The Filipino, Diaspora and a Continuing Quest for Identity

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ABSTRACT

Defining Filipinoness has been problematic throughout history. Previous studies have focused on the persistent impact of the colonial experience on Filipinos (Bernad, 1971; Constantino, 1977; Enriquez, 1992; Yacat, 2005). Some scholars have framed their understanding vis-a-vis the search for a national consciousness resulting in a unified Filipino identity (Anderson, 1983; Constantino, 1969). But in the age of globalization, statehood and nationhood have become questionable concepts (Adamson & Demetriou, 2007; Ahmad & Eijaz, 2011; Guéhenno, 1995; Omae, 1995). Who has the Filipino become amid a modern-day diaspora? I propose an analysis of history not as archival and disconnected from the present but as part of an ongoing story of identity formation. Recognition is given to *kapwa,* a view of self-and-other as one. This indigenous ontology offers a postmodern lens to understand the complexities of being Filipino through time and space. For contemporary Filipinos, identity formation may involve a continuing resistance against colonialism now set amid the diaspora in the digital age. This article further presents an alternative view of Filipinoness by arguing that diasporics remain Filipino despite physical estrangement from the Philippines. An essential point echoed from other scholars is how cultural identity should not be seen as singular and unchanging (Hall, 1990; Said, 1993/2012). Rather, Filipinoness may refer to evolving, varied and fluid Filipino identities. This evolution involves a past that folds into the present and impacts the future in locations around the world.

Keywords: Filipino identities, Filipino diaspora, Facebook, social media, overseas Filipinos, diasporic identity

INTRODUCTION

Filipino migration continues to be a big part of Philippine social and economic reality. The Commission on Filipinos Overseas records emigrants under three categories: permanent (dual citizens, immigrants and permanent residents), temporary (contract workers or foreign students) and irregular (those without legal

documents). The habitual reminder that about a million Filipinos leave the Philippines yearly causes much attention. Presented in Table 1, are statistics from 2000 to 2013. In a telling fashion, these numbers are described as "stock estimates" by an economic system that views Filipino labor as a national resource.

Significant changes have, meanwhile, occurred amid the continuous fragmentation of Philippine society. Previously, one could say Overseas Filipinos (some of whom are Overseas workers renewing their contracts) comprise 10% of the population. But that is no longer accurate. The National Statistical Coordination Board (2013) has estimated that there would be 103 million Philippine residents by 2015. However, there were already 10.5 million Overseas Filipinos in 2012. Even more alarming is the data in Table 1, which shows that nearly half of Filipino diasporics have opted for permanent migration.

Table 1. Stock estimates of Overseas Filipinos 2012-2000
(From Commission on Filipinos Overseas, 2015)

Year	Permanent	Temporary	Irregular	TOTAL
2013	4,869,766	4,207,018	1,161,830	10,238,614
	48%	**41%**	**11%**	**100%**
2012	4,925,797	4,221,041	1,342,790	10,489,628
	47%	**40%**	**13%**	**100%**
2011	4,867,645	4,513,171	1,074,972	10,455,788
	47%	**43%**	**10%**	**100%**
2010	4,423,680	4,324,388	704,916	9,452,984
	47%	**45%**	**8%**	**100%**
2009	4,056,940	3,864,068	658,370	8,579,378
	47%	**45%**	**8%**	**100%**
2008	3,907,842	3,626,259	653,609	8,187,710
	48%	**44%**	**8%**	**100%**
2007	3,693,015	3,413,079	648,169	7,754,263
	48%	**44%**	**8%**	**100%**
2006	3,568,388	3,093,921	621,713	7,284,022
	49%	**42%**	**9%**	**100%**
2005	3,407,967	2,943,151	626,389	6,977,507
	49%	**42%**	**9%**	**100%**
2004	3,204,326	2,899,620	1,039,191	7,143,137
	44%	**41%**	**15%**	**100%**
2003	2,865,412	3,385,001	1,512,765	7,763,178
	37%	**44%**	**19%**	**100%**
2002	2,807,356	3,167,978	1,607,170	7,582,504
	37%	**42%**	**21%**	**100%**
2001	2,736,528	3,049,622	1,625,936	7,412,086
	37%	**41%**	**22%**	**100%**
2000	2,551,549	2,991,125	1,840,448	7,383,122
	34%	**41%**	**25%**	**100%**

Scholarly research responded to the quantity and quality of these human flows. Numerous studies were done on Overseas Filipino Workers (Constable, 1999; Johnson, 2010; Lai, 2011; Lau, Cheng, Chow, Ungvari & Leung, 2009; Liebelt, 2008; Parreñas, 2001; Pratt, 2013; San Juan, 2009). However, there was also interest in Filipinos holding foreign citizenships (Lagman, 2011; Mariano, 2011; Mendoza, 2006; Posadas, 2013; Pratt, 2003 & 2010; Siar, 2013).

This article focuses on Global Filipinos as citizens of other nations. My interest in Filipino diaspora is two-fold. Primarily, I am fascinated with the quest for Filipino identity amid dramatic out-migration. Another facet drawing my attention is how digital technology may allow the emergence of Filipino identities. At the heart of both these concerns is the long thread of colonial history.

History is analyzed to lift up the complexities of Filipino identity. Citing other scholars, I aim to reveal linkages of our colonized past to our diasporic present and to our uncertain future as a (geographically) fragmented community. As Constantino and Constantino (1978) have emphasized, we must view Philippine history as a "continuing past" (book title). Scholars have even questioned the description of colonialism as *post* as if to signify its archival nature (McClintock, 1992; Said 1993/2012; Shohat, 1992). Said (1993/2012) reminds us: "Imperialism did not end, did not suddenly become 'past,' once decolonization had set in motion the dismantling of the classic empires. A legacy of connections still binds countries" (p. 282).

Tracing the evolution of Filipinoness, I argue that colonialism still influences our identity-making efforts. Resistance to essentialist (often stereotypical) conceptions of cultural identities remain tied to the old World Order. Our Spanish and American colonizers have written "orthodox, authoritatively national and institutional versions of history" that produced "provisional and highly contestable versions of history into official identities" (Said, 1993/2012, p. 312). These foreign impressions about Filipinos continue to haunt us in how we imagine ourselves through negative traits such as "*mañana* habit" (habitual procrastination) "Filipino time" (habitual tardiness) and "ningas kugon" (starting but never completing tasks) (Enriquez, 1992, p.72).

Sikolohiyang Pilipino, a decolonizing movement headed by US-educated Filipino psychologist Dr. Virgilio Enriquez, challenged Western-based knowledge by revisiting indigenous wisdom in the 1970s (Pe-Pua & Protacio-Marcelino, 2000). Dr. Enriquez named *kapwa* as the core of Filipino culture. Viewing Filipino identity as collective—self seen not only as similar to but also as united with Other (kapwa)—provided a different lens to understand Filipino psychology (Enriquez, 1997). The movement's

postmodern approach spread throughout Philippine academia. Colonial history was likewise revisited. Renato Constantino (1969, 1976 & 1977) provided more understanding of our past. Most notable was his book *The Making of a Filipino: A Story of Philippine Colonial Politics*.

My aim is to contribute to the postmodern tradition of Philippine studies established by Dr. Enriquez and Dr. Constantino. I continue the scholarly discourse by extending the analysis of Filipino identity as kapwa through time and space. Like both scholars, I acknowledge colonialism as a vital context of Filipino identity-making. As the forces of migration fragment the Filipino nation, there is an imperative to reinvestigate Filipino identity. Again, Edward Said (1993/2012) has emphasized: What matters a great deal more than the stable identity kept current in official discourse is the contestatory force of an interpretative method whose materials is the disparate, but intertwined and interdependent, and above all overlapping streams of historical experience (p. 312).

On September 1, 2010, I arrived in Canada to immerse myself in Filipino diaspora as a migrant graduate student. While Said (1993/2012) chose siginificant moments in world history to connect culture to imperialism, I selected personal anecdotes to unpack the complexities of Global Filipino identity formation. These stories came from my own diasporic experience as well as from those shared to me by Filipino-Canadian participants. By re-searching Filipino identity with fellow Global Filipinos, I became kapwa to Filipinos living outside the Philippines. These tales were kapwa in content (speaking about kapwa) and form (reaching out to the reader as kapwa). In this way, the article may answer the call of Lyotard (1979/1984) to resist against grand narratives and challenge oppressive remnants of colonialism.

THE FILIPINO DIASPORIC STRUGGLE

The word diasporic is loaded with meaning (Clifford, 1994). There are various ways to describe migrant identity. Transnational, multicultural, global, ethnic are only a few common terms. 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" with its neutral focus on human and spatial mobilities (Sheller & Urry, 2006) and material culture (Crang, Dwyer & Jackson, 2003; Mariano, 2011). Others allude to the powerlessness diasporics experience and their struggle for transnationalism (Aguilar, 2009; Kim, 2011; Lai, 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 (Pratt, 2010; Wolf, 1997). In such projects, diasporic refers to first-generation migrants born in the homeland while transnational refers to those either born or raised in the host country. I suggest that no such distinctions be made—believing that the diasporic experience may extend through generations.

By describing Overseas Filipinos as diasporic, I am engaging in the 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 the Torah in 250 BCE. That journey-with-no-destination was a result of a curse by an angry God. However, diaspora's etymology began with the Greek word "diaspeirein"—describing the natural but violent way seeds are separated from a source. Before the 1960s, diaspora mainly referred to long-suffering Jews. Other marginalized groups, such as African Americans, later added similar tales of brutal separation from the motherland. This turning point, also fuelled by human rights movements, resulted in redefining diaspora (Tololyan, 1996).

Six features define diaspora: 1. Large-scale migration resulting from coercion (including economic motivation); 2.Migrant groups generally viewed as homogeneous regardless of their heterogeneous composition (e.g. African slaves); 3. Communal remembrances of the homeland shaping collective difference from the larger population; 4. Clear conception of insider-outsider distinctions imposed internally or externally; 5. Community members' interest in keeping in touch with each other and; 6. Persistent connection to the homeland. Thus, Italian-Americans can be described as ethnic but not diasporic. While they have a distinct cultural identity, they may not be as connected to their homeland as other ethnic communities (Tololyan, 1996).

Adamson and Demetriou (2007) have further discussed migrants' interconnections to various communities. In fact, 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).

My diasporic adjustments began at the Vancouver International Airport. Along with other new migrants, I was herded towards immigration counters for incoming residents. A Caucasian female officer stood beside the cordoned aisle. I witnessed her short exchange with five young Koreans who barely spoke English. Obviously, there were issues with their travel documents. Obviously irritated, she pointed them onwards. I hurriedly walked past her without thinking. But I stopped in my tracks when she shouted sternly: "Where do you think you're going? Show me your papers! You do not go anywhere until I tell you so!" Just like that, I was put in my place. I could have argued that her colleague had already reviewed my documents and told me to proceed to the counter. My fluency in English could have disassociated me from the foreign students she just berated. But I didn't want to get into more trouble. Silence was a knee-jerk reaction to the humiliation. In my previous visits to Canada as a tourist, I found airport officials generally friendly. However, I felt my privileged position shift dramatically from visitor to an alien requesting permission to stay in Canada.

Despite the "imagined community" suggested by the term diaspora, the Global Filipino may instinctively know one has a designated position in an alternative class structure (Anderson, 1983; Seki, 2012). In the next section, I draw your attention to the Filipino class struggle throughout history. Such has added complexity to the Filipino's search for identity. While kapwa is founded on similarity, it exists alongside acknowledged differences in social and economic status. Filipinos who have left the Philippines continue to deal with similar identity issues.

In the 1970s to the 1980s, President Ferdinand E. Marcos offered Overseas Filipinos various rewards for continued connections to the Philippines through remittances, regular visits and investments (Rodriguez, 2010). Such provisions classified diasporic Filipinos into two distinct categories: contract workers (Filipino citizens employed abroad) and balikbayans (visiting Filipinos who are no longer Philippine citizens). Inadvertently, these labels echo the history of class struggle among Filipinos.

My relatives helped me adjust to Canada. My aunt, who gave up her Philippine citizenship in the mid 1970s, introduced me to her Filipino friends. They had regular gatherings where they shared Filipino dishes and conversed mainly in Filipino. Proudly, someone explained: "In our community, everyone is treated equally. Some of us earn more than others. Like, there are nurses here who have big houses. But we also

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have some blue collar workers like housekeepers who have also managed to own their own homes."

This image of a unified Filipino diasporic community was later challenged by my experiences of what it meant to be Filipino in Canada. I constantly struggled to find my place in the new social structure of my diaspora. In the Philippines, I was defined by my education, my professional accomplishments and my middle-class upbringing. None of these mattered in Canada. Primarily, my socio-economic class was determined by my being a Filipino migrant. Filipino-Canadians saw me as a temporary resident carrying a Canadian student visa. My documentary category, however, did not seem to matter to non-Filipino Canadians. Instead, they saw me as "Filipino" with all that that label meant.

Once, my cousin introduced me to her kindergarten students. She asked them to guess what I was doing in Canada. My heart sank when a boy suggested I worked at McDonald's. Other answers similarly placed me in service jobs. I smiled nervously, masking my discomfort. When a Filipino child finally stood up, I was briefly relieved. To my disappointment, she said: "Maybe she is a nanny." My cousin and I exchanged knowing glances. Immediately, she revealed that I was a university instructor. The kids were obviously surprised at meeting a different kind of Filipino. I stood up and smiled, again saying nothing.

My discomfort at being associated with Overseas Filipino Workers was not always easily brushed off. Another occasion found me having lunch with my Caucasian professor and a visiting professor. I felt honoured to be only one of two PhD students invited to the small gathering of scholars. My professor spoke freely about me being Filipino and my work on Filipino diasporic identity. But I instantly felt offended when he mentioned the "impressive" number of Filipino nannies around the world. Compelled to speak for myself and for my kapwa Filipinos, I smiled and said: "Have you heard of how a Filipino beauty queen described Filipino overseas employment? She said that rich and powerful nations are putting the care of their future into the hands of Filipinos. This is how we will conquer the world."

Even my cousin, born in the Philippines but Canadian since she was two, was often reminded of her Filipinoness. It bothered her that all Filipino students were automatically assigned to her class. The principal did so

without consultation. My cousin was troubled mainly by the assumption of her Filipinoness. While her parents were both Filipino, she knew little about the culture. Her palate was obviously Filipino. Her food cravings involved sinigang, adobo and pansit. But, to effectively communicate with other Filipinos, she needed to speak in English. Even so, her ethnicity comforted her students and their newly-arrived Filipino families still adjusting to Canada.

Actually, Filipinos are known to be more adaptive to migration than other ethnic groups (Lau et al., 2009; Rotheram-Borus et al., 1998). A dominant strand of research focuses on Filipinos being ideal migrants 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.

Studies confirm that Filipino migrants consciously define their diasporic identities (Aguila, 2014; Bischoff, 2012; Law, 2002; Mah, 2005; Ocampo, 2013; Pratt, 2010; San Juan, 2005). Filipino diasporic identities are further 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). Curiously, positive Filipino stereotypes still carry unflattering assumptions. Kelly (2007) has pointed out that the good-naturedness of Filipino employees was considered a hindrance to professional development. Thus, the enactment of conflicting social roles may require Filipino migrants to negotiate their identities (Parreñas, 2001; Seki, 2012).

Diasporic identities are, in fact, 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… 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).

Nation building, nationalism and national identity are also concepts associated with diaspora. 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. The Filipino elite, then attending universities in Barcelona, formed the Philippine Propaganda Movement. Anderson (1983) later credited Jose Rizal, the national hero, for inspiring patriotism in the hearts of Filipinos with his novels *El Filibusterismo* and *Noli Me Tangere*. There were two reasons why diaspora played a significant role in the overthrowing of Spanish rule: 1. Rizal and his cohorts, though pushing for reforms rather than secession, were stirred by concepts from the French Revolution, and 2. living in the land of the colonizer empowered even the cooperative middle class to imagine themselves equal to their cultural master.

Yet another dimension of the politics of diaspora is marginalization in host countries (San Juan, 2009). Prime examples are Filipino domestic workers in Hong Kong whose activism was spawned by what they perceived to be unfair labor practices (Lai, 2011; Law, 2002). These experiences speak of the trials enveloping diasporic identities which require renegotiating their positions in society.

Filipino diasporic identities also involve continued connection to the Philippines (Lagman, 2011; McKay, 2010). A distinct strand of research addresses diasporic philanthropy wherein Filipino migrants become benevolent donors to fellow countrymen (Mariano, 2011; Okamura, 1983; Silva, 2006). Significance is also given to return trips to the homeland (Mariano, 2011; Pratt, 2003) which is common to other ethnic migrants (Basu, 2005). These nostalgic journeys reconnect them to their distant histories through glimpses of life in the Philippines.

Still, no assumptions should be made about the homogeneity of Filipino diasporic identity. Seki (2012) and Johnson (2010) have described the conflictedness in how middle-class diasporic Filipinos associate with or disassociate from their working class compatriots. Previous studies have likewise emphasized heterogeneity of regional and linguistic groups (Contreras, 2010; Law, 2001). For this reason, I propose the acceptance of multiple forms of Filipinoness. Such an idea stems from Philippine history.

HISTORY OF FILIPINO DIASPORA

Migration scholars have often cited President Ferdinand E. Marcos as the instigator of Filipino Overseas employment (Kikuchi, 2010; San Juan, 2009; Tyner, 2004). Logically, one could assume residents of an archipelago such as the Philippines ventured beyond their own shores long before that. Filipino labor migration actually began in the 16th century during the Spanish colonization (Gonzalez, 1998; Mercene, 2007). However, it was only in the 20th century, under Marcos, that overseas employment became part of the labor code. Remembered for his two-decade dictatorship, the brilliant strategist used overseas employment to address the nation's employment crisis in the 1970s. Thousands of Filipinos accepted jobs in the Middle East. This was when Overseas Filipino Workers became known as the Philippines' most significant resource. Marcos' historic policy has forced succeeding 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. 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 last term of office. To fight communist insurgency, he ordered midnight arrests of journalists and student leaders; the closure of media organizations; curfews and military checkpoints and 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' political rival. Some were driven away from the Philippines for good (Dresang, 1985).

Another wave of migration occurred when Joseph Ejercito Estrada, a former actor, 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. I heard such dissatisfaction from many diasporic Filipinos I met.

> Years ago, I asked my students at the University of the Philippines about what it meant 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 realized the fallacy of my question. I was imagining 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 like me looked down on their sacrifice and criticized their materialistic sense of nationhood.

In September of 2003, at the Canadian Embassy in Manila, I was interviewed for my tourist visa application. It was to be my third visit to relatives in Edmonton. Reviewing my aunt's letter of support, the immigration officer became suspicious of my desire to cross the Pacific Ocean for a family reunion. Expressing her doubts, she commented: "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— from painfully slow snail mail to expensive overseas calls. I once sent an hour-long voice recording (on cassette tape) in support of a friend undergoing cancer treatment in the US. Sometimes, family members crossed the great distance for physical reunions. Things changed when the Philippines got on the World Wide Web. During my 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 daily. Thus, I offered the stunned immigration officer: "Do you want me to tell you what my aunt had for breakfast, lunch and dinner yesterday?"

Unavoidably, Filipino identities have been defined by physical distance (Kaufman, 2013; Kelly, 2007). Lynch and Makil (2004) noted the Philippines' geographic isolation from its Asian neighbours and its internal division as an archipelago. They emphasized:

Because of this marginality, the Philippines remained aloof and apart from the great civilizations of Asia. Until. . . 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 colonialism was its timing. Western ideas infiltrated Philippine shores in the 16th century, before cultural consciousness was formed. When our awareness of ourselves was born centuries later, we conformed to the notion of a nation-state—neglecting the intricate differences among our cultural groups. Our unified nationalism also emerged as neither Asian nor Western but confusingly both. Constantino (1976) further concluded that Filipino identity was fraught with ambivalence and confusion.

> In 2011, I sat with other doctoral students in a class that seemed like an international gathering in Edmonton. We each talked about our experience of globalization. But I was struck by a colleague's declaration that she was "pure Chinese." When it was my turn, 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 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 not to 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 migration story. The persistent departure of one million Filipinos yearly is making the naturally-diverse Philippine society even more fragmented.

Steinberg (2000) 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 like other cultural identities, have been plagued by ambiguities. Their diasporic versions are faced with complexities beyond geographic and temporal locations. Campomanes (2003) notes that the term Filipino "remains richly indicative of important historical moments or transculturations in the formation of the Philippines and its colonially, and now transnationally, displaced peoples and cultures" (p. 8).

This above argument runs counter to the 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 colonialism (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, diasporic Filipinos renegotiate cultural identities in the in-between of both worlds. Constantly in flux are identities created through community building across time and space. In today's world, some of these renegotiations happen on social media.

KAPWA AND THE ONGOING SEARCH FOR FILIPINO (DIASPORIC) IDENTITIES

While doing a pilot study on the renegotiation of Filipino diasporic identity on Facebook, I hit a brick wall. My supervisory committee meetings went nowhere as I tried to describe "Filipino" identity to three Canadian professors. Repeatedly, I was told that what I was saying sounded like other cultures. "You say Filipinos love to eat. Well, so do Italians or Spanish or Chinese. What makes Filipinos different?," they repeatedly urged me.

My mistake was to assume that kapwa, fusion of self and other, and Philippine colonial history needed no articulation. In fact, my tendency to seek oneness was so deeply ingrained in me as a Filipino that its

philosophical contradiction caused cognitive dissonance. In a doctoral class, I described 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 I felt in finding appropriate words to describe closeness were instantly replaced with confusion. Unexpectedly, my Caucasian professor said: "That is not closeness. Levinas tells us that other is forever other." My silenced opposition to such Otherness only found articulation when I dug deeper into my study of kapwa and the ongoing search for Filipino identities.

To lift up kapwa's significance to Filipino identity and culture, I had to unpack Philippine history. It was only then that I convinced my committee of my readiness to do my research. As Clifford and Marcus (1986) stated: "Cultures are not scientific 'objects'... Culture, and our views of 'it' are produced historically, and are actively contested... It is thoroughly historicist and self-reflective." (pp. 18-19)

Filipino diasporic identities should not be viewed separately from Filipino identities. Lying just beneath the surface are the legacies of our tortured past. Revisiting the past also begs acknowledgment that Filipinos do not have a neat and unified identity but complex and varied identities.

Scholars have pointed to colonialism as the source of the Filipino's conflictedness (Constantino, 1969 & 1976; Hogan, 2006; Patajo-Legasto, 2008). The "continuing past" has existed in the names of our peoples and our country (Constantino & Constantino, 1978). Hogan (2006) has noted that the Philippines was christened after Spanish 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. Two general groupings existed: "Superior" Spaniards and "inferior" natives. But further segregations existed. Natives, also called *indios* for their 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 Spanish peninsula). *Insulares*, Spaniards born in the Philippine islands, were 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 in-between can be traced back to the original Filipinos. According to Constantino (1969), unlike the peninsulares who considered the Philippines a temporary residence, the insulares was loyal to mother Spain and their Asian homeland. Overlapping Eastern and Western tendencies were later bequeathed to the next 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 original Filipinos (Spaniards born in the Philippines) and 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 a movement calling for unity with indios as Filipinos under an emerging nation.

Still, the label Filipino was contentious. 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 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.

This was confirmed by American anthropologist Daniel Garrison Brinton. In 1898, two months after Spain relinquished the Philippines to the United States, he described majority of the population as Filipino. These were people of Malayan descent. In the minority were Negritos. They were said to have originated from Papua New Guinea given their dark skin, wiry hair and diminutive stature. Brinton excluded other ethnic groups such as "Europeans, Chinese, Japanese, etc." since their cultures were well known (p. 307).

One may assume that 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. The Filipino social elite's in-betweeness in 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.

Meanwhile, heading the bloody revolt was Andres Bonifacio as Rizal's anti-thesis. His parents died early, leaving him 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. Filipino historian 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 sought independence from foreign rule while Rizal demanded assimilation. Elite Filipinos mainly sought to be acknowledged as legal Spanish citizens.

Previously, the Philippine revolutionary movement founded the Republica de Filipinas (Republic of the Philippines) in 1896. This formalized Filipino identity through a nation state. Unfortunately, it was a "fragile identity" (Lumbera, 2008, p. 88). Within the republic's ranks were factions of class interests fragmenting members. The elite resisted secession from the West. This was an opportunity for one colonizer to ease out another. During the Treaty of Paris in 1898, Spain surrendered the Philippines to the US for $20 million. Representatives from the Republic of the Philippines were not invited.

The American colonial structure, Lumbera (2008) further stressed, revived class divisions. Peasants, who pursued 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 to embrace 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 burned all traces of the "pagan" culture. What remained were bits and pieces. So, what has become of the Filipino after 300 years in the convent and almost 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)

In fact, I discovered the existence of kapwa in historical accounts written by our colonizers. These non-Filipino observers unconsciously documented portrayals of kapwa. Theophilus Steward, an American army chaplain stationed in the Philippines from 1899 to 1902, first described Filipinos as "hospitable to a fault" (Steward, 1901, p. 253). In dramatic detail, he wrote about how Filipinos readily accepted two marginalized groups.

Steward, during a dinner party, was astounded when female guests freely mingled with their male counterparts. Even smoking, an activity that often excluding women, was jointly done in public. The experience had a lasting effect on him, pushing him to write: "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 Filippinos [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 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)

Meanwhile, the "continuing past" has involved an unfolding history with a former colonizer. Philippine independence from American rule was officially granted in 1945—five decades after promises were made. Filipino political leaders (mostly members of the elite) helped justify American presence through the years. It took another 50 years for the US to physically leave the Philippines. This military departure, still considered more of a show than a complete withdrawal, was not a practice of Philippine sovereignty. Mount Pinatubo, a long-dormant volcano, erupted in 1991. Subic Naval base, the largest US installation in the Pacific, was completely buried in ash. This natural calamity sealed the exit of the US military (Thompson, 1995). However, as will be discussed in the next section, American influence on Filipino identities stretches from the homeland to the diaspora.

FILIPINO DIASPORIC IDENTITIES: THE FUTURE

The trend towards permanent migration has created a greater challenge to Filipino identities. Diasporic Filipinos, regardless of places of birth (across the globe) and years of residence in their current locations, are constantly labelled visible minorities and immigrants by their non-Filipinos compatriots (Aguila, 2014; Bischoff, 2012). Ironically, they suffer the most painful discrimination from Filipinos who question their Filipinoness on the bases of language and location (Aguila, 2014). Bernad (1971) has noted the multi-lingual nature of Filipino identities. Unlike other scholars, he commended Spanish colonizers for preserving indigenous languages that encouraged regionalism.

For some time, Filipino scholars have debated over the identity of Overseas Filipinos. Zeus Salazar, a Philippine historian educated in Europe, argued that *Filipinoness* was determined by location. He meant intellectual space as well as geographic place. Scholars who spoke and wrote in foreign languages to foreign audiences were excluded. Salazar even believed Filipinos living outside the Philippines were no longer Filipinos (Pe-Pua & Protacio, 2000; Mendoza, 2006). Such radical thinking later formed the *Pantayong Pananaw*, an inclusive paradigm aimed at developing one-ness through prioritizing Filipino language and thought (Mendoza, 2006). Inadvertently, this inclusion resulted in the exclusion of Overseas Filipinos.

However, Virgilio Enriquez (1997) acknowledged the Filipinoness of Overseas Filipinos. He suggested that:

> 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 diasporics have been provided by scholars like Mendoza (2006). Importance given to kapwa, collective identity, was also observed in Filipino-Canadian patients by researchers at the University of Alberta Hospital (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 information. Non-verbal cues, such as grimacing even when claiming they felt no pain, allowed nurses to see a need for greater sensitivity. They were only accepted as *hindi ibang tao* (one-of-us) when they provided personalized care. Morales (2010) also discussed how Overseas Filipinos practised *pakikipagkapwa* (being one with others) through Twitter during the Typhoon Ondoy tragedy.[1]

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 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 assume I am Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese or Thai but not Filipino.

> When I was a 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 of Mickey Mouse" (anonymous, n.d.). As a people, we survived three centuries of Spanish rule, half a century of American rule and three years under Japan.

I have never hesitated to say I was Filipino to people I met in my travels even if my Philippine passport often had a bad reputation. Many travels ago, a South Korean immigration officer interrogated my mother. Her sex, age and nationality stereotyped her as a potential illegal alien. The issue was immediately clarified when she introduced herself as a tourist visiting Korea with her daughter. Fortunately, my educational, professional and economic status made me feel invincible against such assumptions. But these deluded me into thinking my Filipinoness was 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 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, 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, I was displaced 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. "Home," to me and other diasporics like me, still referred to the Philippines. In essence, we have remained Filipinos despite the distance.

Upon reflection, I also wondered how much of my diasporic desires came from my American-style education and the American TV shows and movies I loved. The search for Filipino identities requires acknowledging our ties to colonialism and imperialism. Links between the US and the Philippines persist in the 21st century. On April 28, 2014, during the visit of US President Barack Obama, the Philippines signed a 10-year Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) with its historic ally. The official statement from the government described the pact as a "robust and enduring strategic partnership between the two countries" (Fonbuena, 2014, para. 6). There were repeated denials that such would result in the reestablishment of American bases in the Philippines. 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 our crisis of identification.

Struggling to defy my own understanding of Filipinoness (seen through the eyes of Spanish and American historians of my youth), I have embraced the plurality of Filipino identities. This acknowledges multiple types of Filipinos living within and outside the Philippines. It likewise reflects a postmodern belief in the death of nations due to economic forces (Ômae, 1995). Guéhenno (1995) has emphasized that human mobility revolutionized nationalism and nationhood. The fluidity of geographic location has allowed ethnic and cultural identities freedom from its attachments to physical land.

On Facebook, my fellow diasporic Filipinos and I renegotiated our Filipino identities through pakikipagkapwa (Aguila, 2014). Together, we named four emergent identities: Pan Filipino; Neo Filipino; Pan Asian; and Global Citizen. Pan Filipino reflects our belief that Filipinoness is not determined by physical location or linguistic skills. We identified ourselves as Filipino through associations with other Filipinos as well as the liking and sharing of Filipino content. Most basic was the naming of our hometowns in the Philippines. Two diasporic Filipino participants even referred to the Philippines as "home" despite their Canadian citizenship. Some of us expressed ourselves as Neo Filipino on Facebook by critiquing Philippine history and culture through a postmodern lens. Our anti-colonial identity was seen through posts referring to Filipino revolutionaries and propagandists. These reflected our personal and informal efforts to reimagine our Filipinoness. Interestingly, some participants identified themselves as Pan Asian. They liked and shared Korean and Japanese materials on Facebook. Some posts were even expressed in these languages. Surprisingly, they embraced a general Asian identity to distance themselves from criminal and immoral acts by Filipino-Canadians in their communities. In fact, some Filipinos they grew up with chose to bully others rather than be bullied in high school. These individuals later graduated to committing graver offenses. Their stories were supported by news reports which refute the popular view that diasporic Filipinos are "ideal" migrants (Lanza & Svendsen, 2001; Mah, 2005). Finally, many of us identified with the Global Citizen identity—embracing all cultures and ethnicities in our Facebook networks as kapwa. We renegotiated such through photo uploads showing our one-ness with our non-Filipino significant others. Tellingly, a male Filipino participant posted a photo of him with his Korean best friend as his profile picture. There were also participants who went as far as naming non-Filipino friends as brothers and sisters on Facebook—expanding the idea of what "family" meant to them.

Renegotiated forms of Filipino diasporic identity, as enumerated above, seek to challenge stereotypes associated with Filipinos. That these resistances happen

through American-invented technologies should not be ignored. As Rodriguez and Schwenken (2013) have emphasized: "migrant subjectivities that exist in the contemporary emigration states of the Philippines. . .have roots in the colonial period" (p. 386).

We must acknowledge that the future of Filipino diasporic identities involves "techno-imperialism" as a continuation of colonialism (Shabazz, 1999, p. 27). Social media, such as Facebook, may allow diasporics to renegotiate their identities with various segments of their social network (left-behind loved ones, other diasporics and relations in their host country). However, these are not neutral venues of interaction. English is the primary language of the Internet—a manifestation of American cultural hegemony we often ignore. As San Juan (2000) warns us:

> In both academy and public common sense. . .'US imperialism' does not exist—even as an aberration. . .To remedy this amnesia, we need to problematize. . .US history and its representation of the Philippines in the archive. What may be instructive and heuristic for this occasion is a selective review of how the disciplinary regime of Western civilization and its peculiar mode of articulating racial/cultural difference in the Philippines—an instance of academic hubris predicated on the inferiorization of the cultures of 'Others' for its own self validation—have been 'produced' and circulated by liberal discourse with 'postcolonial' pretensions. Its recent postmodernist reincarnation calls for urgent critique if we need to rectify a centenary of liberal-democratic mystification and racist violence. (pp. 67-68)

My life as a Filipino diasporic living in Canada and on Facebook showed me a challenging but promising future. Filipino diasporics could redefine themselves as Filipinos by co-producing new forms of kapwa through Facebook associations and disassociations. We intentionally did so through friending, liking and posting photos and videos to establish connections to significant others (Filipinos and non-Filipinos). Facebook features such as blocking and privacy filters were likewise used to distance ourselves from others. To my surprise, unfriending was never considered an option. Such demonstrated the openness of pakikipagkapwa to allow outsiders to eventually become insiders (*hindi ibang tao*).

Despite Facebook's design, my participants found creative ways to express Filipinoness. These demonstrations had a potential "to extend agency we have to submit to the demands of encoding and kidnap that encoding simultaneously" (Introna, 2011, p. 113). This meant continuously learning the evolving affordances of

Facebook so we may alter its design to suit our needs. Tagging, a feature allowing us to identify others in pictures and comments, was used to send feelers (*parinig*) to those we considered kapwa. Two of my participants even enacted a food fight through timeline photo uploads. Thus, we became "plagiarists" of Facebook's code (Introna, 2011, p. 113).

Profoundly, these four emergent Filipino diasporic identities reflect resistances to stereotypes. Social media may allow Global Filipinos to resist not only stereotypes of their host countries but also labels imposed by the Philippine government. The state has defined diasporic nationalism through neoliberal markers such as dollar remittances, return visits and investments in the Philippines (Rodriguez, 2010). Social media may allow diasporic Filipinos themselves to redefine what it means to be Filipino in multiple ways. As seen in the diasporic stories we have shared, "citizenship is not conferred by states or international institutions. In other words it is not 'top down'; rather the assertions of transnational citizenship have come from the 'bottom up' (Rodriguez, 2010, p. 150).

Diasporic identities may involve shifting forms of socio-economic class, status, culture, ethnicity and the like depending on one's relationship with others (Pe-Pua, 2003; Seki, 2012). The future of Filipino diasporic identities, in particular, seems highly influenced by technology. For Overseas Filipinos, mobile tools have allowed the reenactment of long-distance relationships (Aguila, 2006 & 2014). Social media may serve as bridges between material and virtual existence—embodying and symbolizing the location-dislocation of diasporic communities. In this way, geography may no longer determine one's presence in the Filipino community.

Hall (1990) appropriately concluded that cultural identity does not refer "to an essence but a *positioning*" (p.226). This idea resonates with the Filipino culture's value for kapwa. Through identification with certain types of people, we are able to define who we are. However, identity formation through identification is not a simple process. As Clifford and Marcus (1986) have concluded: "Culture is contested, temporal and emergent" (p. 19).

Stuart Hall (1990) has added further understanding of cultural identities as political projects for people seeking recognition. There seems to be no clear end to this search. However, our efforts to clarify who we are would best be served by accepting that that which we seek is not a lone Filipino identity but multiple Filipino identities in constant flux.

CONCLUSION

Colonial history lives in the continuing thread of issues affecting diasporic communities (Bhatia, 2002; San Juan, 2009). For Filipino diasporics, these concerns are compounded when the host country is the US. It is not surprising that the US has remained the most favoured destination of Filipino migrants (Commission on Filipinos Overseas, 2015). Generations of Filipinos, products of the 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 (Contreras, 2010; 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 also thrive in other host countries (Ignacio, 2000; Kelly, 2007; San Juan, 2009). The crisis of Filipino identification may likewise be extended beyond just the Philippine shores.

Globalization is now an essential feature of diasporic displacements. It troubles not only our conceptions of identity as linked to physical location but also our understanding of nationhood. 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 despite the assumed freedoms of globalization.

In fact, there have been objections against the term "postcolonialism." Shohat (1992) emphasizes that "the 'post-colonial' inadvertently glosses over the fact that global hegemony, even in the post-cold war era, persists in forms other than overt colonial rule" (p. 105). McClintock (1992) contends that the term is "a premature celebration of the pastness of colonialism, runs the risk of obscuring the continuities and discontinuities of colonial and imperial power" (p. 88). My discomfort with the term "neocolonialism" falls within the same terrain. For Filipinos, one cannot assume the newness of our struggles in a world still dominated by our colonizers. Facebook's popularity among Filipinos is an example of how techno-imperialism may influence the emergence of new forms of Filipinoness amid the diaspora.

ENDNOTE

1 Typhoon Ketsana hit Metro Manila in September of 2009. It brought record-breaking rainfall that submerged 80% of the city. Over 300 lives were lost.

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