band in the Middle East which hails from her hometown. Likes Filipino, Korean and American TV shows. Likes the Filipino youth group.

Participant	Hometown	Languages	Family	Schools attended	Work history	Religion	Other relevant information
Lino	Egypt	English, Tagalog and Batangas Tagalog	Identifies several real family members	Schools attended in Edmonton	Not mentioned	Christian	<p>Of the 92 Facebook places he checked into, 82 were in Canada and 3 were in Egypt. He has not checked into any Philippine location even if he often visits relatives there.</p> <p>Likes the Filipino youth group</p> <p>Member of the Facebook fan page of a Filipino dance group based in Edmonton.</p>
Maria	Quezon City	Not mentioned	Identifies several real family members	High school attended in Edmonton	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	<p>Of the 486 Facebook places in her profile, 477 were in Canada and 3 were in the Philippines.</p> <p>Likes the Filipino youth group Likes one of the group's beneficiaries, a non-profit organization working in the Philippines</p> <p>Member of Facebook page of The Filipino Channel which broadcasts Filipino TV shows and movies all over the world.</p>
Victoria	Edmonton	Mandarin Chinese, English and Korean	Has declared only three relatives as family members.	Schools attended in Edmonton	Identifies work place in Edmonton	"Other"	<p>All 57 Facebook places she checked into were in Edmonton.</p> <p>Likes mostly Korean pop artists (under music, TV and movies).</p> <p>Identified the company she works for but its Facebook page does not indicate its location.</p>

Table 16. Filipino diasporic identity on Facebook

	Basil (9) FB since May, 2009	Lia (11) FB since March, 2007	Eli (5)	Lino (3) FB since Jan 2008	Maria (3) FB since Jan 2007	Victoria (4) FB since 2007
PRIMARY KEY INFORMANTS						
Basil	<i>Filipino-Chinese</i>	Filipino FB friends since April 2012	Filipino Canadian but more Filipino than Canadian Fb friends since Jan 2012	Looks Filipino but reflects “white” culture FB friends since 2012	Filipino FB friends since 2011	
Lia	Filipino with Chinese “flavor” FB friends since April 2012	<i>Filipino with Korean or Spanish “flavor”</i>	Filipino (more than Basil) FB friends since May 2012		Filipino coz she likes to upload group pictures Friends since June 2012	Korean-Canadian or Asian-Canadian FB Friends since April 2012
Eli	Filipino-Canadian (more Canadian than Filipino)	Filipino-Canadian (more Filipino than Canadian)	<i>Filipino-Canadian (identity depends on who he is addressing)</i>	Canadian (Filipino identity could not be seen given lack of posts)		

	Basil (9) FB since May, 2009	Lia (11) FB since March, 2007	Eli (5)	Lino (3) FB since Jan 2008	Maria (3) FB since Jan 2007	Victoria (4) FB since 2007
	Fb friends since Jan 2012	FB friends since May 2012		FB friends since 2008		
Lino	Filipino-Canadian but more Filipino coz of "home is where the heart is" photo (more Filipino than Eli) Friends since early 2012	Filipino-Canadian	Filipino-Canadian (posts are generally multi-cultural) FB friends since mid 2008	<i>Filipino-Canadian More Filipino than Canadian but less than Eli and Basil since both have lived in the Philippines</i>		
Maria	Canadian-Filipino-Chinese (in that order) FB friends since 2011	Filipino-Canadian ("but Filipinoness is strong") June 2012			<i>Filipino-Canadian but more Canadian on Facebook coz more</i>	Not Facebook friends

	Basil (9) FB since May, 2009	Lia (11) FB since March, 2007	Eli (5)	Lino (3) FB since Jan 2008	Maria (3) FB since Jan 2007	Victoria (4) FB since 2007
					<i>contacts are non- Filipino</i>	
Victoria		Filipino Canadian FB friends since April 2012				<i>Asian-Canadian</i>
NON-FILIPINO MEMBERS OF YOUTH GROUP (Edmonton-based)						
Mico Moved to Edmonton 2010 Joined youth group same time as me— Feb 2012	More Canadian than Filipino	More Canadian than Filipino FB friends since Aug, 2012				
NON-FILIPINOS LIVING IN CAN ADA						
Isabel		Filipino- Canadian but more Filipino				Korean friends since 2012

	Basil (9) FB since May, 2009	Lia (11) FB since March, 2007	Eli (5)	Lino (3) FB since Jan 2008	Maria (3) FB since Jan 2007	Victoria (4) FB since 2007
		since April 2012				
Sally			Filipino- Canadian (more Filipino on Facebook)	Filipino- Canadian (more Filipino on Facebook)		
FILIPINOS IN THE US						
Nena FB since Aug, 2009 Migrated to US in 2012		Filipino				
Espie	Filipino FB friends since 2011					
Phil Often mistaken for filipino even if Korean Fb since 2009	Filipino FB friends since 2011					
FILIPINOS IN THE PHILIPPINES						
Pia Fb since May						Filipino Friends since Sept

	Basil (9) FB since May, 2009	Lia (11) FB since March, 2007	Eli (5)	Lino (3) FB since Jan 2008	Maria (3) FB since Jan 2007	Victoria (4) FB since 2007
2009						2009
Espie FB since April, 2010						Filipino Friends since July 2010
Paulo FB since 2008 Joined dota group	“Pinoy na Pinoy” (Very Filipino) FB friends since Jan 2012					