

Through Migrant Lenses

Indians, Koreans and the Mediation of Diasporic Voices in Manila

Jason Vincent A. Cabanes

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Abstract

This study had two key aims: to understand the how the mediation of multiculturalism in Manila marginalised the city's Indian and Korean diasporas and, more importantly, to "interrupt" (Pinchevsky, 2005) this problematic mediation by exploring whether and how a collaborative photography exhibition project might create a space that fosters the voices of these migrants. To address these two concerns, I did life story interviews of seventeen Indian and fifteen Korean diasporas from Manila, six focus group discussions with local Filipinos from Manila, an impressionistic analysis of contemporary Philippine mainstream media, and participant observation of *Shutter Stories*, which was a collaborative exhibition project that I worked on together with Manila's Indians and Koreans and with two photography scholars from one of Manila's top universities. By weaving together these rich and diverse data sets, this study provides a nuanced counterpoint to extant works that focus on understanding multiculturalism in the cities of the developed world. In particular, it reveals that although Manila's Indians and Koreans tend to be economically superior to the city's local Filipinos, they are nevertheless symbolically marginalised. This is most evident in the problematic mediation of multiculturalism in Manila, the dynamics of which are characterised by what I call the cycle of strangeness and estrangement. Together with this, one other key contribution of this study is that it maps out the complexities of how a collaborative photography exhibition project might create a space for marginalised voices that can challenge dominant social discourses, such as the mediation of multiculturalism in Manila. As regards the photographic mediation of voice, this study underscores the importance of considering both how the various properties of the photograph are activated in the context of production and of consumption, as well as how the various practices of photography might be harnessed in a way that balances the call for both ethics (that is, the desire for marginalised to have a voice) and aesthetics (that is, the desire to ensure that the voices of the marginalised will be engaging enough to be heard). And as regards the social mediation of voice, this study reveals that the already difficult task of helping marginalised groups, such as migrant cultural minorities, to articulate stories that are in line with their personal life projects is made complicated by the need to also think about the much more difficult task of helping establish a society that is willing to foster such voices.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

“Being put in question by the Other is thus both dis-location and dislocation: the renouncing of any foundation and the interruption of every preestablished procedure or norm.”

-Amit Pinchevski, By Way of Interruption

During the course of this research, I was able to listen to many stories that told of the disturbing experiences of Manila’s¹ Indian and Korean diasporas. I would say that the most harrowing was the story of Jaswinder, a forty year old Punjabi Indian woman with an occupation common to many of the city’s Punjabi Indians: doing micro-lending or *five-six*.² Her tale revealed how her work entailed going into some of the city’s most depressed slum areas whilst carrying a lot of cash and bringing some bulky home appliances, such as electric fans, microwave ovens, and even karaoke machines. Because Jaswinder could only navigate the narrow streets of these places by riding on a small motorcycle that her husband drove or by walking on foot, she (and sometimes her husband as well) was often tempting prey for the city’s many petty thieves. And one time, this almost led to her death. She recounted,

I was doing my rounds in this squatters’ area. I was walking from house to house, collecting [money] from my customers. All of a sudden, two men accosted me. I didn’t know it then, but apparently, they had been waiting on me for weeks already.

¹ For this study, I take Manila to mean the sixteen cities (that is, Manila proper, Caloocan, Las Piñas, Makati, Malabon, Mandaluyong, Marikina, Muntinlupa, Navotas, Pasay, Pasig, Parañaque, Quezon City, San Juan, Taguig, and Valenzuela) and the lone municipality (that is, Pateros) that comprise the National Capital Region (NCR) of the Philippines. This is a region that encompasses a considerably larger area than the original capital city established by the Spanish (that is, Manila proper).

² The Punjabis comprise one of the two major groups of Indians in the Philippines. The other is the Sindhis (Miralao 2007a). In terms of relationships with the majority of local residents, it is the Punjabis who are more visible to local Filipinos, as most of them are involved in micro-lending to poor Filipinos who cannot get loans from banks. This lending scheme is called *five-six* because of the twenty percent interest that they ask of their clients (one is lent five but is asked for six). In terms of institutional ties meanwhile, the Sindhis, who are mostly businesspeople, are significantly more networked with the locals. In fact, they completely dominate the Filipino Indian Chamber of Commerce (FICC), which is the most high profile Filipino Indian organisation in the country (Salazar, 2008).

To Jaswinder's horror, one of these men brought out a knife and held it perilously close to her throat. She recalled,

I felt like a chicken about to be slaughtered! So I screamed and screamed and screamed. In hindsight, I think they were amateurs, because they got flustered by all my screaming. I remember that the one holding the knife was already shaking out of tension. And he was telling me, "Shut up! Shut up!" But I went on screaming...Unfortunately for me...those *jeepney*³ drivers who were my customers weren't there at that time. I feel they would've helped me. There was this one woman though who was a former customer. She could see me. But imagine this! She stood up [from her laundry stool], turned her back on me, and then continued to do her laundry. And no one else who was there helped me. I actually thought to myself, "This is it. I'm going to die now."

Luckily for Jaswinder, the inexperience of the two petty thieves got the better of them. Perhaps they thought that Jaswinder's screaming would eventually attract people, so they ran away. Jaswinder sustained no physical injury more serious than a bleeding gash on her right hand, but the event did leave her with a lasting psychological scar. As she put it, "I don't think anyone can forget something like that. But I go on with what I do, since it's the only job I know...I just pray that kind of thing never happens to me again."

There was also the equally harrowing story of Ji Hun, a twenty year old Korean man who was a fourth year university undergraduate student. Ji Hun alleged that some local policemen were involved in drumming up cases against Koreans like him, in a bid to extort money from them. During our conversation, he brought up this topic by asking, "Would you believe me if I told you that I've been to prison?" This took me aback, as I knew him to be a diligent student and a popular youth leader. He did not seem to be capable of doing something that would land him in jail. Because I expressed my disbelief in this claim, Ji Hun began narrating how some local policemen had once thrown him into prison. Whilst this was only for one night, this was still time inside the Philippine prison system, which is infamous for its sordid conditions (Esplanada, 2011; USDOS, 2012). According to Ji Hun,

It started with me driving home. I was just driving within my lane along Ortigas Avenue when all of a sudden, this motorcycle crashes into the rear of my car, on the driver's side. I'm guessing [the motorcycle driver] was over-speeding. That's why

³ The *jeepney* is one of the key modes of public transport in the Philippines. Its name is a combination of jeep and jitney, owing to the fact that it is a jeep converted into a jitney bus (MWD).

he hit me. My car just got minor scratches and the [motorcycle driver] didn't really get injured. So it was really nothing. But I called on the police, just for insurance purposes you know. The next thing I know, they've let the [other] guy go. And they were arresting me for this very minor accident! I was asking them very kindly, "What's going on? Why are you arresting me?" But they weren't really listening.

Ji Hun then recounted how the police officers impounded his car and brought him to the local police station. Once he was under detention, the officers began making hints about what they wanted from him.

They were saying that they didn't really want to push through with their charges...They didn't really say it directly, but they were hinting that all it'd take was PHP 10,000.00 (GBP 155.00) and then they'd release me. It was like a hostage situation, but it was the police taking me hostage...I know these things happen in the Philippines, but I never thought it'd ever happen to me!

Ji Hun said that, naturally, his parents were terrified to hear about what had happened to him. So his father immediately went to the police station and handed the police officers the money they asked for. Ji Hun ended his story with a resentful comment, saying, "And that was that. Those idiots are still probably victimising other foreigners today."

Unfortunately, most of Manila's local Filipinos have not heard about the problems faced by Jaswinder and Ji Hun or all the other problems faced by the city's many Indian and Korean residents. In this work, I argue that one of the key reasons for this situation is that the Philippines' Manila-centric mainstream media have rarely allowed the city's diasporas an appearance. As I discuss in detail later on in this dissertation (see Chapter 5), I was only able to come across a handful of news reports on the Manila's Indians and Koreans for the entire twenty-one months of my fieldwork. I also observed that during that period, there was only one self-ascribing Indian and only four self-ascribing Koreans who had managed to penetrate the country's entertainment media. This is in spite of the fact that the Philippine capital, a mega-city of 12 million, is home to the majority of the country's 115,400 Koreans and 67,000 Indians. Even if both these diasporic groups only comprise 1.5 per cent

of the city's population, their numbers and, more crucially, their visibility have been continually increasing (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2009; Salazar, 2008).⁴

Concerned with the Philippine mainstream media's marginalisation of Manila's Indians and Koreans, I had two aims for this dissertation. One was that through the specific case of Manila, I sought to better understand the broader issue of whether and how mainstream media representations of diasporas are intertwined with the discourses about multiculturalism in cities of the developing world. My second and more important aim was to contribute, albeit modestly, to countering the Philippine mainstream media's symbolic marginalisation of Manila's Indians and Koreans. I discuss each of these aims below.

1.1 The research aims

One of the two central concerns I had in this study was to generate insights about the mediation of multiculturalism in developing world cities through the particular prism of Manila. I thought that this offered the possibility of expanding the present discussions about media representations of diasporas. Most of the existing studies on this subject have been situated in cities within countries such as Australia (for example, Ang et al, 2008; Richards, 2007), France (for example, Deltombe, 2005; Hamilton, 1997), and the United Kingdom (for example, Georgiou, 2009; Parekh, 2000). As a consequence, these studies deal exclusively with the kinds of multicultural discourses present in the context of the developed world.

One characteristic that makes Manila an important prism for rethinking the mediation of multiculturalism is that like many other cities in the developing world, the economic relationship between its locals and its diasporas is in stark contrast from what can be found in the global cities of the developed world. As an International Labour Office (ILO) document notes, migrants in the developed world tend to be economically inferior to the locals. A majority of them are labourers "motivated [to go abroad]...because of the lack of opportunities for full employment

⁴ Salazar says that of the total number of Indians in the Philippines, around 47,000 reside in Manila. However, these numbers are not necessarily accurate, as some Indians are illegal migrants and therefore not registered in the government census. If those who are unregistered are included, their total population nationwide might actually swell to between 50,000 to 100,000 and their population in Manila might subsequently be much larger as well (Salazar, 2008). Meanwhile, there appears to be no available data on the exact number of Koreans in Manila.

and decent work in many developing countries” (ILO, 2007: 2-3). In contrast, most of the migrants who have settled in Manila tend to be economically superior to the locals. During the city’s colonial past, it was the seat of power for the Philippines’ Spanish and American masters, as well as an important trading centre for many European and Chinese merchants (Connaughton et al, 1995; Irving, 2010; Wilson, 2004). In the city’s postcolonial present, it attracts Indian entrepreneurs (Lorenzana, 2013; Salazar, 2008; Thapan, 2002), as well as Korean businesspeople and students (Miralao, 2007). Unlike their counterparts in the developed world then, the diasporas in Manila often do not experience economic marginalisation (cf. Lentin and Titley, 2011; Roberts and Mahtani, 2010).

Another crucial characteristic that makes Manila an interesting counterpoint to the global cities of the developed world is that it has no overt institutional policies about multiculturalism. As the cultural studies scholar Ien Ang points out, a significant number of influential governments in the developed world—such as Canada, Australia, the United States of America, and the United Kingdom—have had at least forty years of experience in dealing with debates about policies aimed at “address[ing] real or potential ethnic tension and racial conflict” (Ang, 2005: 34). Ang further says that by the turn of the twenty-first century, “it had become commonplace for Western liberal democracies to describe themselves as multicultural societies, even though only a few had embraced official policies of multiculturalism” (*ibid.*). In Manila, most of the local Filipinos still subscribe to the myth that their city (and even the rest of the country) is culturally homogenous (Teodoro in PNS, 2010). Despite the capital’s long history of being a migrant hub, most of its locals continue to be reluctant to confront the reality of the city’s cultural diversity (Ang-See, 1992; Irving, 2010). In this regard, the diasporas in Manila diverge once again from their counterparts in the developed world, as they are not really confronted with sustained public discussions about multiculturalism that, whether intentionally or otherwise, problematise the presence of transnational migrants like them (cf. Ang, 2005; Benhabib, 2002; Phillips, 2008).

These distinct social dynamics of multiculturalism in Manila have allowed me to question a key assumption shared by much of the research on media representations of the diasporas in developed world cities (cf. Georgiou 2006; Husband, 1994; Silverstone and Georgiou, 2005). I am referring to the idea that the diasporas often experience both symbolic and material marginalisation. Since this is

not necessarily the case in Manila, I have been able to explore how the media represent diasporic groups who might be symbolically inferior, but economically superior. I have also been able to identify the kinds of social discourses that help shape such a representation. I discuss my findings on these two things in Chapter 5.

My second more crucial aim in this dissertation was to contribute, however modestly, to countering the Philippine mainstream media's symbolic marginalisation of Manila's Indians and Koreans. In my view, the experiences of mediated invisibility, segregation, and exclusion (Georgiou, 1994) that this marginalisation brought about had to be urgently addressed, since its consequences went beyond issues of representation. It also had far-reaching material consequences, especially as it could lead to the oppression of these migrant cultural minorities (Husband, 1994). As Silverstone and Georgiou argue, at stake in such a denial of multiple and multiply-inflected cultural voices in the media is

the continuing capacity of the nation to insist on its cultural specificity, with possibly significant consequences for its inhabitants' participation in, and identification with, national community. At stake too [is] the capacity of minority groups to form their own transnational or global media cultures, which, for better or worse, could offer frameworks for participation and agency no longer grounded in singular residence and no longer oriented exclusively to the project of national or singular citizenship. (Silverstone and Georgiou, 2005: 438)

The persistence of such a marginalisation is untenable for a city like Manila, a place that is becoming increasingly enmeshed in a globalised world. In the same way that it is home to a growing contingent of Indian, Korean, and various other diasporas (Miralao and Makil, 2007), it is also the capital of a country that has approximately 9.5 million out of its 92 million people residing in 128 different countries around the world (Commission of Filipinos Overseas, 2010). Manila clearly has a stake in helping to build a world that would be less hostile and more hospitable to transnational migrants.

In light of the above, I sought to "interrupt" (Pinchevski, 2005) the Philippine mainstream media's problematic representation of the Indian and Korean diasporas. I attempted to open up a space from which members of these communities could tell their own stories about their lives in the city. Together with five Indian and four Korean participants (whose names I list in Chapter 4 and whose works I present in Chapter 6), two photography scholars from one of the top

universities in the Philippines (whom I will refer to using the pseudonyms Terri and Ricky), and an Indian and a Korean community organisation in Manila (Khalsa Diwan Manila and the United Korean Community Association in the Philippines), I co-organised *Shutter Stories: A Photography Exhibition on the Life of Indians and Koreans in Manila* (which I will refer to throughout the rest of this dissertation as *Shutter Stories*). This collaborative photography exhibition project began with photography seminars for its diasporic participants, which were held on 23, 24, and 31 July 2011 at Ateneo de Manila University. It concluded with a public exhibition of the photo stories of these diasporic participants, which was held from 22 to 28 August 2011 at the SM North EDSA Mall in Manila, The Philippines. Subsequently, the works were uploaded to a dedicated online website, which went live from December 2012 to March 2013.⁵

I was aware that I could have explored many other media that could serve as a platform for Manila's Indians and Koreans. For instance, previous studies have used video, drawing, writing, and the performative arts to create spaces for those whom the mainstream media have symbolically marginalised (see the comprehensive review of Ramella and Olmos, 2005). Similarly, I had the opportunity to talk to David Kay of People's Voice Media. His organisation advocates the use of the convergent and social media in enabling those in the social margins to speak about their lives (personal conversation with David Kay, 08 November 2010; see also <http://peoplesvoicemedia.co.uk/>). However, I chose photography for three reasons.

First, I wanted to explore the opportunity that it opened up for cross-cultural dialogue. Here I am referring to the photograph's ability to tell stories primarily through visual language and only secondarily, if at all, through verbal language, such as accompanying textual captions (Messaris, 1997; Scott, 1999). I wanted to see whether and how the use of the visual might facilitate the storytelling of Manila's Indians and Koreans, especially since they were not necessarily proficient

⁵ Here I would like to note two things. One is that I chose SM North EDSA as the venue for the public exhibition because during the time of my fieldwork, it was Manila's largest mall and was also one of the city's largest transportation hubs. As such, it offered the possibility that the exhibition could be seen by a diverse cross-section of Manila's local Filipinos. Second is that I have deliberately not included the name of the website for *Shutter Stories* in this dissertation. This is because the participants' names are on the site itself and, for various reasons, they were unanimous in requesting that I do not reveal their actual identities in any of my scholarly works.

in Tagalog and/or English, the preferred languages of Manila's local Filipinos. Another reason that I chose photography was that for many people in media-saturated societies, the practice of taking photographs has become a ubiquitous part of everyday life. Partly because of the advent of mobile photography (for example, Scifo, 2005; Van House et al., 2005; Villi, 2007) as well as of photo-sharing and social networking sites (for example, Burgess, 2006; McKay, 2010; Van Djick, 2011), it has become commonplace for ordinary people to take photographs and put them up for public display. As many residents of Manila, including the Indians and Koreans, already shared in this practice, I thought that being invited to participate in a photography project would not be too daunting for many of them. Finally, I chose photography because I wanted to harness the ease with which photographs could be produced, reproduced and disseminated. Compared to video, which has been the (audio)visual medium of choice for many collaborative research projects with cultural minorities in general (for example, the works associated with the media anthropology tradition, such as that of Ginsburg, 2002 and Turner, 2002) and with migrant minorities in particular (for example, de Block, 2010; de Block and Buckingham, 2007), photographs can be produced and reproduced with cheaper equipment and with less technical training. This was an important consideration for me as a researcher, as I had limited funding for this research. Together with this, photographs, whether analogue or digital, tend to be more easily transportable than video (Ginsburg, 2010; Pink, 2007) and, as such, also tend to more quickly spread across the various domains of society (Zelizer, 2006). But of course, all these three initial suppositions I had about the medium were quite rudimentary. So in my research, I sought to go beyond these and to build a more nuanced understanding of the impact of photography on the way the Indians and Koreans in Manila talked about their diasporic lives. I address this concern in Chapters 2 and 7.

1.2 The research questions

Throughout this research, my abiding concern was the lack of both societal and scholarly attention to the issue of multiculturalism in the cities of the developing world in general, as well as to the social issues faced by Manila's Indians and Koreans in particular. The main aim of this study was not only to understand the relationship between how Manila's Indians and Koreans were represented by the

Manila-centric Philippine mainstream media and how these diasporic groups were talked about by Manila's local Filipinos. I also wanted to explore how a collaborative photography exhibition project might interrupt the prevalent discourse of multiculturalism in Manila. Specifically, I wanted to map out how this project could contribute to creating a space wherein the diasporas in Manila could share their own stories about their migrant lives.

The main research question of this study was: How might a collaborative photography exhibition project mediate the voices of the Indian and Korean diasporas in Manila? I also asked the following subsidiary research questions: (a) How are the voices of the project participants mediated by the characteristics of photography and the practices that surround the production of a collaborative photography exhibition project? and (b) How are the voices of the project participants mediated by their experiences of diasporic life as individuals, as part of a cultural group, and as part of a multicultural society?

To answer these questions, I examined the photo stories produced by the Indian and Korean participants of *Shutter Stories*—all of which I present in Chapter 6—in relation to a wide range of empirical data. For this analysis, I primarily drew from interviews I carried out with seventeen Indians and fifteen Koreans from Manila and participant observation field notes from the collaborative photography exhibition project. I also secondarily drew from six focus group discussions with local Filipinos and on an impressionistic analysis of contemporary Philippine mainstream media. I say more about the research techniques I used in Chapter 4.

Equally importantly, I examined the *Shutter Stories* photo stories in relation to two key concepts. As a way of understanding the anatomy of storytelling, I relied on the notion of voice posited by Nick Couldry (Couldry, 2010). And as a way of understanding how such stories are shaped by the participants' particular life contexts, I used the notion of mediation originally posited by Roger Silverstone and subsequently developed by other scholars (Silverstone, 1999; 2005; 2007, as well as Couldry, 2008; Couldry, 2012; Livingstone, 2009; Madianou, 2005; Ong, 2012; Thumim, 2012). I discuss these central concepts of voice and mediation in the next section.

1.3 The key concepts

1.3.1 Voice

As I mentioned above, I anchored my understanding of storytelling in the concept of voice. To define voice, I turned to Nick Couldry's important book, *Why Voice Matters*. In this work, he is primarily concerned with the ascent of neoliberalism in Western society in general and the United Kingdom in particular. Couldry argues that this political and social order continuously insists on the market worldview, which casts people as nothing but agents of profit-making. This state of affairs denies people the ability to tell stories—both of themselves and of the world in which they live—that are different from the neoliberal narrative. In so doing, it denies them the chance to imagine a post-neoliberal way of doing politics. It is in light of this that Couldry insists on the importance of having a sound understanding of voice. He aims to unpack not only the dynamics of how voice is articulated, but also the dynamics of how voice might be fostered. Couldry's hope is that this endeavour contributes to interrupting the ascent of the neoliberal narrative, as well as to opening up spaces for alternative narratives about how society might be ordered (Couldry, 2010). Throughout this dissertation, I draw from this distinction that Couldry makes between the articulation of voice and the fostering of voice in order to understand the mediation of diasporic voices in Manila.

During the course of my research, I only tangentially addressed the rise of neoliberalism in the Philippines. However, I found a significant parallel between what Couldry described as the ascent of neoliberalism in the West (Couldry, 2010) and the rise of postcolonial nationalism in the Philippines (cf. Gonzaga, 1999). In the same way that the Western brand of neoliberalism stifles the possibility of narratives regarding a post-neoliberal society, Philippine postcolonial nationalism's insistence on cultural homogeneity also tends to prevent the emergence of narratives about a multicultural Manila. This is something I elaborate on in Chapter 5. For now, what I would like to say is that this parallel between neoliberalism in the West and postcolonial nationalism in the Philippines led me to be concerned with two aspects of voice similar to those with which Couldry was concerned: the dynamics of how diasporic voices in Manila were articulated and the dynamics of how these diverse cultural voices might be fostered (cf. Couldry, 2010). At the same time, I also attempted to further Couldry's distinction of the two aspects of voice by

exploring how these play out in relation to the issue of multiculturalism and in the context of a city in the developing world.

Based on a diverse range of philosophical traditions, including the Anglo-American (for example, Alisdair Macintyre and Charles Taylor), the continental (for example, Paul Ricoeur) and the post-structuralist (for example, Judith Butler and Adriana Cavarero), Couldry asserts that the first of two key definitions of voice is as a process. By this he refers to “the human capacity to give an account of themselves and of their place in the world” (Couldry, 2010: 10). According to him, this is a fundamental aspect of human life.

Voice as a process can be linked to Walter Fisher’s claim that people are *homo narrans* (a storytelling species) who seek to understand their lives through narratives. For Fisher, it is this capacity for narrative that helps people attain a degree of control over their lives (Fisher, 1987). First, this capacity contributes to people’s ability to make sense of their circumstances. A fascinating example of this is Daniel Miller’s anthropological work about people living in one North London street. In this study, he demonstrates how each of these Londoners has constructed a particular story of the world, which manifests itself in the way that they engage with the material objects in their households. Miller further argues that it is these stories that “form the basis on which people judge the world and themselves” (Miller, 2008: 296) and that “gives them their confidence to legitimate, condemn, and appraise” (*ibid.*). Second, people’s capacity for narratives is also important in allowing them to influence others. As Derek Layder explains, this ability is crucial in enabling people to derive their social needs from others. He says that people “require some means of ‘producing’ or creating...[other people’s] love, care, acceptance” (Layder, 2004: 14). Because of the centrality of voice in how people order their lives, Couldry points out that any attempt to deny people’s voices is a political act (Couldry, 2010). Taking away voice means taking away people’s ability to feel that they “have some input into directing the flow of events rather than being passively ‘carried along’ by them” (Layder, 2004: 15). As a consequence, it also means taking away the possibility that they can “step into the future with more confidence about what it is [they] want to achieve and how [they are] going to make it come about” (*ibid.*)

Together with Couldry’s definition of voice as the capacity to tell stories (Couldry, 2010), it is also important to think of the argument that voice can be

expressed by eloquent silences, which are stories in themselves. The works of several feminist scholars are relevant to this claim. There is, for one, Robin Clair and her work, *Organising Silences*. One of the most important assertions in this book is that silence can also speak. Of course, this is not to deny the possibility that this condition might be characteristic of oppression. She does acknowledge that silence is a powerful tool that dominant groups in society employ to marginalise their perceived others.⁶ But at the same time, Clair also underscores how silence holds the possibility of social resistance, even defiance (Clair, 1998). Silence can be a tactical strategy (cf. Glen, 2004: xi). A case in point is this account of Chilean women successfully harnessing the power of silence:

In 1989, at the time of the plebiscite, there was a demonstration by 2000 women in Santiago. The women walked in silence along the main avenues of the centre of Santiago, carrying cardboard cut-outs of disappeared people, each one with a name. No words were spoken, only the image was seen...Women had transcended the private level to be an integral part of the naming and expressing of the present, and of a dynamic impetus for the future. (Boyle, 1993: 153-154)

Couldry himself further nuances his definition of voice by saying that it is not just about speaking, but is also about being heard (Couldry, 2010). Once again, the works of feminist scholars are instructive here. This is because some of them, such as Caroline Knowles, say that, at the very least, academic projects on voice should entail making the theorisations and experiences of the unheard a central research concern (Knowles, 2010).⁷ Beyond this, however, they say as well that voice can only be truly transformative if it can go beyond scholarly initiatives.

⁶ In conditions of oppression, silence is usually thought to be the property of the oppressed. To complicate this view, it is instructive to note John Keane's argument that there are instances of oppression when silence is the property of the dominant group. There are, for example, the manufactured public silences that are collusively enacted by state and market actors when their so-called large-scale exercises of power go awry (Keane, 2012).

⁷ Inevitably, this raises the difficult question of whether we scholars can actually help give voice to those who are not able to speak. As Spivak's often-repeated question goes, "Can the subaltern speak?" (Spivak, 1988a). After all, we who claim to speak for them are necessarily embedded and positioned, and therefore select and present the stories of the unheard in the modes that we find most suitable for us (Devault, 1990). I do agree that we can never really escape our particular standpoints and that we will inevitably bring this with us when we engage with those who are in the social margins. I disagree, however, that this must be a cause for pessimism, since we can have recourse to reflexivity in research. Perhaps, there is just the need for us to continually foreground that we are not revealing truths, but constructing representational strategies that are aimed towards particular political ends (for example, Gottfried, 1996; Knowles, 2000).

Rakow and Wackwitz put it bluntly, saying, “Surely we have not solved the problem of domination and oppression by finding places in our books and journals for voices outside the academy” (Rakow and Wackwitz, 2004: 95). They insist that those who are in the margins can only be said to have found their voice if their narratives influence people’s practices, both at the level of the personal and at the level of the public. This is emphasised by feminist political projects of bringing to public light the life stories of those who are previously unheard, in order to push for social change (for example, Boyle, 1993; Gatua, 2007; Hinton, 2013).

But how can we ensure that voice as a process is fostered? For this, Couldry posits the second order definition of voice, which is that of a value. This notion of voice is about “the act of valuing, and choosing to value, those frameworks for organising human life and resources that themselves value voice (as a process)... [and] discriminating against frameworks of social, economic and political organisation that deny or undermine voice” (Couldry, 2010: 10-11). This is why in *Why Voice Matters*, Couldry evaluates whether the prevalent political, economic, and symbolic frameworks in the West foster or stifle the emergence of stories that go beyond the neoliberal narrative (*ibid.*). In examining voice in the context of multicultural societies meanwhile, one needs to assess if the existing social arrangements in these places allow the voices (as a process) of members of diverse cultural groups to flourish and, at the same time, if these social arrangements reject practices that silence members of particular cultural groups (cf. Phillips, 2008).

In this research, my specific interest was in seeing the ways that the media—especially the Philippine mainstream media vis-a-vis the alternative media space I wanted to initiate via the *Shutter Stories* project—might value diverse cultural voices. Echoing Tanja Dreher, I wanted to examine “the conventions, institutions and privileges which shape who and what can be heard in the media” (Dreher, 2009: 445). One work that was particularly relevant to this task is Roger Silverstone’s *Media and Morality*. In this book, he posits a particular standard that one can use in assessing how the media either foster or hinder diverse cultural voices. Here I am referring to the notion of the *mediapolis*, a term which Silverstone draws from the works of Hannah Arendt (Silverstone, 2007). On the one hand, Silverstone understands the *mediapolis* as an empirical reality. For him, it pertains to an already existing mediated global public space of appearance where “contemporary political life increasingly finds its place, both at the national and global levels” (Silverstone

in Dayan, 2007: 114). But more important for the discussion at hand is that, on the other hand, Silverstone also thinks of the *mediapolis* as an ideal. For him, this space should be characterised by communication that is multiple and multiply-inflected, as well as by its openness to the diverse images and narratives that represent those whom we think of as our others (Silverstone in Dayan, 2007: 114-115). His hope is for this space not to be hostile but instead hospitable—and infinitely so—to the appearance of cultural others (Silverstone, 2007). It can be said then that the more that the media come close to the ideal of the *mediapolis*, then the more that these value voice (as a process).

Whilst acknowledging the originality and boldness of Silverstone's argument, Couldry says that Silverstone's ideal of the *mediapolis* tends to be "impossibly demanding" (Couldry, 2012: 195), primarily because of its deontological or universalist inflection. He points out that Silverstone's notion of hospitality is based "on the normal time limits to strangers' stay within the home and on the usual territorial limits around the home, from where strangers are normally absent" (*ibid.*). But hospitality for those who appear in the media requires so much more of us, as it asks us to understand the media as "'our home', whoever 'we' are, and that our media home must be continually open" (*ibid.*). In light of this, Couldry says that, perhaps, the media might be assessed better if our terms of judgement were less deontological (and universalist) and more ethical (and situated). He therefore posits a neo-Aristotelian approach, which he describes as "guided by the eminently practical insight that right behaviour cannot be identified in advance, abstracted from the often competing requirements of specific contexts" (Couldry, 2012: 189). In relation to this, it can be said that an understanding of how the media might or might not value voice (as a process) depends on the circumstances present in a particular case. And indeed, empirical studies bear out the diverse considerations that are at play when one looks at the possibility of culturally diverse voices in relation to mainstream media on the one hand (for example, Ang et al 2008; Parekh, 2000) and in relation to alternative media for cultural minorities on the other hand (for example, Ginsburg, 2002; Turner, 2002; Wilson and Stewart, 2008). In each of these cases, Couldry suggests that we ask, "What are the virtues or stable dispositions likely to contribute to us conducting the practice of media well?—well, that is, by reference to the wider aim of contributing to a flourishing human life together" (Couldry, 2012: 190).

1.3.2 Mediation

As I have said earlier, this research also necessitated an understanding of how voices are shaped by people's engagement with the social contexts in which they are embedded. As Stephen Coleman says, voice is not something that resides merely within a person, separate from his or her external world (Coleman, 2013). He argues instead that voice is something that has a social life, in that it "always entails a compromise between the individual interests, values, self-perception and intended self-projection of speakers and the rhythms, norms, taboos and contingent expectations of the cultures in which they speak" (*ibid.*: 11). In other words, a proper appreciation of voice also needed a proper appreciation of the process of mediation.

Unfortunately, mediation has been made to refer to different things across various scholarly disciplines and, as such, can be potentially confusing. Couldry deals with this issue by mapping out the key debates about what mediation—which in his more recent works he refers to as mediatisation—might mean (Couldry, 2008; 2012). At the same time, mediation has also been made to refer to different things within the field of media, communications, and cultural studies itself. Nancy Thumim sheds light on four distinct but overlapping approaches through her useful heuristic categorisation of these notions of mediation (Thumim, 2012: 51-55). For the purposes of this dissertation though, I took a view of mediation that was rooted in Silverstone's original articulation of the concept. I drew particularly on his definition of mediation as the process in which meanings are circulated in society and, as a consequence, are constantly transformed (Silverstone, 1999; 2005; 2007; but see also Couldry, 2008; 2012; Livingstone, 2009; Madianou, 2005; Ong, 2012; Thumim, 2012). Silverstone says that in order to understand this process, we have to, first and foremost, "enquire into the instability and flux of meanings and into their transformations, [and] also into the politics of their fixing" (Silverstone, 1999: 16).

Couldry, however, argues that a key weakness in Silverstone's approach is that it insists on remaining abstract, with Silverstone refusing to further systematise his own account of the mediation process (Couldry, 2012). To address this valid concern, this dissertation also drew from Nancy Thumim's recent book on mediation. On the one hand, the focus of Thumim's work is different from that of this dissertation, as it examines formal institutional spaces (namely the BBC and the Museum of London) and not alternative media spaces (like the *Shutter Stories*

project that I initiated). But on the other hand, her work is relevant to this dissertation, as it attempts to conceptualise mediation in relation to “ordinary people”, which is a term that refers to those who are not part of the institutional media but who nevertheless produce media content. This is very close to what I was doing in this work, which was on the mediation of the voices of the Indians and Koreans in Manila, who are themselves “ordinary people”.

Thumim posits that an inclusive view of mediation needs consider its three key dimensions. One is institutional mediation, which pertains to “the production contexts of the media industries...[but also] individual persons directly working on producing self-representations with/by members of the public, with those many others in the institutions and related bodies, such as funders and partner organisations” (Thumim, 2012: 58). There is also cultural mediation, which is about “what the audience/participants bring to the production of self-representation in terms of abilities, expectations, understandings—what is brought to the mediation process from the participants who are outside the institution” (*ibid.*: 59). Finally, there is textual mediation, which is an analysis of the properties of the medium involved but, crucially, understood “in relation to the context in which they are produced” (*ibid.*: 60). Taken together, Thumim contends that all these dimensions allow us to stress “both the multiple factors that shape meaning, and the open-ended nature of meaning making” (*ibid.*: 57). Anchored on this premise, my discussion in Chapter 7 examines how the voices of the Indian and Korean participants of the *Shutter Stories* project were mediated both textually (that is, in relation to the properties of photography) and institutionally (that is, in relation to the practices surrounding photography), whilst my discussion in chapter 8 examines how these same voices were mediated culturally (that is, in relation to the social experience of being a diaspora in Manila).

1.4 The chapters

In Chapter 2, I begin developing the theoretical framework of this study, which is grounded in Couldry’s notion of voice (Couldry, 2012), as well as in Silverstone’s general articulation (Silverstone, 1999; 2005; 2007) and Thumim’s concrete conceptualisation (Thumim, 2012) of mediation. For this first half of the framework, I provide a conceptual exploration of how diasporic voices might be mediated by

photography. I consider the properties of the photograph as a medium. Using the works of photography scholars from cultural studies, sociology, and anthropology, I establish that the defining characteristic of the medium is that it is simultaneously denotative and connotative, as evidenced in its all-at-once indexical, iconic, and symbolic relation with reality. Together with this, I also consider photography as a practice, especially in the context of interventionist research. I argue that its distinctive feature is how its two most important moments—the selection and the representation of the photographic subject—both lie at the intersection of how ordinary people do photography in the everyday (that is, popular photography) and how researchers engage with photography in social research (that is, legitimated photography).

In Chapter 3, I move on to develop the second half of the theoretical framework of this study. I give a conceptual account of how diasporic voices might be mediated by the diasporic social experience. Weaving together works on the politics of multiculturalism, the philosophy of the social sciences, and media and cultural minorities, I posit that such an experience consists of three levels. These are the levels of the self, where voice is mediated by people's personal experiences of being in a multicultural society; of the cultural group, where voice is mediated by the concern for cultural group voice; and of the multicultural society, where voice is mediated by a multicultural society's willingness to engage with cultural minority voices.

In Chapter 4, I elaborate on my methodology for this research. For the first part of this chapter, I establish and justify my use of participatory action research as my general methodological approach, as well as of the collaborative photography exhibition project as my specific interventionist strategy. In the second part of this chapter, I talk about my use of life story interviews, focus group discussions, and impressionistic media analysis in order to understand the social context wherein I sought to intervene via the *Shutter Stories* project. I also discuss my use of participant observation as a way of looking into the nuances of the transformations that the *Shutter Stories* project brought about amongst Manila's local Filipinos.

In Chapter 5, I start to present the data I gathered during the course of my fieldwork. Drawing on life story interviews with Manila's Indians and Koreans, focus group discussions with Manila's local Filipinos, as well as an impressionistic analysis of the Manila-centric Philippine mainstream media, I describe how the

mediation of multiculturalism plays out in the context of Manila. I show how this instance of mediation is entangled with the broader discourses of the Philippine postcolonial nationalist project (Gonzaga, 2009). For one, I highlight how local Filipinos' preoccupation with establishing a unifying cultural identity tends to make them elide the issue of their own internal cultural diversity, as well as of the social issues raised by the increasingly significant diasporic population of the city. I also underscore how the local discourse of cultural homogeneity results in the continued reluctance of local Filipinos to publicly discuss the persistence of their unspoken skin-tone based racial hierarchy not only of themselves, but also of their cultural others.

In Chapter 6, I share the photo stories of the five Indian and four Korean participants of the *Shutter Stories* project. Here, I attempt, in an admittedly limited way, to recreate the appearance of these works during the public exhibition in Manila and on the dedicated website. My hope is that this somehow allows the photo stories of the participants to speak for themselves, before I move on to speak about these works. Through this, I try to mitigate the power asymmetries that arise from the way in which my scholarly voice, no matter how grounded it might be, dominates this dissertation. I open this chapter by showing the textual caption that accompanied the entire exhibition. Then throughout the rest of the chapter, I present each of the photo stories of the Indian and Korean participants, as well as their accompanying captions, in the sequence in which they were presented in both the photography slideshow (for the public exhibition) and online (for the dedicated website).

In Chapter 7, I discuss how the voices of the five Indian and four Korean participants of the *Shutter Stories* project were photographically mediated. For the first half of this chapter, I reveal the relationship between the properties of the photographic medium and Couldry's notion of voice as a process (Couldry, 2010). Here I examine how the participants dealt with the indexical, the iconic, and the symbolic modes of the photograph during the crafting of their photo stories (Scott, 1999). I draw links between this and the two key aspects of the materiality of voice: the social resources involved in producing people's voices and the particular form that their voices actually take (Couldry, 2010). Together with this, I also look into the conditions that shaped how Manila's local Filipinos interpreted the various photographic modes of the participants' photo stories (Zelizer, 2006). On the basis

of this, I assess whether their voices were recognised, that is, whether they were listened to and were registered as important (Couldry, 2010). In the second half of this chapter, I explore the relationship between the practices surrounding photography in interventionist research and Couldry's notion of voice as a value (*ibid.*). I look at both the process of subject selection and subject representation (cf. Pink, 2007) and attempt to characterise the kind of negotiations that took place between the photographic practices drawn on by the participants and the photographic practices espoused by the photography scholars and myself (cf. Bourdieu 2003 [1990]; Thumim, 2009).

In Chapter 8, I turn my attention to how the voices of the five Indian and four Korean participants of the *Shutter Stories* project were socially mediated. I show that at each level of the diasporic experience—the self, the cultural group, and the multicultural society—different forces were at work in shaping the photo stories of the Indian participants, on the one hand, and the Korean participants, on the other hand. At the level of the self, I talk about how the photo stories demonstrated the participants' ability to be reflexive, as they expressed their personal agency in dealing with the circumstances in which they were embedded (Archer, 2000; 2007; Layder, 2004). I highlight how Couldry's notion of voice as a process played out in the crafting of the participants' stories (Couldry, 2010). At the level of the cultural group, I explore how the participants' works reflected the ways that they negotiated the boundaries of their cultural groups: mostly reinforcing but at times challenging them (Barth, 1976; Bauman 2001; Baumann, 1997). I show how, on the one hand, the crafting of a unified cultural group voice might be linked to Couldry's notion of voice as a process and how, on the other hand, the dissensions that undergird this seemingly unified voice might be linked to Couldry's notion of voice as a value (Couldry, 2010). Finally, at the level of the multicultural society, I delve into how the participants' works were mediated by how open and willing Manila's wider society was in engaging in a dialogue regarding the multicultural character of their city (Benhabib, 2002; Phillips, 2008; Said, 1994; Silverstone, 2007). I then draw the connections between this kind of mediation and Couldry's notion of voice as a value (Couldry, 2010).

In Chapter 9, I conclude this dissertation. I summarise the key empirical findings of this study and discuss their contribution to a better understanding of multiculturalism and of participatory action research. On the basis of these findings,

I aim to help in mapping out the possibilities and problems that accompany an interventionist project that seeks to foster diasporic voices, such as *Shutter Stories*. I also contribute to identifying possible future endeavours that might make Manila's present-day local Filipinos come to terms (once again) with the longstanding multicultural character of what has been called "the world's first global city" (Irving, 2010: 19).

Chapter 2

Theorising the Mediation of Voice Part 1: Voice and Photography

“The naive observer sees that in the photographic universe, one is faced with both black-and-white and coloured states of things. But are there any such black-and-white and coloured states of things in the world out there? As soon as naive observers ask this question, they are embarking on the very philosophy of photography that they were trying to avoid.”

-Vilém Flusser, Towards a Philosophy of Photography

In the next two chapters, I build on the previous chapter’s discussion on voice (developed by Couldry, 2010) and mediation (developed by Silverstone, 1999; 2005; 2007, as well as by Couldry, 2008; 2012; Livingstone, 2009; Madianou, 2005; Ong, 2012; Thumim, 2012) to establish the theoretical framework of this study. My central thesis will be that understanding how diasporic voices are mediated in a collaborative photography exhibition project necessitates an examination of the two distinct but intertwined aspects of this process. First, it is important to look into the mediation of voice via the photographic medium, with its distinct properties and practices (cf. Thumim, 2012 and her notions of textual and institutional mediation). And second, it is also important to look into the mediation of voice via the various levels of the diasporic social experience: the self, the cultural group, and the multicultural society (cf. Thumim, 2012 and her notion of cultural mediation). By unpacking these photographic and social aspects of the mediation process, I hope to provide a nuanced consideration of the possibilities and pitfalls that might be encountered by interventionist endeavours such as this study.

Through this study’s framework, I seek to move beyond the two polarities that characterise much of the scholarship on the mediation of voice. I hope to avoid the overly optimistic view of some interventionist researchers about the capacity of participatory visual research to empower people’s voices (cf. the critique set out by Buckingham, 2009), whilst also avoiding the overly pessimistic view of some post-structuralist researchers about the limited capacity of people to have a voice that is truly their own (cf. the critique set out by Parekh, 2004). As I will subsequently discuss in this chapter, the framework I am proposing counterbalances the optimism of action researchers through its emphasis on how media platforms can be both enabling and disabling of voice. At the same time, this framework also counteracts

the pessimism of post-structuralists through its emphasis on how a person's agency is central to the ways in which the social experience of being a migrant mediates voice. In these two ways, I aim to establish a more complex understanding of the ways in which both voice as a process and as a value (Couldry, 2010) might be mediated.

My discussion below focuses on fleshing out how the photographic medium matters in the mediation of diasporic voices. First, I look into the properties of the photograph as a text. I argue that what makes the mediation of the photographic text unique is how it is influenced by the tension between the medium's simultaneously denotative and connotative nature (Scott, 1999; Zelizer, 2006). Second, I look into photography as a practice, especially within the context of interventionist research. I argue that the key characteristic that defines how this kind of photographic practice mediates voice is that it lies at the intersection of photography in everyday life (for example, Harrison, 2002) and photography in social research (for example, Chaplin, 1994).

2.1 Voice and the properties of the photograph

Central to understanding an interventionist media research project is a consideration of the media platform being harnessed. The media are immensely plural and have equally plural characteristics (Silverstone, 2007). As a consequence, all of these different media mediate differently. They might be visual and evoke the senses or written and evoke contextual information (Pink, 2006); intimate and tend towards dialogue or public and tend towards dissemination (Peters, 1999); self-reflective and emphasise individuality or social and emphasise collectivity (Van Dijck, 2004). In this section, I provide a careful consideration of the unique properties of the photographic medium and their impact on the mediation of voice as a process, which is the capacity of people to speak about themselves and their place in the world (Couldry, 2010).

My main argument here is that one distinct trait of photographic mediation is its paradoxical way of representing reality. Barbie Zelizer articulates this point very clearly, saying that photographs possess the unparalleled ability to be simultaneously denotative and connotative. Since photographic images record so much visual detail, they have the capacity to make us think that they are depicting the world as it really

is. They are, in this sense, denotative. At the same time, images also tend to resist linguistic codification, at least when they are considered apart from any accompanying written captions or oral narratives. Because of this, they also allow themselves to be interpreted in diverse ways that correspond to particular symbolic frames that dominate the different domains of society (for instance, the realm of journalism, advertising, and art). They are, in this sense, connotative (Zelizer, 2006). So in mediating voice, photographs can emphasise the realism of the details of a person's narrative (that is, the who, what, where, when, and how of a story) as much as they can emphasise the discursiveness of these stories (that is, the why of a story).

Zelizer further argues that the simultaneously denotative and connotative quality of photographs has important implications for the social circulation of such an easily transportable medium. On the one hand, the realism often associated with the denotative property of photographs means that they have a referential force that they bring with them across different social settings. But on the other hand, the discursiveness inherent in the connotative property of photographs means that they have the capacity to orient people towards interpretations that suit specific social settings. In other words, the credibility of photographs can remain constant, even if their meanings can be contextually contingent (*ibid.*).⁸ This means that the meanings embedded in photographs might be perceived as realistic, even if possible interpretations about these meanings might vary along with the kind of spaces in which the photographs appear. This dynamic significantly determines the possibilities and limitations of the photograph as a platform for voice.

To arrive at a more detailed understanding of how the above dynamic plays out, I turn to Clive Scott and his essay on what he calls the life of photographs, which is based on C.S. Peirce's classic semiological modes of the index, the icon,

⁸ Van Dijck, however, notes the changes to the credibility of photos in an age of digital photography. She says that although the penchant for photographic manipulation has long existed, "what is new in digital photography is the increased number of possibilities for reviewing and retouching one's own pictures, first on a small camera screen and later on the screen of a computer" (Van Dijck, 2008: 66). This is why she asks, "[D]oes this increased flexibility cause the processes of photographic imaging and mental (or cognitive) editing to become further entwined in the construction of identity?...[D]oes image doctoring become an integral element of autobiographical remembering?" (*ibid.*)

and the symbol.⁹ In this work, Scott makes two key suppositions that run parallel to but also extend Zelizer's arguments above. First, he claims that photographs are primordially denotative, with the indexical as their most basic relationship with the reality that they are thought to represent. Second though, he also claims that as these images age, their connotative quality becomes more and more pronounced, as they move towards the iconic and, later on, to the symbolic. As a consequence of this shift from a more concrete to a more abstract mode of representation, they become increasingly entangled with the ideological (Scott, 1999). I elaborate on these points below, highlighting the ways in which the different modes of photographs diverge and converge and, in turn, impact the mediation of voice.

2.1.1 Indexicality and personal memories

Scott argues that, first and foremost, the photographic medium is indexical. A photograph is inextricably linked to its material referents via physical causality or connection. Peel away the photographic codes and conventions laid over a photographic image and one finds that at the most basic, it is comprised of traces of light patterns and their reflections off subjects. By its very nature, a photograph is never completely itself. It instead constantly hearkens to a something else from the past, from that particular instance in which it was originally taken (Scott, 1999).

This ability to freeze and to make present a specific moment from the past is what allows a photograph to serve as a powerful relic that "take[s] us back to the scene of memory in ways that are not permitted by other modes of textuality" (Hughes and Noble, 2003: 5). For many scholars, it is this idea of a photograph as an aide-mémoire that defines the indexical mode of the medium (for example, Hughes and Noble, 2003; Messaris, 1997; Keenan, 1998). Take for instance the latter half of Roland Barthes' work, *Camera Lucida*. In this deeply personal meditation on photography, he shares his personal search for that one image that can best return to him the essence of his mother, whose loss he mourns very deeply. After much rummaging, he settles on what he calls the Winter Garden Photograph. Barthes does not show this to his readers, because he believes this to be

⁹ Chandler defines these as follows: (1) the index as "a mode in which the signifier is not arbitrary but directly connected to the signified," (2) the icon as "a mode in which the signifier is perceived as resembling or imitating the signified," and (3) the symbol as "mode in which the signifier does not resemble the signified but which is fundamentally arbitrary or purely conventional" (Chandler, 2007: 36-37).

a futile exercise. For him, others could never share in the unique way in which the photograph's denotative properties have affected him. Nevertheless, Barthes provides an account of what he sees, so as to hint at the kind of evocation it triggers. He then marvels at how these photographic referents bring forth his mother's kindness in such an essential manner that the image is able to bring his mother back to him (Barthes, 1981).

What is interesting in Barthes' account of the Winter Garden Photograph is that it both proves and disproves the idea of the photograph as an aide-mémoire. For him, the said image, as in the case of all other images, is only able to evoke memories if its provenance is known to the viewer. Otherwise, it becomes a counter-memory, obscuring rather than revealing the past. Barthes explains that when the origins of photographs are unknown, they become images that people can view but cannot decipher. They become, in some ways, violent, "not because [they show] violent things, but because on each occasion [they fill] the sight by force, and because in [these], nothing can be refused or transformed" (Barthes, 1981: 91). Unfortunately, this situation tends to be the norm, as the original contexts of and meanings associated with photographs become forgotten over time. Susan Sontag's seminal book, *On Photography*, echoes this argument. She says that it is difficult to fully comprehend photographs because they tend to conceal more than reveal. As instances that are captured and often torn away from their temporal and spatial embeddedness, they present a superficial version of reality that leaves to the viewers the daunting task of deducing what really happened. As a consequence, these images fail as memory devices, with their denotative elements unable to summon the complex meanings associated with the original sensory experience depicted within their frames (Sontag, 2002 [1977]).

It appears that the indexicality of photographs means that they can be an aide-mémoire as much as they can be a counter-memory; photographs can both reinforce and recreate, assure and trouble, as well as evoke and interfere with our memories (cf. Sturken, 1997; Wells, 2004; Zelizer, 1998). It can be therefore said that they are never really able to evoke personal memories in a straightforward manner. As Hughes and Noble put it, photographs, "like the memories they stand in for, are never pure or unmediated" (Hughes and Noble, 2003: 5). They are instead "artifactual constructions, hence sites of contestation and dispute" (*ibid.*). This is an argument that comes up again and again in the well established literature that

explores how the past can be recorded and reworked by family albums in general (for example, Hirsch, 1997; Holland and Spence, 1991; Rose, 2010) and, crucial to this study, by migrant family albums in particular (for example, Camp, 2012; Holland, 2004; Hoobler and Hoobler, 1997).

This complex tension between photographic remembering and forgetting can impinge on the mediation of diasporic voices. One work that has thoughtfully explored this tension is Giorgia Alu's piece on the works of two female Italian authors, Anna Maria Riccardi and Elena Gianini Belotti. In this study, Alu focuses on how these authors seek to use photographs—both from family and public archives—as an aide-mémoire in narrating their family migration histories.¹⁰ She argues that the way in which these authors weave together photographs and words in their accounts reveal both the possibilities and limitations of photographic storytelling. On the one hand, Riccardi and Belotti's practice validates the testimonial character of photographs. It shows how images can concretise and authenticate words, both of which cement the irrefutability of the account being offered. On the other hand, the author's practice shows how photographs, especially those that come from a different place and a different time, can lose their meaning and intentionality. And in these instances, it is words that reconstitute the relevant context that makes the images intelligible. As Alu puts it,

the relationship between words and photograph, therefore, should be understood as a compromise where weaknesses—and strengths—are reciprocally compensated. It is according to this perspective of a mutual exchange of authenticity and meaning that...the interaction between photograph and text in these books should be understood. (Alu, 2010: 101)

In Chapter 7, I say more about the impact of the indexicality of photographs on the *Shutter Stories* project. I reveal that the Indian and Korean project participants talked exclusively about how they found the photographic capacity for remembering to be both the medium's strength and weakness. I also reveal that, in contrast, many of the local Filipinos who saw the *Shutter Stories* photo stories talked

¹⁰ According to Alu, it is significant that most of the authors who write about the migration history of their families are women. This reveals how it is the woman—both in the past and at present—who has continually played “the role of keeper of family and community relations, as well as holder and vehicle of the family's memories. She bears witness to stories that have been fragmented, interrupted and even silenced by separation” (Alu, 2010: 100).

primarily about how the photographic capacity for forgetting tended to overwhelm its capacity for remembering, making the stories about the lives of Manila's diasporas "so near yet so far".



Figure 2.1 A photograph from Riccardi's 'Cronache dalla collina.'

2.1.2 Iconicity and collective memories

The discussion above articulates how the indexicality of photographs means that they are visual records with an enduring connection to their material referents. However, it also begins to hint at how these images are at the same time visual depictions that can elicit diverse interpretations. This clearly parallels Scott's assertion that even if photographs are primordially indexical, they are also mere likenesses of the realities they portray and are consequently iconic. Scott explains,

(1) The photograph has a large dose of the iconic from the outset; (2) all photographs, individually...move from the indexical to the iconic, without, however, sacrificing their indexicality; (3) photography as history, that is, the corpus of all photographs ever taken, follows an itinerary from the indexical to the iconic, without, again, jettisoning indexicality. (Scott, 1999: 32)

This begs the question, however, of why photographs tend to travel the route from the indexical to the iconic. As I have suggested in the previous section, the answer to

this is that these images usually undergo a process of disembedding. This could be spatial, as happens when they get physically transported from one location to another while their referents get left behind. But this could also be temporal, as happens when they slowly but inexorably become historical artefacts whose referents get increasingly distant through the passage of time (*ibid.*).

Once the contextual linkages of photographs are loosened, they become open to interpretations that are less locally generated and that are more generally understood. The emphasis moves away from the historically specific realm of the index towards the historically schematic realm of the icon. Hariman and Lucaites describe how this works through the specific example of the so-called *Accidental Napalm* photograph from the Vietnam War (see Figure 2.2).¹¹ Very few people will now remember the details of this image, such as the name of the girl, the name of the South Vietnamese Village, the exact and circumstances of the event. However, many will know what the image stands for: the horrific pain suffered by those innocent Vietnamese civilians caught within the theatre of an American-instigated war (Hariman and Lucaites, 2003). Other such images that are generally thought to have acquired an iconic status include, for example, Steve McCurry's photograph of a young Afghan girl that appeared on the front cover of *Time* Magazine (circa 1985), Lyle Owerko's photograph of the World Trade Center up in flames during the 9/11 attacks (circa 2001), and Jeff Widener's photograph of a Chinese protester standing up to oncoming tanks at Tiananmen Square (circa 1989) (see <http://www.wired.com/rawfile/2012/01/famous-photos-posed-with-their-most-iconic-images/?pid=1609>).

¹¹ Hariman and Lucaites recount that the photograph "was taken by photographer Nick Ut on June 8, 1972, released after an editorial debate about whether to print a photo involving nudity, and published all over the world the next day. It then appeared in *Newsweek* ('Pacification's Deadly Price,' 1972) and *Life* ('Beat of Life,' 1972) and subsequently received the Pulitzer Prize" (Hariman and Lucaites, 2003: 39).



Figure 2.2 The ‘Accidental Napalm’ photograph.

What becomes apparent with all of the photographs mentioned above is that the most salient feature of the iconic mode is its capacity to cast photographs as visual representations that can stand in for complex realities. However, it must be emphasised that the shift of photographs from the indexical to iconic does not at all undermine the inherent materiality of these images (Scott, 1999). If anything, it is this materiality that enables them to be powerful icons. Or to put it in reverse, their representative value is intimately linked to their credibility as indices. This is why recent technological developments in photographic editing affect not only the status of the photograph as an index, but also as an icon. The public’s increasing awareness of computer-manipulated images (for example, airbrushed models on magazine covers) and of the deliberate blurring of staged and authentic events (for example, political photo-opportunities) has cast some doubt on the truth-value of photographs (Messaris, 1997). But more than this, it has also blunted their iconic force. For indeed, how can they be representative of reality if they are not even based on it? That said, the capacity of photographs for truth-telling and representation are nowhere near dissipating. Although some might argue that icons no longer possess their previously near-automatic persuasive force, they are yet to be treated by the public as texts akin to paintings or drawings. On the contrary, our present society still relies heavily on them for remembering the past (Hariman and Lucaites, 2003; Messaris, 1997; Zelizer, 1998). This leads me to the next key point.

The iconicity of photographs reveals that the relationship between images and memory actually has two layers. Not only are these photographs central to the work of recalling and reconstructing personal memories, they are also significant to

the process of establishing and contesting collective memories. For this, Zelizer's work, *Remembering to Forget*, is a key touchstone. Here, she underscores three key features of collective visual remembering:

(a) Images, particularly photographs, do not make obvious how they construct what we see and remember. Often, they arbitrarily connect with the object or event being remembered;

(b) The images of collective memories are also both..."conventionalised, because the image has to be made meaningful to the entire group; simplified, because in order to be generally meaningful and capable of transmission, the complexity of the image must be reduced as far as possible"; and

(c) Collectively held images are schematic, lacking the detail of personal memory's images...[and thus] act as signposts, directing people who remember to preferred meanings by the fastest route. (Zelizer, 1998: 6-7)

Taken together, all these features indicate how iconic photographs can be powerful, in that they are able to encapsulate the memories of a certain group. They also reveal how iconic photographs are extremely filtered and abstracted representations of these memories. The consequence of this, Sontag notes, is that such images tend to present a motivated view of the collective experience it is representing. They become, in a word, political (Sontag, 2002 [1997]). In a similar vein, John Berger says that each photograph is but a particular someone's choice of a sight selected from an infinite possibility of other sights. It privileges a particular someone's ways of seeing over that of other people (Berger, 2008 [1972]).

In light of the above, I argue that the iconicity of photographs presents the possibility for diasporic voices to speak not just about an individual migrant's experience, but also about the migrant experience in general. Nevertheless, the iconicity of photographs also raises the problem that they might be seen as one-sided, as they necessarily simplify the complexity of migrant experiences.¹² There is, for instance, Dorothea Lange's iconic photograph, which is often referred to as the *Migrant Mother* (see Figure 2.3). Whilst it is an image of a migrant rather an image by a migrant, it is nevertheless indicative of how photographs might mediate the stories of the diaspora.

¹² In the next chapter, I further elaborate on the social politics involved in this idea of one migrant narrative standing for all migrant narratives via the concept of cultural group voice.

Linda Gordon explains that the *Migrant Mother* photograph is of Florence Thompson and her children. It comes from a series of photographs that Lange produced in the 1930s for the Farm Security Administration (FSA), which at the time was seen as a left-leaning office within the Department of Agriculture of the American Government. According to Gordon, this photography project was part of an effort to “examine systematically the social and economic relations of American agricultural labour” (Gordon, 2006: 698). In an interesting turn, this series was not released in its entirety to the public. The photos were instead released individually, without captions. It was through this process that the *Migrant Mother* immediately shifted from an index to an icon. As Lucaites and Hariman contend, the public did not really see the image as a personal account of Thompson’s difficulties as a migrant farmer as much as they understood it to embody “the tension between individual worth and collective identity at a moment of severe economic crisis” (Lucaites and Hariman, 2001). Here we can see how powerful voice can be when mediated photographically.

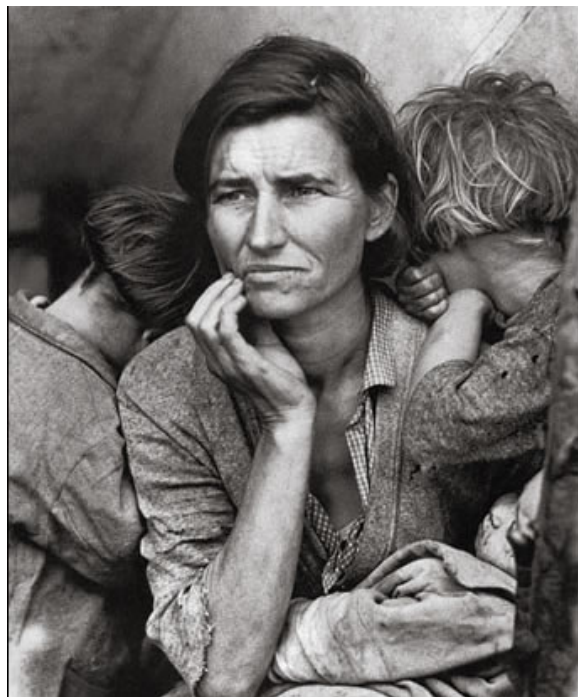


Figure 2.3 Dorothea Lange’s ‘Migrant Mother’.

However, some commentators negatively assess Lange’s photograph of the *Migrant Mother*, saying that it reveals her all-too-feminine approach to photographic storytelling. Gordon summarises some of these gendered critiques, which argue that

the strong emotional content of her work [is] instinctive, in a way said to be characteristic of female sensibility. A “natural” feminine intuitiveness underlay her photography in these accounts. “Dorothea Lange lived instinctively...photographed spontaneously...” At other times she is described as a piece of white photosensitive paper or “like an unexposed film,” onto which light and shadow marked impressions. Her photographs consist disproportionately of portraits, a form often described as particularly feminine, consistent with the observation that women are uniquely interested in personality and private emotions. Her colleague Edwin Rosskam called her “a kind of a saint.” The critic George Elliott expressed the common imagining of female artists as passively receptive: “For an artist like Dorothea Lange the making of a great, perfect, anonymous image is a trick of grace, about which she can do little beyond making herself available for that gift of grace.”(Gordon, 2006: 702)

The existence of such comments raise the possibility that the original intent behind iconic migrant photographs notwithstanding, they might be critiqued for being representative of nothing but the photographer’s own representation of the diasporic experience.

I return to the notion of photographs as iconic in Chapter 7, when I elaborate on the contrasting ways in which the people involved in the *Shutter Stories* project approached the issue about the roster of the Indian and Korean participants being more demographically homogenous than was originally intended. I also discuss the manner in which the photography scholars, Terri and Ricky, and I attempted to resolve this issue, as well as the eventual consequences of the move the three of us agreed to take.

2.1.3 Symbolism and conceptual meanings

As I have previously mentioned, once the emphasis of photographs shift from the indexical mode to the iconic mode, they could very easily move towards the symbolic mode as well. This is because both the iconic and the symbolic stem from the connotative quality of photographs. But they do have a significant difference. Scott argues that

where the icon constitutes a relationship of resemblance, between sign and object, signifier and signified, the symbol institutes one of translation...The symbolic code is the code of language, and the more the visual becomes involved in the language system, the more it will be carried over into the symbolic, the more deeply it will be carried into the semantic (not “What is it?” but “What does it mean?”), and towards the abstract. (Scott, 1999: 40)

As such, the symbolic mode is still about photographs as visual representations, but the representation tends to be of the conceptual rather than the historical.

Paul Messaris argues that it is in the symbolic mode wherein photographs come closest to written language. For him, this mode underscores how images also possess their own kind of syntax, in the form of photographic conventions. This includes visual communication codes such as camera angles, colours, lighting, staging, and other such techniques. However, Messaris also says that photographic expression tends to be more syntactically indeterminate than linguistic expression. Between images and words, it is images that are more imprecise in articulating propositions, such as analogies, contrasts, or causal claims. So whilst they can privilege certain interpretations, they cannot pin these down with any finality, compared with words (Messaris, 1997).¹³

Barthes also makes a similar, if rather differently articulated, claim. Talking about the nature of photographs, he posits two of its characteristics that are in binary opposition to one another. On the one hand, he talks about the *studium*, which he defines as the set of shared cultural resources drawn on by photographers (or what Barthes calls the Operator) in the process of photographic creation. Through this, photographers are able to call the attention of the viewers (or what Barthes calls the Spectator), as well as offering them a framework for making sense of the visual codes embedded within the frame. On the other hand, Barthes posits the notion of the *punctum*, which pertains to the unpredictable detail in photographs that holds the attention of the viewers in a way that no other element in the photograph can. Barthes colourfully describes the *punctum* as that which flies through the air like an arrow and pierces the viewers. Crucially, he says that this is something that the photographers cannot really predetermine. Like Messaris then, Barthes argues that even if photographs can be framed by their photographers, these images persist in being polysemic texts (Barthes, 1981).

¹³ Although this might be construed as a weakness, Messaris argues that this is in some ways an advantage of photographs. This implicitness makes the readers work harder in determining the photographs' messages. Messaris argues that this becomes an advantage if we hold to be true the claim that, all things being equal, people are predisposed to believe an argument that they took time to reflect on. The implicitness of photographs also means that the claims these have become subject to less scrutiny because these claims are not immediately apparent. As an example of this, Messaris points to cigarette ads. He says that whilst these ads are legally prohibited from using verbal language to argue for the health benefits of their products, they still get away with making such arguments because they do it visually, juxtaposing images of cigarettes with images of outdoor activities (Messaris, 1997).

It is important to note that despite the possibility that photographs might allow for an infinite amount of interpretations, they are usually read in a limited number of ways. Photographs are usually not interpreted in isolation. As Gillian Rose contends, they are generally interpreted intertextually, that is, in relation to the other images that circulate within a society. As such, they end up being viewed from within the discursive formations that predominate the said society (Rose, 2007). Susan Sontag's comparison of the photographs from the Vietnam War and the Korean War illustrates this argument well. She notes that photographs from the Vietnam War horrified some Americans because they both culled from and contributed to an established discourse that defined it "as a savage colonialist war" (Sontag, 2002 [1977]: 13-14). Meanwhile, she argues that the photographs from the Korean War did not have the same political effect because the war itself was embedded in a discourse that portrayed it as a "just struggle of the Free World against the Soviet Union and China" (ibid.: 14).

Related to this is the previously discussed argument by Zelizer that photographs also tend to activate interpretations that are privileged by the social domain wherein they are displayed. Because of this, she says that the transportability of photographs can sometimes be tricky. This is especially the case when the domain wherein these images are produced operate under discursive formations that are completely antithetical to the domain in which they are consumed. To drive home this point, she asks several provocative questions that underscore this tension between the domains of photographic production and consumption:

What does it mean when photographs of a 12-year-old Palestinian boy killed in the crossfire between Israeli forces and Palestinian militias adorn mosques? What does it mean when photographs of Abu Ghraib end up in a New York City art gallery, or people leaping to their deaths on September 11, 2001, comprise the raw material of a Chicago art installation that mimics the fall years later? What does it mean when an image of Nazi concentration camp survivors becomes the subject of an advertisement for the Church of Scientology? What does it mean when snap-shots of Bosnian atrocities turn up as evidence in a war crimes tribunal about atrocities committed in other distant lands? What does it do to the public sphere when the same image is used to launch public debate and sell matchbox covers? (Zelizer, 2006: 16-17)

In sum, it can be said that in mediating voices, the symbolic mode of photographs allows their producers to attach conceptual meanings to their visual

narratives. But then again, this mode also raises the possibility that those consuming the photographs might interpret visual narratives in ways that are less aligned with the producer's original intent and more in line with the dominant discourses of a particular society or a particular social domain. The same thing can of course be said about the photo stories that migrants might make.

As a case in point, I refer to Deirdre McKay's ethnographic account of Filipino labour migrants in Hong Kong and the photographs that they send to their relatives back home. In this work, McKay talks specifically about Jose, a labour migrant who attempts to construct an upwardly mobile version of himself through the display of objects that connote success, especially in the framework of the economically underdeveloped Ifugao ethnic society from which he comes. These objects include clothes and bags with designer brands, as well as background settings that mark out Hong Kong as a first world city. At the same time, McKay observes that Jose keeps to himself his photographs that betray his actual plight as a labour migrant, which is primarily characterised by hard work and relatively low pay. These unsent photographs includes, for example, a snapshot that shows him wearing what he refers to as the lowly uniform of a household help, which is the primary occupation of Filipino labour migrants in Hong Kong (see Figure 2.4) (McKay, 2008).



Figure 2.4 A photo mailed home (L) and a photo kept (R).

By managing the photographs of himself that his relatives back home consume, Jose is able to conjure an image of his desired future self in the present. McKay explains that

As an Ifugao man, from an ethnic group often associated with poverty and backwardness, Jose's self-presentation is intended to convey messages about both his cosmopolitanism and his personal economic potency. His staging and selection of this photograph reveal an attempt to act on his subjectivity by portraying himself as solid, secure, and worthy—a person who can offer assistance, guidance, and material help to others. In other words, he has had himself photographed as a big person. (ibid.: 388)

But at the same time, Jose's photographs also produce an unintended interpretation that brings him an anxiety peculiar to him and to other migrants who practice this kind of image-management. According to McKay, Jose's photographs reinforce the discourse about migration that predominates the Filipino *masa* (lower class), his Ifugao relatives included. Specifically, they have “inspired a kind of faith in migration as a ‘remedy’ to local struggles for livelihood and development” (ibid.: 390). As a consequence of this, the photographs have also prompted Jose's relatives to place him on a pedestal, as he becomes construed as a benefactor whom his extended kin could approach and ask for gifts, loans, or business investments. Whilst this is an image of himself that is of Jose's own conjuring, it does present him a significant burden as well. The pressure to fulfil his self-constructed idealised image pushes him to work harder and harder and to delay his homecoming more and more. As such, Jose's photographs become a ghost of the future that haunts his present. As McKay notes,

The longer he remains in Hong Kong, the more this subjective experience of imposture may be intensified. This is because photographs are material and “consumed,” meaning Jose must continually send new and better portraits home to maintain his social position. (ibid.)

The example of Jose's photographs illustrates that just like the images in the indexical mode and the iconic mode, images in the symbolic mode also have a double-edged way of mediating migrant voices. In the same way that photographs as an index can evoke but also interfere with personal memories and that photographs as an icon can encapsulate but also filter collective memories, photographs as a symbol can propose but cannot impose conceptual meanings. In Chapter 7, I talk

about how the tension between photographic intent and interpretation played out in the *Shutter Stories* project. I share the ways in which the meanings that the Korean and Indian participants and the local Filipino viewers attached to the photo stories converged as well as diverged. In the next section however, I first reflect on photography in relation to the practices that surround it.

2.2 Voice and the practices of photography

I begin this section by returning to David Buckingham's argument that a critical appraisal of participatory visual research should not just consider the affordances that come with the choice of a medium (that is, the properties of a medium). Such an appraisal should also consider the dominant ways in which a medium is deployed in particular social contexts (that is, the practices attached to a medium). This is because the precise way in which the properties of a medium are activated is heavily circumscribed by the practices attached to the said medium. As Buckingham contends, different participatory research projects create equally different positions "from which it is possible for participants to speak, to perform or to represent themselves" (Buckingham, 2009: 648) and that these positions "are a function of the wider social contexts in which research is conducted, distributed and used" (*ibid.*).

It is in line with the above that my focus now temporarily shifts from thinking about the photograph as a medium with a unique set of properties to thinking about photography as an activity embedded in social practice, particularly in the context of interventionist research. For this, I use Pierre Bourdieu's essay on *The Social Definition of Photography* as a springboard from which to build my own approach. Bourdieu argues in this work that photography is a cultural form that finds itself somewhere in the middle of what he calls the hierarchy of cultural legitimacy, which is his attempt to map out the gradations in which various cultural forms are subject to the contradictory forces of popularity and legitimation (see Figure 2.5). Bourdieu says that photography is not completely like clothes, decoration, and cookery, all of which fall squarely into the sphere of the arbitrary, where people feel that they "have the right to remain pure consumers and judge freely" (Bourdieu, 2003 [1990]: 95). He also says though that photography is not completely like music, painting, and theatre, all of which fall squarely into the sphere of legitimacy,

where people “feel measured according to objective norms, and [are] forced to adopt a dedicated, ceremonial, and ritualised attitude” (ibid.). Bourdieu instead argues that similar to cinema and jazz, photography lies in the in-between sphere of the legitimisable. At the same time that some people approach the medium as a popular cultural form that is subject to the tastes of people as users/consumers, some others approach it as an institutionalised cultural form that is passed on as a specialised and consecrated body of knowledge (ibid.).

Parallel to Bourdieu’s approach above, I contend that photography in interventionist research also lies at the intersection of popularity and legitimation. But here I am not referring to this kind of photography’s cultural legitimacy, but to its mediational quality. This is because it is entangled in the equally productive and problematic tension that arises from the desire of interventionist projects to empower ordinary people to speak and the need for interventionist projects to allow researchers to exercise their power in creating spaces for such speech (cf. Thumim, 2009). On the one hand, a central feature of interventionist research is that it often aims to involve those so-called ordinary people whose voices are often unheard by society, as in the case of the diasporic cultural minorities that this thesis is concerned with. Consequently, the way that this research engages with photography tends to be informed by how these ordinary people practice photography in the everyday (cf. Harrison, 2002). On the other hand, another central feature of interventionist research is that it is an institutional endeavour organised primarily by researchers. As such, the way that this research engages with photography tends to be framed by how these researchers deploy photography in relation to social research (cf. Chaplin, 1994).

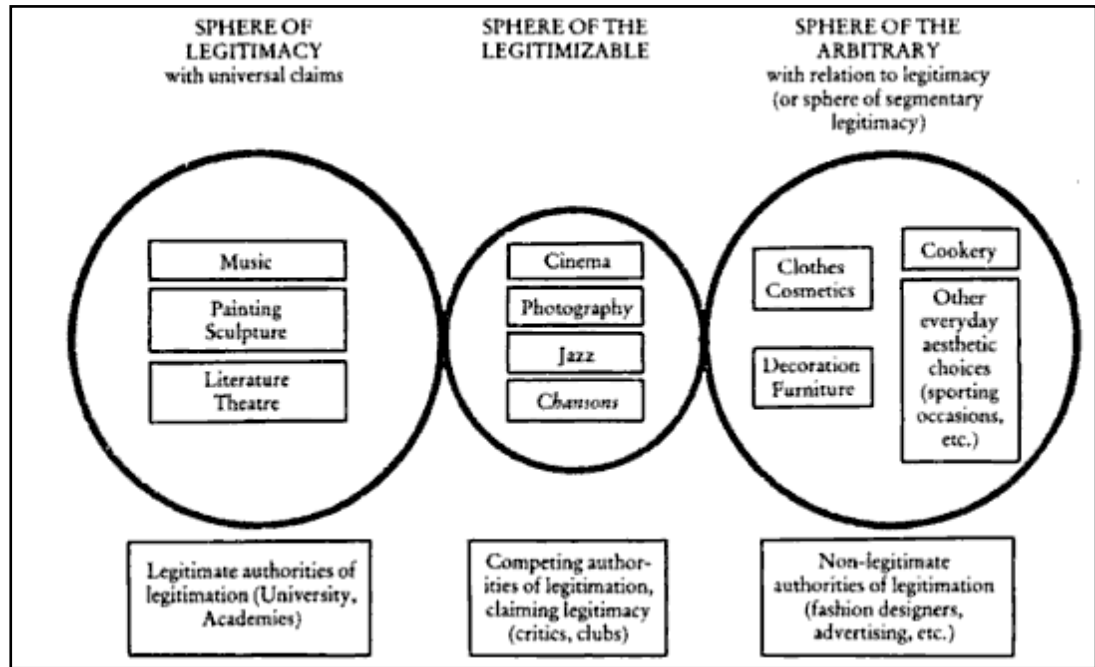


Figure 2.5 Bourdieu's hierarchy of cultural legitimacy.

In order to explore how the above-mentioned tension might mediate diasporic voices, I look at the two key moments in the practice of creating photographs for interventionist research: the selection and the representation of the photographic subject (cf. Pink, 2007). Through this, I hope to indicate the ways that this kind of photography might embody and betray voice as a value, which Couldry defines as the act of choosing to foster material resources and symbolic discourses that themselves, in turn, foster voice as a process (Couldry, 2010).

2.2.1 On the selection of the photographic subject

Barbara Harrison says that theoretically, ordinary people are free to choose whatever photographic subjects they desire. Unlike professional photographers, they are not limited by institutional prescriptions about photographic practice. Nevertheless, Harrison says that ordinary people still end up having a surprisingly strong degree of regularity in the way they select their photographs and that, in fact, they tend to draw from a common range of subjects (Harrison, 2002). As many other researchers observe, these photographs primarily revolve around two things: the special people in their lives (especially their family and their other loved ones) and the special events in their lives (especially their tours, holidays and leisure trips) (for example, Bourdieu, 2003 [1990]; Holland, 2004; Slater, 1995).

Bourdieu suggests that the regularity that characterises the ways in which ordinary people select their photographic subjects is due to how “[ordinary photographic practice] is always aimed at the fulfilment of social and socially defined functions” (Bourdieu, 2003 [1990]: 38). He identifies this function as the maintenance of existing social relations. For Bourdieu, this is first and foremost about the reinforcement of class *habitus*, which he defines as that

experience (in its most usual sense) which immediately reveals a hope or ambition as reasonable or unreasonable, a particular commodity as accessible or inaccessible, a particular action as suitable or unsuitable...[and, as a consequence, represents] the externalisation of interiority and the internalisation of exteriority. (ibid.: 5)

His contention then is comprised of two parts. One is that the selection of photographic subjects is a concrete example of how ordinary people have come to accept predominant social class arrangements. Second is that this selection is also a concrete example of how ordinary people enact the social class arrangements that they have come to accept.

Whilst I agree with Bourdieu’s analysis, I found his emphasis on social class too limiting for the study at hand. Beyond this focus, I also wanted to explore how other social forces could shape personal photography. For this, I turned to Patricia Holland’s essay on popular and personal photography. She argues in this work that the regularity in how ordinary people select their subjects reinforces many other entrenched social arrangements. For instance, she raises the issue of women’s oppression by talking about how ordinary people’s preoccupation with taking photographs of a family’s happy moments can sometimes contribute to the glossing over of the various kinds of abuse that some women might suffer at home. She also raises the issue of racism by revealing how ordinary people’s preoccupation with taking tourist photographs is in some ways rooted in the colonialist interest in the exotic. Finally, she raises the issue of consumerism, saying that ordinary people’s preoccupation with personal subjects tends to play into the depoliticising nature of today’s media (Holland, 2004). I would hasten to add though that the way in which ordinary people select their subjects can also reinforce the more benign manifestations of existing social arrangements. For instance, these can help create and sustain positive interpersonal and community relationships (for example, Van House et al, 2004 and their work on the social uses of personal photography in

contemporary Western society), as well as contribute to the practice of cultural group values (for example, Pinney, 1997 and his work on the photographic practices in India).

That said, the selection of photographic subjects in interventionist research is complicated by how it is also rooted in photographic practice in social research. Interventionist researchers often attempt to delineate the kinds of photographic subjects that their project participants can feature in their stories. This is a necessary component of doing research for at least two reasons. First, interventionist researchers need to ensure that the participants' photographs are able to contribute to answering the research questions that their projects have set out to address (cf. Grady, 2004). As such, the selection of the photographic subjects tends to conform to the particular methodological standards to which the researchers subscribe. Second, interventionist researchers also need to ensure that the participants' photographs are able to contribute to the social change agenda with which their projects seek to engage (cf. Becker, 2004). Consequently, the selection of photographic subjects should align with the ideological framework that informs the work of the researchers.

This does not mean, however, that interventionist researchers do not question the inevitable power inequalities that arise from the way that they conduct research. If anything, many are uneasy about how this condition takes away from their desire to truly collaborate with their participants. As Marcus Banks shows, some researchers are averse to unilaterally setting the boundaries to the kinds of photographic subjects that their participants can feature in their stories. These researchers instead favour setting boundaries through a process of negotiation with their participants. The results can be very diverse. Some researchers end up closely coordinating with their participants through every step of the selection process. Some others end up stepping back and allowing the participants to take control of the process (Banks, 2007). Despite this corrective mechanism though, Rich and Chalfen argue that nothing can take away the reality that photographs in interventionist research are always produced in an "experimental context," which is the term they use to refer to the spaces set-up by researchers (Rich and Chalfen in Ramella and Olmos, 2005). I would argue though that, at the very least, this mechanism provides a way to mitigate the power inequalities that arise from such endeavours (cf. Chaplin, 1994).

All of the above comments indicate that, on the one hand, the often unrecognised limits that result from the social function of photography in the everyday predispose migrants to tell photographic stories that feature the special people and the special occasions in their lives. These limits also predispose them to tell stories that reinforce a wide array of existing social arrangements, both benign or otherwise. On the other hand, there are also explicit boundaries that researchers set in relation to photography in social research. These direct the migrants' photographic stories, so that these stories conform to the disciplinary standards of researchers and to the ideological frames of their interventionist projects. As such, it can be said that the moment of photographic subject selection mediates diasporic voices in a twofold manner, with "the intentions and objectives of researchers and [the diasporic] informants combin[ing] in their negotiations in order to determine the content of the photographs" (Pink, 2007: 76). Depending on the outcome of this process, this moment can mean that the voices of the researchers are able to serve as a narrative framework from wherein migrants can either productively tell their photographic stories or, conversely, as a narrative imposition that can stifle the kinds of stories that diasporas would like to tell. In Chapter 7, I discuss how this issue played out during the seminars leading to the *Shutter Stories* exhibition. I focus especially on the ways in which the boundaries that the photography scholars, Ricky and Terri, and I had set created both possibilities and limitations to the photo stories that the Indian and Korean project participants could work on.

2.2.2 On the representation of the photographic subject

The other key moment in the practice of creating photographs for interventionist research is when the participants represent their photographic subjects. This pertains to that phase in which they deploy particular visual codes and conventions in the process of photographically depicting their subjects. Drawing on the work of Jean Burgess, I argue that there are two intertwined ways in which photography in the everyday influences how ordinary people represent their photographic subjects. First, there is their increasing use of "the production logics of the 'creative industries'" (Burgess, 2006: 204). For most ordinary people, this manifests itself in their attempts to take photographs that apply those visual codes that are current in the creative industries, with, of course, different degrees of success, depending on their skills. They might, for instance, appropriate popular

photographic genre codes (for example, advertising photography and fashion photography), as well as reference particular popular culture trends (for example, the celebritisation of their self-representations and the use of iconic images as photographic pegs). For the self-fashioned avant-garde among the ordinary people however, this production logic manifests itself in a rather ironic manner. This is because it is often the case that these avant-garde ordinary people attempt to create photographic cultures that challenge the consumerism of the mainstream, but then end up reinforcing this same consumerist spirit. As an example of this, Burgess talks about the “lomography” movement of the 1990s, whose members used the defects of cheap plastic Russian cameras (for example, the Lomo, where the movement gets its name from) in order to develop their own photographic aesthetics. She says that despite this movement’s anti-establishment ethos, it has nevertheless “built a business out of the movement, offering participation in a community of lomography enthusiasts, with cameras and merchandise for sale” (ibid.: 205).

Together with the above-mentioned production logics, the set of local photographic conventions to which ordinary people subscribe can also influence how they represent their photographic subjects (Banks, 2007; Pink, 2007). For the most part, these conventions are rooted in the particular cultural cosmologies of the societies to which they belong. One interesting study that explores this is Laurel Kendall’s work on the rules that governed the photographic representations of Korean wedding hall events in the 1980s. According to her, the Koreans of that time implemented the following process with almost complete faithfulness:

First the bride and groom would be posed on the steps of the dais with the master of ceremonies a step or two above them (masters were assumed to be busy people, sometimes presiding over several weddings in an afternoon, and the primary sequencing of this shot accommodated their busy schedules). Then the couple would be posed alone, then posed surrounded by members of both families, then posed surrounded by both sets of friends. The camera rig would be rolled away and the bride and groom hustled off to dressing rooms to change their clothing. (Kendall, 2006:5)

Kendall says that this template became so popular in Korea that almost all ordinary people who were interested in photography could replicate it. Crucially, she contends that the reason for its widespread adoption was that it affirmed the Korean imaginary that coincided with the country’s modernisation during the late 20th century. As she explains,

The posing of photographs was enacted as part of the performance of a Korean new-style wedding and the ritual space was, in part, constructed as a photographic studio. As durable artefacts, these photographs documented that a wedding had been enacted with appropriate ceremony and social support, the photographs becoming an extension through time of the social witnessing that is a critical element of the new-style wedding. To this point, I have argued that the power of Korean wedding hall portraiture in the 1970s and 1980s was, precisely, in the mechanical reproduction of standard genres, fixed poses, and recognisable settings. (*ibid.*: 14)

Kendall concludes by saying that because of the continual shifts in the Korean imaginary, Korean wedding hall photographs are becoming increasingly elaborate, with more and more poses being incorporated into the practice (*ibid.*).

Meanwhile, the magnitude of how photography in social research might impact on the moment of representation depends on the visual data that researchers need for their work. Some researchers minimise their intervention because part of their research agenda is to observe the participants' existing representational practices. This is the case in the collaborative photography exhibition project that Sharples et al did with 180 children from five European countries (Sharples et al, 2003). According to Banks, the researchers did not interfere with how their participants took photographs because they "set out to explore not so much what children 'see' as how children understand photography in the first place" (Banks, 2007: 5). Some other researchers aim to provide a template for how their participants should take photographs, so that it provides visual support for their work. However, this can often prove problematic, as the participants might insist on their own practices of representation. An example of this is Joseph Pinney's experience of working with participants from a local Indian community. Pinney shares that he intended for the participants to take photographs in a specific manner: "candid, revealing, expressive of the people [Pinney] was living among" (Pinney, 1997: 8). However, the participants refused, saying that they had their own way of taking photographs. According to Pinney, this involved taking photographs that were "full-length and symmetrical" and that featured subjects with "passive, expressionless faces and body poses," which for him "extinguish[ed] precisely that quality [he] wished to capture on film" (*ibid.*: 9). Finally, some researchers might also influence their participants' representational practices less in terms of style and more in terms of skill. As Banks notes, this is the case when the participants do not possess the necessary skills to participate in a particular photography project. He says that researchers attempt to intervene in these instances because the participants

might sometimes need practice, or even training, so that they do not end up “concentrating far more on ‘getting it right’ technically than on the image(s) they are seeking to create” (Banks, 2007: 82).

In the moment of subject representation then, two things impact on the ways that migrants choose to represent their photographic subjects. First are the two intertwined sets of representational practices from photography in the everyday: the representational practices associated with industrialised cultural production and the local photographic conventions of particular societies. Second are the attempts of researchers to intervene with their representational styles and skills. If these two mediating forces synergise—that is, when researchers are able to harness the everyday life practices of diasporas properly—then an interventionist project can be a space for the emergence of the diasporas’ vernacular creativity. This is a concept which Burgess defines as the “productive articulation of consumer practices and knowledges...with older popular traditions and communicative practices” (Burgess, 2006: 212). If, on the other hand, the control that the researchers exert on how migrants represent their photographic subjects is not compatible with the goals of the research, then they run the risk of “closing off perfectly relevant areas of inquiry, as well as fail[ing] to build the good will that collaborative ventures depend upon” (Banks, 2007: 82). They also run the risk of supplanting the participants’ voices with their own voices, which of course takes away from an interventionist project’s ability to contribute to voice as a value. I discuss in Chapter 7 how the *Shutter Stories* project both succeeded and failed in fostering the vernacular creativity of its Indian and Korean participants. I show that whilst the negotiations that happened about the practice of photography during the project helped the participants’ photo stories become ready for public viewing, it also undermined their confidence in using photography as a platform for their diasporic voices.

2.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, I began to articulate the theoretical framework for this study by exploring how migrant voices might be mediated by photography. In order to do this, I discussed photography from two different perspectives. First, I considered the photograph as a medium. I established that its defining characteristic is that it is simultaneously denotative and connotative, as evidenced in its all-at-once indexical,

iconic, and symbolic relation with reality (Scott, 1999; Zelizer, 2006). I then unpacked how this impinges on voice as a process (Couldry, 2010). Specifically, I revealed that on the one hand, photographs can contribute to the creation of powerful narratives because of how they can activate personal memories (as in the case of photographs in the indexical mode), collective memories (as in the case of photographs in the iconic mode), and even conceptual meanings (as in the case of photographs in the symbolic mode). But on the other hand, photographs can also complicate the process of storytelling because of how they only evoke memories and meanings and do not fix them with finality. Because of this, migrants' stories are inevitably exposed to the risk of being interpreted not only in ways that are different from their original intent, but also in ways that might actually be contrary to these intentions.

Second, I considered photography as a practice, especially in the context of interventionist research. I argued that its distinctive feature is how the key moments of photographic selection and representation both lie at the intersection of how ordinary people do photography in the everyday (that is, popular photography) and how researchers engage with photography in social research (that is, legitimised photography) (cf. Bourdieu, 2003 [1990]; Thumim, 2009). I also sought to explain how these moments relate to voice as a process (Couldry, 2010). I indicated that if these two sets of practices are synergised, then the differences in terms of photographic selection and representation can become productive. This usually translates to researchers being able to provide a structured space from wherein migrants are able to tell the stories they want to tell. I also pointed out that researchers need to match, one, the kind and the degree of control that they exert on the photographic practices of their participants to, two, the goals of the research. For researchers who seek to open up spaces from which their participants can tell their stories, putting excessive control on the participants' photographic content and/or style might mean coming up with a space that does not support the participants' voices as much as it stifles them.

I return to the key arguments of this chapter twice in this dissertation. In Chapter 4, I talk about how these ideas about the properties and practices of photography became key considerations in the way I implemented the two key parts of the collaborative research project at hand: the photography seminars and the photography exhibition. In Chapter 7, I re-appraise the points raised here in relation

to the empirical data I gathered during the course of the *Shutter Stories* project. There remains, however, a need to further develop our understanding of interventionist media research projects. In the next chapter then, I complete the theoretical framework for this study by delving into the possibilities and the pitfalls that are inherent in the social mediation of voice.

Chapter 3

Theorising the Mediation of Voice Part 2: Voice and the Social Experience of the Diaspora

"In other words, when the distance between speaker and listener is great, the audience bears the interpretive burden. Those who have ears to hear, let them hear!"

-John Durham Peters

I have already said earlier that the theoretical framework for this study should allow for a comprehensive consideration of how a collaborative photography exhibition project, such as *Shutter Stories*, might mediate diasporic voices. Specifically, it should provide an account of how such an interventionist endeavour might facilitate both voice as a process (that is, the capacity of people to talk about themselves and of their place in the world) and as a value (that is, the act of choosing to foster material resources and symbolic discourses that themselves, in turn, foster voice as a process) (Couldry, 2010). In the previous chapter, I began establishing this framework by talking about the mediation of voice in relation to photography. I considered how diasporic voices might be mediated by the properties of photography (cf. Thumim, 2012 and her notion of textual mediation), as well as by the practices surrounding photography in interventionist research (cf. Thumin, 2012 and her notion of institutional mediation). In this chapter, I complete this study's theoretical framework by considering how voice might be mediated by the social experience of the diaspora (cf. Thumim, 2012 and her notion of cultural mediation). I present a conceptual account of how diasporic voices in the media might be enabled and disabled by particular social forces.

The ensuing discussion draws on key works from the field of media and migration studies and also from the field of contemporary social theory. Based on the insights from these works, I submit that voice is mediated by the three intertwined levels that constitute the social experience of the diaspora: the self, the cultural group, and the multicultural society. Together with this, I also identify the tensions that are most important to each of these levels. For voice at the level of the self, the tension is that between the agency that migrants possess and the circumstances wherein they are embedded (Layder, 2004). For voice at the level of the cultural group, the tension is that between the desire of migrants to gain freedom

from the constraints brought about by the norms of their community and the need of migrants to feel the security of belonging to their community (Bauman, 2001). And finally for voice at the level of the multicultural society, the tension is that between the promise of diverse cultural voices harmonising into a counterpoint and the risk of these voices descending into dissonance (Said, 1994).

3.1 Voice at the level of the self

At the level of the self, what comes into play is what Couldry refers to as the first register of voice: that of a process (Couldry, 2010). In this instance, voice is mediated via the personal experiences that people have of the society in which they live. It is because of this that I posit that the key problematic for this level is the tension between what Layder labels as agency and circumstance (Layder, 2004). On the one hand, people are said to possess agency because their voices are imbued with their personal motivations, feelings, and interpretations of their lives and of the world in which they live. But on the other hand, they are also said to be limited by their circumstances because their voices are reflective of larger historical and social contexts (Maynes et al, 2004). Avery Gordon observes that many sociological accounts tend to lean towards either one of these positions. In some instances, these accounts posit people as superhuman agents (Gordon, 1997). A case in point is Anthony Giddens' concept that a person's speech is constitutive of his or her "revisable narrative" that in turn, informs the "reflexive project" of fashioning his or her personal identity (Giddens, 1991: 258). Gordon also says that at other times, these accounts posit people as victims of social structure (Gordon, 1997). Take for example Nakagawa's claim that a person never really owns his or her speech, as this is but "an ensemble of voices and discourses that resonate within" (Nakagawa, 1997: 461).

Couldry's conception of voice goes beyond this dichotomy between the victim approach and the superhuman approach (Couldry, 2010). It acknowledges that voice is a product of both agency and circumstance. In relation to agency, he says that "the act of voice involves taking responsibility for the stories one tells, just as our actions more generally... 'disclose' us 'as subjects'" (*ibid.*: 8). And in relation to circumstance, he says that "voice depends on many prior conditions, above all the shared resources of material life, and the specifically social resources (including but

not limited to language) that enable and sustain practices of narrative” (*ibid.*:7). A similar stance is taken by some contemporary works on the politics of multiculturalism. Anne Phillips, for instance, raises the crucial distinction between coercion, which assumes cultural determination, and choice, which assumes cultural influence. For her, the human condition is not really characterised by the former as much as it is by the latter. Whilst we cannot deny social pressures on humans, we also cannot assume that these translate to social dictates (Phillips, 2008). Indeed, people who draw their narrative resources from the same culture do not necessarily end up telling the same stories about themselves and their place in the world. Seyla Benhabib provides an excellent metaphor to explain this. She says that in the same manner that people who work within the constraints of a particular language are still able to construct an infinite number of well-formed sentences, members of a cultural group have diverse ways of drawing from their group’s shared resources for understanding the world (Benhabib, 2004).

To explain why it is that people from the same cultural group can construct varied narrative trajectories, Couldry points to the notion of how humans are embedded in material realities. He says, “voice is the process of articulating the world from a *distinctive embodied position*...[this] does not involve a claim to a unique interiority, but only a claim that the way we are each exposed to the world is unique” (Couldry, 2010: 8). The sociologist Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot’s study on African American life stories concretises this idea. It presents an account of Charles Ogletree and David Wilkins, two African American men who found themselves occupying the same social-structural position and who still ended up narrating their lives in a significantly different manner. It then emphasises how this divergence can be attributed to the unique way that they each experienced the world as a consequence of their equally unique embodiment in it (Lawrence-Lightfoot in Maynes et al, 2004). From all of these arguments, it is clear that whilst people cannot escape the processes of socialisation and acculturation that being part of a cultural group entails, they can nevertheless claim to have a voice that is truly their own.

The sociologist Margaret Archer claims, however, that it is not enough to acknowledge that both agency and circumstance matter. She argues that we must also be able to explain how these two forces are linked to one another. To account for this, Archer proposes the notion of reflexivity (Archer, 2000; 2007). According

to her, “The subjective powers of reflexivity mediate the role that objective structural or cultural powers play in influencing social action and are thus indispensable to explaining social outcomes” (Archer, 2007: 5). Archer contends that in order to understand how this concept might matter in terms of voice, we must assess people’s stories about themselves and their place in the world in relation to three key themes. First, we must ask about what she calls “the reflexive adoption of projects” (*ibid.*: 6). This means understanding what life projects people have, how they have come to value them, and how they plan to realise them. Second, we must ask about “the reflexive mediation of structural and cultural properties” (*ibid.*: 10). This involves looking into the social and cultural conditions that circumscribe people’s life projects and, equally important, the manner in which people reflect and act on these. Lastly, we must ask about “reflexivity and the endorsement of different courses of actions” (*ibid.*: 15). This necessitates examining the reasons for the diverse actions in which people can engage, even when confronted with similar circumstances.

This idea of human reflexivity is actually akin to how other scholars conceptualise how agency and circumstance are linked to each other. Layder’s notion of an emergent self-narrative is defined as “the actual unfolding storyline of the self (or psychobiography) as it emerges from a person’s lived experience” (Layder, 2004: 128-129). There is also Maynes et al’s notion of personal narratives within a historical context, which they understand to be the intersection between “the narrative sequence for which [a person’s] life course itself provides the plot lines and the temporal frame” (Maynes et al, 2004: 43) and “the individual’s place in collective events and historical time” (*ibid.*). Finally, there is Andrew Sayer’s notion of human autonomy and heteronomy, which is about how people have “self-command and [a] capacity for agency” but only “within the context of relationships and responsibilities that afford [them] some respect” (Sayer, 2011: 128). Of course, these approaches each provide a different inflection to how agency and circumstance are linked. Nevertheless, they clearly share in the endeavour of unpacking what scholars mean when they say that social forces “work through” subjective experiences (cf. Archer, 2000).

Crucially for this dissertation, reflexivity is also central to the way diasporic groups use the media as a space for voice. Like any other media content, the media texts that migrants create are embedded in a set of public discourses about the

society in which they find themselves (Madianou, 2005). But at the same time, these migrants filter the public discourses of their society through their own subjective experiences (Ignacio, 2005). The cultural theorist Ien Ang characterises such works as autobiographical. She says that these are better understood not as self-writing but self-reading, not as a presentation of their authentic selves but as a representation of their reflective/reflexive positioning, and not as enacted for private purposes but for public purposes (Ang, 2001). Take, for example, my work on the online cultural identity performances of young Filipino professionals in Singapore. This study shows how these professionals' constructions of their Filipino identity are heavily influenced by the dominant discourses about the Philippines, the material realities of Singapore, and the affordances of the blog as a medium. Still, these professionals are able to assert their agency by shifting between performing patriotic pride and cosmopolitanism in relation to the particular kinds of discrimination that they encounter in their everyday lives in Singapore (Cabañes, 2010). These findings resonate with de Block and Buckingham's study on the media production of migrant children in Europe. They note that the social, political, and economic forces, as well as media resources, all frame and influence the participants' understanding of their experiences. At the same time, the youth "[appropriate] the media that [surround] them, in order to find a place among their peers, to explore their own tensions and dilemmas, to understand seemingly arbitrary events that affect their family lives and to express their own positive take on the world" (de Block and Buckingham, 2007: 198). I add to these findings of these two works in Chapter 8. Here I point out that although many of Manila's Indians and Koreans have diasporic experiences that are similar to the members of their particular cultural groups, the Indian and Korean participants of *Shutter Stories* still came up with divergent ways of talking about their migrant life in Manila.

3.2 Voice at the level of the cultural group

At the level of the cultural group, both the registers of voice that Couldry identifies are highlighted (Couldry, 2010). On the one hand, voice manifests itself at this level as the collective voice of people within a cultural group. This manifestation can be related to the first register of voice—that is, as a process—because it pertains to the capacity of a cultural group to speak about itself and its

place in the world. On the other hand, voice also manifests itself at this level as the individual voices of people within a cultural group. This manifestation can be related to the second register of voice—that is, as a value—because it refers to the capacity of a cultural group to allow or deny its members their own ways of speaking about themselves and their place in the world. In summary, cultural group voice represents both the singular voice of the collective group and the plural voices of the individual people within the group. Because of this, I argue that the key problematic of cultural group voice is one between what the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman refers to as the tension between the security of a community and the freedom of a person (Bauman, 2001).

In Bauman's work, he talks about how, in contemporary times, the experience of security is often linked to the experience of belonging to a community. He traces the roots of this assumption to modern society's nostalgia for and valorisation of community life.¹⁴ He says that for most of the people who live in a world of fragmentation and anomie, the concept of a community conjures thoughts of:

a “warm” place, a cosy and comfortable place...[where] there are no dangers looming in dark corners...[where] we all understand each other well...[where] we are never strangers to each other...[where] we can count on each other's good will...Our duty, purely and simply, is to help each other, and so our right, purely and simply, is to expect that the help we need will be forthcoming...[Community] evokes everything we miss and what we lack to be secure, confident and trusting. (Bauman, 2001: 2-3)

This manner of valuing community is strikingly similar to the supposition that cultural minorities are able to speak with greater security, confidence, and power when they speak as one and express their cultural group voice (for example, Campbell and Keane, 1997; De Villar, 1998). Doing this involves what the postcolonial scholar Gayatri Spivak calls strategic essentialism (Spivak, 1988b). This means having to construct a bounded group identity that eventually becomes

¹⁴ Bauman defines the notion of an ideal community via the attributes that Robert Redfield identifies in his book, *The Little Community* (Bauman, 2001; Redfield, 1971). These attributes include the community's distinctiveness (“it is apparent ‘where the community begins and where it ends’”), smallness (“so small as to be all within view of its members”), and self-sufficiency (“so that...it ‘provides for all or more of the activities and needs of the people in it. The little community is a cradle-to-the-grave arrangement’”) (Bauman, 2001: 12).

the basis from which cultural minorities are able to collectively speak against the cultural hegemony of the dominant groups within their particular societies. Certainly, there is great value to aspiring towards a cultural group voice. For one, attempts to build a consensus towards a singular voice can contribute much to strengthening in-group solidarity (Husband, 1994). In turn, this in-group solidarity can help in establishing a unified front when pursuing social change (Boyle, 1993).

But then again, there is one crucial consequence in choosing to speak as part of a collective. Bauman says that any endeavour that is done within the confines of a community pays a specific price. This he identifies as freedom, which he equates with “‘autonomy’, [the] ‘right to self-assertion’, [and the] ‘right to be yourself’” (Bauman, 2001: 4). Bauman puts it this way:

Do you want security? Give up your freedom, or at least a good chunk of it. Do you want confidence? Do not trust anybody outside your community. Do you want mutual understanding? Don't speak to foreigners nor use foreign languages. Do you want this cosy home feeling? Fix alarms on your door and TV cameras on your drive. Do you want safety? Do not let the strangers in and yourself abstain from acting strangely and acting odd thoughts. Do you want warmth? Do not come near the window, and never open one. (*ibid.*)

Whilst this reality is evidently problematic, it is also unfortunately inevitable. As the political scholar Bhikhu Parekh explains, every cultural group has a mechanism for regulating its members. It does so by “‘approv[ing] or disapprov[ing] certain forms of behaviour and ways of life, prescrib[ing] norms governing human relations and activities, and enforc[ing] these by means of rewards and punishment” (Parekh, 2004: 156). If a cultural group does not do these things, then it will not be able to define its boundaries.

Since this is the case, relying on cultural group voice to express defiance always runs the risk of reifying that voice and making it definitive. This happens when the singularity of the collective voice is perceived to be threatened by the dissent of individual voices. In these instances, nonconformist voices are stifled. And as a consequence, the people behind these voices experience double marginalisation. This is why Phillips underscores the importance of remembering that although the voices of cultural groups should be fostered, individual voices should be fostered just as much (Phillips, 2008). Here, it must be said that the tendency for suppressing internal plurality is not something exclusive to diasporic

groups (for example, Jacobsen and Raj, 2008; Mendoza, 2002; Renard et al, 2007). Other community formations are prone to this as well. For instance, one of the prominent issues in feminist literature is how the diversity of women in the world is at times sacrificed discursively in the efforts to rally them all towards social solidarity (Lugones and Spellman, 1983). And in postcolonial studies, there is an ongoing concern for those instances when the search for that one true voice to represent colonised populations overwrites the complex differences of the people involved (Griffiths, 1994).

Bauman's assessment of the tension between freedom and security is worth quoting at length here, as it is a forceful reminder of how we cannot wish away this indissoluble conundrum.:

security without freedom equals slavery (and in addition, without an injection of freedom, proves to be in the end a highly insecure kind of security); while freedom without security equals being abandoned and lost (and in the end, without the injection of security, proves to be a highly unfree kind of freedom). This circumstance gives philosophers a headache with no known cure. It also makes living together conflict-ridden, as security sacrificed in the name of freedom tends to be *other people's* security; and freedom sacrificed in the name of security tends to be *other people's* freedom. (Bauman, 2001: 20)

That said, members of cultural groups do constantly try to balance these two tendencies. This process is captured very well by the anthropologist Fredrik Barth. In his seminal work, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, he argues that members of cultural groups are constantly engaged in negotiating and renegotiating the boundaries of their culture. Central to this is his supposition that cultural groups are not complete wholes.¹⁵ They are instead always in process (Barth, 1969). Another anthropologist, Gerd Baumann, further elaborates on how members of cultural groups draw and redraw their cultural group boundaries. He says that, at times, these people act on the basis of a dominant discourse, which reinforces the existing boundaries of their group because it “views ‘culture’ as the reified possession of ‘ethnic’ groups or ‘communities’” (Baumann, 1997: 209). At other times, they act on the basis of a demotic discourse, which challenges the existing boundaries of their

¹⁵ Phillips presents a thorough critique of what she labels as the billiard ball conception of culture. This pertains to the static view of culture that she claims is held by most political theorists (Phillips, 2008).

group because it “questions and dissolves [the] equation between ‘culture’, ethnos, and ‘community’” (*ibid.*).

For a significant number of diasporic groups, media discourses and practices become crucial sites of boundary-making and -breaking. This is made evident by empirical studies that look into the lives of diasporic audiences. For instance, Mirca Madianou’s ethnography of Turkish-speaking Greeks highlights how the news media can influence whether migrant groups use reifying descriptions (that is, dominant discourses) or oppositional re-descriptions (that is, demotic discourses) of their cultural identity. She observes that the participants’ tendencies towards cultural identity essentialism are heightened when mainstream Greek society marginalises them through ethnically discriminating news stories and newsroom practices. However, they become more open to cultural identity contestations when conversing about the news with their fellow Turkish-speaking Greeks (Madianou, 2005). In a parallel manner, Marie Gillespie’s work with Punjabi teenagers in Southall, London shows how viewing and talking about the entertainment media can reveal the tensions brought about by the plurality within cultural groups. She describes how the participants’ talk about Western soaps, such as *Neighbours*, becomes an opportunity to highlight how gossip is one way for the Indian community elders to police the maintenance of their cultural traditions—especially those that are social and religious—as well as to redraw their collective identity in relation to their others. Meanwhile, the images and sounds of US-based transnational corporate advertising tend to be a vehicle for the young Indians to aspire towards cultural change. Although they usually feel more socially constrained than their “white” counterparts, these advertisements allow them to “define an ideal arena, an imaginative space, within which the construction of new identities becomes possible as a real project” (Gillespie, 1995: 206).

A similar process of boundary-making and -breaking can be seen in how migrant cultural minorities produce what Myria Georgiou refers to as diasporic media. She points out that the diasporic media that tend to survive in the long run are all characterised by flexibility. They need to be able to adjust to the interests of the specific cultural group to which they cater. This entails being sensitive to the ongoing shifts in how the members of that group define their cultural identity (Georgiou, 2002). For example, there is the increasing trend among London’s diasporic community newspapers to go bilingual. Apparently, this is a consequence

of the increasingly bilingual character of their diasporic readership. Georgiou gives the concrete example of the London-based Greek Cypriot paper *Parikiaki* where “in the Greek pages...news from Cyprus and from the local community that primarily interest the migrant generation is presented. In the English pages, news and opinions that reflect the interests and the opinions of the younger generations dominate” (*ibid.*: 21). Kira Kosnick’s study of the Turkish minority media in Berlin mirrors this same process of cultural boundary negotiations. Her ethnographic accounts of the everyday life of the media workers in *Radio Multi Kulti* and *Offener Kanal Berlin* (OKB) bring to light how various voices with contesting ideas about what it means to be a Turk in Berlin each try to shape the media output of these two institutions. More interestingly however, her stories also reveal how within these media outfits, the voices of certain people within the Turkish community tend to dominate and, at times, silence those of others. This is why she asks questions about who is speaking for whom, what their agenda is, which audiences they are addressing, and which hegemonic discourses they are articulating and reinforcing (Kosnick, 2007).

Part of my discussion in Chapter 8 connects with the insights above. This is especially the case when I talk about how the Indian and Korean participants of *Shutter Stories* enacted this same dynamics of drawing and redrawing their cultural identity boundaries through their photo stories. The key manifestation of their desire to uphold the boundaries of their cultural identities was their overt intention of projecting a primarily positive image of their particular cultural groups via their photo stories. Meanwhile, their desire to challenges these boundaries was more subtle and restrained, coming out only during our more private conversations about their lives and about the photo stories they were creating.

3.3 Voice at the level of the multicultural society

At the level of the multicultural society, it is Couldry’s second register of voice—voice as a value—that comes to the fore (Couldry, 2010). In this instance, voice is mediated by a multicultural society’s willingness to foster and listen to the voices of its cultural minorities. In line with this, I posit that the key problematic that arises here is the tension between the possibility of cultural majority and minority voices harmonising into a counterpoint and the danger of these same voices

descending into dissonance. This is something that I take from the cultural studies scholar Edward Said (Said, 1994).

Said first elaborates on the contrapuntal his work in his work, *Culture and Imperialism*. He explains that this concept refers to a mode of reading texts that evokes the idea of a musical counterpoint, which is a compositional technique wherein melodic lines that possess some degree of individuality or independence are played in such a way that they become harmonious. This is because a contrapuntal reading does not merely listen to the dominant voices in the text. It also makes an effort to “draw out, extend, give emphasis and voice to what is silent or marginally present or ideologically represented” (*ibid.*: p.66). Extending Said’s argument, I propose that the contrapuntal can also present a way in which people read the narratives that circulate within multicultural societies. This entails going beyond listening solely to the voices of those who are culturally dominant in order to hear the voices of those who are culturally marginalised.

Cultural minority voices tend to speak in ways that might be different from cultural majority voices. As a consequence, these two different sets of voices tend to contest one another. But as the metaphor above suggests, this cacophony of voices can nevertheless be made to play out in harmony. The concrete manifestation of this contrapuntal harmony is dialogue. Phillips describes this as a process wherein “people from different cultural backgrounds explain to one another why they favour particular laws or practices, and develop the skills of negotiation and compromise that enable them to live together” (Phillips, 2008: 180). The possibility of this is premised on two important principles.

Nancy Fraser labels the first principle of dialogue as the objective condition of participatory parity. For her, this means that those who participate in dialogue must all be given an equal opportunity to be recognised and, I add, to speak. Fraser explains that in order to ensure that this condition is met, none of the people who are engaged in a dialogue should be immediately disqualified because their voices are not worth hearing. She says that the said condition also means making sure that the distribution of material resources to these people fosters their “independence and ‘voice’” (Fraser, 2003: 36). The rationale for this first principle of dialogue is something that Bauman forcefully elucidates. He says, “the variety of findings [present in a dialogue] increases the chance that fewer of the many human

possibilities will be overlooked and remain untried. Each finding may benefit all explorers, which ever road they have themselves taken” (Bauman, 2001: 136).

Meanwhile, Fraser calls the second principle of dialogue the intersubjective condition of participatory parity. She contends that the voices of different cultural groups are, in the end, not equal. And in order to evaluate their competing cultural claims, they need to be measured against a certain standard.¹⁶ For her, this means examining whether or not “institutional patterns of cultural value express equal respect for all participants and ensure equal opportunity for achieving social parity” (Fraser, 2003: 36). Fraser says that this is important, especially since there are some people who, after being afforded the chance to participate in a dialogue, express narratives that deny other people their own chance to participate in a dialogue; given a chance to speak, certain quarters, ironically, speak about how others do not deserve equal recognition. As examples, Fraser points to how some people in Africa speak of the importance of the tradition of female genital mutilation and how certain Orthodox Jews call for the necessity of sex segregation in education institutions. She says that both these claims are unacceptable because whilst these African and Orthodox Jewish groups attempt to establish their own voice about particular cultural matters, they also negate the ability of women to speak on these issues (*ibid.*).

Despite the possibilities opened up by dialogue, Phillips warns that recent policies trying to promote multicultural politics in the developed world have instead undermined the very basis for dialogue (Phillips, 2008). For instance, the attempts of the Australian, Canadian, and British governments to acknowledge the cultural diversity of their populations have produced policies that portray cultural groups as “the inherent proprietors of ‘culture’ and that ‘cultures’ are fixed and static realities” (Ang, 2005: 35). Phillips says that these moves inadvertently emphasise cultural boundaries, and “encourage us to view peoples and cultures as more systematically different than they are” (Phillips, 2008: 25). But we need not be stuck in this quagmire. The internal plurality of cultural groups that I mentioned in

¹⁶ According to Sayer, such a claim towards a universal standard is something of which social scientists should not be afraid. For him, there is such a thing as human nature, which people share with one another. Sayer posits certain universals that allow people to understand what it means to be human and, I add, what it feels like to be those other people who are involved in the dialogue. It is this that allows us to ethically evaluate—both within ourselves and with the others with whom we are in dialogue—whether a particular perspective of humanity is acceptable or not (Sayer, 2011).

the previous section can be a way to address the doubts about the possibility of contrapuntal voices in a multicultural society. Benhabib says that the cracks in the seemingly static boundaries of cultural groups allow people who are culturally diverse to find some common ground, at least as regards certain issues. Conversely, these same cracks also indicate that people who come from the same cultural group might actually have differing principles, at least in relation to some concerns. As Benhabib puts it, “there are those...who inhabit other cultures and worlds, but whose evaluations we find plausible and comprehensible, and still others whose ways of life as well as systems of belief will be abhorrent to us” (Benhabib, 2002: 41-42). According to her, this is what enables what she calls a complex cultural dialogue, which she defines as “the interpenetration of traditions and discourses and [the] disclos[ure] [of] the interdependence of images the self and the other” (*ibid.*: 41). The hope is that the kind of familiarity with cultural others that people gain from dialogue will allow them to be less shaped by their own cultures, be more critically self-reflexive, and be more open to considering the views of those who belong to other cultures (cf. Parekh, 2004).

There is another threat to dialogue, however. It is that in the context of today’s mediated society, exchanges among members of different cultural groups do not necessarily lead to smooth and pleasant relationships. Sometimes they create very uncomfortable dissonances among the various groups involved, at least for the short-term. According to Charles Husband, this is only a momentary setback. He even believes that this momentary dissonance is important, as it is precisely what creates the opportunity for people to shake themselves out of their reluctance to encounter voices from other cultures. As this is the case, he says that people must be compelled to hear and to listen to one another. Otherwise, the presence of plural voices will be left substantially meaningless. In other words, the right to speak should always be coupled with the right to be understood (Husband, 2000). For Husband, this means instituting media policies geared towards “rejecting and condemning egocentric and ethnocentric routines of engaging with the communicative acts of others” (Husband, 1996: 139). This is, of course, easier said than done. As John Durham Peters argues, those who speak, especially via the media, do not really have a way of knowing how their words might be received. Using Jesus Christ’s parable of the sower as a metaphor for mediated

communication,¹⁷ he points out that “the diverse audience members, like the varieties of soils, who hear the parable...are left to make of it what they will” (Peters, 1999: 51). He further adds, “though much is sown, little is caught” (*ibid.*: 52). This is not to say that people should no longer attempt to express their voices via the media. Peters says that we should not really be talking just to those people with whom we want to talk. For him, it is more equitable to just speak out and let the receivers decide whether they are predisposed to listen to us or not. As the opening quotation in this chapter says, “Those who have ears to hear, let them hear!”

As I have mentioned earlier in this discussion, Silverstone is very much concerned about the possibility of a *mediapolis* that contributes to multicultural dialogue (Silverstone, 2007). But he is well aware that people do not automatically tune in to the voices of their cultural others. This is why in the same way that Said proposes a contrapuntal mode of reading texts, Silverstone also proposes a contrapuntal mode of viewing the media (Said, 1994; Silverstone, 2007). This means being sensitive to the ways that the diaspora appear and disappear in the screens of the world. And in order for people to learn this, he argues for media literacy. One, educational institutions must hone the capacity of audiences “to make effective and authoritative choices when confronted with the welter of information and narrative at [their] disposal and when confronted with the glossing simplicities of media representation” (Silverstone, 2007:184). This will hone their capacity for evaluating and deliberating on the voices that they encounter in the media that will, in turn, increase their ability to work together for social change (cf. Kellner, 2000). Second, audiences need to learn how to confront “the conditions of production [of media texts] and more importantly...the world they bring to [their] front doors” (Silverstone, 2007: 185). This means having to understand how cultural minorities are not only marginalised through media representations, but through political economic constraints on the media as well (cf. Husband, 1996).

¹⁷ Peters describes the parable of the sower this way: “Jesus is represented in all three synoptic Gospels (Matthew 13, Mark 4, Luke 8) as delivering the parable of the sower by the seashore to a vast and mixed audience. A sower, he says, goes forth to sow, broadcasting seed everywhere, so that it lands on all kinds of ground. Most of the seeds never bear fruit. Some sprout quickly...only to be scorched by the sun or overcome by weeds. Others sprout but get eaten by birds or trampled by travellers. Only a rare few land on receptive soil, take root, and bring forth abundantly, variously yielding a hundredfold, sixtyfold, or thirtyfold” (Peters, 1999: 51).

In Chapter 8, I bring to bear the insights above in order to show the ways in which the *Shutter Stories* project both succeeded and failed in contributing to a more robust multicultural dialogue in Manila. Specifically, I talk about the stark difference between my experience of conversing with some of the local Filipinos who viewed the *Shutter Stories* exhibition and of my experience of trying to get Manila's mainstream media to cover the said exhibition.

3.4 Conclusion

The discussion above completes my discussion of the theoretical framework for this study, as it indicates the ways in which the social experience of diaspora might mediate voice, both as a process and as a value (Couldry, 2010). I attempted to show the possible ways that diasporic voices might be mediated at the level of the self, at the level of the cultural group, and the level of the multicultural society. I also identified the register/s of voice that was/were most present at each of these levels. I also characterised the central problematic of each of these levels, as well as indicated the possible ways of dealing with these.

I suggested that at the level of the self, diasporic voice is mediated by people's experiences of being in a multicultural society and that, as such, its main issue is the tension between agency and circumstance (cf. Layder, 2004). I said as well that important to understanding this tension is the concept of reflexivity (Archer, 2000; 2007). Secondly, I suggested that at the level of the cultural group, diasporic voice is mediated by the concern for cultural group voice and its attendant issue of the tension between security and freedom (cf. Bauman, 2001). In order to unpack this, I turned to the concept of the negotiation of cultural group boundaries (Barth, 1976; Baumann, 1997). Finally, I suggested that at the level of the multicultural society, diasporic voice is mediated by a multicultural society's willingness to engage with cultural minority voices and that, because of this, its central issue is that concerning counterpoint and dissonance (Said, 1994). To make sense of this, I drew from the notion of multicultural dialogue (Phillips, 2008) and on the idea of the *mediapolis* (Silverstone, 2007).

I build on the key insights of this chapter throughout the rest of this dissertation. In Chapter 5, I establish the background for the diasporic social experience of the Indians and Koreans in Manila. I pay particular attention to how

the mediation of multiculturalism plays out in the context of this city and how this mediation impinges on the quality of the everyday lives of its Indian and Korean communities. In Chapter 8, I draw links between this current chapter's theoretical insights about how voice might be mediated by the social experience of the diaspora and my empirical findings about how the photo stories in the *Shutter Stories* project were in many ways shaped by the divergent relations that Manila's Indians and Koreans have with the city's local Filipinos. But before I delve into any discussion of the empirical data I have gathered, I first need, in the next chapter, to recount the methodological approach I took in this study.

Chapter 4

The Collaborative Photography Exhibition Project as Participatory Action Research

“For apart from inquiry, apart from the praxis, individuals cannot be truly human. Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other.”

— Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*

I have already established the theoretical framework for this study in the two preceding chapters; I considered how the diasporic voices in a collaborative photography exhibition project might be mediated by, one, the photographic medium (see Chapter 2) and, two, the social experience of the diaspora (see Chapter 3). In this chapter, I reflect on how I attempted to explore this mediation process via the preparation and implementation phases of the *Shutter Stories* project. As I said in Chapter 1, this was the project I organised together with two renowned photography scholars in the Philippines (Terri and Ricky) and the five Indians and four Koreans whose photographic works were featured in the exhibition (for their names, see Tables 4.5.1 and 4.5.2), as well as with the support of two diasporic community organisations (namely Khalsa Diwan Inc., Manila and the United Korean Community Association in the Philippines) and one academic institution (namely the Konrad Adenauer Asian Center for Journalism at the Ateneo de Manila University). Whilst the photography exhibition itself was on public display from 22 to 28 August 2011 at The Block, SM North EDSA Mall in Manila, Philippines and then subsequently uploaded in a dedicated online website from October 2011 to March 2012, the entire project spanned twenty-one months, stretching from July 2010 to March 2012.

I begin the discussion below with a brief conceptual overview of participatory action research via the collaborative photography exhibition project. Drawing on key literature about this methodological approach, I highlight its crucial characteristics and define its value for the study at hand. I then provide an account of my engagement with the said approach. I talk about how I crafted and re-crafted the various research techniques I used during the different phases of the fieldwork. This covers the three research tools I used during the preparation phase of the fieldwork,

which were the life story interviews with seventeen Indians and fifteen Koreans from Manila, the focus group discussions with six sets of local Filipinos from different socio-economic classes, and the impressionistic analysis of contemporary Philippine mainstream media. It also covers the main research tool I used during the implementation phase of the research. This was the participant observation of the photography seminars for the five Indian and four Korean participants of *Shutter Stories*, as well as of the subsequent photography exhibition that featured the works of these nine participants.

4.1 Defining participatory action research via the collaborative photography exhibition project

It was primarily developing-world scholars from the 1970s and the 1980s who pioneered participatory action research as a methodological approach. These included, among others, Paulo Freire and Orlando Fals-Borda who were doing work in Brazil, Marja-Liisa Swantz in Tanzania, and Rajesh Tandon in India. Concerned with the complex social issues of their particular milieus, these scholars sought to engage in studies that contributed not only to scholarly inquiry, but also to social praxis (see Fals-Borda, 1981; Freire, 1972; Tandon, 1988; Swantz in Hall, 2005). Concretely, they wanted to acquire “serious and reliable knowledge upon which to construct power, or countervailing power, for the poor, oppressed and exploited groups and social classes—the grassroots—and for their authentic organisations and movements” (Fals-Borda, 1991: 7). They set out to do projects that embodied two key things. One was a commitment to a collaborative relationship between researchers and participants (hence the label “participatory”). The other was an interventionist intent that sought to address the perceived problems in particular social arrangements (hence the label “action”) (Kindon et al, 2007). As the works of different scholars suggest (for example, Green et al, 2003; Somekh, 2006; Wadsworth, 1998), it is still these collaborative and interventionist characteristics of participatory action research that continue to be the distinguishing hallmarks that tie together the increasingly diverse projects that are implemented under its rubric. These include projects on social auditing, natural resource management, clinical practice evaluation, higher education reform, organisational development, theatre

performance, and, of course, photographic production (for example, the collections of Day et al, 2002; Kindon et al, 2007; Reason and Bradbury, 2001).

The value of the collaborative nature of participatory action research lies in how it embodies the ideal of empowerment. This can most clearly be seen in how this methodological approach reconceptualises the relationship between researchers and participants. It breaks away from more traditional approaches to research that cast researchers as a subject doing the study and participants as an object being studied, positing instead that researchers are also co-participants and participants are also co-researchers. An important implication of this reconceptualisation is its assumption that the contributions of the participants in a research project are just as valuable as those of the researchers. The hope is that this contributes to redressing the power asymmetry that so often characterises the relationship between these two parties and, as a consequence, fosters an equality of esteem between them (Somekh, 2006). Moreover, this reconceptualisation opens up the possibility for participants to become more active in shaping the direction of a research project. Aside from taking on the traditional role of being interviewees, these participants can also co-plan, co-implement, and co-critique research projects (cf. Hart, 1992; Pratt, 2006; Pretty et al, 1995). In other words, these participants find themselves in a space that encourages them to engage in various kinds of creative work that hone their different skills. According to David Gauntlett, this condition helps in building resilience in people and, in so doing, contributes to ensuring that they are able to “face future challenges with confidence and originality” (Gauntlett, 2011: 245).

Meanwhile, the value of the interventionist nature of participatory action research stems from how it embodies the ideal of transformation. This is made evident in how this kind of research rethinks the relationship between scholars and society. Owing to the critical orientation of its pioneers,¹⁸ participatory action research simultaneously challenges the still-dominant positivist view that researchers are to assume a neutral stance, as well as an observer role. The said methodological approach instead asks researchers not only to provide a critique of

¹⁸ Kindon et al note that whilst the Marxist roots of participatory action research are often emphasised, its feminist roots are sometimes left unacknowledged. They take pains to point out how much feminism has contributed to the “aware[ness] of gendered divisions among participants, but also of the potentially gendering effects of poorly conceived [participatory action research practice]” (Kindon et al, 2006: 11-12). They also point out that “a feminist appreciation of social inequality as well as the masculinist nature of ‘research as usual’ speaks directly to the need for collaborative, participatory research” (*ibid.*: 12).

society, but also to contribute to addressing the problems that they perceive in it. As Bridget Somekh claims, participatory action research “starts from a vision of social transformation and aspirations for social justice for all” (Somekh, 2006: 7), asking of those who engage with it to “aim to act morally and promote social justice through research that is politically informed and personally engaged” (*ibid.*). According to the joint authors Gibson-Graham, such research entails exploring possibilities for establishing social arrangements that are other than those that are oppressive in their dominance. Their own work, for instance, involves engaging in concrete projects that seek to re-think how society understands the so-called “economy” in order to challenge the dominance of capitalism (Gibson-Graham, 2006). They say that the value of doing works like this does not necessarily lie in how these might succeed, although it would of course be ideal for them to do so. Instead, they say that the worth of these works lies in how these continually push us to think and act beyond the status quo (*ibid.*).

It is in light of the above that I decided to use participatory action research as the methodological approach for this study. As I have said in Chapter 1, my central concern in this work is about how the symbolic marginalisation of Indians and Koreans in the Philippine mainstream media takes away from these diasporic groups their capacity for voice and, as a consequence, their capacity for changing the society to which they belong. I therefore thought that the collaborative nature of participatory action research was appropriate to a study that sought to open up a space from which the Indians and Koreans in Manila might be able to tell their own stories about their diasporic lives. I also thought that the interventionist nature of the research was appropriate to a study that aimed to explore how the narratives of diasporas might be used to make the local Filipinos in Manila confront the complexities of their multicultural society.

Related to this, I decided to engage with participatory action research via the collaborative photography exhibition project because of the possibilities it offered for both empowerment and transformation. Before I elaborate on this, it must be said that I have yet to find literature about attempts at participatory action research that use the exact form as the approach I took. There are, however, works that provide a general discussion about the role of the visual in participatory action research (for example, Banks, 2001; da Silva and Pink, 2004; Mitchell, 2011; Pink, 2006). More importantly, there are also works that document approaches to participatory action

research that have elements resembling the work I did. This includes participatory photography, which entails handing over the camera to the participants as a way for researchers to gain insights into these participants' lived experiences (for example, Krieg and Roberts, 2007; Gonzales, 2003; Lykes, 1997; Singhal et al, 2007; Wang, 1999). There is also applied visual anthropology, which aims to use photographs as a way of making ethnographic data more immersive for the intended audience (for example, Collier, 1967; Lovejoy and Steele, 2007; Pink, 2006).

Some of the above-mentioned literature underscore the unique ability of the photographic medium to allow participants to advocate their own perspectives of reality. Sarah Pink explains that a photograph is exceptionally well suited to expressing such perspectives because of its fundamental subjectivity. This is because the image that appears within its photographic frame does not only represent reality. It also reveals "the thoughts, feelings, preferences, and ideologies of the photographer" (in da Silva and Pink, 2004: 158). This is echoed in the reflections of Lana Roberts, a participatory action research participant, who shares her belief that photography allows marginalised people like her to "reveal how [their world] is oftentimes much more different than those who are looking in imagine it to be" (in Krieg and Roberts, 2007: 155) and, crucially, to "prove and express [this] themselves rather than have someone else speak for them" (*ibid.*). As Singhal et al further contend, the process of constructing these photographs also "becomes a participatory site for wider storytelling, community discussion, and action" (Singhal et al, 2007: 217).

Much of this literature also points to the capacity of the photographic medium to make the narratives shared by the participants more accessible and interesting to a wider range of audiences. Here, I once again turn to Pink, who says that one of the advantages of using the visual in participatory action research is that it facilitates "transcultural communication", by which she means the sharing of experiences amongst two different groups of people (Pink, 2006). Similarly, Tracey Lovejoy and Nelle Steele underscore the power of visuals in both capturing the attention of its audiences and immersing them in the stories that are being presented (Lovejoy and Steele, 2007). At the same time, these scholars also warn about the double-edged nature of images. Pink says that whilst these images can allow audiences to "feel other people's feelings and sense their sensory experiences" (Pink, 2006: 88), they also often run the risk of making them

experience “what we think are *their* experiences in terms of *our own* cultural and individual biographic knowledge” (*ibid.*). As such, she suggests that texts be used to culturally contextualise the images that are being presented to audiences. Paralleling this, Lovejoy and Steel observe that when images are not provided with an accompanying text, there is often a greater risk for audiences to “make interpretations that [are] not in line with the ethnographic data...collected” (Lovejoy and Steele, 2007: 304). Because of this, they advice for images to be made to work with texts.

Before I conclude this section, it is crucial to note that I made the decision to use participatory action research knowing that the power relations created by an attempt at collaboration and the outcomes that arise from an attempt at intervention often tend to be complicated and, at times, even messy (Kesby et al, 2006; Somekh, 2006). I hope to have shown my awareness of this reality in Chapters 2 and 3, where I discussed the theoretical framework of this study. And I hope to do the same in Chapters 7 and 8, where I will discuss the empirical data I gathered. At the same time, it is also important for me to say that I persisted with participatory action research because of my strong commitment to building knowledge—whether by success or failure—about how to address the increasingly untenable status quo of Manila’s diasporas being symbolically marginalised in Philippine mainstream media and, in the process, open up the possibility for a future Manila that is truly cosmopolitan. I wanted, in other words, to do my own share in what Noam Chomsky describes as the difficult task of engaging works that embody our groping towards “true humanly, valuable concepts” (Chomsky in Chomsky and Foucault, 2006 [1971]: 55).

4.2 Engaging with participatory action research via the collaborative photography exhibition project

In this second section of the chapter, I discuss the process I went through in doing the fieldwork for this study (see Table 4.1). I start with the preparation phase for this research, which took place from July 2010 to June 2011. I talk about how I set out to understand the lived experience of multiculturalism in Manila primarily by conducting life story interviews with the city’s Indian and Korean diasporas, but also by having focus group discussions with the city’s local Filipinos and doing an

impressionistic analysis of the Philippines' Manila-centric mainstream media. Then, I move on to the implementation phase, which took place from June 2011 to March 2012. I narrate my exploration into how a collaborative photography exhibition might mediate diasporic voices by doing a participant observation of both the production and the consumption of *Shutter Stories*.

Table 4.1 The two key phases of the fieldwork.

Fieldwork Phase and Dates	Primary Research Tool	Secondary Research Tool(s)	Research Focus
<p>PHASE 1: Preparing for the Exhibition July 2010 to June 2011</p>	<p>60 to 90 minute life story interviews</p>	<p>-60 to 90 minute focus group discussions -impressionistic media analysis</p>	<p>characterising multiculturalism in Manila</p>
<p>PHASE 2: Implementing the Exhibition June 2011 to March 2012</p>	<p>long-term participant observation</p>	<p>none</p>	<p>understanding the mediation of diasporic voices from the point of production and from the point of consumption</p>

4.2.1 Phase 1: Preparing for the exhibition

4.2.1.1 Life story interviews

During the first phase of the fieldwork, my primary intent was both to understand the diasporic life experiences of Manila's Indians and Koreans and to explore how the texture of these experiences have been influenced by the Manila-centric Philippine mainstream media. I sought to probe the city's diasporic groups about the following key themes: their performances of and talk about Filipino-ness, as well as about Indian-ness or Korean-ness; their relationships with the locals, as well as with the other diasporic groups in the city; and their media consumption patterns and media talk, especially in relation to multiculturalism. For this task, I

chose to use the life story interview, a research tool geared towards identifying the significant everyday life experiences that participants choose to remember and to share (Atkinson, 1998).

Through the data that the life story interviews generated, I pieced together the complex ways in which the participants thought about their lives, as well as the ways in which their lives were embedded in wider social, cultural, and historical movements (ESDS, 2011; Maynes et al, 2008). These tasks were relevant to the study because people's issues about cultural identities and multicultural relations are said to be best understood in the context of the complex social dynamics of everyday life (for example, Edensor, 2002; Georgiou, 2007; Madianou, 2005). Moreover, the interweaving of the so-called real world and of the so-called mediated world is also said to be best examined at the level of the everyday, where people's common sense—or, in clearer terms, their sense of the common—is most clearly revealed (Silverstone, 2007).

4.2.1.1.1 The process of recruiting participants

In recruiting participants for the life story interviews, I attempted to balance two specific sampling principles. On the one hand, I aimed for maximum variation in terms of their age, migrant generation, gender, and socio-economic class. Apart from this, I also aimed to get a balanced number of the two most dominant Indian linguistic groups in the city, the Sindhis and the Punjabis, since the existing literature suggests that ethnicity is a crucial dividing line amongst Manila's Indian community at large (see Chapter 5, where I discuss this situation in greater detail). This qualitative approach meant of course that the set of participants I aimed to recruit far from mirrored the actual demographic statistics of the Indian and Korean communities in Manila. But then again, I did not really aim for this. Instead, I wanted to harness the key strengths of including a diverse group of people; at the same time that this sampling technique is able to highlight the unique experiences of each participant, it is also able to reveal significant shared patterns that cut across their individual cases (List, 2004; Patton, 2002).

I also filtered the participants through several case selection criteria. This included the following parameters:

(a) The participants should self-ascribe as Indian or Korean. This ensured that as long as they acknowledged their Indian-ness or Korean-ness, those who had mixed parentage could still be included in the study. Conversely, this also meant that those with Indian and Korean parentage who ascribed non-Indian or non-Korean cultural identities to themselves were excluded.

(b) The participants should be open to meeting and working together with members of other cultural groups in Manila. This allowed me to pre-select participants whom I could eventually ask to join the collaborative photography exhibition project component of this study.

(c) The participants should be at least eighteen years old at the time of the interview. This enabled me to assume that the participants could responsibly decide whether or not to join the collaborative photography exhibition project component of this study.

By getting in touch only with those Indians and Koreans who possessed characteristics that were most relevant to this study, I was able to shorten the search process (cf. Oliver, 2006).

To help me in my search for participants, I asked for the assistance of several key informants in gaining access to Manila's Indian and Korean communities. One was Karan¹⁹, a longtime Punjabi friend of mine who helped me get in touch with potential participants from both Manila's Punjabi Indian community and Sindhi Indian community. There were also three Korean university students, Hyung, Lee, and Linda, who introduced me to potential participants amongst their fellow Manila-based Korean students. Finally, there was Mena, a fellow academic who connected me with her network of Manila-based Korean professionals.

Whilst all of the above-mentioned key informants helped me extensively in the process of searching for participants, I still ended up having markedly different

¹⁹ The names of all the Indian and Korean key informants and participants in this study have been changed in order to keep their identities anonymous. The sole exception to this is Samir Gogna (also known as Sam YG and Shivaker), whom I had to name by virtue of the fact that he was the only Indian celebrity to have made an impact in the Philippine mainstream media (at least at the time of this writing). I had asked his permission about this and he graciously agreed.

experiences of trying to recruit Indian participants on the one hand and Korean participants on the other hand. With the Indians, I found that the help of a single community insider was enough to significantly facilitate my search for participants. Karan's act of connecting me with his contacts was enough to initiate a process wherein one contact introduced me to another contact, who introduced me to another contact, and so on. Crucially, these participants had no trouble in introducing me to other potential participants who fit the criteria I specified (for example, a Punjabi female student in her 20s or a Sindhi businessman in his 50s). With the Koreans however, I found that my initial contacts, who were all university students, could only connect me with Koreans who more or less belonged to the same cohort. The same was true with my subsequent participants in their late 20s, who were introduced to me by a Korean of a similar age, and my lone participant in his 60s, who was introduced to me by a Filipina businesswoman of a similar age. Because of these circumstances, I failed to ensure the age diversity of the Korean participants.

In the end, the uneven experiences I had in the recruitment process for the life story interviews meant that although the case selection criteria was fully implemented, the principle of maximum diversity was not. This left me with uneven sets of participants: a group of seventeen Indians who closely resembled the ideal sample I had in mind and, in contrast, a group of fifteen Koreans who were dominated by young university students (see Tables 4.2.1 and 4.2.2). This situation certainly posed some problems in data analysis, as I could not probe the views of the older Koreans with nuance. Interestingly however, this problematic situation had some value as well, as it foreshadowed the very different social dynamics of the Indian and Korean communities in Manila. Here I am referring to permeability of the rigid ethnic distinctions among the Indians (cf. Lorenzana, 2013; Salazar, 2008) and the significant social barriers raised by age divisions among Koreans (cf. Ferrante, 2008; Jouhki and Paaso, 2011; Kim and Ryu, 2005; Sohn, 2009). As I discuss in Chapter 8, this insight turned out to be a crucial finding in this study.

Table 4.2.1 Life story interview: Indian participants.

Name	Sex	Age	Civil Status	Ethnic Affiliation	Occupation	Migration History
Amisha	F	21	single	Other	freelance makeup artist	2nd generation
Sukhprit	F	19	single	Punjabi	university undergraduate student	2nd generation
Shilpa	F	26	married	Other	writer	1st generation
Jaswinder	F	40	married	Punjabi	money lender	3rd generation
Roshni	F	20	single	Sindhi	university undergraduate student	2nd generation
Samitra	F	51	separated	Other	antique dealer	1st generation
Ravinder	M	26	single	Punjabi	college student	2nd generation
Hardeep	M	33	married	Punjabi	money lender	1st generation
Charnjit	F	27	married	Punjabi	money lender	1st generation
Rakesh	M	53	separated	Sindhi	businessman	1st generation
Kuldip	M	26	single	Punjabi	jobseeker	2nd generation
Satwant	M	35	married	Punjabi	money lender	1st generation
Anil	M	23	single	Sindhi	advertising account manager	2nd generation
Preity	F	25	single	Sindhi	university postgraduate student	2nd generation
Samir	M	29	single	Other	media celebrity	2nd generation
Amir	M	25	single	Sindhi	businessman	2nd generation
Preet	M	22	single	Punjabi	advertising strategic planner	2nd generation

Table 4.2.2 Life story interview: Korean participants.

Name	Sex	Age	Civil Status	Occupation	Migration History
Jessica	F	22	single	university undergraduate student	1st generation
Ji Hun	M	20	single	university undergraduate student	2nd generation
KC	F	22	single	university undergraduate student	2nd generation
Su Yeon	F	26	single	university undergraduate student	1st generation
Sang Jum	M	21	single	university undergraduate student	1st generation
Eun Ji	F	29	single	university lecturer	1st generation
Sara	F	30	engaged	volunteer worker	1st generation
Min Sik	M	20	single	university undergraduate student	1st generation
James	M	62	married	businessman	1st generation
Daphne	F	33	married	businesswoman	2nd generation
Sonya	F	22	single	university undergraduate student	1st generation
Carl	M	42	single	businessman	1st generation
Sang Mi	F	24	single	university undergraduate student	1st generation
Hae Jin	M	24	single	university undergraduate student	1st generation
Matt	M	23	single	university undergraduate student	1st generation

4.2.1.1.2 The structure of the life story interviews

The structure of the life story interview guide that I prepared (see Appendix A) was loosely guided by the principles put forth by James Spradley in his work, *The Ethnographic Interview*. Specifically, the guide eschewed having a rigid sequence that was preoccupied with following a particular series of questions. Instead, it had a semi-fluid flow that was more concerned about striking a balance between what Spradley posits as the two distinct but complementary processes that

are the central elements of such a research tool: eliciting information and developing rapport. In practice, this meant that the interviews I conducted freely vacillated between conversations that revolved around the interview's central concerns and digressions that enhanced the openness between the participants and myself as the interviewer. Aside from this, the interview guide was comprised of many questions that were phrased according to Spradley's notion of a descriptive question, the defining characteristic of which is its ability to encourage participants to speak at great length and detail by having them talk about concrete scenarios. The particular scenarios that I raised were based on the key themes that I was attempting to look into (Spradley, 1979).

In the initial versions of the life story interview guide, the central themes that I probed drew heavily on the data from recent works about media and the diasporic minorities (for example, Georgiou, 2006; Gillespie, 1995; Madianou, 2005) and from recent studies on the lives of the Indian and Korean diaspora elsewhere in the world (for example, Brown, 2006; Laux and Thieme, 2006). Specifically, I asked the participants to share detailed accounts about the key points that constituted the trajectory of their diasporic lives. These included the migration stories of their predecessors, their present experiences in the city, and their future plans for themselves and, if applicable, for their children. I used these to gain a contextualised understanding of their responses to the subsequent questions that probed their discourses and practices about their cultural identities, the cultural others that they encountered in the city, and the media with which they engaged.

The latter interviews I conducted still focused on the participants' diasporic trajectories, discourses, and practices. In line with the qualitative nature of the research tool however, I refined some of my specific questions in order to focus more on the thematic patterns that were not necessarily discussed in previous literature, but were clearly emerging from my earlier interviews (K. C. Ho, personal conversation, 8 June 2007). Examples of these were the centrality of romantic relationships in the cultural identities of young Indians in Manila, the significantly different degrees of discrimination encountered by the Sindhi and the Punjabi Indians, the heavily classed identity of Koreans in the city, and the antagonism between Korean-born and Philippine-born Koreans, all of which I elaborate on in Chapters 5, 7 and 8. I also took the opportunity of asking more information-oriented questions from those participants whom I thought had the knowledge and/or

experience that qualified them to be key informants about certain understudied aspects of Indian and Korean life in Manila (cf. Rieger, 2007). For instance, I asked off-script questions about the life of a Philippine celebrity from Samir Gogna (aka Sam YG), an Indian participant who was a radio disk jockey (DJ) and television host. I also asked about the intricacies of the use of honorifics in the Korean language to a Eun Ji, a Korean participant who was a university lecturer on Korean culture.

4.2.1.2 Focus group discussions

Whilst conducting the life story interviews with Manila's Indians and Koreans, I increasingly noticed that there were significant differences in the way that these two diasporic groups experienced discrimination. As I reveal in Chapter 5, it seemed that the city's local Filipinos were more overtly discriminatory towards the Indians and were less so towards the Koreans. Unfortunately, there appears to be no existing empirical study that provides a comparative perspective on how these locals perceive the diaspora in their midst. I even consulted two leading scholars in the Philippine academia: the cultural studies critic Roland Tolentino (personal conversation, 27 January 2011) and the anthropologist Fernando Zialcita (personal conversation, 28 January 2011). Both of them confirmed this void in the literature. All of these made me realise that I was about to embark on *Shutter Stories* without having the adequate resources to understand the exhibition's target audience, who are a key component in planning such a photography exhibition (Krieg and Roberts, 2007).

Confronted by my lack of understanding of how Manila's local Filipinos thought about the city's Indians and Koreans and, equally important, how the media figured in this situation, it became imperative for me to talk to these locals. I wanted to listen to how they would talk about the city's diasporic groups and how they would draw from the media in the process of doing so. I also wanted to observe how they would discuss the rarely talked about, if at all, issue of multiculturalism amongst their fellow locals. To address both these goals, I used the focus group discussion as my research tool. I wanted to harness this tool's capacity for generating data not only about a particular group's shared social knowledge (via the talk of the participants), but also about how this said knowledge is discursively constructed (via the interaction of the participants) (Green and Brown, 2005).

4.2.1.2.1 The process of recruiting participants

For the focus group discussions, I selected the local Filipino participants on the basis of their social class. I wanted to gather participants whom I could put together in groups that would each represent one of the three key socio-economic classifications in the Philippines: the upper-class, the middle-class and the lower-class. To define each of these classifications, I relied on the work of Jonathan Ong (Ong, 2011), who provides a comprehensive conceptualisation of these by drawing from Bourdieu's theoretical understanding of class as a combination of various forms of capital that can be converted from one form to another (1985), as well as from the more concrete definitions of class posited by previous academic scholarship (for example, Pinches, 1999), market research reports (for example, Mercado, 2006), and government surveys (for example, Oblea, 2006) about the Philippines (see Table 4.3).

This purposive sampling technique was driven by my intent to explore whether and how social class might matter in the issue of Manila's multiculturalism. As many Philippine Studies scholars argue (for example, Pinches, 1999; Tadiar, 2004; Tolentino, 2011), this concept should be central in any serious social analysis of the country. They contend that Philippine society has been characterised by continually widening income disparities amongst its people that, in turn, has led to the increasing reinforcement of their longstanding divisions along social class lines (Usui and Mendoza, 2012). In relation to this, I wanted to assess two competing possibilities about the impact of social class on multiculturalism in order to see which of these applied better to the Philippine context. On the one hand, there is the argument that social class can overcome culture. The exemplar of this is Jeremy Seabrook, who says that social class affinity can, to some degree, trump cultural group affinity. He claims that the shared outlook between people who come from the same social class but from different cultural groups can sometimes serve as a stronger bond than the shared outlook between people who come from the same cultural group but from different social classes (Seabrook, 1996). On the other hand, there is the contention that culture can overcome social class. The exemplars of this are the recent works in migration studies that underscore how the ascent of neoliberalism has undermined the viability of multicultural societies around the world, most especially in the West (for example, Goldberg, 2009; Lentin and Titley, 2011; Roberts and Mahtani, 2010). These studies point to how the discourse of

migrants as economic competitors can cut across social class lines and unite a country's so-called locals against its so-called others.

Table 4.3 Socio-economic classifications in the Philippines.

Socio-economic classification	Definition
upper-class	<p>- from previous academic scholarship:</p> <p>“...the landed elite class (Aguilar 1998) who distance themselves in geographic and cultural terms from the poor who seek patronage (Kerkvliet 1990) and the middle-class that challenges their dominance (Pinches 1999)”</p> <p>- from the industry:</p> <p>“...a monthly income of PHP 50,001.00 pesos (or GBP 715.00) and above, an undergraduate degree from an ‘exclusive’ university, white-collar occupations as high-earning and ‘high-skilled’ business executive or professional, and a house located in an ‘exclusive subdivision / expensive neighbourhood enclave’ (McCann Erickson 2009)”</p>
middle-class	<p>-from previous academic scholarship:</p> <p>“...asserts discourses of resourcefulness and hard work in contesting the value of the ‘spoiled’ and privileged upper-class”; “in a precarious position (Parreñas 2001; Pingol 2001) because middle-class-ness could be easily ‘lost’ as a result of external calamities (for example, financial crises, natural disaster) or family tragedies (for example, death of breadwinner, family illness) in the absence of social safety nets and welfare state provisions”</p> <p>-from the industry:</p> <p>“...monthly income range of PHP 15,001.00 to 50,000.00 (GBP 214.00 to 714.00), college-level education from state colleges (with or without a diploma), occupations in ‘skilled’ and ‘technical’ jobs (including nurse, call centre agent, overseas worker, small-scale businessman), and houses in ‘permanent or semi-permanent conditions in mixed neighbourhoods’ (McCann Erickson 2009)”</p>

Socio-economic classification	Definition
lower-class	<p>-from previous academic scholarship:</p> <p>“...subject to studies of ‘coping mechanisms’ in light of poverty or disaster (Bankoff 2003; Hollnsteiner 1973; Jocano 1975) and creative uses of ‘idioms of persuasion, reluctance, and pity’ to draw recognition from the elite (Cannell 1999; also Kerkvliet 1990)”</p> <p>-from the industry and the government:</p> <p>“...monthly household income levels of below PHP 15,000.00 (GBP 213.00), high school or elementary education, occupations as ‘unskilled’ labour workers (including plumber, vendor, janitor, maid), and live in semi-permanent and temporary homes, usually in slum or ‘squatters’ communities (McCann Erickson 2009)</p> <p>“...not all lower-class individuals are officially considered ‘poor’. Government statistics mark the poverty line at daily subsistence of below PHP 42.00 (GBP. 060). Applying this convention, 33 percent of the entire population is recorded to live below poverty line (NSCB 2006), though total ‘lower-class individuals’ represent almost twice this number: around 64 percent of the population (AGB Nielsen 2006)”</p>

All in all, I was able to set up six groups that each had five to seven participants from the same socio-economic classification. Two of these groups were from the upper-class, two from the middle-class, and two from the lower-class (see Table 4.4). Beyond ensuring that the groups had participants from the same social class, I also sought to I put together participants who already had a significant degree of familiarity with one another. Because multiculturalism is a subject that local Filipinos usually have difficulty confronting in public settings (cf. Ang-See, 1992), I wanted to make the atmosphere in the focus group discussions as relaxed and as natural as possible. It was towards this end that I employed the peer group principle, which suggests that the selection of participants should closely mirror “natural clusterings of people” (Green and Brown, 2005: 66). In order to set up these groups, I identified key informants who helped me invite people who were already their longtime friends (as in the case of the mothers and the dentists), work colleagues (as in the case of the promotional merchandisers and the accounting department staff) , or classmates (as in the case of the former Out of School Youths

or OSYs and the university students). For the most part, the key informants also became part of the focus groups. The only exceptions were the university dean who helped me set up the focus group for the former OSYs and the assistant manager who assisted me in putting together the focus group with the promotional merchandisers, since these two were not part of the natural groups they had identified.

Table 4.4 Focus group discussion: Local Filipino participants.

Focus group description	Socio-economic classification	Number of participants	Sex	Age range	Focus group discussion venue
former Out of School Youths (OSYs) attending an intensive Philippine Education Placement Test (PEP Test) preparatory course at a local public university	lower-class	5	3 males 2 females	15 to 18	classroom at a local public university
contractual promotional merchandisers working for one of the country's leading telecommunications companies	lower-class	7	3 males 4 females	21 to 33	fast food restaurant
staff of the accounting department in a small garments enterprise	middle-class	6	4 males 2 females	34 to 60	office meeting room
dentists who were previously university classmates	middle-class	5	2 males 3 females	35 to 37	fast food restaurant

Focus group description	Socio-economic classification	Number of participants	Sex	Age range	Focus group discussion venue
university students at a leading local private university	upper-class	7	4 males 3 females	19 to 20	classroom at a local private university
a group of mothers who were previously elementary and high school classmates	upper-class	6	6 females	49 to 51	private residence of one of the mothers

4.2.1.2.2 The structure of the focus group discussions

Two traits of the focus group discussion guide that I prepared (see Appendix B) were similar to that of the life story interview guide: its semi-fluid structure and its emphasis on descriptive questions. Through these traits, I once again aimed to strike a balance between eliciting information from and developing rapport with the participants (cf. Spradley, 1979). Beyond these however, another key trait of the focus group discussion guide was its funnel approach to eliciting responses from the participants. Each section of the discussion began with general questions that were addressed to all the participants. This was meant to establish the inclusive character of the discussions. Subsequently, each of the sections would then progress towards more specific questions that were directed at particular participants. This was to enable me to follow up on the key themes that were emerging in the course of the discussions (Keyton, 2005).

Based on the ethnographic approach to understanding media audiences (for example, Alasuutari, 1999; Gillespie, 2005; Livingstone, 1998; Williams, 1961), the questions I crafted for the focus group discussion guide sought to understand the local Filipino participants in the context of their everyday lives. This was why I devoted the first section of the focus group discussion sessions to establishing both the personal histories and the present everyday routines of these participants. Whilst doing this, I paid special attention to their talk about the kind of media with which they engaged in their everyday lives, as well as the kind of consumption practices that surrounded these daily engagements. In the second section of the said sessions, I

probed the participants' relationships with Manila's diasporic groups. Here I asked questions that allowed me to compare the participants' knowledge of and actual experiences with these diasporic groups vis-a-vis the participants' opinions and feelings about the same groups. I also asked questions that allowed me to draw links between the participants' talk about Manila's diasporic groups and the participants' media engagement and media consumption practices. All these questions allowed me to generate two important sets of data. First, I was able to identify the hierarchy of races to which the participants seemed to implicitly subscribe and, as I would later on realise, to which the literature on the formation of the Filipino identity point towards (for example, Aguilar, 1999; Aguilar, 2005; Gaborro, 2008; Rafael, 2000; Rondilla and Spickard, 2007; Simbulan, 2005; Tiongson, 1984). Second, I was able to map out the ways in which the participants drew from the media as "resources for thought, judgment and action, both personal and political" (Silverstone, 2007:5), most especially as regards Manila's diasporic groups.

4.2.1.3 A short note on the impressionistic analysis of media texts

As the discussion above has shown, I took an ethnographic approach in seeking to understand whether and how the media mattered in the Indian and Korean participants' experience of diasporic life in Manila, as well as in the local Filipino participants' discourses and practices pertaining to the diasporic groups in Manila. My concern then was more about listening to what the two sets of participants had to say about the media and less about providing my own analysis of these (cf. Gillespie, 2005). Because of this, I did not engage in any systematic and sustained study of the way in which Manila's Indians and Koreans appeared (or, for the most part, did not appear) in the Philippine mainstream media. Nevertheless, I familiarised myself with the relevant media material because this allowed me to initiate a discussion about these texts during the interviews and the focus group discussions in order to elicit responses from the participants. This also allowed me to engage both the interview and focus group participants in those instances when they talked about the said texts during our conversations.

Throughout the duration of the preparation phase of this project, I was on the lookout for television, radio, print, and online news texts that featured Manila's Indians and Koreans. I also took the cue from both the interview and focus group participants by seeking out other such news texts that they happened to mention in

the course of our discussions. As I had expected, however, these materials turned out to be very few and far between. They were nevertheless valuable in affirming how the city's diasporic groups almost never appeared in the Philippine news media. If these migrants did make appearance, these tended to be in the most marginal of ways. This is something I discuss further in the next chapter.

Together with the above, I also immersed myself in the entertainment media texts that featured Philippine show business' sole Indian celebrity, namely Sam YG, and four most popular Korean celebrities, namely Ryan Bang, Grace Lee, Sam Oh, and Sandara Park. In the case of Sam YG, I watched five episodes of the television noontime variety show *Eat Bulaga* (where he was a recurrent guest) and listened to four editions of the primetime FM radio programme *Boys Night Out* (where he was one of the three DJs). For the Korean celebrities, I watched five episodes each of at least one of the television programmes in which they appeared: *Showtime* for Ryan Bang (where he was one of the celebrity judges), *The Sweet Life* for Grace Lee (where she was one of the main hosts), *True Confections* for Sam Oh (where she was one of the main hosts), and *Star Circle Quest* for Sandara (where she was one of the contestants). Additionally, I listened to four editions of the morning FM radio programme *Good Times with Mo, Mojo and Grace* (where Grace Lee was one of the three DJs) and watched the movie *Can This Be Love* (where Sandara Park was one of the lead stars). Aside from all of these, I also watched the entire airing of the television programme *Pinoy Big Brother Teen Edition 2010* because of how it featured Korean contestants, amongst other foreign nationals and Filipinos with mixed descent, and how it glaringly shunned Indian contestants. I listened as well to the songs of local comedians who poked fun at the Indians in the Philippines. Taken together, all these were crucial in allowing me to identify patterns in the way Manila's Indians and Koreans were represented in the local entertainment scene. I then attempted to compare and contrast my insights with what the interview participants were saying about their experiences about diasporic life in the city and with what the focus group participants were saying about the diasporic groups in the city. This is something that I discuss further as well in the succeeding chapter.

4.2.2 Phase 2: Implementing the exhibition

My central concern in the second phase of the fieldwork was to map out the possibilities and pitfalls of engaging in a collaborative photography exhibition such

as *Shutter Stories*. I sought to directly address the central research questions of this study from both the standpoints of production and consumption. In order to do this, I turned to participant observation, a research tool that allowed me to be simultaneously engaged and distanced from the *Shutter Stories* project. This enabled me to take the position of a “participant as observer” (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983: 93). On the one hand, I was a participant and an insider because of my role as project organiser, which required of me to work closely with the participants throughout both the photography seminars and the photography exhibition. But on the other hand, I was also an observer and an outsider because of my role as a researcher, which required of me to take a step back and examine the process that the participants and I were undergoing.

Being an insider-outsider allowed me to gain a sense of understanding about how the Indian and Korean photography exhibition participants found the project enabling and disabling of their individual voices (cf. Mac an Ghail, 1996). I was also able to generate “thick descriptions” about our shared experiences of the being involved in the project (cf. Geertz, 1983). In line with the considerations outlined in the theoretical framework of this study, which I established in Chapters 2 and 3, I observed how photographic properties and practices on the one hand and the various levels of the diasporic social experience came into play in the way that the participants crafted their photographs. For the former, I took note of how the participants approached the camera as a technology, engaged with photography as a discipline, and related with the photography scholars in their designation as seminar facilitators and with myself in my capacity as organiser and researcher. This is something I focus on in Chapter 7. For the latter, I paid attention to how the participants’ personal histories, their relations with the people in their particular diasporic groups, and their relations with the local Filipinos figured in the photographs that they took. This is something I elaborate on in Chapter 8.

My status as an insider-outsider also enabled to assess how local Filipinos engaged with the exhibition. I gathered feedback from the people who took time to view the *Shutter Stories* exhibition, whether they did so at The Block, SM North EDSA in Manila or via the dedicated website. For the photography exhibition at The Block, what I did was to take down notes of the varied reactions that I witnessed both as the exhibition organiser during the opening night and as a guide for the viewing public during the rest of the exhibition days. I also initiated informal

conversations with my colleagues, students, and friends who saw the exhibition. In the case of the photography exhibition dedicated website, I took down notes of the shares and comments that the exhibition link garnered after I posted it on Facebook. I also did the same for the conversations I had with my connections in the Philippine news media about whether and how they might feature the website in their respective platforms. All of these inform my analyses of the empirical data in Chapters 7 and 8.

4.2.2.1 The Process of Recruiting Participants

As I was hoping to maintain the degree of participant diversity that I had established during the life story interviews, my original plan involved getting at least ten Indian and ten Korean interviewees to also take on the role of participants for both the photography seminars and the photography exhibition. To prepare for this, I concluded all the life story interviews with a brief introduction of the *Shutter Stories* project, as well as a request for the participants to consider joining this endeavour. I followed this up by getting in touch with all the interviewees sometime in June 2011, a month before the photography seminars were due to begin. For this, I once again requested for the help my key informants Karan, Hyung, Lee, Linda, and Mena in scheduling a second face-to-face meeting with these interviewees, wherein I was hoping to once again invite them to join the project. In total, I was able to have a second meeting with twenty four out of the thirty interviewees I sought to meet, with the remaining six saying that they had other commitments that prevented them to meeting with me again.²⁰ Of the twenty three with whom I was able to talk, only fifteen showed keen interest in the project.

With the hope of trying to raise this number to the minimum twenty that I had set, I reiterated my invitation by sending a formal letter to all the interviewees via email. In this letter, I emphasised the potential benefits of the project for them. In particular, I highlighted how the renowned Konrad Adenauer Asian Center for Journalism at the Ateneo de Manila University (ACFJ) would award them certificates for joining the photography seminars, how their works would be featured in a public exhibition that will have an opening night wherein they could invite their own special guests for some cocktails, and how their works might possibly be

²⁰ I no longer invited Samir (aka Sam YG) and Eun Ji, as I later on decided to classify them as expert interviewees.

covered by the Philippine news media. By the middle of July 2011, which was a week before the photography seminars were scheduled, I managed to get confirmation emails from the same interviewees who showed interest during the second set of meetings. Unfortunately, the rest either sent their regrets or no longer replied.

A few days before the first seminar though, four of the fifteen potential project participants sent me emails or text messages saying that, due to unforeseen circumstances, they had to back out. And whilst all the eleven other potential participants attended the first photography seminar, only nine of them managed to stay on until the very end of the project. These were the five Indians and the four Koreans whose works were eventually featured in *Shutter Stories* (see Tables 4.5.1 and 4.5.2).

Interestingly, the nine participants who saw the project through shared a number of strikingly similar characteristics. They were all in their late teens to their early twenties, all unmarried, all students or graduates from top universities in the Philippines, and all with a prior interest in photography. I would argue that these were what probably made it easy for me to convince them to join the project, despite the intense level of commitment that it required of them. Their relatively young age and their unmarried status meant that they had schedules that were more flexible than some of the other life story interviewees, who might have been kept busy by their families or by their prominent roles in their businesses or professions. Together with this, their university experience made the photography seminars a familiar set-up, unlike some of the other interviewees who might have found the format rather daunting. Finally, their interest in photography meant that they were keen to learn more about it and get recognition for doing it too, unlike some of the other interviewees who might have been less interested in or more apprehensive about the craft.²¹

²¹ This also meant that all of them already had cameras that could take exhibition quality photographs, which meant that I did not have to source these equipment for them.

Table 4.5.1 The ‘Shutter Stories’ project Indian participants.

Name	Sex	Age	Civil Status	Ethnic Affiliation	Occupation	Migration History
Amisha	F	21	single	Other	freelance makeup artist	2nd generation
Sukhprit	F	19	single	Punjabi	university undergraduate student	2nd generation
Roshni	F	20	single	Sindhi	university undergraduate student	2nd generation
Anil	M	23	single	Sindhi	advertising account manager	2nd generation
Preet	M	22	single	Punjabi	advertising strategic planner	2nd generation

Table 4.5.2. The ‘Shutter Stories’ project Korean participants.

Name	Sex	Age	Civil Status	Occupation	Migration History
Sonya	F	22	single	university undergraduate student	1st generation
Sang Mi	F	24	single	university undergraduate student	1st generation
Hae Jin	M	24	single	university undergraduate student	1st generation
Matt	M	23	single	university undergraduate student	1st generation

4.2.2.2 The process of gathering project resources

Implementing both the photography seminars and the photography exhibition necessitated considerable costs. In order to help me with this, I sought the help of the Konrad Adenauer Asian Center for Journalism (ACFJ) via its Executive Director, Violet Valdez. Because my work fell in line with the organisation’s initiative to empower ordinary people to tell their own stories through photography, ACFJ pledged financial support that covered the learning materials for the photography seminars, the lunch for all the participants during the seminars, the

display materials for the exhibition, and the cocktails for the exhibition opening night. The organisation was also very generous in allowing me to work with Terry and Ricky in designing and executing the photography seminars, as well as in letting me access the expertise of its office staff in coordinating public events such as photography exhibitions.

I also approached two diasporic community groups to ask for their institutional support for *Shutter Stories*, so that the project would have greater credence both within their communities and with the wider public in general. In particular, I was able to talk to some of the key leaders of Khalsa Diwan Inc., Manila, which is the largest and oldest Indian organisation in the Philippines, and a marketing officer of the United Korean Community Association in the Philippines (UKCA), which is the umbrella organisation for all the Korean groups in the Philippines. Both of them allowed me to use their names and logos for the promotional materials for the seminars and the exhibition. They also helped promote the photography exhibition to their respective cultural communities.

4.2.2.3 The photography seminars

The nine participants of the *Shutter Stories* project underwent three photography seminars that were aimed at equipping them with the critical and technical skills in using photography to tell their stories about diasporic life in Manila (see Table 4.6 and Figure 4.1). The subject of the first seminar was Basic Photography. Facilitated by Terri, this session was comprised of two parts. One was a lecture that covered the basic functions of point-and-shoot and digital single-lens reflex (dSLR) cameras, as well as the key principles in framing, lighting, colours, and shapes. The other was a hands-on activity that required the participants to work in groups of three in order to take a set of photographs that included at least one image that emphasised each of the earlier mentioned principles.

Meanwhile, the second seminar was on Photo Stories, which was facilitated by Ricky. This session was also comprised of two parts. It had a morning lecture that introduced the participants to the various ways in which photo stories can be told, such as portraits, day in the life series, and ethnographic accounts. It also had an afternoon brainstorming activity, wherein the participants were asked to group together and discuss how to tell a story about Manila from the eyes of a local

Filipino and, subsequently, about how to tell a story about Manila from their own individual perspectives.

Towards the end of the second seminar, the participants and I discussed the aims of the photography exhibition that we were all working towards. For reasons that I shall explain in the next chapter, the participants and I came to an agreement that they were to construct individual photo stories reflecting issues about their diasporic lives that they wanted Manila's local Filipinos to know more about. With this settled, I requested them to complete their photo stories during the next six days and to save these on a flash drive, which they were to bring during the next session.

During the third and final seminar, the focus was on Photo Selection. Each of the nine participants took turns in presenting the photo stories that they came up with, as well as in critiquing the photo stories that their peers were presenting. Terri, Ricky, and I also joined in the discussions; the two photography scholars engaged the participants in discussions about how to improve their individual photographs and how to enhance the sequence of their photo stories, whilst I probed the participants about their motivations for crafting the photo stories that they did. This session ended with the photography scholars summarising the ways in which the participants could improve their works, with me letting the participants know that they had to finish editing their works two weeks before the photography exhibition opening night, and with everyone in the project coming together to have a light-hearted certificate awarding ceremony and a group photography session.

Table 4.6 The photography seminars.

Activity	Facilitator(s)	Date
Seminar 1: On Basic Photography	Terri	23 July 2011
Seminar 2: On Photo Stories	Ricky	24 July 2011
Assignment: Individual Photo Stories	n/a	25 to 30 July 2011
Seminar 3: On Photo Selection	Terri and Ricky	31 July 2011



Figure 4.1 Ricky and the participants during ‘Seminar 2: On Photo Stories’.

4.2.2.4 The photography exhibition

The seminars were followed by *Shutter Stories*, which, as I have said earlier, was the photography exhibition that featured the works of the nine project participants (see Table 4.7). This was first displayed publicly at The Block, SM North EDSA in Manila, which at the time of the project was the largest mall in the Philippines and the third largest mall in the world. The set-up for this particular exhibition included assembled boards that contained contextualising information about the photographs and a television that displayed the photo stories on loop (see Figure 4.2). This part of the exhibition had its opening night on 22 August 2011. It then stayed on display at The Block until 28 August 2011. Throughout this entire duration, a group of volunteer undergraduate students from the Department of Communication, Ateneo De Manila University and I staffed the exhibition and engaged the interested mall visitors in conversations about the nine participants’ photo stories.

Through the assistance of Leah Smith, an undergraduate student from the Institute of Communications Studies, University of Leeds, I also had the photography exhibition uploaded to a dedicated website. The site designed by Leah, which was up from 15 December 2011 to 31 March 2012, featured a home page that displayed the contextualising information mentioned above, as well as links to individual pages that each contained one of the photo stories of the nine participants (see Figure 4.3). Throughout the time that the site was live, I served as its administrator. I also sought to create traffic for it by posting its link on my Facebook

account and asking my friends to share it, as well as by asking my contacts in the Philippine news media to feature the site.



Figure 4.2 The ‘Shutter Stories’ photography exhibition at The Block, SM North EDSA in Manila.

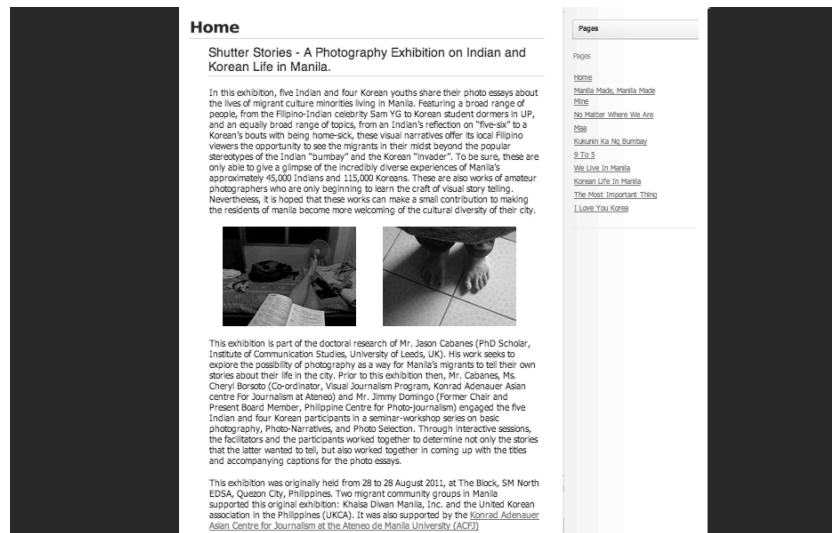


Figure 4.3 The ‘Shutter Stories’ photography exhibition homepage.

Table 4.7 The ‘Shutter Stories’ photography exhibition.

Activity	Date	Venue
Public Photography Exhibition	22 August to 28 August 2012	The Block, SM North EDSA, Manila, Philippines
Online Photography Exhibition	15 December 2011 to 31 March 2012	dedicated online website

4.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, I provided an account of how I conducted the fieldwork for this study. I opened the discussion by justifying my use of participatory action research as my general methodological approach and of the collaborative photography exhibition project as my specific interventionist strategy. I argued that both of these were relevant to the study at hand primarily because they mirrored my strong commitment towards what Gibson-Graham call “a politics of possibility” (Gibson-Graham, 2006: xiv) and what Chomsky refers to as our attempts to grope towards “true humanly valuable concepts” (in Chomsky and Foucault, 2006 [1971]: 55). More concretely, these allowed me to build knowledge — whether by success or failure—about how to address the increasingly untenable status quo of Manila’s diaspora being symbolically marginalised in Philippine mainstream media and, in the process, open up the possibility for a future Manila that is truly cosmopolitan.

I then talked about the research tools that I used for the two key phases of the fieldwork. First, I showed how I sought to understand the social context wherein I wanted to intervene through life story interviews with Manila’s Indians and Koreans, focus group discussions with Manila’s local Filipinos, and an impressionistic media analysis of the Manila-centric Philippine national media. The data that I generated in this phase is what I discuss in Chapter 5. Second, I showed how I employed participant observation in the implementation phase to explore the complexities of empowering the five Indian and four Korean project participants of this study, as well as to look into the nuances of the transformations that this project might have brought about in those local Filipinos who had encountered the exhibition. The observations I derived from all these inform my discussions in Chapters 7 and 8.

Chapter 5

On the Mediation of Multiculturalism in Manila

*“From the overbaked figures came the black people.
From the underbaked figures came the white people.
And out of the perfectly baked figures arose the brown people...”*

-Filipino Creation Myth

In this chapter, I aim to set the stage for the three subsequent empirical chapters that focus on the *Shutter Stories* project, namely Chapter 6 (where I present the photo stories crafted by Indian and Korean project participants), Chapter 7 (where I focus on how the voices of the Indian and Korean project participants were mediated by the photographic medium), and Chapter 8 (where I focus on how the voices of the Indian and Korean project participants were mediated by their diasporic social experiences in Manila). I provide an account of the situation that the *Shutter Stories* project sought to “interrupt” (Pinchevski, 2005). Specifically, I talk about the problematic mediation of multiculturalism in Manila, which is primarily characterised by the symbolic marginalisation of the city’s Indian and Korean diasporas.

The structure of this chapter is undergirded by Silverstone’s definition of mediation as a process in which meanings are socially circulated and, as a consequence, continuously transformed (Silverstone, 1999; 2005;2007; but see also Couldry, 2008; 2012; Livingstone, 2009; Madianou, 2005; Ong, 2012; Thumim, 2012). In an effort to follow the social circulation and continuous transformation of meanings, I examine the links between the discourse of multiculturalism in how the Manila-centric Philippine national media represent Manila’s Indians and Koreans (that is, the media discourse) and in how Manila’s local Filipinos talk about the Indian and Korean migrants in their midst (that is, the social discourse). Before I delve into the empirical data that I gathered during the preparation phase for the *Shutter Stories* project, I begin by explaining the mediation of Filipino cultural identity. This is an important and necessary first step, since the mediation of multiculturalism in Manila is inextricably intertwined with the said process of mediation. For this discussion, I turn to key works that shed light on how the notion of Filipino-ness has been represented in the Philippine media (for example, Cabanes, 2009; Tadiar, 2004; Tiongson, 1984) and on how it has been talked about by local

Filipinos (for example, Aguilar, 1995; David, 2005; 2009; Zialcita, 2006). I then shed some light on the mediation of multiculturalism produced by the dynamics between the media discourses and the social discourses about Manila's Indians and Koreans. On the basis of three key sets of data—from my life story interviews with Manila's Indians and Koreans, focus group discussions with local Filipinos, and impressionistic textual analysis of Manila's news and entertainment media—I contend that mediation of multiculturalism in Manila is one that contributes to what I call a problematic cycle of strangeness and estrangement, a concept that I develop throughout this chapter.

5.1 On local Filipinos and their cultural identity

5.1.1 'Mestizos' and 'indios'

I would argue that the most definitive characteristic of Philippine media's representation of Filipino-ness is how conflicted it is. This is most clearly manifested in how the media have depicted the physical appearance of Filipinos. Local show business has always been dominated by those who have the so-called *mestizo* look possessed primarily by those hyphenated Filipinos who have features that are strongly Western (for example, Spanish, German, Italian, and American) and, in recent years, strongly Oriental (for example, Chinese, Japanese, and Middle Eastern). It is these celebrities who often end up being the country's film and television superstars. Those who are thought to have the look of an *indio*—the stereotypical local Filipino with a flat nose, brown skin, and a small stature—have always been in the minority. Save for a few notable exceptions, they are often the ones who are relegated to playing bit roles (cf. Cuartero, 2010; Lo, 2008; Tiongson, 1984).

There is, however, a strong countercurrent in Philippine media that seeks to establish pride in Filipinos with an *indio* appearance. There are popular songs that urge its listeners to be proud that they are *pango* (flat-nosed) and *kayumanggi* (brown-skinned) such as the anthemic *Bayan Ko* (My Nation) and the rap piece *Tayo'y Mga Pinoy* (We are Filipinos) (Cabanes, 2009). There is also the fact that even if there are only a few local-looking movie stars, they count amongst their number the most legendary Filipino movie star of all time: Nora Aunor (Tadiar,

2004).²² More recently, there has been a surge in media attention about the ‘Cinderella stories’ of celebrities who, despite their local Filipino appearance, have had success in the global stage. The most prominent example of this is Charice, a hit-making pop singer in the American music scene (Santiago, 2012).

This schizophrenic approach that the Philippine media take in representing Filipino-ness is actually entwined with the equally contradictory currents that influence how local Filipinos approach their cultural identity. On the one hand, there is this persistence of a racially hierarchical view of local Filipinos, which is one of the unsavoury legacies of the country’s colonial past. On the other hand, there is the project of establishing a singular, all-encompassing, and unifying Filipino identity, which is borne out of the country’s postcolonial present. I explain more about these below.

5.1.2 An unspoken racial hierarchy and an insecure cultural identity

The predominance of *mestizo* celebrities in Philippine entertainment media is linked to the often unarticulated but deeply embedded racial hierarchy present in contemporary Philippine society. Whilst local Filipinos are reluctant to talk about this reality, a significant number of Philippine Studies scholars argue that most of these locals subscribe to the notion that those among them who are light- and fair-skinned belong at the top of the social ladder, followed by those who are brown-skinned, and finally those who are dark-skinned (for example, Gaborro, 2009; Rafael, 2000; Rondilla and Spickard, 2007; Tiongson, 1984).

One of the roots of this racial hierarchy is that the country’s present oligarchic elite trace their ancestry to those who, during the Spanish regime, were known as *filipinos* (those with a half-Spanish and half-*indio* blood) and *mestizos* (those with a half-Chinese and half-*indio* blood). As the historian Filomeno Aguilar recounts in his key work, *Clash of the Spirits*, these two groups experienced a rapid social ascent during the late Spanish colonial period. From being marginalised for having a

²² Tadiar describes Nora Aunor’s importance in contemporary Philippine popular culture this way: “It is difficult to attempt to depict, much less explain, the magnitude of Nora Aunor’s star power, the immense draw of a following that commands its own analytical category. In movie critics’ conversations, the most expressive sign and irrefutable evidence of the spectacular power of this greatest Filipina actress of all time is the hysteria of her fans. The ‘hysteria’ is as much about the formidable size of her following as it is about the imputed excessiveness of their devotion” (Tadiar, 2002: 703).

mixed heritage, they became Philippine colonial society's *principalia* (noble class), who challenged and eventually displaced the leadership role of the *indio*-descended *datus* (local village chieftains). It is also often said that it was through their cooperation that both the Spanish and, later on, the Americans ruled the *indio* majority. At the same time, it is often repeated that it was also through their efforts against the Spanish and American regimes that sovereignty was eventually won for all Filipinos.²³ It is because of this longstanding leadership role and their inherited political and economic power that local Filipinos with a mixed heritage—who are now collectively called *mestizos*—are accorded a high status in contemporary Philippine society. As a byproduct of this, all other local Filipinos who possess physical features similar to these *mestizos* are generally admired as well (Aguilar, 1999).

Aside from these political economic considerations, this racial hierarchy was also reinforced by the Western-oriented discourses propagated by some of the leading members of the *principalia*. Because of their desire to assure the Europeans that Filipinos were equal to their colonisers in stature, these members of the *principalia* worked very hard to present their compatriots as a civilised people. This involved limiting the notion of the Filipino to those who were part of the lowland Christianised Malay culture. They argued that because these lowlanders had been so thoroughly exposed to the influence of the Spanish, they could hardly be uncivilised. At the same time, these members of the *principalia* also closed-off the notion of the Filipino to the upland tribespeople, such as the Igorots and the Negritos. They argued that because these uplanders existed outside the ambit of the Spanish regime, they had remained barbaric. This double-move contributed to entrenching the idea that the dark-skinned people of the archipelago were inferior to everyone else (Aguilar, 2005). In a similar move, prominent members of the *principalia* during the American colonial period wanted to show the West their civility by supporting the establishment of the American education system. Unfortunately, this system propagated the idea that everything associated with the United States of America

²³ Whilst it is true that the *principalia* led the revolution against the Spanish and the independence movement from the Americans, it is also true that they vacillated between assimilation into and independence from both colonisers. Because of their privileged position in these regimes, they were not really inclined to challenge the colonisers. At the same time however, they also did not want to lose their leadership role over the Filipinos who were yearning for sovereignty (Aguilar, 2005; Simbulan, 2005).

was superior (Simbulan, 2005). Crucially, this included the idea of Anglo whiteness, which further cemented the superiority of the light- and fair-skinned *mestizos* over both the brown-skinned *indios* and the dark-skinned upland tribespeople (Gaborro, 2008).

Meanwhile, I posit that the countercurrent seeking to valorise the idea of the *indio* is tied to the ongoing project of Philippine postcolonial nationalism. As Randy David observes, many of today's local Filipinos are conscious about how their forebears did not really imagine themselves as belonging to a single nation. For the longest time, the people living within the islands of the Philippines thought of themselves to be part of separate communities that were distinguished along ethno-linguistic lines. In an attempt to move beyond this, today's local Filipinos have displayed an intense concern with establishing a kind of Filipino-ness that can rally the country's still heavily fragmented peoples together. They want to find a single distinct cultural identity that all of them can share and of which they can be proud (David, 2005; 2009). In practice, this project of Philippine postcolonial nationalism has usually translated into the country's political and cultural leaders pursuing nationalistic initiatives aimed at boosting pride in one's Filipino-ness. Unfortunately, many of these initiatives uncritically equate Filipino culture with the culture of the lowland Christianised Malays, as it is they who constitute the cultural majority of the population. As a consequence, they tend to deny the internal plurality of the cultures found in the Philippines, including that of the significant Muslim minority in the southern region of Mindanao and the wide array of indigenous cultural minorities that are scattered all over the country (San Juan, 1999).

A very prominent example of such a problematic undertaking is the national civics education curriculum in the country's publicly funded schools. According to Azada-Palacios (2011), the textbooks that are used to teach this module tend to overly emphasise national unity and social cohesion, and a homogenous national identity. As a consequence, these textbooks are unable to provide a sufficiently critical and inclusive view of Filipino cultural identity. A similarly misguided endeavour is Senator Lito Lapid's pending legislative proposal, which takes issue with the recent increase in business establishments that have posted signs written in languages other than the country's two official languages, which are Filipino and English (Ager, 2011). Senator Lapid says that he understands that these help the concerned shops attract their main customers, who are comprised primarily of the

country's migrant cultural minorities. But at the same time, he says that he is unable to accept that “[local Filipinos] are being alienated in [their] very own country, and [they] are left to figure out for [them]selves what these establishments are” (*ibid.*). Senator Lapid thus passionately argues that the government should not allow this, since it is their duty “to instil and maintain a sense of nationalism among the dwellers living within its jurisdiction, whether they are Filipinos or migrants” (*ibid.*). As such, he proposes that signboards across the entire archipelago should all be written in or translated to Filipino and/or English.

The anthropologist Fernando Zialcita makes an argument that runs parallel to that of David's (David, 2005; 2009). Zialcita says that today's local Filipinos are very insecure about their cultural identity, since they find it difficult to appreciate the notion that their culture derives from a plurality of influences. They constantly rue how their cultural identity has been heavily influenced by their precolonial encounters with India and China, as well as by their long-time colonisation under Spain and the United States of America (Zialcita, 2006).

Zialcita contends that one of key reasons for why local Filipinos are insecure about their cultural identity is that many Filipino cultural elites openly express their envy towards their Southeast Asian neighbours. For these elites, the cultural heritage of their neighbours seem much more distinctly Asian. They lament that whilst the Philippines' architectural heritage is primarily comprised of Spanish era Catholic churches, Indonesia has Borobudur and Cambodia has Angkor Wat. They also fret about how Filipino cuisine has names that sound too Spanish (for example, *adobo*, *mechado*, and *morcon*) or too Chinese (for example, *pancit*, *siomai*, and *siopao*) when other Southeast Asian food, like those of the Thai and the Vietnamese, have both unique names and unique flavours that are recognised the world over. Because of these and other similar concerns, they end up thinking that what they possess is a culture that is, at best, imitative, and, at worst, bastardised. In other words, they believe that their heritage is not exotic and, therefore, not authentic (*ibid.*).²⁴

²⁴ In a bid to contest this negative opinion that local Filipinos have about their cultural identity, Zialcita runs an introduction to cultural heritage module at Ateneo de Manila University. In this module, he teaches students to appreciate the uniqueness of Filipino culture by making them experience its various aspects through the different bodily senses, such as taste (which is explored via a degustation prepared by a local celebrity chef), touch (which is explored via a massage therapy seminar with a local professional masseuse), and sound (which is explored via a musical session with a local music expert).

From the insights in the key works I have shared in this section, it can be said that the mediation of Filipino-ness in contemporary Philippine society is characterised primarily by a negotiation between two things: the lingering colonial legacy of a hierarchical view of local Filipinos and the urgent postcolonial project of a unifying and distinct Filipino cultural identity. This mediation has made the predominant cultural identity discourse in the country a very introspective one, focused as it is in resolving this impasse. A key consequence of this is that local Filipinos seem unconcerned about understanding the diasporas in their midst and seem apathetic to the social issues that these diasporas confront (cf. Ang-See, 1992). This implication is something that figures in the next section's discussion of how the mediation of multiculturalism plays out in relation to the Manila-centric Philippine news and entertainment media. The mediation of Filipino-ness in contemporary Philippine society has also made local Filipinos loathe to think about their internal cultural diversity, as their focus has been firmly on establishing some degree of cultural homogeneity. Paralleling this, local Filipinos have also been reluctant to think about the increasing cultural diversity of Manila brought about by the increasing influx of diasporas in the city (cf. Teodoro in PNS, 2010). As I discuss in the next section, this has meant that, in both the media and in social discourses, there has been a lack of public discussion that problematises how local Filipinos have extended their skin-tone based racial hierarchy of themselves to their cultural others.

5.2 On local Filipinos and their cultural others

5.2.1 Manila's diasporas in the news media

There is no doubt that many of the issues raised in the Manila-centric Philippine national news media are relevant to the city's Indians and Koreans. These are, after all, issues of politics, economics, and national security that affect the quality of the everyday lives of all the the city's residents. What is problematic, however, is that the social concerns of Manila's Indians and Koreans very rarely make it to the news. Whilst doing an impressionistic media analysis during the preparation phase of the *Shutter Stories* project, I only managed to come across a handful of such stories, some of which I share later on in this discussion. Similarly, almost all of the local Filipinos who took part in the focus group discussions said

that they cannot recall having ever encountered any news item that talked about Manila's two largest diasporic communities.

I would argue that the key implication of the news media's (lack of) representation of Manila's Indians and Koreans is that it reinforces the discourse amongst local Filipinos that these diasporas are strangers. Moreover, this kind of representation also contributes to making local Filipinos feel that they are estranged from these diasporas. When I asked the local Filipino participants of the focus group discussions about what they knew about the lives of the Indians and Koreans in their midst, the most common response I got was "Nothing really." And when I asked them about what problems they thought these migrants faced, their answer was invariably "I don't know." Admittedly, I myself had very little awareness about the social issues that Manila's Indians and Koreans faced until I embarked on this study. In the course of my research, however, I realised that most of their issues were rooted in the only thing that local Filipinos seemed to know about them. This was the problematic stereotype that these migrants were relatively more well off than the average Filipino.

Recall that one of the stories that I shared at the very beginning of this dissertation was about Jaswinder (female, 49, Punjabi Indian) and her recollection of that time when she was held at knife-point by petty thieves. What I gleaned from the other Indians whom I interviewed was that Jaswinder's case is not an isolated one. It appears that many other Punjabi Indians are often exposed to physical harm. Those of them who are into *five-six* (or moneylending) are particularly vulnerable to this, since their work entails having to bring cash and bulky home appliances into some of the city's most economically depressed areas. Being only on a motorcycle or on foot, they become very tempting prey for those local Filipinos who, out of economic desperation, are already *kapit sa patalim*, which is a Tagalog idiomatic expression that literally translates to 'living life clutching onto to the blade of a knife'.

Meanwhile, some Punjabis are victims of crimes perpetrated by their fellow Punjabis. Ravinder (male, 26, Punjabi Indian) explained that the continually increasing Punjabi population in Manila has led to many *five-six*-related turf wars. Because earning from *five-six* is not easy, many Punjabis are vigilant in securing their customer base in areas where they are already established. Unfortunately, some of the more established Punjabis resort to violent means in order to scare off newly arrived Punjabis. The milder tactics include kidnapping them or their relatives and

asking for a ransom, whilst the more extreme methods include murder. Ravinder shared his own experience of this, saying

Although my father has been here for a long time, he still became a victim of [these turf wars]. It was his business partners who kidnapped him...Yes, they asked for a ransom. And we aren't really rich, as you can see. So that was a huge problem...After that [incident], we left the Philippines for a while. Who wouldn't get scared, right?...This time around, we are very careful about the Punjabis we do business with. And we also have only a very small circle of Punjabi friends. We wouldn't really want a repeat of that, would we?

Since most Sindhi Indians are upper class business owners, they are generally insulated from the kind of violence that the Punjabi Indians face. In many ways, these Sindhi Indians are like the well-to-do local Filipinos whose everyday lives primarily unfold in two particular “zones of safety” that are cordoned off from the “zone of danger” that is the rest of Manila (cf. Chouliaraki, 2006). One is the city's so-called first world hubs (Tolentino, 2011), which include the city's gated communities, high-end entertainment complexes, and private clubs, and the other is their private cars that traverse the city's iconic flyovers, which allow them to travel to and from the first world hubs with minimal interaction with the greater Third World realities outside their car windows (Tadiar, 2004). Nevertheless, Sindhi Indians do face their own set of problems. And out of all these, the one that seems to concern them the most is the difficulties that they encounter when they try to apply for a Filipino citizenship. They are often keen to undergo naturalisation because being a foreigner bars them from owning land and from having majority ownership of local companies. This means that their Indian citizenship prevents them from growing their businesses. Rakesh (male, 53, Sindhi Indian) explained that whilst the actual process of naturalisation might be fairly easy, the need to deal with some allegedly corrupt immigration officials made it frustrating. He said, “They're aware that [a Filipino citizenship] is important for our business. And you know how they are. It's either you give them *padulas* (grease money) or they'll give you a hard time.” Rakesh himself was discouraged by this, which was why he put off his naturalisation for a long time. In a separate interview, his son, Anil (male, 23, Sindhi Indian), told me of the tragic consequence of this. He recalled how his father put all his properties, including several houses, under the name of his wife, who is a Filipino citizen. There had really been no other way for him to acquire and expand

his wealth. “But then Mom left us a few years ago,” Anil shared. “She took all of Dad’s properties with her. Everything! So Dad had to rebuild our life after that.”

The other story that I shared at the beginning of this study was that of Ji Hun (male, 20, Korean), the university student who was the victim of an alleged extortion attempt by the local police. His story is representative of how many Koreans in Manila are like their Indian counterparts, in that they become a target of local criminals because they are perceived to be wealthy. Whilst it is true that most of Manila’s Koreans are better off than the average Filipino, they are not necessarily wealthy. James (male, 62, Korean) shared that many of the Korean entrepreneurs who came over during the past ten to fifteen years were usually those who had financial troubles back in Korea. They moved to Manila because they found it easier to start a new venture in a place where both materials and labour were cheaper. Meanwhile, he said that those who arrived during the sixties and seventies came to Manila to learn how to do business, as the Philippines was more economically developed than Korea at the time. “This is actually what landed me here,” he recalled. Similarly, the Korean students with whom I talked revealed that they belonged to middle and lower-middle income families in Korea. And just like the businessmen, they went to the Philippines in a bid to enhance their finances. Hae Jin (male, 24, Korean) put it vividly, saying,

The reason why I chose to study English here over the USA, Canada, Australia or the UK is the tuition difference. In my university here, it’s PHP 30,000.00 (GBP 450.00) per semester. In the USA, it’s 20 times that! My family doesn’t really have enough money for that. In fact, of all my high school classmates, only two eventually decided to study in those real English-speaking countries. The rest of us either stayed home or went here.

Despite the realities of their economic situation, Manila’s Koreans have to deal constantly with the consequences of the stereotype that they are wealthy. Whilst some of their experiences might not be as life threatening as that of the Punjabi Indians, they are nevertheless alarming for their frequency. One of the things the Koreans most commonly talked about during the life story interviews was how cab drivers charged them with extra fees for absurd reasons, such as those that are levied for heavy traffic (when Manila always has heavy traffic) and heavy rains (when Manila often has heavy rains). Alternatively, there were some drivers who refused to turn on their meters and instead asked them to pay an exorbitant rate. Sara (female,

30, Korean) said that she already resigned herself to this. “We’re foreigners here, so we can’t really do anything about it...I don’t really like it, but I pay anyway.” Sang Jum (male, 21, Korean) made a similar comment: “I know I’m only supposed to pay PHP 120.00 (GBP 1.80) from my place to my school. But the drivers usually charge me PHP 150.00 (GBP 2.25), PHP180.00 (GBP 2.70), or even PHP 200.00 (GBP 3.00). It feels bad that they do that to me. I would never do that to anyone. But I just accept [the practice]. I’ve learned to smile and just make a joke out of it.”

The Korean students I met also talked a lot about their mobile phones being stolen during their travels around Manila. Some have had their hand bags slashed whilst riding a *jeepney*, some their pockets picked whilst standing inside a packed train, and others their phones snatched right from their hands whilst walking on a busy street. Sang Mi (female, 24, Korean) opined, “I think this has happened to 70 percent of all the Koreans I know here. No joke.” Worse, she added, “This has happened to me twice already.” Some of them professed to being quickly able to ignore these incidents and move on. Matt (male, 23, Korean), for instance, said, “I only want to remember good things about the Philippines. So I don’t think of my stolen phone much.” For some others though, the theft of their mobile phones was something not easily forgotten. Hae Jin (male, 24, Korean) was one of those who spent a lot of time reflecting on his experience of this, as his mobile phone was stolen during his very first week in the city. “At first, I told myself that it’s just okay. Maybe this is part of Philippine culture. But the more I thought about it, the more I asked, ‘Why me? What did I do for this to happen to me?’ It’s a very scary experience, you know.” Unfortunately, even the most reflective of them had an attitude similar to Sara and Sang Jum. That is, they would rather not make a fuss of what had happened to them because they are foreigners and, as such, should not expect to be given priority by the local authorities. This leads me to the next point.

Some Koreans I interviewed alleged that local authorities are involved in scheming against them. Most of these did not sound systematic, as in the case of Ji Hun (male, 20, Korean) and the opportunistic local police who tried to frame him. Some cases, however, actually did sound organised. In my interview with Carl (male, 42, Korean) for instance, he said that some people in the Philippine government seemed keen to take whatever money they can from Korean businessmen like him. He talked specifically about the government’s recent campaign of closing down English language schools that took in Korean students

who did not possess the proper visas. He said that whilst he understood that local laws should be followed, there was something fishy in the government's demands. He said that the government's intent seemed to be less about helping the language schools and the students to comply with the law and more about getting as much as they can from the burgeoning number of such schools and such students in the city. "They ask for so much," Carl lamented. "They ask for special study permits, special working permits for the tour guides, BIR (Bureau of Internal Revenue) papers. A lot. A lot...I'm not saying that staying here illegally is correct. It's just that they should make it easier for the students to get these papers, not make it harder for them by asking them to pay for so many things."

Here, it is necessary to return to my earlier point that during my field work, there were a few instances when the social concerns of Manila's Indians and Koreans did make it to the news. I was able to see one television news report and two newspaper articles about the spate of kidnappings among the city's Punjabi community. But as expected, the television news report was given very little television airtime and the newspaper articles were buried deep in the inside pages of newspapers. More disconcertingly, the television news report was filled with erroneous details. The report featured a Punjabi man claiming to have been a victim of kidnapping by another Punjabi man. When I recounted this to Preet (male, 22, Punjabi Indian), he reacted furiously, saying, "Victim? Ask any Punjabi, and they'd tell you that he's the mastermind [of these kidnappings]!" True enough, I learned later on that the said victim in the news report was wanted for two cases: car-napping and double homicide. Related to this was Ravinder's (male, 26, Punjabi) disgust about how one leading broadsheet covered the kidnapping of his father, an incident which I mentioned earlier in this discussion. Ravinder lamented, "You wouldn't even have noticed [the article] was there...[and] all the information was wrong. Name, age, everything!" Unfortunately, such errors seem to be a common feature of the local news and are, in fact, present in many other news stories

(Teodoro, 2011).²⁵ The regularity of such errors notwithstanding, the repercussions of this kind of reportage are magnified in the case of the Indians in Manila because of how symbolically marginalised they are.

Whilst doing fieldwork, I also came across a broadsheet news article that looked at how Korean businessmen were victimised by certain government officials. It reported on how these corrupt authorities threatened the migrants with made-up legal cases if they did not agree to pay bribe money. However, most of the Korean participants I interviewed did not see the article (or any other similar report for that matter). What many of them observed with some concern was how the local news media tended to make repeated mention of a “Korean invasion,” especially in relation to the recent influx of young Koreans, most of whom have come to the country to take up English language courses or university degrees. Interestingly, many of the local Filipinos in the focus group discussions actually used this exact same phrase. Moreover, these local Filipinos also described the Korean students in Manila in ways that were very similar to those that circulated in the news media: “brash,” “unruly,” “noisy,” and the like. Ji Hun (male, 20, Korean) was especially sensitive about this. Because he grew up in the Philippines, he felt a greater affinity with his Filipino identity than with his Korean identity. He thus lamented, “Honestly, I love this country. I’m even banking on the fact that it’s going to rise one day. There’s so much talent here...So all this talk about an ‘invasion’ is very unfortunate.” Su Yeon (female, 26, Korean) also expressed her disappointment with these labels. She said, “[The news media] make it appear that we are here to steal from the Philippines. But we actually put in a lot of money. How much is my tuition? PHP 120,000.00 (GBP 1780.00)? Right?”

Based on the discussion above, I submit that the way in which multiculturalism is mediated via the Manila-centric Philippine news media contributes to a pernicious cycle of strangeness and estrangement between the Manila’s local Filipinos and its Indians and Koreans. By symbolically marginalising

²⁵ Because of the untrustworthiness of some journalists, many local Filipinos do not hold the institution of the press in high esteem. The journalism scholar Luis Teodoro (2011) argues that is very evident in the lack of public outrage about the killing of local journalists over the past few years. He says, “If journalists were as a rule more ethical and more professional, they would be doing better reporting and explaining the social, political and natural environment to the Filipino public, and as a result would be so valued in the communities that they would be protected by the people themselves and their loss universally lamented” (online).

the city's diasporas through exclusion (and, in some isolated instances, distorted inclusion), the news media reinforce the existing social discourse that these migrants are strangers; the local Filipinos know nothing about these migrants' lives nor of their very real social concerns. As a consequence of the stranger status of Manila's Indians and Koreans, the local Filipinos feel estranged from them. In turn, this estrangement further entrenches the status of migrants as strangers, which then makes the local Filipinos more estranged toward them. In the next section, I discuss how the Philippine entertainment media also contribute to this process, but through a different set of representational practices.

5.2.2 Manila's diasporas in the entertainment media

5.2.2.1 Reinforcing cultural group stereotypes

Despite the proliferation of these *mestizo/a* stars in Philippine show business (Cuartero, 2010; Lo, 2008; Tiongson, 1984), there are only a handful of mainstream media celebrities who self-ascribe as Indian and Korean. In fact, there are only five of them. One of them is Indian: Samir Gogna, who throughout the rest of dissertation I will refer to using his more popularly known screen name, which is Sam YG. And the other four are Korean: Ryan Bang, Grace Lee, Sam Oh, and Sandara Park. I would contend that these five have all managed to penetrate the *mestizo*-dominated Philippine entertainment media primarily by erasing or exoticising their cultural identities. For the most part, they have either rendered themselves "too close" (Silverstone, 2007: 172) by performing a cultural identity that is indistinguishable from Manila's local Filipinos or "too far" (*ibid.*) by performing a cultural identity that is extremely alien to these locals.

Of the five celebrities, it is Sam YG who has the most peculiar way of performing his cultural identity. Instead of just tending towards erasure or exoticisation of his Indian-ness, he constantly moves between these two polarities. To Manila's urban yuppies, Sam YG is his supposedly regular self, Sam, who is one of the three disc jockeys (DJs) in Magic 89.9 FM's controversially naughty radio program, *Boys Night Out* (BNO). When he is together with his co-DJs Tony Tony and Slick Rick, he emphasises that he is "one of the boys". This means downplaying his association with the conservative culture of the city's Indian community and playing up his belongingness to the Westernised culture of the Filipino socio-economic elite. Not only does Sam speak with the American-accented English of the

city's upper- and middle-classes, he also speaks candidly about the raciest and, sometimes, the most socially controversial topics (cf. Abjelina et al, 2011). To the *masa* (or lower-class) meanwhile, Sam YG presents himself as his alter ego *Shivaker*.²⁶ Making appearances not only on radio but, crucially, in mainstream television, he caricatures the idea of an Indian guru by exaggerating existing stereotypes about how Indians speak, gesture, and dress. This he does whilst giving tongue-in-cheek love advice—most of which are actually just lyrics from Filipino and Western popular culture songs—to fellow local celebrities or to audiences phoning-in (cf. Rañoa-Bismark, 2010).

The media personas of the Korean celebrities Grace Lee and Sam Oh are rather like those of Sam YG's Sam character. Their cultural identity performances emphasise their affinity with the Westernised culture of the Filipino elite rather than with the conservative culture of Manila's Korean community. They highlight how they are “excellent in English”, “independent”, “successful”, and even “sexually liberated” (cf. Leyson, 2004). Take for instance Grace Lee's on-air character in the Magic 89.9 radio program *Good Times with Mo, Mojo, and Grace Lee*, a show notorious for discussing racy topics despite its morning primetime schedule. Whilst more coy than her male co-hosts Mo Twister and Mojo Jojo, Grace Lee nevertheless gamely engages them in conversations that often involve the sexual proclivities of local celebrities, as well as the show's call-in audiences (cf. Sadiri, 2009). Although Sam Oh has a less controversial celebrity persona, she also hews closely to the stereotype of a socialite Filipina in her many media gigs. She always projects the image of a confident woman who is not afraid to share her thoughts, whether as a television host, a radio DJ, and a newspaper columnist (Caruncho, 2009).

That said, the more successful of the four Korean celebrities in the Philippines are the two who, like Sam YG's *Shivaker* character, caricature their cultural identities. Take the case of Sandara Park, the pioneering Korean in Philippine television and cinema. While she is presently known as the international star Dara, a member of the South Korean Pop Music (K-Pop) group 2NE1, she began her career in show business as a contestant in ABS-CBN television network's talent search program, *Star Circle Quest* (Rodriguez-Deleo, 2009). Although Sandara Park had no ability to act, sing, or dance, she eventually became extremely popular with the local

²⁶ This is a made up name that tries to be funny by simultaneously sounding Indian and alluding to the Filipino colloquial term *sibaker*, which is a playful label for a sex maniac.

fans by being a comically naïve and Filipino-loving Korean. She became most famous for her trademark wave, which she punctuated with exclamations of ‘*Mahal ko kayong lahat!* [I love you all!].’ Ryan Bang, the most popular Korean in contemporary Philippine show business, appears to have used the same route. Before becoming an ubiquitous presence in television, he also started out as a contestant in another ABS-CBN show, *Pinoy Big Brother* (Santos, 2010). It was in this programme that he first captured the attention of the local fans by reprising Sandara’s role of a comically naïve and Filipino-loving Korean. He also endeared himself to them via his own trademark move: forming the shape of a heart with his hands, thumping them on his chest, and proclaiming, ‘I have a Korean body but a Filipino heart!’

It cannot be denied that the five celebrities discussed above have been afforded some degree of symbolic power by the local entertainment industries (cf. Couldry, 2003; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2010). Not only do they each have a considerable amount of exposure in the media, they are also the only Indians and Koreans in Manila who have public visibility in such an important institution of cultural dissemination. As such, they have influence as regards how discourses about Indian-ness and Korean-ness are mediated in Manila. The fact remains, however, that the five celebrities are only minor stars when compared to the top-billing *mestizo*-looking and *indio*-looking celebrities who command considerable influence in the entertainment industry. So whatever “star power” they have would necessarily be minor as well. More importantly, the five celebrities are still only talents of the media companies with which they are affiliated. The final say in how cultural diversity is dealt with in the entertainment industry does not really rest with them. That power and, as a consequence, responsibility belongs to those in the media who craft, control, and cascade company policies. It is they who have the power of “the edit” (Silverstone, 2007: 141). And in practice, these people have only allowed the five celebrities to perform their cultural identity in ways that tend to be shaped and, at the same time, tend to reinforce existing derogatory stereotypes about Manila’s Indians and Koreans (cf. Rose, 2001).

Take the case of Sam YG. In a conversation I had with him (personal correspondence, 30 March 2011), I told him that I saw his media performances as a vacillation between erasing and exoticising his Indian-ness. Sam YG replied that my view was not entirely accurate. He said that whilst he was deliberate in constructing

his on-air personalities, his reasons had nothing to do with disrespecting or shunning his Indian heritage. If anything, he was very careful not to antagonise anyone from his community. As he put it, “I may make fun of things like our accent...I may say things that are not necessarily expected of Indians...but I never talk sh*t about Indians and Indian culture.” He further explained that his roles were actually expressions of his experiences as a migrant in a Manila.

On the one hand, Sam YG said that his *Shivaker* character was, to some degree, a reaction to his childhood experience of always being taunted for being a *bumbay*. Although he used to get infuriated by this, he has now learned that showing local Filipinos that he can laugh at himself dissuades them from teasing him. It is this logic that drives *Shivaker*, as Sam YG pointed out that the character “showed those who want to make fun of me, and all Indians in general, that, ‘Hey, I can make fun of myself better than you can. So go ahead.’” In other words, he thought of the character as a defence mechanism that allowed him to nurture his steadily increasing pride for his Indian heritage. On the other hand, Sam YG shared that his Sam persona was a very real reflection of his everyday self. He did not at all wish to deny his Indian roots, but he argued that he also has always had very strong Filipino and Western influences in his life. He grew up amongst his school friends, who were almost completely local Filipinos, and he now spent most of his time with his BNO co-hosts, both of whom grew up in the USA. He articulated this culturally diverse identity of his thus: “People usually think that I’m not the usual kind of Indian...But of course, I’m still Indian!”

During the focus group discussions, however, most of the discussions of the local Filipinos who knew Sam YG had a very different take on his *Shivaker* alter ego. Of course, they did not really know Sam YG’s reasons for playing the character. For them, *Shivaker* was, more than anything, a prompt for sharing the things they disliked about Manila’s Indians. Every time this character was mentioned, some of the participants would start ranting about Indians, saying things such as:

Indians here [in Manila] are all loansharks (*five-six*), aren’t they? I can’t say that I agree with that kind of livelihood. It’s very exploitative. (Agnes, 50, female, upper-class)

I wouldn’t really want to do anything with them. They’re cheats (*madugas*)! (Jorel, 40, male, middle-class)

Of course, everyone knows that the thing that is most wrong with them is that they're smelly (*mabaho*)! (Junjun, 22, male, lower-class)

Interestingly, all the labels they mention—*five-six*, *madugas*, and *mabaho*—appear to draw from the long established and well-ridiculed stereotype of the Indian as the *bumbay*: the smelly, turban-wearing, heavily bearded loan shark who travels around Manila in his motorcycle, preying on needy locals who are desperate enough to agree to borrow money or buy home appliances through their *five-six* (or twenty per cent interest) lending system (Salazar, 2008). These also seem to mirror the depictions of the *bumbay* that have been popularised by the songs of local comedians. These include Michael V's novelty music video entitled *DJ Bumbay*, which features an Indian selling cheap but defective wares (for example, a mobile phone with a car battery, an iron that heats up on the handle, and a sleeping mat that can fit ten people, but only if they stand up), as well as Blakdyak's song *Bumbay*, which tells of an Indian who is “*nakamotorsiklo, may dalang payong, may balot sa ulo, balbas sarado* [always on a motorcycle, with his umbrella, his headscarf, and his full-bearded face]”.

Unfortunately, I did not have the opportunity to talk to any of Manila's four Korean celebrities. Their published interviews, however, seem to indicate that their media personas are borne out of their own ways of coping with the same tension that Sam YG encounters, which is that of having both to reinforce and to challenge the boundaries of one's cultural identity. Below are snippets of the interviews:

(1) ON GRACE LEE: Did she feel like a stranger going back to Korea? “Not really. But I've been living here for a long time (*sic*) that I don't look like a Korean anymore...*alam ninyo ba nag-interview ako ng actors* [did you know that I interviewed actors] and out of five, three told me that I speak Korean very well. I told them I was Korean.” (Sadiri, 2007: online)

(2) ON SAM OH: “Have you heard of the ‘third culture’ syndrome?” she asks. “I can totally relate to that because while I was growing up, my parents were very mindful that I didn't forget I was from Korea...But when we went outside and we were with friends, our influences were very Filipino” (Caruncho, 2009: online)

(3) ON SANDARA PARK: *Hindi masabi ni Sandara na hinding-hindi na siya babalik sa Pilipinas. Kinunsidera na raw niya kasi ang Pilipinas bilang kanyang tahanan at Korea ang kanyang second home...Halos gabi-gabing umiiyak si Sandara bago ang kanyang pag-alis.* [Sandara could not promise that she would no longer return to the Philippines. This is because she already considers the Philippines as her home and Korea as her second home...Before her departure, she had been crying almost every night.] (Bonifacio, 2007: online)

(4) ON RYAN BANG: I've lived here in the Philippines for five years and I've been very happy since then. (*sic*) I am really lonely because my parents are back in Korea. (in Siazon, 2010: online)

Once again, what I got from the focus group discussions was that the local Filipinos were almost completely unaware of diasporic issues above. For them, talk about Sandara Park and Ryan Bang invariably became talk about the persistent notion that the Koreans in Manila are a weird lot. Their comments often included strongly derogatory labels, such as the following:

I see a lot of [Koreans] around. But I don't really talk to them. They're just too strange (*kakaiba*) for me. (Bernice, 19, female, upper-class)

Have you seen the way that they dress up? It's like they're abnormal (*abning*). You wouldn't see me wearing the things that they wear. (Sandro, 37, male, middle-class)

Koreans? I think they're crazy (*sintu-sinto*)! (Arnie, 15, male lower-class)

This notion of the 'weird Korean' has become so persistent that the leaders of certain Korean community groups have started being concerned about it. In a conversation I had with the Korean scholar Kyungmin Bae (personal conversation, 10 March 2011), she talked about how one such organisation launched a series of seminars for Korean students in Manila that aimed to provide advice on how best to fit in with the local Filipinos. Bae says, "They especially tell those students who go around in groups to try not to draw attention to themselves. They ask them not to be noisy, not to occupy the middle of the street, things like that" (*ibid.*)

It is clear from the discussion above that the Philippine entertainment media's representation of its Indian and Korean celebrities often falls into two types. One is that this representation enacts an erasure of their cultural identities, as in the case of Sam YG's Sam character, Grace Lee and Sam Oh. The other is that it enacts an exoticisation of the celebrities' Indian-ness, as in the case of Sam YG's *Shivaker* character, and of their Korean-ness, as in the case of Sandara Park and Ryan Bang. As in the case of the news media then, the entertainment media also reinforce the existing social discourse of the Indian and the Korean as a stranger and the existing public sentiment of estrangement towards these migrant groups. The mediation that happens here is one that fuels the negative views of the Indian as the *bumbay* and of the Korean as weird and, as a consequence, is also one that entrenches the problematic cycle of strangeness and estrangement that I posited earlier.

5.2.2.2 Reinforcing an other-oriented hierarchy

In this next section, I underscore a second, but equally crucial, insight I have regarding the mediation of multiculturalism in the Philippine entertainment media. Here I start with my observation that the entertainment media's representation of Indians and Koreans are beginning to diverge. Whilst the media continue to represent Indians almost exclusively as the *bumbay*, they have begun to slowly broaden their representational repertoires for Koreans. For example, five of the ten so-called "teenternational" housemates featured in the reality television programme *Pinoy Big Brother Teen Edition 2010* were Koreans living in the Philippines (with the other five contestants being Australian, American, Canadian, Taiwanese, and Hong Kong Chinese living in the country as well). Because the programme aired daily for two months, it allowed its local Filipino audience a glimpse into the interactions amongst the Korean youth and, as a consequence, into the cultural norms that govern many members of Manila's Korean community. Towards the end of my research, I also learned that GMA television network started airing a series entitled *Koreana* (Korean Girl). This soap allowed its audiences to follow the story of its half-Filipino and half-Korean heroine through her journey of discovering her cultural roots and, in the process, her hybrid cultural identity. Finally, a few months after my fieldwork, I saw that one of the biggest Philippine fashion brands, Bench, began using Korean models and, crucially, explicitly indicating their cultural identity

as Koreans. This could very well be an indication that Korean-ness is beginning to attain an aspirational status in the local market.

I have also seen the difference in the way that the Philippine entertainment media have refracted the recent global ascent of the Korean entertainment industry's *Hallyu* (the Korean Wave) (Kim, 2008) and of the Indian entertainment industry's *Bollywood* (Govil, 2008). On the one hand, the Philippine media seem to be receptive to the popularity of *Hallyu*, as they have allowed a huge influx of *Koreanovelas* (Korean soap operas) and *K-Pop* (Korean popular music) hits in the country. On the other hand, the local media have not appeared to catch on to the increasing global recognition of Indian popular culture, as evidenced by their general disinterest in distributing Indian films, television series, and music.

The above-mentioned developments have not necessarily made Manila's local Filipinos more aware and more accepting of the Koreans (and for that matter, the Indians) in their midst. At least this is what the focus group discussions indicated, since the participants continually talked about Manila as if it were a city populated by culturally homogenous people. Nevertheless, it has been argued that these developments have contributed to the increasing appreciation that many local Filipinos have for Korean culture (see Hicap, 2011; Meinardus, 2005) and, unfortunately, to the continued diffidence of the locals towards Indian culture (see Lorenzana, 2013; Salazar, 2008).

Of course, the crucial question to ask here is why the Philippine media represent Indians and Koreans differently. In this matter, I find Roland Tolentino's (personal conversation, 27 January 2011) insight important. According to him, the ultimate criterion for whether and how something makes an appearance in the local media boils down to the all-important question, "*Bebenta ba?* (Will it sell?)". And as my focus group discussion data indicated, the media might indeed be responding to their audience's own preference for Koreans over Indians. It appears that the focus group discussion participants from across all the social classes subscribed not only to a racial hierarchy of themselves as Filipinos, but also of their cultural others. Whilst this is equally as implicit and as persistent as the locals' racial hierarchy of themselves, it is governed by a unique set of dynamics. Unlike most other racial hierarchies where affinity is reserved only for those at the top rung of the racial ladder, this particular hierarchy seems to allow for the possibility of both affinity and reservation at all the rungs of its ladder.

The local Filipino participants in the focus group discussions said many good things about most of the cultural others they have encountered. They seemed generally enamoured by them, regardless of which cultural group they belonged. For one, they talked about the physical traits they liked about in other cultural groups: the “beautiful eyes” of the Middle Easterners, the “*matangos na ilong* (pointed nose)” of the Indians and Americans, and the “*kutis porselana* (porcelain skin)” of the Chinese, Koreans, and Japanese. The local Filipinos also pointed out the cultural traits they liked from other cultural groups. They said that:

I think that Americans are the friendliest people in the world. I’d certainly want to have them as friends. (Anna, 18, female, lower-class)

I’m sure you’ve heard about this, but they always say that the Chinese are known to be industrious...And they’re very good with business...That’s why they’re taking over the world economy. (Henry, 60, male, middle-class)

Don’t the Koreans and the Japanese have the fastest Internet connection speeds in the world? It’s amazing how technologically advanced they are! (Tim, 20, male, upper-class)

Finally, the local Filipinos also professed to liking foreign—but primarily Western—stuff over local ones. Some of things they mentioned were as follows:

MEDIA PRODUCTS: Oh no, I never watch our *telenovelas*...[but] yes, I’m addicted to *Koreanovelas*. (Jianna, 20, female, upper-class)

FASHION BRANDS: One of my biggest dreams in life is to buy my own Hermés bag. (Lottie, 35, female, middle-class)

TECHNOLOGICAL DEVICES: Of course I’d prefer the iPhone to a MyPhone [which is a local mobile phone brand]! (Toto, 27, male, lower-class)

At the same time, the local Filipino focus group discussion participants also had their litanies of what they perceived to be the appalling cultural traits of other cultural groups. And for the most part, they recited this with much conviction. Take, for instance, the following:

[Americans] have boyfriends and girlfriends at twelve. Imagine that. What a very immoral country! (Cora, 51, female, upper-class)

One of my friends told me that I shouldn’t even think of doing business with the Koreans. It’s because he himself got duped by them. And I’m talking about a US-educated guy, mind you. (Jenna, 45, female, middle-class)

From what I've experienced, [my Indian neighbours] take a bath only once a week. I mean, you can't do that here. It's too hot! You're bound to smell! (Erwin, 26, male, lower-class)

Curiously, most of the participants avoided saying derogatory things about the physical traits of others in my presence, except for the often-repeated claim that Indians are smelly and that the Chinese are unhygienic.²⁷ I surmise that this is because they were wary that I might think of them as racists. Having spent almost all of my life in Manila, however, I do know that my fellow locals often poke fun at the appearance of foreigners. Among many others things, they label the Japanese “*sakang* (bow-legged)”, the Chinese “*singkit* (slit-eyed)”, the Middle Easterners “*mabaho* (smelly)”, the Africans “*uling* (coal)”.

It is crucial to point out, however, that the participants display different levels of affinity and reservation about the different cultural groups that they mention. And I contend that the interplay between these two feelings form the basis of the locals' racial hierarchy of their cultural others. Those that the locals have the most affinity for and the least reservations about occupy the top of the hierarchy, whilst those that the locals have the least affinity for and the most reservations about occupy the bottom of the hierarchy.

The focus group discussions indicated that like the locals' racial hierarchy of themselves, they also followed a skin-tone based principle in their racial hierarchy of their cultural others. It appears that the participants placed the Westerners—whom they generally defined as Americans—at the top of this hierarchy, as they said the most positive comments and the least negative comments about this group. Meanwhile, they placed the Orientals in the middle, with the Chinese as their most favourite, followed by the Japanese, and then by the Koreans. Finally, they placed the Middle Easterners, the Indians, and, when mentioned, the Africans at the bottom. Aside from the general tenor of the participants' talk about other cultural groups, their subscription to a racial hierarchy was also revealed by their talk about specific

²⁷ According to the sociologist Jayeel Cornelio (personal conversation, 14 July 2011), this might be because local Filipinos believe that their obsession with cleanliness is the only ace up their sleeve against those from other cultures. He argues that this is a modern “weapon of the weak” (Scott, 1985), which they deploy against those cultural others who seem better off than they are. Perhaps, the historical roots of this lie in the American colonial regime's civilising project of reforming Filipinos' personal hygiene and social practices in order to lift them out of being a “contaminated race” (Anderson, 2006: 159).

topics that I raised during our conversations. I give some examples of these topics below.

One such topic was my question about whether the local Filipino participants in the focus group were interested in having what they called “foreigner partners”. Almost all of them said yes. Lottie (35, female, middle-class), for one, was very vocal about her desire to have a so-called foreigner partner. She said, “Not everyone here will say it, but of course, most of us women dream of that! No offence, okay? But honestly, white guys have so much more to offer than Filipino men. They generally look better. They’re generally richer. I can go on and on...Right?” Similarly, Phil (20, male, upper-class) talked about female foreigners as a “dream” for Filipino men. “I’d become super-cool if my friends saw that I was going out with an American girl. I mean, that doesn’t happen very often, so it would be a feat!” Very tellingly however, Lottie, Phil, and most of the other participants often assumed that when I said foreigner, I meant a white—usually American—person. When I probed about the possibility of the participants having a relationship with a *chinito* (someone with oriental features), they remained enthusiastic, although less so. I would say that Lester (22, male, lower-class) articulated the sentiments of most of the participants rather well when he said, “*Parang mas matindi kapag puti, pero puwedeng-puwede pa rin naman ang chinita!* (I’d say white girls have much more impact, but oriental-looking girls are still more than all right!)”. Finally, when I raised the possibility of the participants having a relationship with Indians, for example, many of them expressed reservations. There were some, however, who said that they would at least be open to such a possibility. One particularly interesting reaction came from Elena (18, female, lower-class), who shared that one of her aunts actually had an Indian partner. She shared,

Tingin ko mas okay pa rin sila sa Filipino, kasi marami silang pera. Pero kung ako, ayoko. Kasi kung mag-aasawa na lang din ako ng foreigner, e di Amerikano na lang. Parang mas mabait kasi sila. Eh iyong asawa kasi ng tita ko, nambubugbog (I think [Indians] are still better than Filipinos because they have a lot of money. But if it were me, I wouldn’t think of marrying one. I mean, if I would marry a foreigner, then I’d go for an American. They seem nicer. My aunt’s husband beats her up).

Clearly, the hierarchy held in this discussion.

Another focus group discussion topic that brought out the local Filipinos hierarchical view of their cultural others was the one about whether they were all

right with foreigners taking up residence in Manila. As in the case above, almost all the participants said that it was all right with them that foreigners take up residence in Manila, especially if these foreigners were white. Some of them even sought to explain the benefits of having the whites living in Manila:

I think [having more and more white people in Manila is] a sign that our country's going on the up-and-up. *Ibig sabihin, sikat na tayo. Kasi hindi na nila tayo ini-isnub* (That would mean that we've already gained popularity. Because they aren't snubbing us anymore). (Helena, 49, female, upper-class)

Of course, of course! They're the ones who start up these companies that bring in the jobs [for us locals]. (Henry, 60, male, middle-class)

Syempre problema din 'yang mga yan. Tulad ng mga rape na nangyayari, hindi ba?...Pero ewan ko lang. Parang kasing kung susumahin mo, mas marami silang magandang naibibigay sa atin. (Of course they can be a problem too. Like with the rape cases wherein they're involved, right?...But I don't know. It seems to me that, all in all, they do more good than harm to us.). (Lolong, 29, male, lower-class)

A significant number of the local Filipinos also valued the presence of the Orientals, most especially the Japanese. Echoing the sentiments of some of the other participants, Anna (18 female, lower-class) said, "*Okay lang na nandito sila. Mababait at galante kaya ang mga Hapon* (It's okay that they're here. You know, the Japanese are known to be very kind and very generous)." Giving a specific example about how generous the Japanese are, Jenna (45, female, middle-class) pointed out that "The Japanese have always been helpful to us...Look at our flyovers. You'll see plaques saying they were donated by Japan, right?" However, many of the local Filipinos also had reservations about those whom they referred to as their fellow Asians. Tim captured this shared sentiment quite well when he said, "At the end of day, [our Asian neighbours] are our competition...We have to be careful about how we share our resources with them, because you can never say...I think of them as 'frenemies' [or friends who are also enemies]. So naturally, I'm a bit wary about them." Whilst the local Filipinos also extended their welcome to the Middle Easterners and Indians, they were certainly more ambivalent about the benefits of these two migrant communities. For the Middle Easterners, their key concern was about terrorism. Invariably, the local Filipinos would make a comment about how they were afraid that these foreigners were training terrorist groups in the Muslim-dominated areas in the southern region of Mindanao or were planting bombs themselves. For the Indians, the discussion, as I have already indicated early,

would mostly centre on the benefits but, more than this, the problems that arise because of the *bumbay* and their *five-six* moneylending scheme.

5.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, I argued that the mediation of multiculturalism in Manila can only be understood in relation to the broader dynamics of the mediation of Filipino cultural identity. As such, I attempted to show how most local Filipinos today are focused on establishing a singular and unifying cultural identity that all Filipinos can share. I pointed out that their preoccupation is more about what makes them culturally homogenous, rather than what makes them culturally diverse. In the same way that this contemporary project of postcolonial nationalism has made Manila's locals reluctant to confront the issue of their internal cultural diversity, it has also made them inattentive to the issues brought about by the increasing cultural diversity of the city's growing diasporic population (cf. Ang-See, 1992; Teodoro in PNS, 2010). Similarly, this project of postcolonial nationalism has also meant the locals' continued reluctance to discuss publicly the persistence of their unspoken racial hierarchy not only of themselves, but also of their cultural others.

Together with this, I also aimed to describe how the mediation of multiculturalism in Manila plays out. I sought to trace the links that threaded together how the Manila-centric Philippine news and entertainment media represented the city's Indians and Koreans and how Manila's local Filipinos talked about the these two diasporic groups. Using the data I gathered during the preparation phase of the *Shutter Stories* project, I revealed how the mediation of multiculturalism has been one that elides any serious attempt at a nuanced understanding of these groups, fuelling instead the stereotype of the Indian as *bumbay* and the Korean as weird. I also sought to develop the argument that this kind of mediation has helped produce a pernicious cycle of social strangeness and estrangement between the city's local Filipinos and its Indians and Koreans. This cycle refers to how it is that the more the local Filipinos think that the Indians and Koreans are strange, the more estranged the locals Filipinos become from these migrants. And the more estranged these local Filipinos are from the Indians and Koreans, the more the local Filipinos think that these migrants are strange.

It is this notion of the cycle of strangeness and estrangement that became the basis of the design of the *Shutter Stories* project. In an attempt to contribute to breaking this cycle through an “interruption” (Pinchevsky, 2005), it became the goal of this particular collaborative photography exhibition project to create a space in which Manila’s Indians and Koreans could share their stories about their migrant lives. The hope was that allowing these migrants to craft photo stories that presented the diverse aspects of their diasporic experiences would help local Filipinos go beyond the usual stereotype of the Indian as *bumbay* and the Korean as weird and, as a consequence, reduce the strangeness and estrangement they feel towards these diasporic groups. In Chapters 7 and 8, I reflect on the ways in which the *Shutter Stories* project succeeded as well as failed in this endeavour. But before these analytical chapters, I first present the *Shutter Stories* photo stories in the next chapter.

Chapter 6

The 'Shutter Stories' Photo Stories

"Of course there's really no such thing as the 'voiceless'. There are only the deliberately silenced, or the preferably unheard."

-Arundhati Roy, Peace & The New Corporate Liberation Theology

Before I embark on an analysis of *Shutter Stories* in the next two chapters, I find it imperative to first present the photo stories of the five Indian and four Korean participants of the project. Here, I show their works that attempt to break the problematic cycle of strangeness and estrangement that I posited in the previous chapter. I do this in a manner that tries, in an admittedly limited way, to approximate the appearance of these images during the public exhibition in Manila and on the dedicated website. I have arranged the photo stories according to the sequence in which they were originally presented. I have also included the textual messages that framed the entire photography exhibition (which I wrote), as well as the captions that accompanied the individual photo stories (which the participants wrote). My hope is that this will somehow allow the readers of this study to take the position of "the viewing public" in engaging with the project participants' photo stories and, as a result, be able to evaluate my subsequent discussion in relation to such an experience.

6.1 The introductory text

The introductory text that I wrote for *Shutter Stories* was printed on a "cintra board" during the public exhibition (see Figure 4.2 in Chapter 4). It also occupied the homepage of the dedicated website (see Figure 4.3 in Chapter 4). Its main blurb read as follows:

In this exhibition, five Indian and four Korean youths share their photo stories about the lives of migrant cultural minorities living in Manila. Featuring a broad range of people—from the Filipino-Indian celebrity Sam YG to Korean student dormers in UP—and an equally broad range of topics—from an Indian's reflection on "five-six" [or moneylending] to a Korean's bouts with being homesick—these visual narratives offer its local Filipino viewers the opportunity to see the migrants in their midst beyond the popular stereotypes of the Indian "bumbay" and the Korean "invader". To be sure, these are only able to give a glimpse of the incredibly diverse experiences of Manila's approximately 45,000 Indians and

115,000 Koreans. These are also works of amateur photographers who are only beginning to learn the craft of visual storytelling. Nevertheless, it is hoped that these works can make a small contribution to making the residents of Manila become more welcoming of the cultural diversity in their city.

Accompanying the above was an explanatory note, which stated:

This exhibition is part of the doctoral research of Mr. Jason Cabanes (PhD Scholar, Institute of Communications Studies, University of Leeds, UK). His work seeks to explore the possibility of photography as a way for Manila's migrants to tell their own stories about their life in the city. Prior to this exhibition then, Jason and two renowned photography scholars—Terri and Ricky—engaged the five Indian and four Korean participants in a seminar-workshop series on Basic Photography, Photo Narratives, and Photo Selection. Through interactive sessions, the photography scholars and the participants worked together to determine not only the stories that the latter wanted to tell, but also how to tell these stories best through photographs. They also worked together in coming up with the titles and accompanying captions for the photo stories.

There was also a paragraph listing the project sponsors:

This project is supported by two migrant community groups in Manila: Khalsa Diwan Manila, Inc. and the United Korean Association in the Philippines (UKCA). It is also supported by the Konrad Adenauer Asian Center for Journalism at the Ateneo de Manila University (ACFJ).

6.2 The photo stories

6.2.1 ‘Kukunin Ka Ng Bumbay (The Bumbay Will Come And Get You)!’

PARTICIPANT: Amisha (21, female, other Indian)

“Sige ka, kukunin ka ng bumbay!” is a petty scare commonly used by *yayas* to get their *alagas* to behave. In this photo story set in the land of Philippine showbiz-- a territory usually restricted to locals and mestizos-- this phrase takes on a different meaning. Here, you will see how a full-blooded but Philippine-born Indian has managed to go beyond this stereotype. By balancing his two characters, TV and radio host Sam YG aka Shivaker has won the hearts of Filipinos through the local media scene.

Figure 6.1.1 Amisha’s caption 1.²⁸



Figure 6.1.2 Amisha’s photo 1.

²⁸ The Tagalog word *yaya* translates to nanny, whilst the word *alagas* translates to wards.



Figure 6.1.3 Amisha's photo 2.

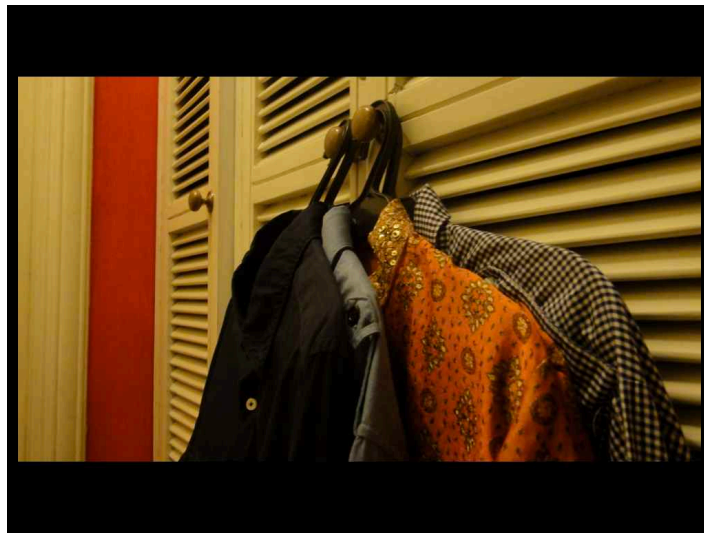


Figure 6.1.4 Amisha's photo 3.

Sam steps out of the house with his whole day ahead packed in his bags, geared up for his meetings, hosting stints, and radio show.

Figure 6.1.5 Amisha's caption 2.

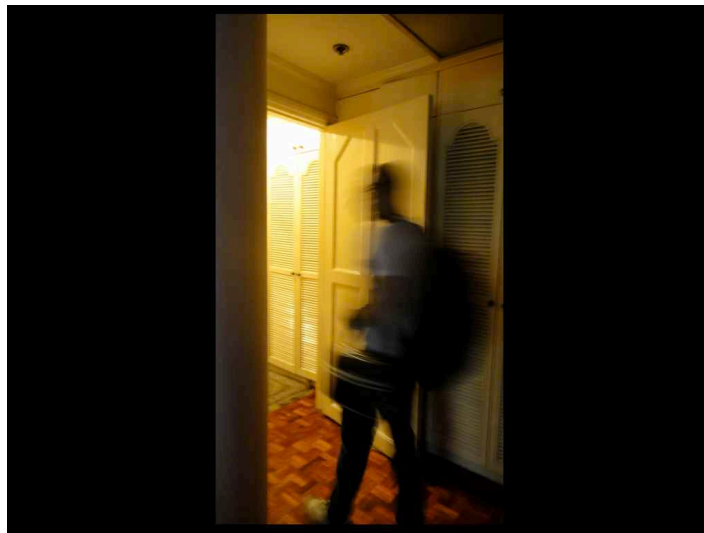


Figure 6.1.6 Amisha's photo 4.

Twice a week, Sam guests as a judge for a segment in Eat Bulaga, the Philippine's longest running noon time show. *Shivaker* has been widely introduced to the local TV scene through frequent guest appearances in this program. Now having gained the acceptance of the Philippine audience, Sam returns to deliver the same entertainment sans the costume.

Figure 6.1.7 Amisha's caption 3.



Figure 6.1.8 Amisha's photo 5 (L) and 6 (R).



Figure 6.1.9 Amisha's photo 7.



Figure 6.1.10 Amisha's photo 8.

Sam has been on FM radio since he was a university junior, which is why he has the moniker Sam YG (Sam the Young Guy). His weeknights are dedicated to his radio show Boys Night Out, which he hosts with partners Slick Rick and Toni Tony. Although requiring the most energy of his daily tasks, Sam considers this gig his first love. Here, he gets to make the drive home from work more enjoyable for listeners, as well as make time to meet and greet visitors at the station.

Figure 6.1.11 Amisha's caption 4.

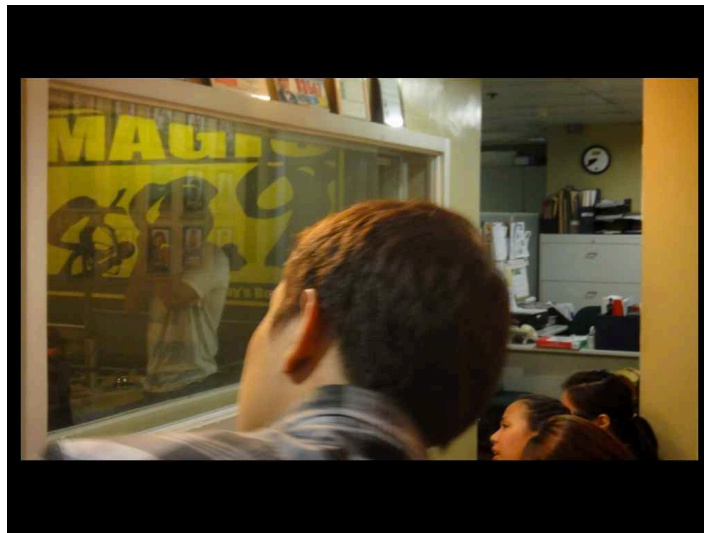


Figure 6.1.12 Amisha's photo 9.



Figure 6.1.13 Amisha's photo 10.



Figure 6.1.14 Amisha's photo 11.



Figure 6.1.15 Amisha's photo 12.

6.2.2 '9-5'

PARTICIPANT: Preet (22, male, Punjabi Indian)

This photo essay aims to show how my father's hard work as a moneylender has helped me be where I am right now. Because he rode his motorbike every single day in every single condition possible, I was able to finish university and take on a job in one of the top advertising companies in the country. For him, the toil, mockery and disrespect are worth it, just as long as his children would not have to go through the same hardships of moneylending.

Figure 6.2.1 Preet's caption 1.



Figure 6.2.2 Preet's caption 2.



Figure 6.2.3 Preet's photo 1.



Figure 6.2.4 Preet's photo 2.



Figure 6.2.5 Preet's photo 3.

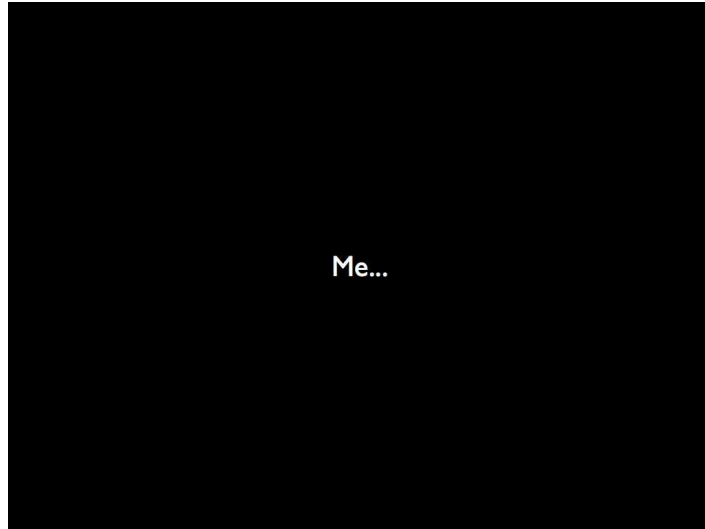


Figure 6.2.6 Preet's caption 3.

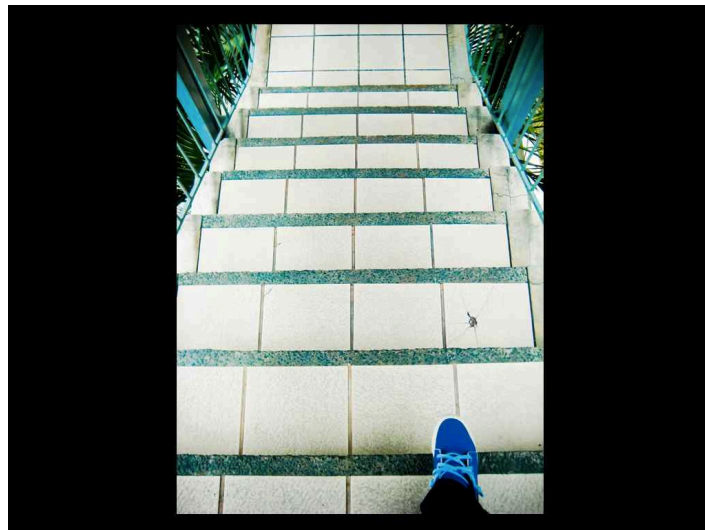


Figure 6.2.7 Preet's photo 4.

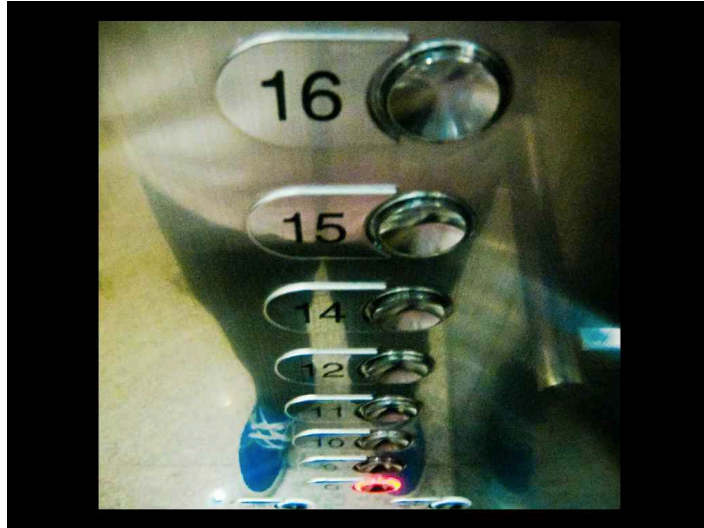


Figure 6.2.8 Preet's photo 5.

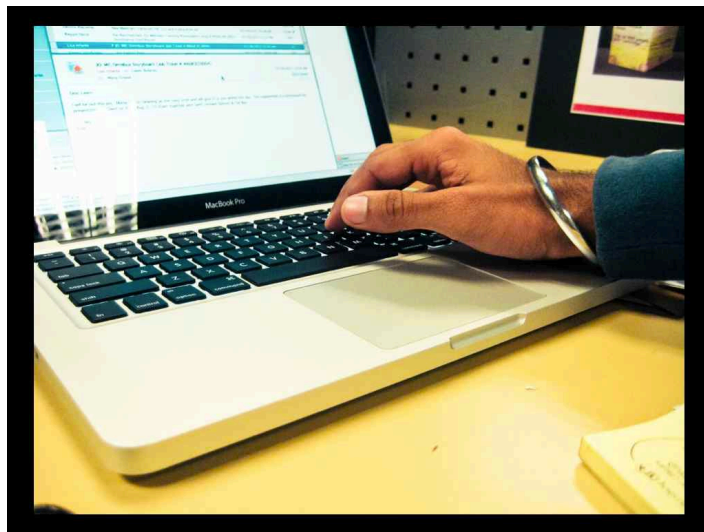


Figure 6.2.9 Preet's photo 6.



Figure 6.2.10 Preet's photo 7.

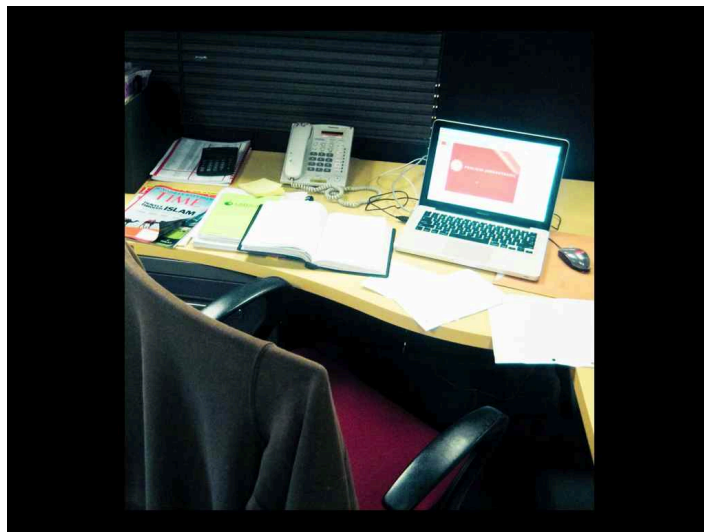


Figure 6.2.11 Preet's photo 8.



Figure 6.2.12 Preet's photo 9.

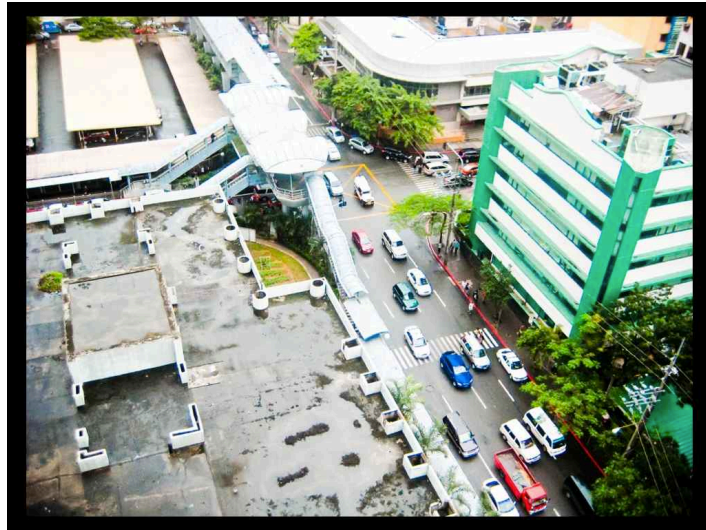


Figure 6.2.13 Preet's photo 10.

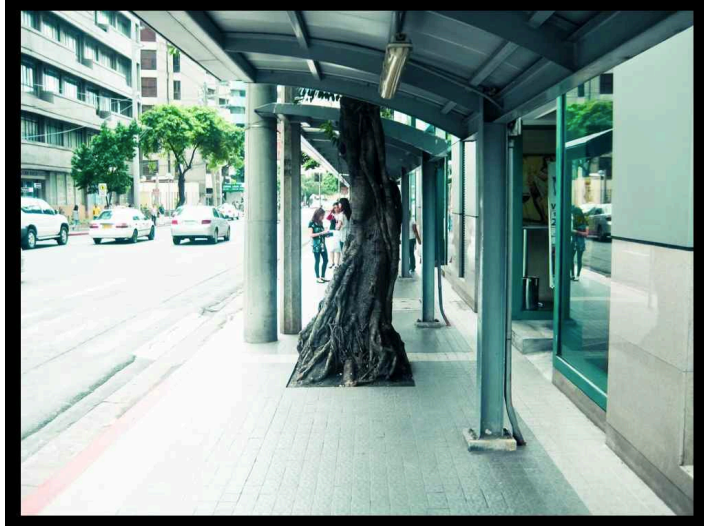


Figure 6.2.14 Preet's photo 11.



Figure 6.2.15 Preet's photo 12.



Figure 6.2.15 Preet's photo 13.

6.2.3 'Korean Life in U.P. (University of the Philippines)

PARTICIPANT: Matt (23, male, Korean)

"In this photo essay, I want to show the life of Koreans in the U.P. International Dorm. I want to show the ways in which we try to save money (by washing our clothes in our rooms), we study (by working with other people in the lobby), and we deal with depression of being away from home (by talking to other Koreans around). These aren't all the things we do, but I just wanted to give a glimpse of how we are."

Figure 6.3.1 Matt's caption.



Figure 6.3.2 Matt's photo 1.



Figure 6.3.3 Matt's photo 2.



Figure 6.3.4 Matt's photo 3.

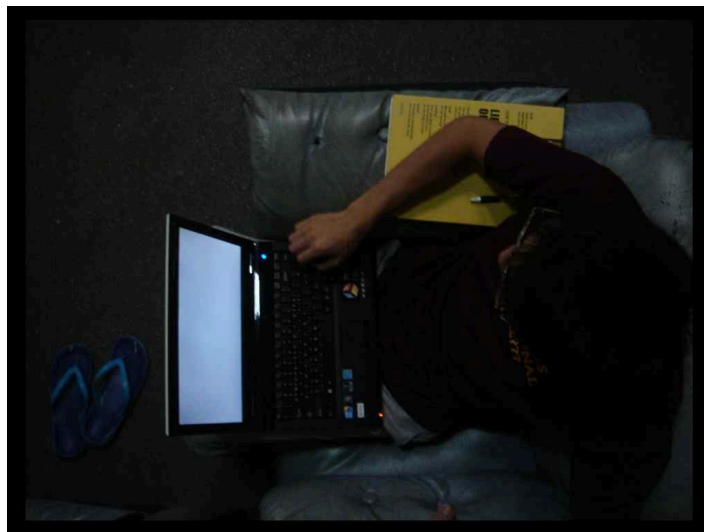


Figure 6.3.5 Matt's photo 4.



Figure 6.3.6 Matt's photo 5.

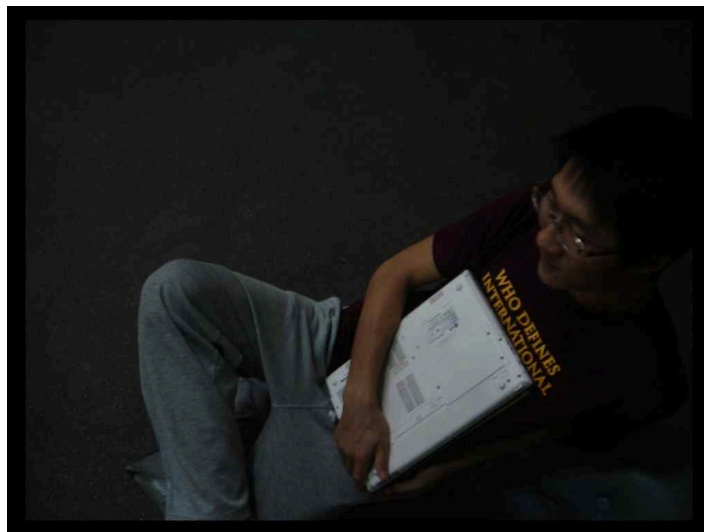


Figure 6.3.7 Matt's photo 6.

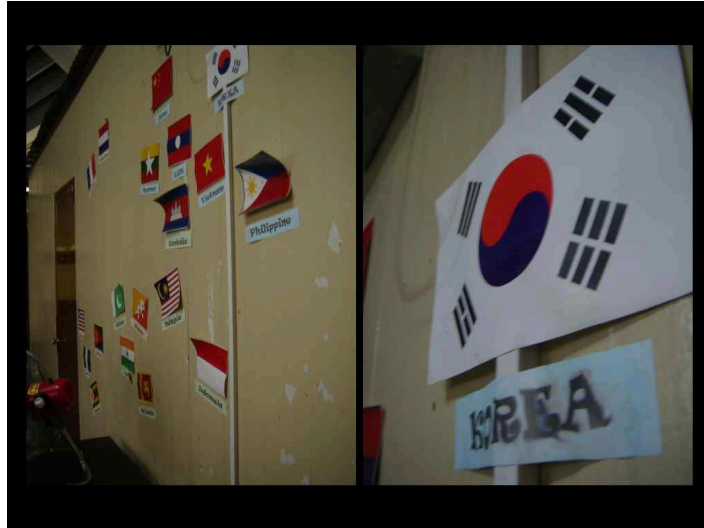


Figure 6.3.8 Matt's photo 7 (L) and 8 (R).



Figure 6.3.9 Matt's photo 9.



Figure 6.3.10 Matt's photo 10 (L) and 11 (R).

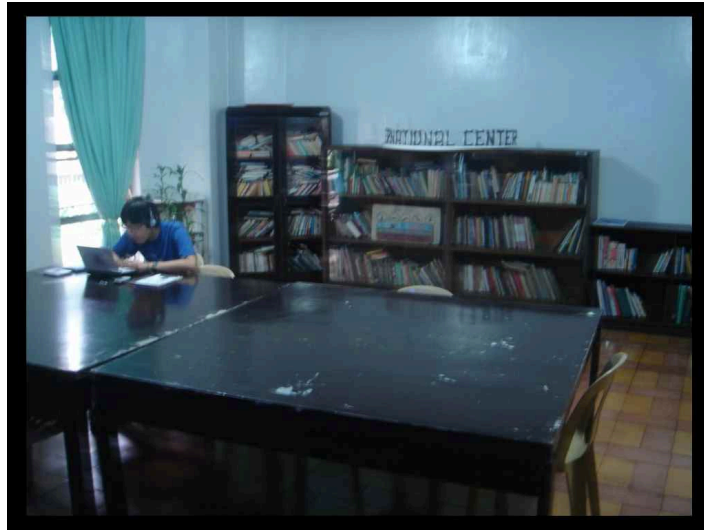


Figure 6.3.11 Matt's photo 12.



Figure 6.3.12 Matt's photo 13.

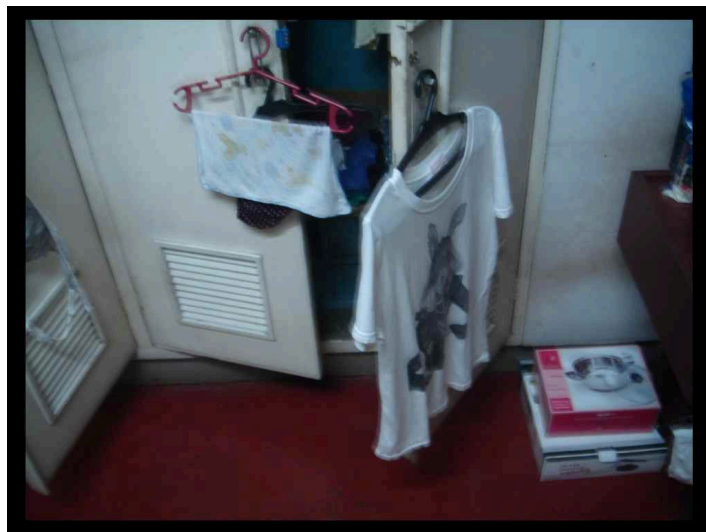


Figure 6.3.13 Matt's photo 14.

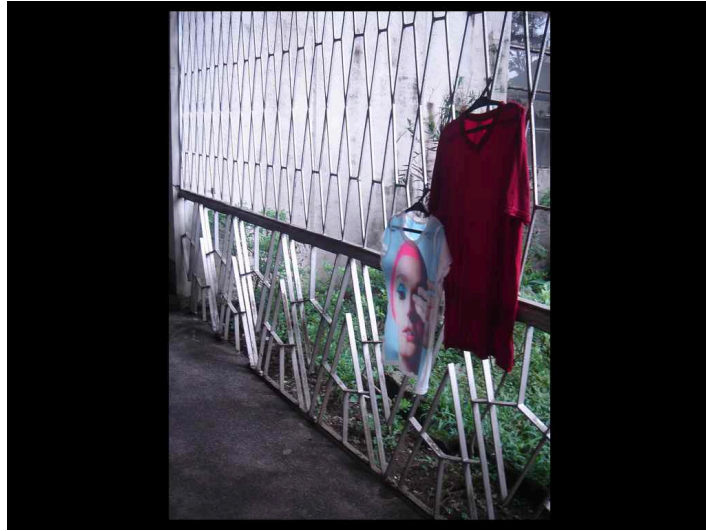


Figure 6.3.14 Matt's photo 15.

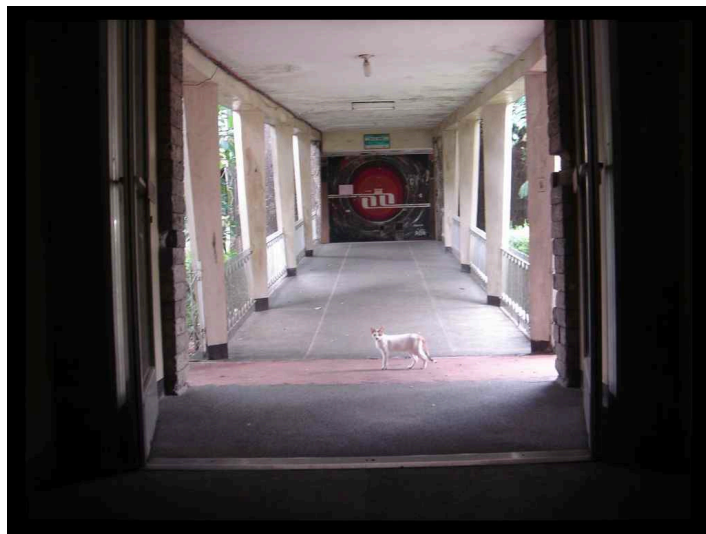


Figure 6.3.15 Matt's photo 16.

6.2.4 'Manila Made. Manila Made Mine.'

PARTICIPANT: Anil (23, male, Sindhi Indian)

Photos will never really be able to capture and measure what Manila--in all of its mess and glory--means to me today. Miguel Syjuco once wrote that "Manila is the cradle, the graveyard, the memory. The Mecca, the Cathedral, the bordello. The shopping mall, the urinal, the discotheque." For me, it's all this and more. Manila is what I've forced myself upon. This way, the bond is stronger, the desire much deeper and the interaction is much more personal.

Manila is not something I simply received. It is all that I choose to call and somehow make my own everyday.

Figure 6.4.1 Anil's caption.



Figure 6.4.2 Anil's photo 1.



Figure 6.4.3 Anil's photo 2 (L) and 3 (R).



Figure 6.4.4 Anil's photo 4 (L) and 5 (R).



Figure 6.4.5 Anil's photo 6 (L) and 7 (R).



Figure 6.4.6 Anil's photo 8 (L) and 9 (R).



Figure 6.4.7 Anil's photo 10.

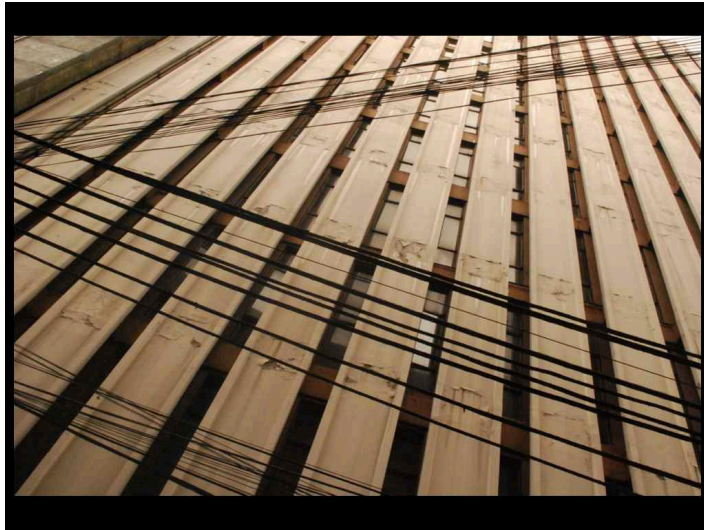


Figure 6.4.8 Anil's photo 11.



Figure 6.4.9 Anil's photo 12 (L) and 13 (R).



Figure 6.4.10 Anil's photo 14 (L) and 15 (R).

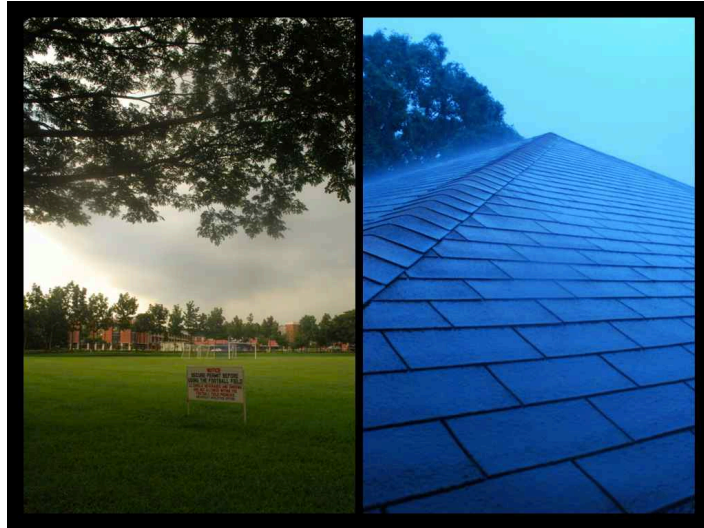


Figure 6.4.11 Anil's photo 16 (L) and 17 (R).

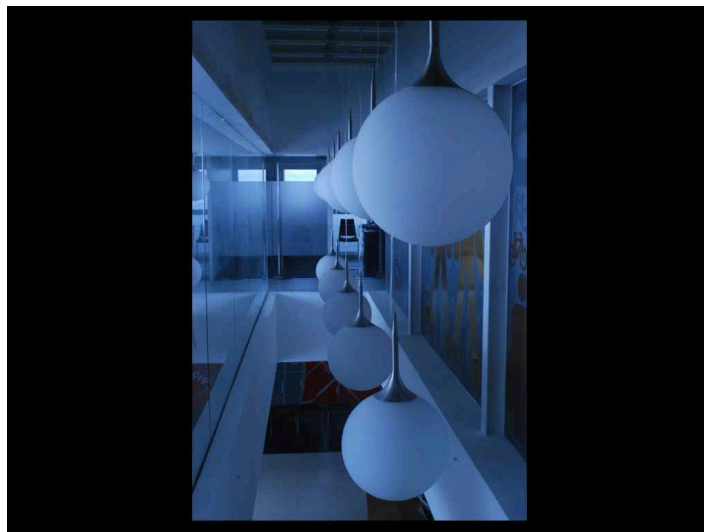


Figure 6.4.12 Anil's photo 18.

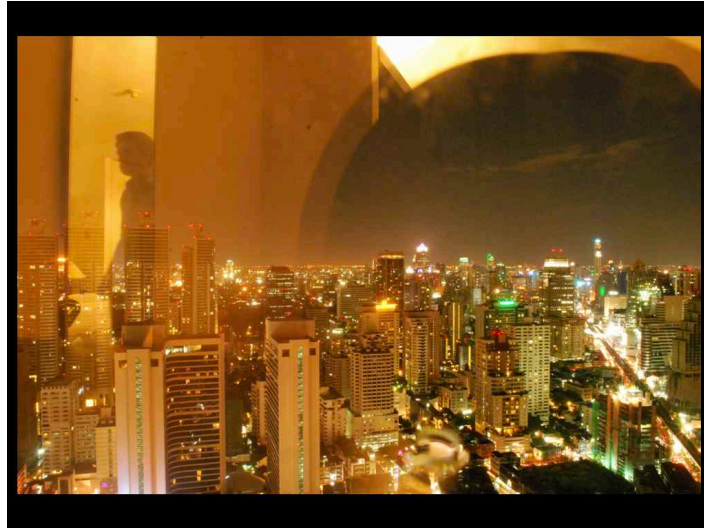


Figure 6.4.13 Anil's photo 19.

6.2.5 'The Most Important Thing'

PARTICIPANT: Hae Jin (24, male, Korean)

We need many things: food, water, plants, animals, et cetera. These things are not the most important things in life though. We can even afford to live without them for certain stretches of time. However, the one thing that we cannot live without is what is most important above all: love. My experience of living in Manila has taught me this much.

Figure 6.5.1 Hae Jin's caption.



Figure 6.5.2 Hae Jin's photo 1.



Figure 6.5.3 Hae Jin's photo 2.



Figure 6.5.4 Hae Jin's photo 3.

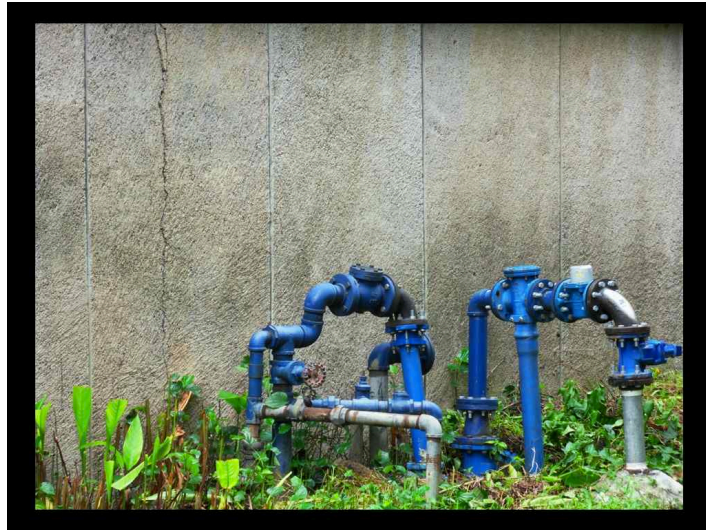


Figure 6.5.5 Hae Jin's photo 4.

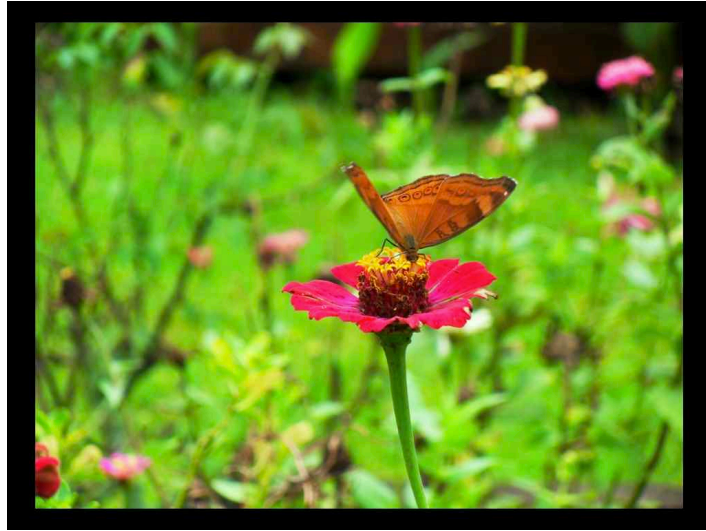


Figure 6.5.6 Hae Jin's photo 5.



Figure 6.5.7 Hae Jin's photo 6.



Figure 6.5.8 Hae Jin's photo 7.



Figure 6.5.9 Hae Jin's photo 8.



Figure 6.5.10 Hae Jin's photo 9 (L) and 10 (R).

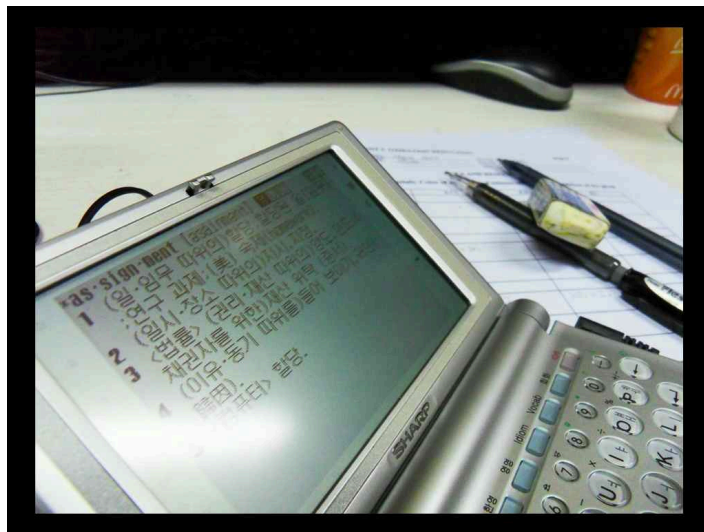


Figure 6.5.11 Hae Jin's photo 11.

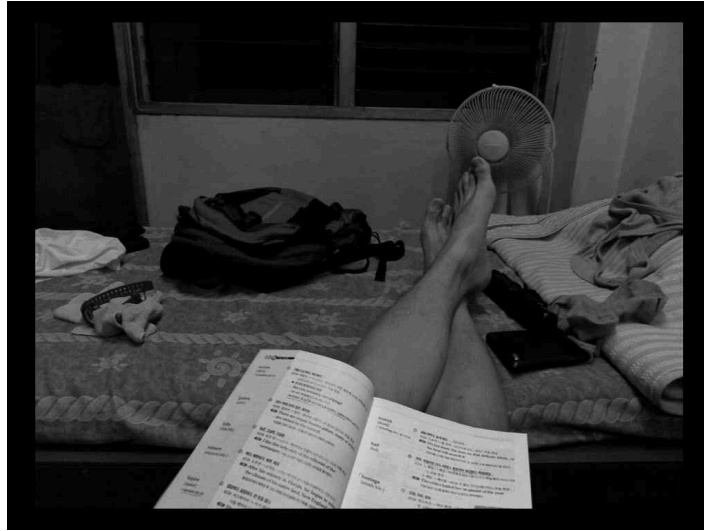


Figure 6.5.12 Hae Jin's photo 12.

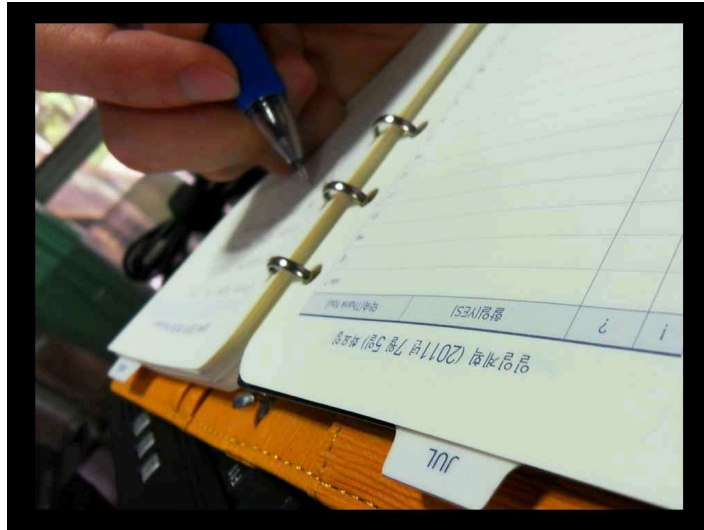


Figure 6.5.13 Hae Jin's photo 13.



Figure 6.5.14 Hae Jin's photo 14.



Figure 6.5.15 Hae Jin's photo 15.



Figure 6.5.16 Hae Jin's photo 16.



Figure 6.5.17 Hae Jin's photo 17.



Figure 6.5.18 Hae Jin's photo 18.



Figure 6.5.19 Hae Jin's photo 19.

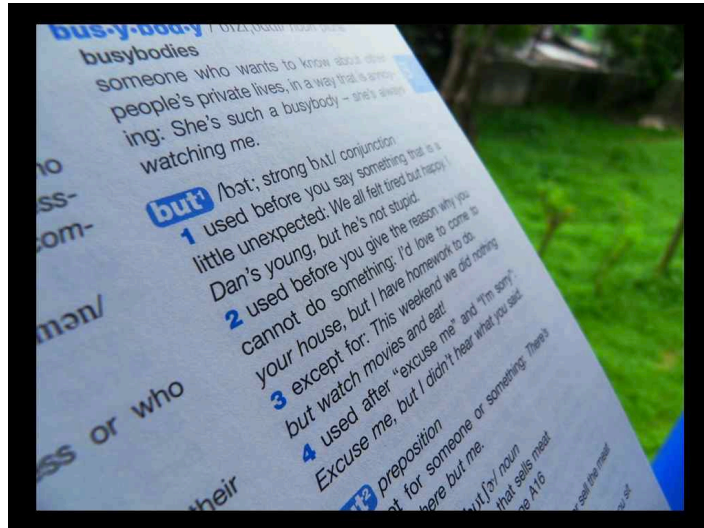


Figure 6.5.20 Hae Jin's photo 20.

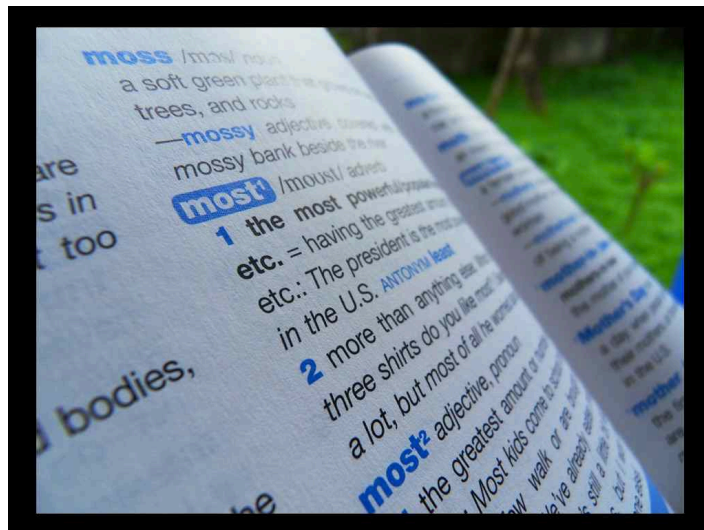


Figure 6.5.21 Hae Jin's photo 21.

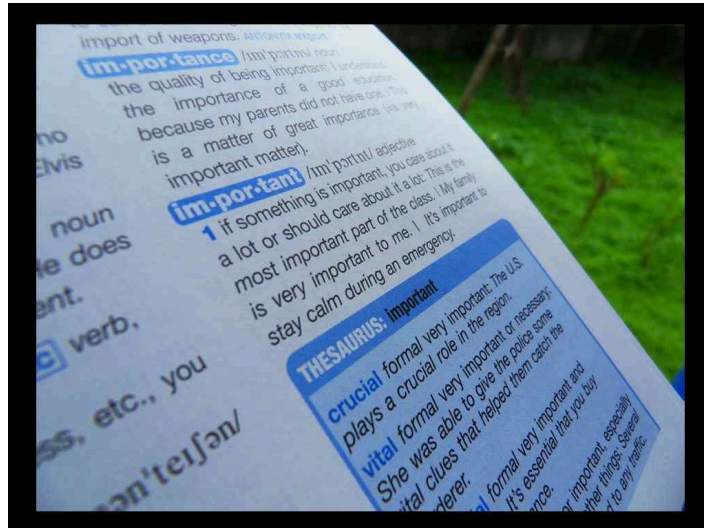


Figure 6.5.22 Hae Jin's photo 22.

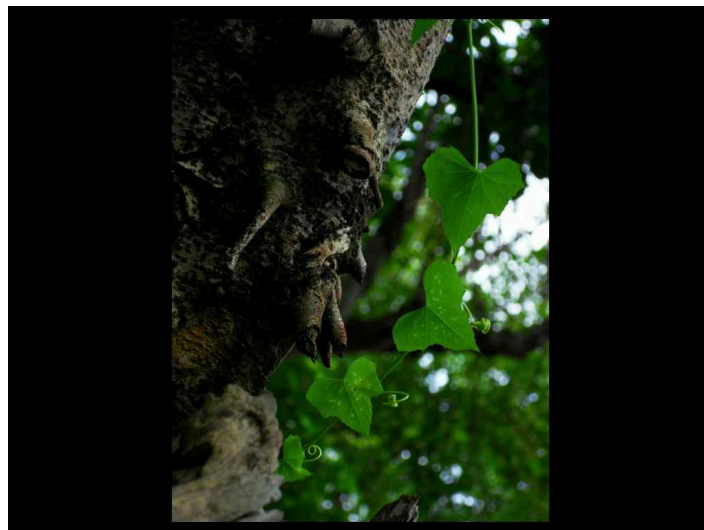


Figure 6.5.23 Hae Jin's photo 23.



Figure 6.5.24 Hae Jin's photo 24.

6.2.6 'I Love You Korea'

PARTICIPANT: Sang Mi (24, female, Korean)

I'm Korean, a foreigner living in Manila.
I've met many other foreigners here and, thankfully, they love Korea.
So, here's a little something to express my gratitude.
I hope to that these photos will allow them to remember me and Korea.
This activity was very happy and I felt proud to be Korean.
Thank you. And enjoy my photos. ^—^

Figure 6.6.1 Sang Mi's caption.



Figure 6.6.2 Sang Mi's photo 1.



Figure 6.6.3 Sang Mi's photo 2.



Figure 6.6.4 Sang Mi's photo 3.



Figure 6.6.5 Sang Mi's photo 4.



Figure 6.6.6 Sang Mi's photo 5.



Figure 6.6.7 Sang Mi's photo 6.



Figure 6.6.8 Sang Mi's photo 7.



Figure 6.6.9 Sang Mi's photo 8.



Figure 6.6.10 Sang Mi's photo 9.



Figure 6.6.11 Sang Mi's photo 10.

6.2.7 'Maa'

PARTICIPANT: Sukhprit (19, female, Punjabi Indian)

Migration usually brings about tremendous changes in people's lives. This makes it very hard for them to stay in touch with their roots, their cultures, and even their own people. It also makes it hard for them to pass on these things to their children. This is a story of a woman who has pledged her life to keeping her family together and rooted in their culture, despite living in the Philippines for over 21 years.

Figure 6.7.1 Sukhprit's caption.

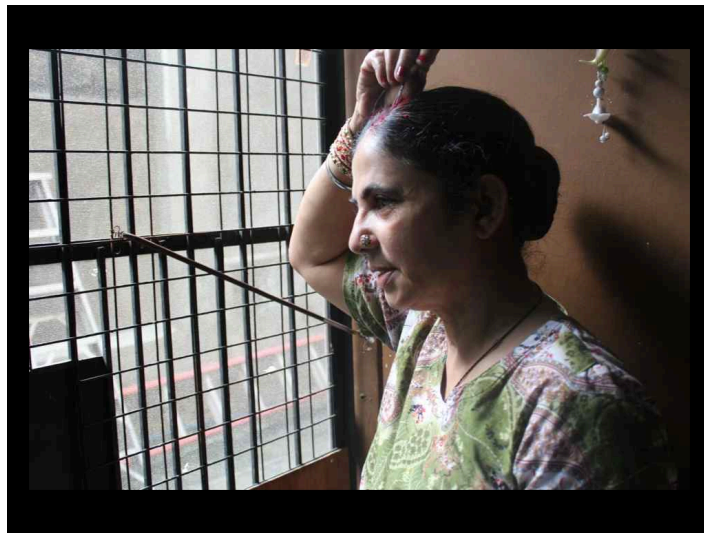


Figure 6.7.2 Sukhprit's photo 1.



Figure 6.7.3 Sukhprit's photo 2.



Figure 6.7.4 Sukhprit's photo 3.

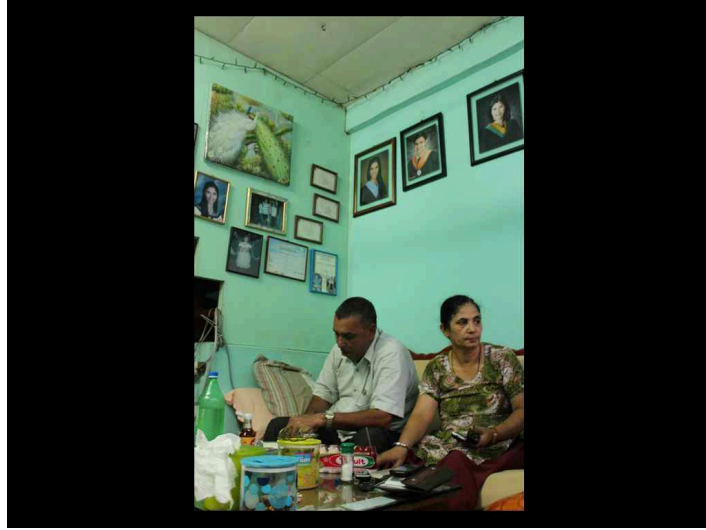


Figure 6.7.5 Sukhprit's photo 4.



Figure 6.7.6 Sukhprit's photo 5.



Figure 6.7.7 Sukhprit's photo 6.



Figure 6.7.8 Sukhprit's photo 7.



Figure 6.7.9 Sukhprit's photo 8.



Figure 6.7.10 Sukhprit's photo 9.



Figure 6.7.11 Sukhprit's photo 10.

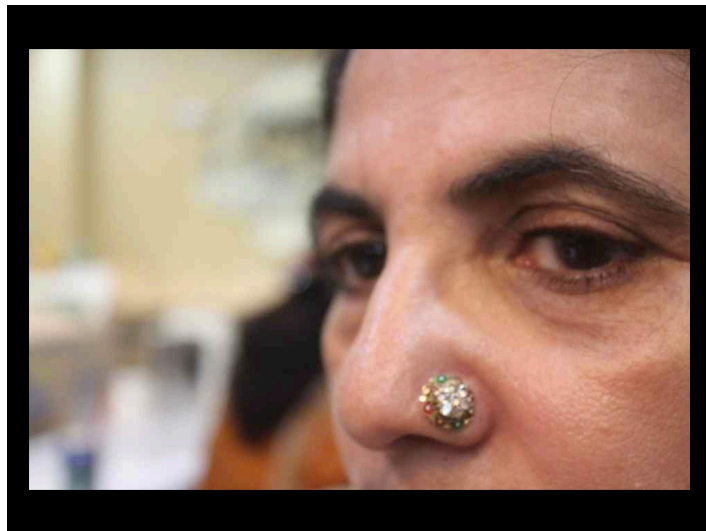


Figure 6.7.12 Sukhprit's photo 11.

6.2.8 'No Matter Where We Are'

PARTICIPANT: Roshni (20, female, Sindhi Indian)

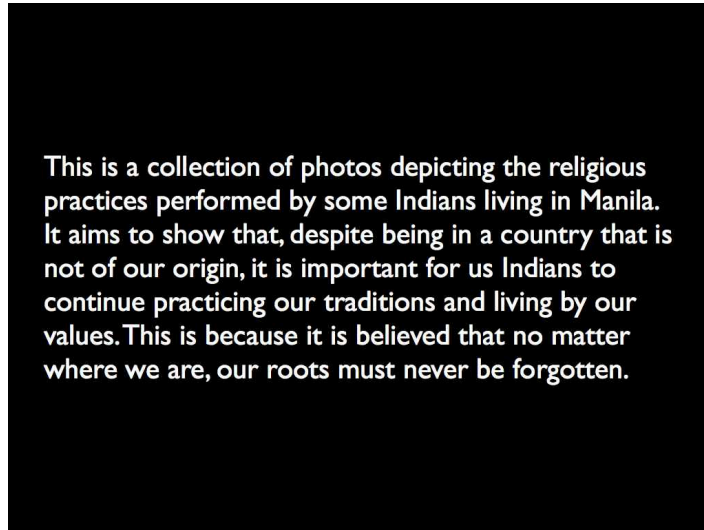


Figure 6.8.1 Roshni's caption.

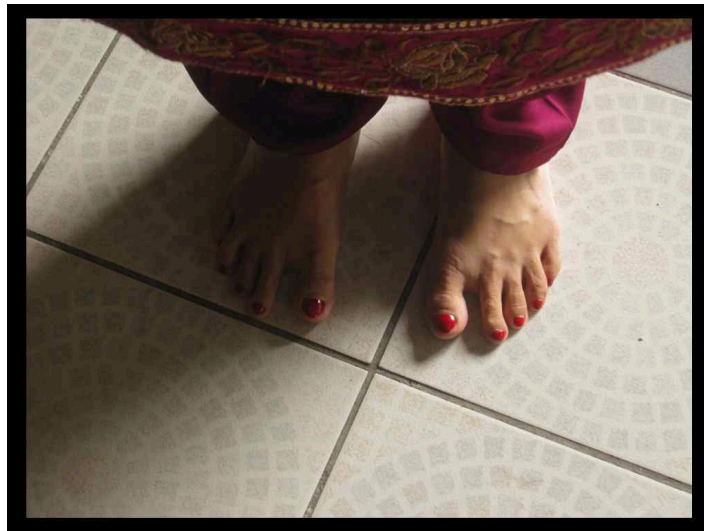


Figure 6.8.2 Roshni's photo 1.



Figure 6.8.3 Roshni's photo 2.



Figure 6.8.4 Roshni's photo 3.



Figure 6.8.5 Roshni's photo 4.



Figure 6.8.6 Roshni's photo 5.



Figure 6.8.7 Roshni's photo 6.



Figure 6.8.8 Roshni's photo 7.



Figure 6.8.9 Roshni's photo 8 (L) and 9 (R).



Figure 6.8.10 Roshni's photo 10.



Figure 6.8.11 Roshni's photo 11.



Figure 6.8.12 Roshni's photo 12 (L) and 13 (R).



Figure 6.8.13 Roshni's photo 14.



Figure 6.8.14 Roshni's photo 15.

6.2.9 'We Live in Manila'

PARTICIPANT: Sonya (22, female, Korean)

Koreans of all ages have migrated to the Philippines. And as this photo essay shows, those who belong to different generations have different daily lives and activities as well. By appreciating the circumstances each of us are in, we have found ways to make our culture adapt to life in Manila. This is what allows us to keep their identity as Koreans.

Figure 6.9.1 Sonya's caption.

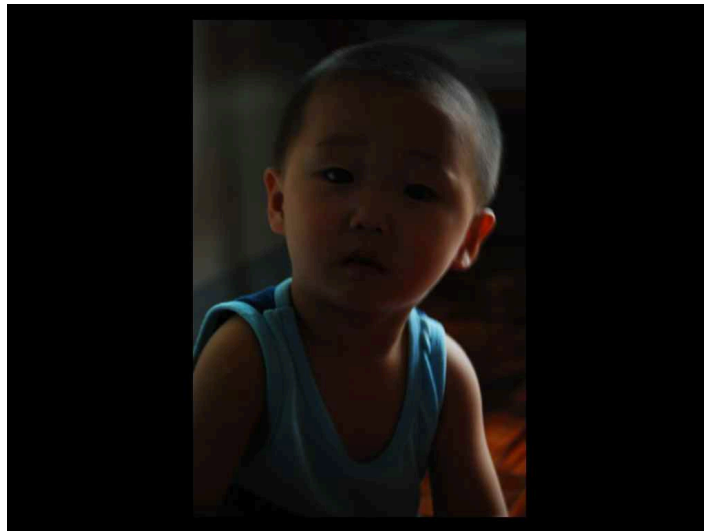


Figure 6.9.2 Sonya's photo 1.



Figure 6.9.3 Sonya's photo 2.

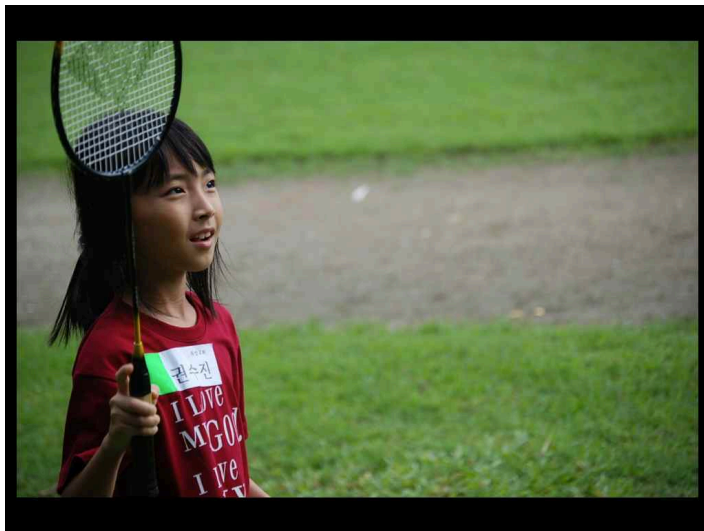


Figure 6.9.4 Sonya's photo 3.



Figure 6.9.5 Sonya's photo 4.



Figure 6.9.6 Sonya's photo 5.



Figure 6.9.7 Sonya's photo 6.



Figure 6.9.8 Sonya's photo 7.



Figure 6.9.9 Sonya's photo 8.



Figure 6.9.10 Sonya's photo 9.



Figure 6.9.11 Sonya's photo 10.



Figure 6.9.12 Sonya's photo 11.



Figure 6.9.13 Sonya's photo 12.



Figure 6.9.14 Sonya's photo 13.



Figure 6.9.15 Sonya's photo 14.



Figure 6.9.16 Sonya's photo 15.



Figure 6.9.17 Sonya's photo 16.



Figure 6.9.18 Sonya's photo 17.



Figure 6.9.19 Sonya's photo 18.



Figure 6.9.20 Sonya's photo 19.



Figure 6.9.21 Sonya's photo 20.



Figure 6.9.22 Sonya's photo 21.



Figure 6.9.23 Sonya's photo 22.

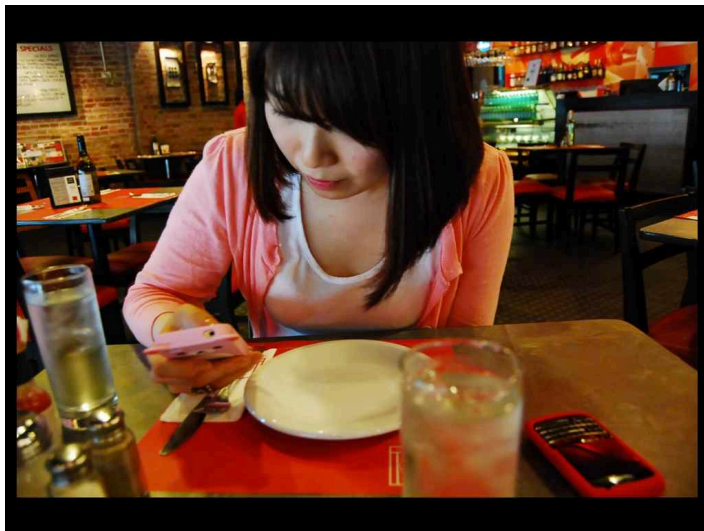


Figure 6.9.24 Sonya's photo 23.



Figure 6.9.25 Sonya's photo 24.



Figure 6.9.26 Sonya's photo 25.



Figure 6.9.27 Sonya's photo 26.



Figure 6.9.28 Sonya's photo 27.



Figure 6.9.29 Sonya's photo 28.



Figure 6.9.30 Sonya's photo 29.

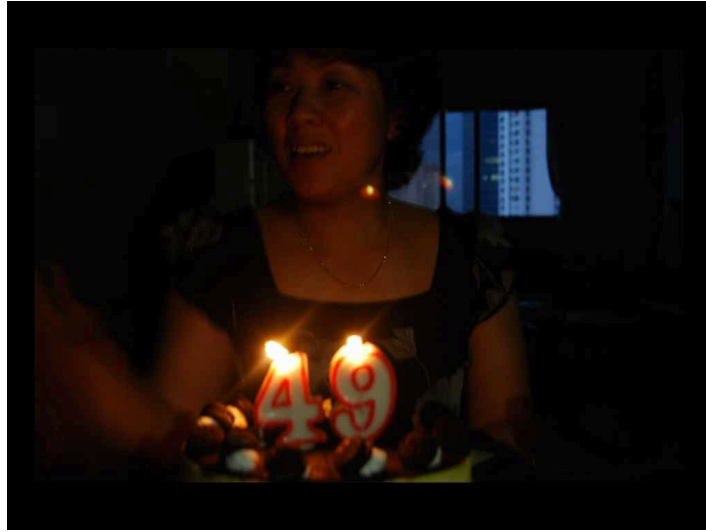


Figure 6.9.31 Sonya's photo 30.



Figure 6.9.32 Sonya's photo 31.

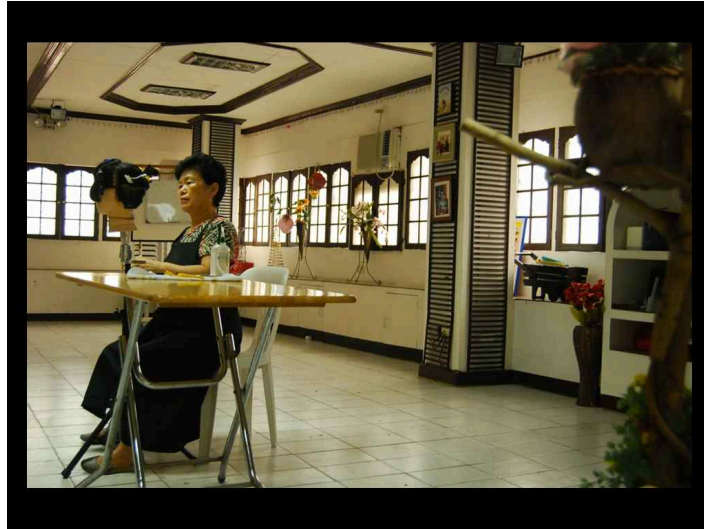


Figure 6.9.33 Sonya's photo 32.

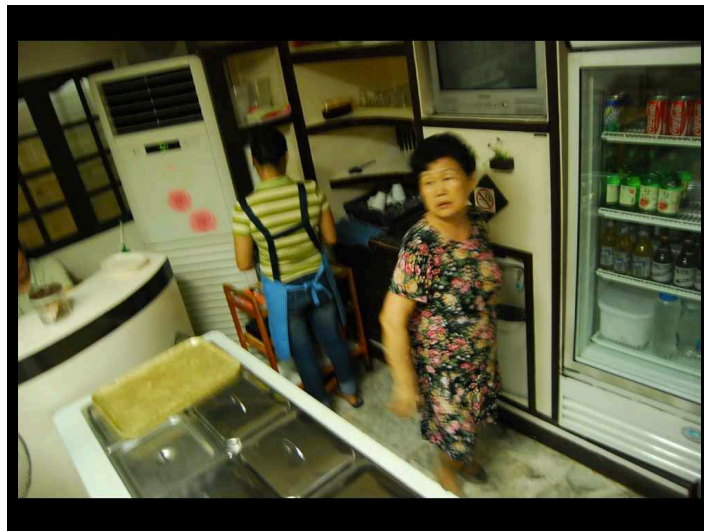


Figure 6.9.34 Sonya's photo 33.



Figure 6.9.35 Sonya's photo 34.



Figure 6.9.36 Sonya's photo 35.

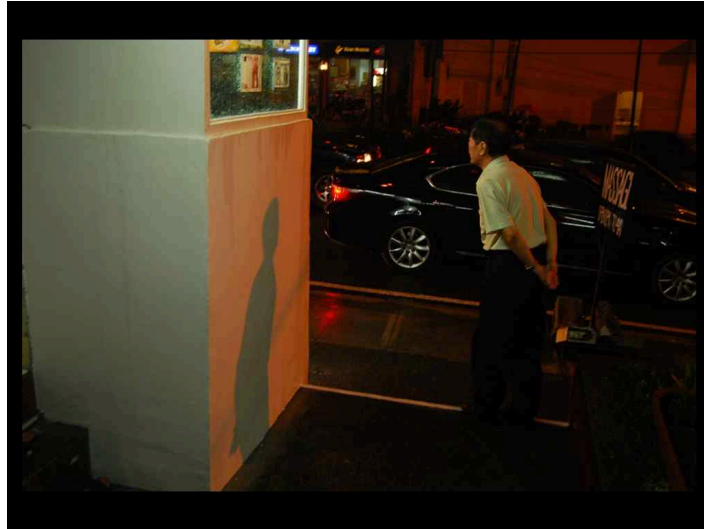


Figure 6.9.37 Sonya's photo 36.

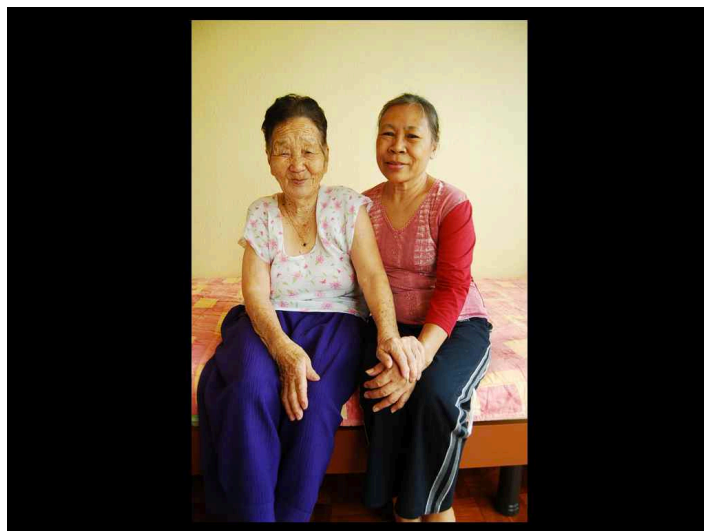


Figure 6.9.38 Sonya's photo 37.

6.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented the photo stories of the five Indian and four Korean participants in manner that attempted, in its own limited way, to recreate the way that they appeared in both the public exhibition of and the dedicated website for the *Shutter Stories* project. This included a presentation of the introductory text that accompanied the exhibition, the textual captions for each of the photo stories, and,

of course, the participants' photo stories themselves. In the two succeeding chapters, I use the mediational framework I established in Chapters 2 and 3 to analyse the participants' photo stories. In Chapter 7, I unpack how the voices of the participants were photographically mediated. And in chapter 8, I examine how these same voices were socially mediated.

Chapter 7

On the Photographic Mediation of ‘Shutter Stories’

“...all photographs are vernacular, in the sense that they are all practiced in specific social worlds, through particular combinations of software, hardware, objects, images, discourses, and subjectivities.”

-Gillian Rose, Photographic Assemblages

In the preceding chapter, I presented the photo stories of the Indian and Korean participants of the *Shutter Stories* project. By attempting, in a very limited way, to recreate the appearance of these works during the public exhibition in Manila and on the dedicated website, I hope to have provided the readers of this study a chance to take the position of “the viewing public”. This is an experience that is crucial to understanding the discussion here and in the next chapter, where I reflect on my modest attempt at breaking the problematic mediation of multiculturalism in Manila that I discussed in Chapter 5. Drawing on this study’s mediational framework, I examine whether and how the *Shutter Stories* project allowed its nine Indian and Korean participants to tell their own narratives about their diasporic lives in Manila (cf. Couldry, 2010; Silverstone, 1999). In this chapter, I focus on how the voices of the Indian and Korean participants were mediated by the properties of the photographic medium and the practices of photography in the context of an interventionist research project (see the theoretical framework on the photographic mediation of voice in Chapter 2). I then build on this in the next chapter by shifting my focus to how the voices of these participants were also mediated by the diasporic social experience at the level of the self, the cultural group, and the multicultural society (see the theoretical framework on the social mediation of voice in Chapter 3).

The first section of this chapter draws on Couldry’s notion of voice as a process—that is, the capacity of people to tell stories about themselves and their place in the world—to analyse how the properties of photography shaped the kinds of stories that the Indian and Korean participants of the *Shutter Stories* project could tell about their diasporic life (cf. Couldry, 2010). Using the data I gathered from my participant observation, I discuss how the indexical, iconic, and symbolic modes of the photograph were linked to particular issues that the participants encountered

during the production of the photo stories (cf. Scott, 1999). I also reveal that the primarily iconic interpretation that the local Filipinos had of the photo stories was rooted in the particular context in which they engaged with the works, that is, the public exhibition and the dedicated website (cf. Zelizer, 2006). In the second section of this chapter, I draw from Couldry's notion of voice as a value—that is, the act of fostering institutions that themselves foster voice (as a process)—to explore whether and how the photographic practices involved in the *Shutter Stories* project enabled the capacity of the Indian and Korean participants to tell stories about their diasporic life (cf. Couldry, 2010). Drawing on my participant observation once again, I consider how the parameters that the photography scholars and I, in my role as project organiser, set for the project both opened up possibilities and placed constraints on the way the participants crafted their photo stories (cf. Bourdieu, 2003 [1994]; Thumim, 2009).

7.1 The photographic medium and voice as a process

7.1.1 *The photographic modes and the production of the photo stories*

Below I describe how the diasporic voices of the *Shutter Stories* participants were mediated by the properties of the photographic medium (cf. Couldry, 2010). Specifically, I show that when the Indian and Korean participants were crafting their photo stories, they encountered the affordances of all the photographic modes that C. S. Peirce identifies: the indexical, the iconic, and the symbolic (Scott, 1999). The presence of all these three modes became especially evident in photography's narrative possibilities, but also in its narrative limitations.

7.1.1.1 The indexical

A lot of the talk that happened during the photography seminars was undergirded by the idea of the photograph as an index, that is, as a record of the participants' diasporic life in Manila. There was a strong appreciation of the capacity of the photograph as an *aide-mémoire*, as a testimonial to the irrefutability of the personal story being told (Alu, 2010). Here are some of the participants expressing the above-mentioned sentiment at different points during the three photography seminars:

DURING THE PHOTO NARRATION SEMINAR:

I'm guessing most [local] Filipinos don't know that there are people here [in Manila] who practise Hinduism. So my plan is to take pictures of the things that happen inside our *gurudwara* (temple), to show them that we are here, to let them know what we do...I'm not sure, but I'm hoping it'll help them appreciate our culture better. (Roshni, 20, female, Sindhi Indian)

I'm excited to make a story about my mom. I've always been very proud of her and I want everyone else to see why. (Sukhprit, 19, female, Punjabi Indian)

[Jason], do you think it'd be a good idea to document the lives of the elderly in our community? I'm really interested in that. (Sonya, 22, female, Korean)

DURING THE PHOTO SELECTION SEMINAR:

All these [photographs] really make me happy. They'll be a special reminder of all the lovely people I have become friends with here in Manila. (Sang Mi, 24, female, Korean)

I myself alluded to the same idea of photographic indexicality. During the photo narration seminar, for instance, I talked about which photographic subjects the participants might want to consider. I said,

I want you [the participants] to think about what it is about your lives as migrants in Manila that you might want to share with us local Filipinos...My hope, really, is that your photographs will allow us locals to go beyond the stereotypes that I mentioned earlier, which is that of you Indians, once again sorry, as *bumbay* and you Koreans, sorry again, as weird. Make us see how your lives really are.

There were, in fact, some participants who expressed keen intent on using the evidentiary quality of the photographs first and foremost. The talk of these participants strongly referenced the argument made by certain scholars that the image can both point to an actual event in the past and to make this event present to its viewers (for example, Hughes and Noble, 2003; Scott, 1999). Preet (22, male, Punjabi Indian) saw his photo story on his life as a yuppie as, above all else, proof that he was one Punjabi who was not engaged in *five-six* (or moneylending) (see Figures 6.2.1 to 6.2.15 in Chapter 6). This was what he said when he presented his raw images in the photo selection seminar:

Of course I'm proud that my father does *five-six*. Where would I be without him, right? But that doesn't mean I don't get pissed that people always think of us Indians as *bumbays*...For me, at least, these photos are meant to prove that a

Punjabi like me can work in Makati [the country's premiere central business district].

Preet elaborated on this idea by presenting those photographs that established how posh his workplace was (for example, see Figure 7.1.1), how cutting edge his workstation laptop was (for example, see Figure 7.1.2), and how hip his lifestyle was (for example, see Figure 7.2.3).

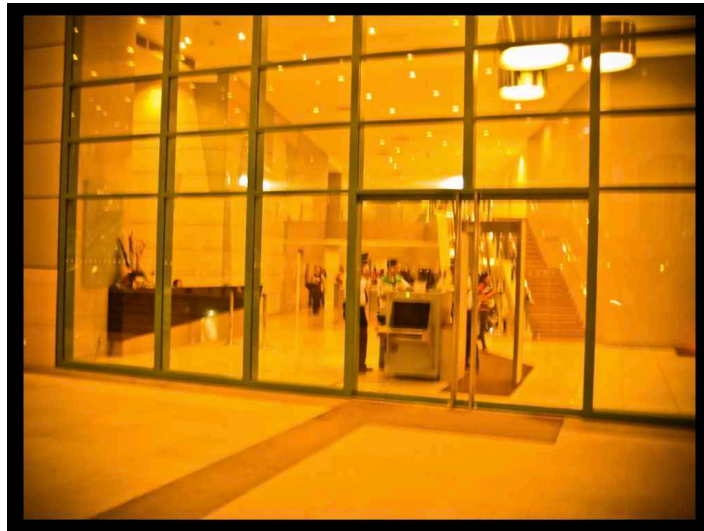


Figure 7.1.1 Photo 7 of Preet's '9-5'.

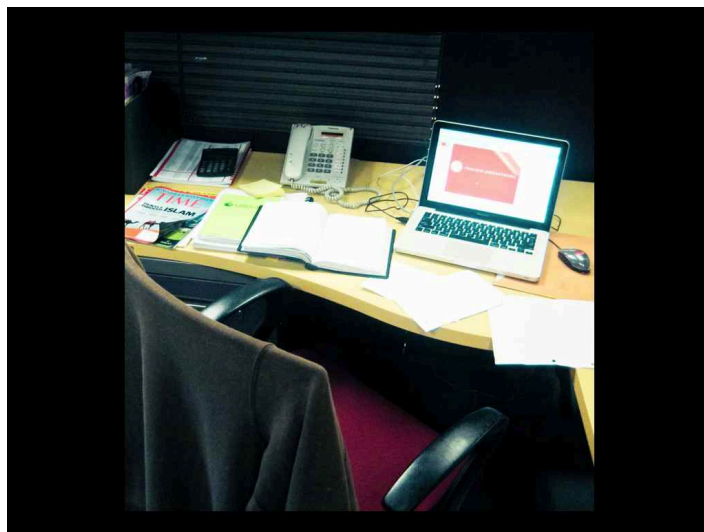


Figure 7.1.2 Photo 8 of Preet's '9-5'.



Figure 7.1.3 Photo 12 of Preet's '9-5'.

In a similar manner, Matt's (23, male, Korean) concern with his photo story on student life in his dormitory at the University of the Philippines (U.P.) was to provide a corrective to the stereotype I talked about in Chapter 5: that Manila's Koreans are wealthy and are excellent targets for all kinds of criminal activities (see Figures 6.3.1 to 6.3.15 in Chapter 6). As he said when he introduced his raw images in the photo selection seminar,

I'm hoping this story will let Filipinos know that not all Koreans have perfect lives. There are Koreans who, like me, have to make do with less than ideal living conditions...If only they could go to my dorm, then they'd know what I mean. Many times, the lights go off just like that, there are cockroaches crawling everywhere, the rooms are dirty...Of course I'm still thankful to be in U.P because I get to be with geniuses.... But this is the reality.

Like Preet, he went on to expound on this claim as he showed images that pointed to the decrepit state of the U.P. International Center. This included photos of the building's grimy facade (for example, see Figure 7.2.1), corridors (for example, see Figure 7.2.2), and rooms (for example, see Figure 7.2.3). He then rounded up his presentation by talking about one of his female Korean dormitory mates who could not stand the state of their accommodation. She had cried her way through the first month and after that had moved out for good.



Figure 7.2.1 Photo 2 of Matt's 'Korean Life in U.P.'

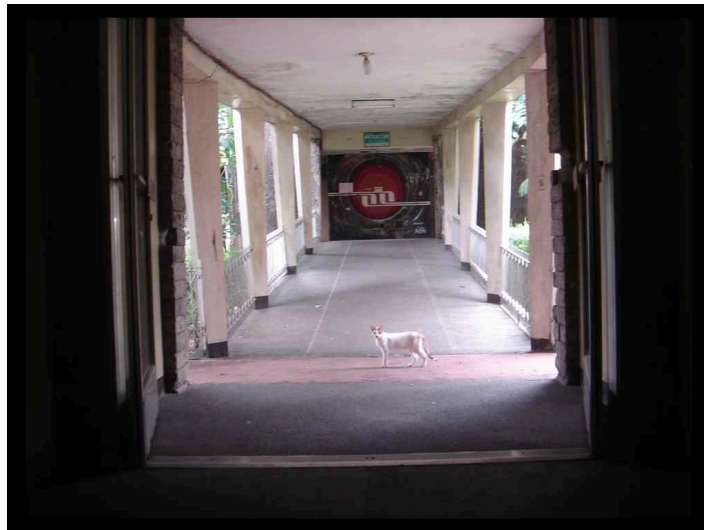


Figure 7.2.2 Photo 16 of Matt's 'Korean Life in U.P.'



Figure 7.2.3 Photo 14 of Matt's 'Korean Life in U.P.'

It was also the same consciousness about the irrefutability of the photograph that hindered some of the participants from telling the stories they wanted to share. The key issue here was that because the photo stories were to be publicly exhibited, they could compromise the anonymity of those potential subjects who might have wanted their identities withheld. This concern is something that runs counter to the current body of literature on photography and memory, which is usually concerned with the problem of the image turning into a counter-memory that fails to evoke the details of some original event (for example Barthes, 1981; Hughes and Noble, 2003; Sontag, 1977 [2002]). Perhaps the difference is due to how the participants were thinking about the indexicality of the photograph vis-a-vis the way their images would be viewed by a public largely unknown to them. This is quite different from the case of much of the existing literature on photography and memory that focus on the indexicality of the photograph in relation to the way these might be consumed primarily by family and other close relations.

Take, for instance, Amisha (21, female, other Indian), who originally wanted to do a photo story documenting a day in the life her older brother, Sharma (25, male, other Indian). Amisha explained that she wanted to explore how Sharma broke the *bumbay* mould, despite his engagement with *five-six* work. Instead of going around on a motorcycle, he went around on an expensive sports utility vehicle (SUV). And instead of lending money to the lower class, his customers were mostly middle-class businesspeople. Amisha's original story seemed potentially powerful,

as it promised to help local Filipinos rethink their understanding of the notion of how *five-six* is done.

During the photo narration seminar however, Ricky, the photography scholar facilitating the seminar, asked Amisha about how she might tell Sharma's story visually. When Amisha replied that part of her plan was to take photographs of her brother in the act of lending money, Ricky discussed with her the possibility that Sharma's customers might not want themselves to be part of the photograph. Ricky pointed out that these people might get embarrassed about letting others know that they are borrowing money. He also said that if Amisha attempted to be more covert about her project and use a hidden camera for instance, then she would have to deal with all the ethical issues in which she would necessarily get entangled (see Pauwels, 2008 and his comprehensive discussion on subject anonymity in the context of visual research). Ricky was clearly raising valid concerns here.

For some time after the discussion, Amisha wrestled with the double-edged quality of photographic indexicality; at the same time that the her photo story could contribute to undermining longstanding ideas about the *bumbay* and about *five-six*, this could also inadvertently expose her photographic subjects to public scrutiny. Eventually, Amisha let go of her original topic. Unable to find a way to tell her original story without compromising the privacy of her subjects, she focused instead on doing a photo story on a day in the life of the Indian celebrity Sam YG, whom I had talked at about at some length in Chapter 5. Reflecting on this change of plans, Amisha revealed how her brother actually echoed the sentiments of Ricky:

Yeah, even [my brother] didn't want me following him around. He said his clients wouldn't want me taking shots of them. That'd be *bastos* (rude)...I asked him if I could just take the photos from inside the car, but he'd said that might appear more suspicious and that we'd end up being in bigger trouble if someone noticed me there...I guess I liked that topic because it was controversial. But maybe it was too controversial?

Sonya (22, female, Korean) also had to think about how the photograph could not hide people's faces without a significant data loss. She raised this issue with me during the photo narration seminar. Sonya said she wanted to tell a story about a Korean man, Dae Jung (70, male, Korean) who has survived living in Manila for decades without knowing how to speak English or Tagalog. She planned to follow him and see how he went about accomplishing his tasks without the ability

to communicate verbally with the locals. Sonya was worried though that Dae Jung would not allow her to do this, especially since he had a reputation for being a recluse. When I suggested that perhaps she could take his photographs without revealing his face, she said,

Yes, but that would be very difficult! [laughs] I guess it might assure him that his identity will be kept secret, but wouldn't that take away so much from my story? Because I'm already thinking that if he doesn't use words, he most probably uses his face and his hands to talk to others.

As in Amisha's case, Sonya and I could not resolve the issue of the old man's anonymity. Because of this, Sonya also decided to draw up other topics, which did not involve subjects who were unwilling to appear in the photo story.

7.1.1.2 The iconic

Some of the participants believed that since their photographs had the capacity to be credible testimonies of their personal lives (that is, to be indexical), these could also be equally credible representations of the lives of Manila's diaspora (that is, to be iconic). This idea hearkens back to Scott's argument that it is the photograph's material quality as an index that enables its representative value as an icon (Scott, 1999). For example, Anil (23, male, Sindhi Indian) asserted during the photo selection seminar that sharing his experiences of being someone who looked foreign but felt Filipino meant that he was also sharing the experiences of those like him (see Figures 6.4.1 to 6.4.13 in Chapter 6). He said,

Of course this [photo story] is about me. But I think it's also about everyone else who has been through the same thing. You know, those of us who always get spoken to in English, even if we know Tagalog better than most Filipinos...

Sonya (22, female, Korean) also said that the images she collected for the exhibition were meant to represent the multitude of activities in which the different generations of Manila's Koreans were engaged (see Figures 6.9.1 to 6.9.38 in Chapter 6). When she shared her work in the photo selection seminar, she said, with some humour,

I know I can't show all the stuff that we [Koreans] do here. Still, I want to give a sense of just how much activities we have (*sic*). That's why I tried my best to include the different aspects of our lives here. And as you'll see, this includes travel and, of course, shopping.

Here it is important to note that unlike in the case of iconic images wherein it is individual photographs that are thought to be iconic (Hariman and Lucaites, 2003), the participants seemed to think the photo story as a whole could be iconic. Apart from their talk about their photo stories, this was also evident in the captions that some of them wrote for their works (see Chapter 6 for the complete texts). Here are some of the lines that demonstrate this:

These aren't all the things we do [at the U.P. International Dormitory], but I just wanted to give a glimpse of how we are. (Matt, 23, male, Korean)

[This photo story] aims to show that, despite being in a country that is not of our origin, it is important for us Indians to continue practicing our traditions and living by our values. (Roshni, 20, female, Sindhi Indian)

Koreans of all ages have migrated to the Philippines. And as this photo story shows, those who belong to different generations have different daily lives and activities as well. (Sonya, 22, female, Korean)

Perhaps one key reason for this kind of thinking was how the photography scholars and I focused heavily on instructing the participants to tell their narratives not in a single photograph, but through an entire photo story.

It is also crucial to point out that none of the participants expressed concern about how the process of representation is an inherently political process that could simultaneously valorise and marginalise certain ways of viewing the world (Berger, 2008 [1972]; Sontag, 2002 [1997]). If anything, their talk seemed to indicate that they had a decidedly rosy view of the representative power of their work. They tended to assume that the photograph's ability to stand in for complex realities was something straightforward and unproblematic. I actually find this unsurprising, given that the relationship between images and ideology is something that most people do not really worry about in the practice of photography in the everyday. As some scholars point out, ordinary photographers are often unreflexive about how they might be reproducing existing discourses, whether problematic or otherwise (for example Holland, 2004; Pinney, 1997; Van House et al, 2004).

In contrast to the participants, I had an abiding concern about what their photo stories would include and exclude and, crucially, how this might shape the local Filipino public's view of Manila's diasporic communities. My worry was that the participants were not as diverse as I had originally hoped. They were all nineteen to twenty four years old, university educated, middle class, and as such, only represented a specific segment of the communities to which they belonged (see my discussion of this study's case selection process in Chapter 4). I wondered if the entire *Shutter Stories* project might be thought of as overly biased and, as such, not be worth engaging with, as was the case with the *Migrant Mother* photograph I talked about in Chapter 2. Since I thought that such questions about the politics of representation was important to consider, I discussed this issue with Ricky and Terri, the photography scholars with whom I was collaborating. The three of us came to the agreement that perhaps the issue could in some ways be addressed if the introductory text that accompanied the exhibition explicitly articulated that the participants had a particular subject positioning that, in turn, produced particular *ways of seeing* (Berger, 2008 [1972]). This was why the main blurb I wrote emphasised that the participants were “five Indian and four Korean youths”, were “amateur photographers who [were] only beginning to learn the craft of visual storytelling”, and, most importantly, could only “give a glimpse of the incredibly diverse experiences of Manila's approximately 45,000 Indians and 115,000 Koreans” (see Chapter 6 for the complete text).

7.1.1.3 The symbolic

When I asked the two photography scholars, Ricky and Terri, about what they thought of the photography skills of the participants, they both classified them as amateurs or, as I prefer to call them in this work, ordinary photographers (cf. Harrison, 2002; Thumim, 2009). The photography scholars and I noted, however, that the participants did make an effort to use the conventions of photography in a bid to embed conceptual messages into their images (cf. Messaris, 1997). These attempts by the participants were probably enabled by their many years of doing photography in the everyday. All of them owned personal cameras, ranging from point and shoots to D-SLRs, of which they made extensive use. One only has to look at their Facebook pages, for instance, to know that they have had prior experiences of trying to draw from the various photography techniques that they had

encountered. I say more about this later. Here, I contend that the attempts of the participants to deploy particular photographic conventions were also significantly helped by the basic photography seminar that they underwent prior to the exhibition. This was because the facilitator for that seminar, Terri, introduced them to a systematic way of understanding how and when to use the key elements of photography, such as lighting, texture, focus, angling, composition, and colour. At the very least, Terri's lectures and activities made the participants more conscious of their use of these elements.

It was in the photo selection seminar that the efforts of the participants to harness the symbolic mode of the photograph became most evident. When Terri, Ricky, and I probed them about the individual images they took, they often referred to the elements of photography that Terri discussed in the basic photography seminar and that Ricky subsequently reinforced in the photo narration seminar. Below are some examples:

COMPOSITION: I really wanted to make this statement about how the modern and the traditional mix at home. Here, the modern part would be those signs on the doors [of the rooms of my brother and of myself]. Then the traditional part would be Maa's prayer area...In a way, I'm trying to capture that despite how my brother and I are Westernised in so many ways, Maa keeps us tied to our Indian culture. (Sukphrit, 19, female, Punjabi Indian) (see Figure 7.3.1)

LIGHTING AND COLOUR: Sam first made it big as Shivaker. So I wanted to end with this photo of his turban...I intentionally made use of contrast here. I really wanted to play up the lighting and the shadows and also light and dark colours, so that the turban would be the thing that would hold the viewers' attention. (Amisha, 32, female, other Indian) (see Figure 7.3.2)

SHAPE AND FOCUS: The shape of the leaves means love, of course. If you notice, I put them in sharp focus and made everything else blurred. That means that this love, it's, like I say, the most important thing, more than anything else. (Hae Jin, 24, male, Korean) (see Figure 7.3.3)

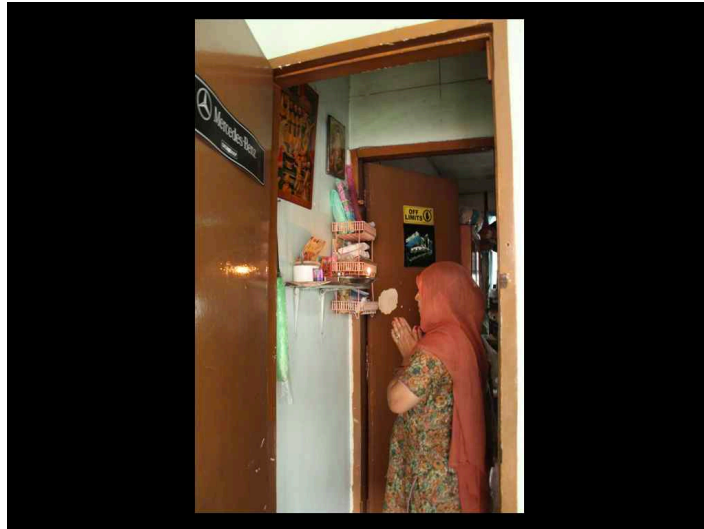


Figure 7.3.1 Photo 6 of Sukhprit's 'Maa' .

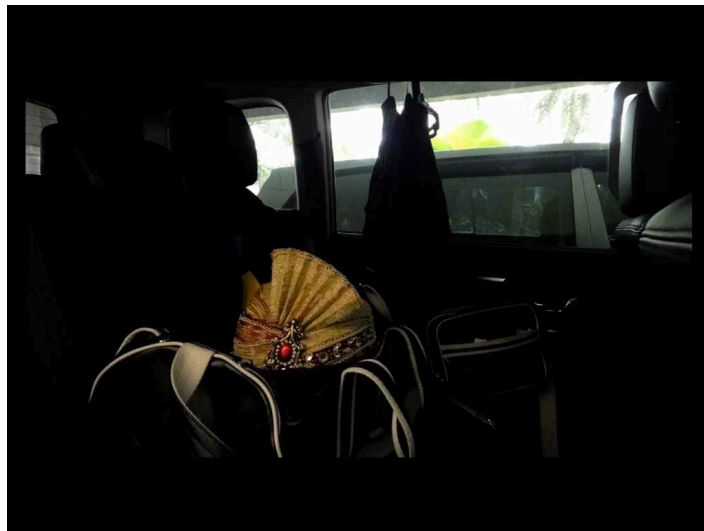


Figure 7.3.2 Photo 11 of Amisha's 'Kukunin ka ng Bumbay (The Bumbay will Come and Get You)!'

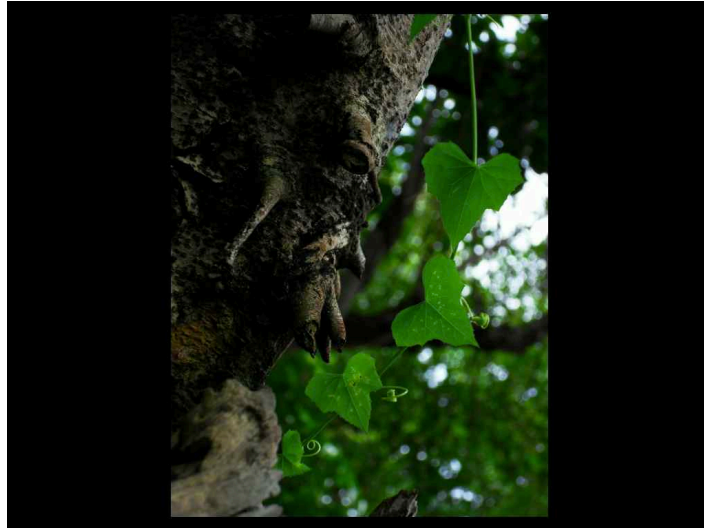


Figure 7.3.3 Photo 22 of Hae Jin's 'The Most Important Thing'.

The photography scholars did observe as well that the participants were not always precise with their use of the visual language. This was, of course, understandable, as they were still in many ways ordinary photographers who were only beginning to learn to think conceptually about photography. Aware that such imprecisions heightened the inherent ambiguity of the photograph in articulating propositions (cf. Barthes, 1981; Messaris, 1997), the photography scholars wanted to help refine the works of the participants. This was why Terri and Ricky provided constructive criticism at the end of each of the participants' presentations, which took place during the photo selection seminar.

For instance, Anil (23, male, Sindhi Indian) originally presented his photographs of old Manila without any particular sequence in mind. This was because he meant his work to mirror the randomness of his wanderings around the city. Terri and Ricky suggested however that Anil had to balance the randomness of his work with some degree of order. And the way that he could do this was by juxtaposing those images that were either similar or contrasting in form, texture, or colour. This was why the final arrangement of Anil's photo story had such juxtapositions (for example Figure 7.4.1 for colour).



Figure 7.4.1 Photo 2 (L) and 3 (R) of Anil’s ‘Manila Made. Manila Made Mine.’

Meanwhile, Sonya (22, female, Korean) wanted to end her photo story about the generations of Koreans in Manila with an image that sought to portray how even the oldest of Koreans did not live their lives in loneliness (see Figures 6.9.1 to 6.9.38 in Chapter 6). She said that she intended to do this through a photograph of an elderly Korean woman holding hands with a younger (but still elderly) Korean woman. Terri and Ricky commented that Sonya’s original image was already powerful. But they said that this could still be more powerful if its edges were cropped. That way, the clasped hands of the two Korean women would be more prominent as a focal point. Sonya accepted this advice and edited the image accordingly (see Figure 7.4.2).

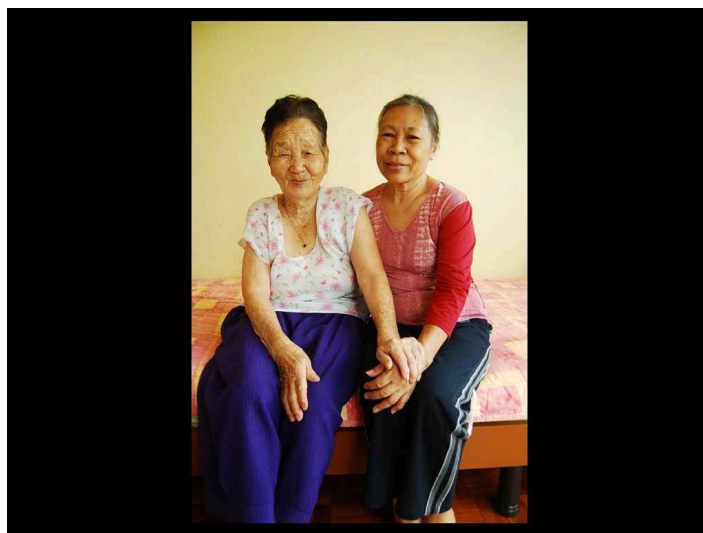


Figure 7.4.2 Photo 37 of Sonya’s ‘We Live in Manila.’

The refinements to the photographs notwithstanding, the photography scholars and I were still concerned about the general imprecision of the photographic medium. As the work of Barthes suggests, there is always a great possibility that the public might interpret the participants' photo stories in unintended ways (Barthes, 1981). Terri, Ricky, and I were, of course, aware that there was nothing we could do to foreclose this possibility. We nevertheless tried to mitigate it by asking the participants to come up with an introductory caption to their works. Our hope was that these verbal texts might serve as interpretive frames for the photographs, simultaneously playing up and downplaying particular details within the images (Barthes, 1990 [1977]; Rafael, 1999; Rose, 2001). Terri, Ricky, and I were also aware that the verbal texts could threaten the very status of the photograph as this study's chosen medium to mediate the participants' voices. As Scott contends, there is a tendency for images to surrender their autonomy and become either a small part of a larger linguistic metaphor or a mere visual prompt that relies on a primarily linguistic narrative for its meaningfulness (Scott, 1999). But then again, we thought that this was a risk worth taking, since words can also help images deliver their messages better. As Alu argues, using words and images together might be a compromise, but it is a compromise that opens the opportunity for one medium to lend its strength to make up for the other medium's weakness (Alu, 2010).

Thus far, my discussion has centred on how the three photographic modes of the index, icon, and symbol all figured in the production of the photo stories for the *Shutter Stories* project (cf. Scott, 1999). Through this, I hope to have addressed Couldry's claim that central to understanding voice as a process is a consideration of the two key aspects of the materiality of voice: the social resources involved in producing people's voices and the particular form that their voices actually take (Couldry, 2010). In relation to Couldry's notion of social resources (*ibid.*), I showed that what mattered most in the *Shutter Stories* project was the capacity of the different project collaborators—comprised of the participants, the photography scholars, and myself—to make use of the various qualities of the photographic modes. For the participants, this usually translated to emphasising the possibilities of these modes. And for the photography scholars and myself, this usually equated with pointing out the limitations of these modes. Meanwhile, in relation to Couldry's notion of form (*ibid.*), I highlighted the key characteristics of the manner in which

the photo stories were presented during the actual public exhibition and its subsequent online appearance. I showed that the negotiations between the participants, on the one hand, and the photography scholars and I, on the other hand, meant that the public exhibition ended up featuring neither the individual voices nor the collective voice of the participants. Instead, it became the collective voice of all the project collaborators. There is nothing inherently wrong in this. As Couldry says, people can often “recognise [themselves] in a collectively produced voice” (*ibid.*: 9). What needs to be further looked into, however, is whether certain individual voices were suppressed in the production of this collective voice. This is something I reflect on in a much deeper way in the second half of this chapter.

Below, I first evaluate whether the production-related concerns about the multimodal character of the photograph actually mattered in how Manila’s local Filipinos interpreted the photo stories in the *Shutter Stories* project. To do this, I draw from two other data sets that I gathered during my participant observation in the project. One is the conversations I had with the local Filipinos who viewed the project’s public exhibition at The Block, SM North EDSA in Manila and the other is the online comments I saw about the project’s dedicated website.

7.1.2 The photographic modes and the consumption of the photo stories

I explained in Chapter 1 that Couldry’s understanding of voice as a process is twofold. At the same time that it is about being able to speak, it is also about being heard (Couldry, 2010). So in order to complete my discussion about the photographic mediation of voice, I now turn to how the Indian and Korean participants’ photo stories were received by Manila’s local Filipinos. First, I analyse the data I gathered from my participant observation in the public exhibition of *Shutter Stories* at The Block, SM North EDSA in Manila. I argue that the indexical, iconic, and symbolic modes of the photograph all figured into how the locals viewed the photo stories (cf. Scott, 1999). However, the context of consumption created by the *Shutter Stories* public exhibition seemed to position the locals to view the photo stories primarily as iconic, secondarily as indexical, and only rarely as symbolic (cf. Zelizer, 2006). Second, I discuss the data I gathered from my participant observation in maintaining the dedicated website for *Shutter Stories*. I contend that, as in the case of the public exhibition, the dedicated website also tended to position the locals

to view the photo stories as iconic. Unlike the public exhibition however, the website did not seem to encourage overtly indexical or symbolic readings of the photo stories.

7.1.2.1 Talk about the public exhibition of ‘Shutter Stories’

During my informal conversations with some twenty (out of the approximately one hundred and fifty) local Filipinos who visited the exhibition, I observed that a significant amount of talk about the photo stories referenced the indexical mode of these works. I would say that one of the clearest examples of this was how a university student, Jenny (22, female, middle-class), shared her thoughts about Amisha’s (21, female, other Indian) work on a day in the life of Sam YG (see Figures 6.1.1 to 6.1.15 in Chapter 6). Jenny said that she could not help but be most interested in Amisha’s photographs, since she was a huge fan of Sam YG. Enacting what Couldry describes as modern society’s ritual of conferring a special status to media celebrities (Couldry, 2003; 2012), Jenny shared how she delightedly scrutinised the details of the images to find out as much as she could about Sam YG. It seemed that doing this gave her the feeling that she was, in some ways, transported into Sam YG’s world. She explained, “The photos make me feel as if I’m with Sam YG! It’s exciting to see...the inside of his house...those tops he owns...his van...” (for example, see Figure 7.5). Clearly, Jenny thought of Amisha’s images first and foremost as objects that provided her an actual link to Sam YG and the life in which he lived (cf. Hughes and Noble, 2003; Scott, 1999). My talk with Jenny also revealed the limits of the indexicality of Amisha’s photo story. Despite all the textual captions that Amisha included, which were already the most numerous amongst all the photo stories, Jenny often felt that she had too little contextual information that would allow her to fully understand the images she was seeing. She said that she wanted to know more because the images were, as she described it in Filipino, *bitin*, which can be captured by the English word “tantalising”. Put another way, the indexicality of the images made Sam YG’s world so near yet so far. In this specific case then, words were not enough to reconstitute the necessary contextual cues to make the images completely intelligible (cf. Alu, 2010).



Figure 7.5 Photo 3 of Amisha’s ‘Kukunin ka ng Bumbay (The Bumbay will Come and Get You)!’

Meanwhile, there was much less talk amongst the local Filipinos that alluded to the symbolic mode. And most of these allusions were relatively indirect. Take, for instance, the thoughts of a photography hobbyist, Carding (45, male, middle-class), about his favourite photo story in the exhibition, which was Preet’s (22, male, Punjabi Indian) story about his father the *five-six* Indian and himself the yuppie Indian (see Figures 6.2.1 to 6.2.13 in Chapter 6). A lot of what Carding told me was actually about the work’s indexical characteristics. For example, he said “I think Makati [which is Manila’s central business district] means so much to him, since he keeps on emphasising that it’s where he works”. Carding also referred to the work’s iconic traits, saying, “It’s very compelling, the way that he is able to capture the angst of a Filipino-Indian (*sic*)”. Carding never explicitly talked about what he thought were the ideological messages behind Preet’s photo story (cf. Scott, 1999 and his examples of symbolic readings of photographs). Being the photography hobbyist that he was though, he could not help but indulge in some lengthy commentary about how the various elements of the visual language were deployed in the photo story. He said, for instance, that one of the most effective techniques used in the work was the use of recurrent visual cues that tied together Preet’s photographs of his father and of himself (for example, see Figures 7.6.1 and 7.6.2). According to Carding, “The comparison between the father and the son’s hands and feet...that was really good. It gave me goosebumps!” He said as well that one of the weaknesses of Preet’s photographs, such as those that featured Preet’s workplace

(for example, see Figure 7.1.1 earlier in this chapter), was the lack of drama in the frame. For Carding, these photographs “felt too factual...It just says ‘This is where I work.’ That’s it. He could’ve made better use of them if they conveyed something more complex than that”. Clearly then, even if Carding never really got to talking about what the images might have meant, he was, to a degree, deconstructing the conceptual arguments that he thought were embedded in them. This particular reaction concretises the idea that no matter how one tries to pin down the meaning of a photograph at the moment of production, one cannot really pin down how viewers might interpret it at the moment of consumption (cf. Barthes, 1981; McKay, 2008).



Figure 7.6.1 Photo 2 of Preet’s ‘9-5’.



Figure 7.6.2 Photo 6 of Preet's '9-5'.

The two exemplary cases above are reminiscent of what Christopher Pinney calls corpothetics. This concept, which is rooted in an anthropological approach to the visual, pertains to how the image and its observer co-constitute each other in particular ways at particular times (Pinney, 2004). According to Gillian Rose, this idea emphasises the importance of two intertwined processes. One is how people recontextualise the images they engage with in relation to their own culturally embedded experiences. The other is how, together with this, images also assert their agency by circumscribing the particular subjectivities that people can assume (Rose, 2010). In Jenny's (22, female, middle-class) engagement with Amisha's (21, female, other Indian) photo story, for instance, one could see how Jenny appropriated the images through the prism of her experience as a local Filipino fan and how, in turn, the images produced in her a performance of being a local Filipino fan. And in the case of Carding's (45, male, middle-class) engagement with Preet's (22, male, Punjabi Indian) work, one could see how Carding drew from the shared knowledge of photography hobbyists as a way of understanding the images and how, at the same time, the images also activated in Carding the desire to enact the role of a photography hobbyist.

The idea of co-constitution, however, can only partially explain the manner in which the local Filipinos interpreted the photo stories. Although it is able to account for how and why these visitors engaged with particular images, it is not able to shed light on why it is that, in general, they seemed to look at the photo stories in the exhibition as iconic. In contrast to the nuanced talk of the visitors about their

favourite works, they would talk about the rest of the works in the exhibition as a collective, as if these photo stories all constituted one unified narrative about Indian and Korean life in the city. Below are some of the comments that the local Filipinos made during the course of our conversations:

Well, I was interested in the photos of the Koreans because I'm curious about them. I see them all the time, but I have no idea what it is they're doing here. All I hear is that they're here to learn English. That's what they say, right?...One of the things I got from the photos was that they're Christians. I didn't know that!...It looks like they're well off too. But I think that's obvious. They're foreigners! (*Jose, 22, store attendant, lower class*)

I've always known about the *bumbays*. *Five-six* and all that, right? We used to have one as a neighbour. But I've never really known anything about them...To me, this [exhibition] is quite educational. Honest. Because it's a first for me to know all these things about them...The most surprising [thing from the exhibition]? It's that we actually have an Indian *artista* (celebrity)! (*Tina, female, 30, housewife, middle class*)

What's striking to me is that [the Indians and Koreans] look like they have well established communities here...I have expat friends, but they don't really have communities, as in big communities, like the way that the Indians have their own temple...And it seems like the Koreans have their own church, their own school, and everything...It's amazing to me that they're actually here, right under our noses. (*Art, male, 41, businessman, upper class*)

I suggest that Zelizer's notion of the transportability of photographs best explains this generally iconic reading of the photo stories. As I explained earlier in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, she contends that because photographs tend to crossover various social domains, their interpretation becomes circumscribed by the particular context within which they are displayed. As Zelizer puts it, "images work differently in the contexts that put them to work. They adopt and adapt to the attributes of the domain into which they are imported..." (Zelizer, 2006: 5). In hindsight, I can identify at least three possible reasons why the way that the Indian and Korean participants, the photography scholars, and I set up the public exhibition of *Shutter Stories* tended to "put to work" the photo stories as icons.

First was our collective decision to downplay the identities of the *Shutter Stories* participants. Most of the nine Indians and Koreans actually had no qualms about identifying themselves in their photo stories. And except for Preet and Amisha, who wanted to remain completely anonymous, all the other seven agreed to have their names in their works. However, the participants did have an issue about

the exhibition revealing anything substantial about their personal lives. Because they were often related by kinship (as in the case of most of the Indians) or by friendship (as in the case with the Koreans) to those whom they featured in their photo stories, they felt that providing extensive details about themselves might serve to undermine the relative anonymity of their subjects. And because they knew that I would talk about their lives in this dissertation, they also did not want to undermine the anonymity that I promised to give them in my work. All of these things amounted to a lack of contextualising information in the exhibition, which increased the possibility for the images on display to move from the indexical to the iconic.

There was also the fact that I was forced to give up on the original plan to present the photo stories according to the industry standard, which was to print the images on “cintra boards” (or photo panels). This was because the limited project finances meant that I could not afford these expensive boards. In an attempt to remedy this problem, the photography scholars suggested that I try a more unconventional but much cheaper presentation style. The photography scholars, Ricky and Terri, said that the photographs could be flashed as a slideshow that would continuously loop on a large LCD television screen. A key consequence of this change that I decided to adopt was that the photographs on display were no longer still, but streaming. During a post-project conversation, Ricky, Terri and I discussed how this continuous flow of images appeared to hinder the exhibition visitors from considering the photo stories as individual narratives. In contrast, it seemed to heighten the visitors’ understanding of how the photo stories related to each other. It can be said then that the streaming presentation format contributed to shifting the exhibition visitors’ focus away from seeing the individual photo stories as personal memories of the participants towards seeing all the photo stories as part of a collective memory of Manila’s Indian and Korean communities.

Finally, there were the accompanying promotional materials that I helped prepare for the public exhibition. One of these was the introductory text that accompanied the photographs (see the text in Chapter 6). As I have already mentioned, my main intent in writing this was to provide an interpretive frame for the local Filipino exhibition visitors. Above all, I wanted to make explicit that the aim of the project was to push Manila’s local Filipinos to look at their city from the standpoint of its diasporic communities and, through this experience, become more open to their city’s multicultural character. In the process of doing this, however, I

posited the idea that the photo stories of the Indian and Korean participants were reflective of the wider experiences of Manila’s diasporic communities. In fact, the text explicitly made mention of how their diverse stories could give the exhibition visitors a glimpse of the even more diverse stories of the city’s Indian and Korean communities. This same idea was evidenced in the concept behind the poster for the public exhibition (see Figure 7.7). The poster text suggested that the exhibition would allow its visitors to “view Manila from another standpoint”, that is, from the standpoint of Manila’s Indians and Koreans, as represented by the participants’ photo stories. The poster images also reinforced this idea, as it showed the feet of an Indian and a Korean, feet that signified the standpoint that exhibition visitors were invited to take.



Figure 7.7 The ‘Shutter Stories’ Public Exhibition Poster.

7.1.2.2 Comments about the dedicated website for ‘Shutter Stories’

As I indicated in Chapter 4, the original plan I had for the *Shutter Stories* project only involved a week-long public exhibition for the participants’ photo stories. Unfortunately, this exhibition did not get as many visitors as I had hoped. It must be said that its opening night was attended by more than sixty invited guests,

including people from the Indian and Korean communities, scholars and students from Manila's top universities, as well as the local Filipinos who participated in the focus group discussions for this study. The opening ceremonies of *Shutter Stories* also attracted a sizeable crowd of around thirty mall goers, most of whom were students coming home from Manila's various schools and office people coming home from work. During the rest of the public exhibition's week-long run, however, I only counted about a hundred and fifty local Filipinos—including the twenty with whom I got to talk—who took an interest in the photo stories. That total number translates to an average of about twenty-five visitors a day. I would say that one of the main reasons for this low visitor turnout was the relatively unimpressive set up of the exhibition. Whilst the photo stories were shown on a massive projection wall during the opening night, they were only shown on an LCD television, accompanied by a small eight-panelled "cintra board", for the remainder of the week (see Figure 4.2 in Chapter 4). This was further compounded by the fact that the mall hosting the exhibition, The Block at SM North EDSA in Manila, was also the venue of a government-sponsored photography exhibition on the founding of Quezon City, the place where the mall itself was located. Unlike *Shutter Stories* that occupied a small space in an upper floor of the mall, this heavily funded government exhibition was comprised of about fifteen massive tarpaulin panels that were arranged in a circular formation and that spanned almost the entirety of the main lobby on the ground floor of the mall. Unfortunately for this project, it was this other exhibition, and not *Shutter Stories*, that attracted most of the mall goers.

Since I wanted the participants' photo stories to reach a wider public, I decided to try and put up an online version of *Shutter Stories*. The *ad hoc* and last-minute nature of this component of the project meant that the planning I did for it was not as meticulous as for the public exhibition. One crucial weakness of this attempt was that I did not properly consider the interactive properties of the online media during the conceptualisation of the website. As such, the final version of this site—and I would like to emphasise that the fault was mine and not the web developer's—was less Web 2.0 (that is, interactive) and more Web 1.0 (that is, static). Because of this, the website itself did not receive any comments from its visitors. In fact, my discussion below draws on the comments of twenty two individuals about the website, all of which I saw on my own Facebook newsfeed.

The comments that I gathered point to at least one significant insight about how the online version of the photo stories were interpreted. As in the case of the talk of the local Filipinos who visited the public exhibition of *Shutter Stories*, those who visited its dedicated website also approached the photo stories primarily as icons. In almost all of the posts of the online exhibition visitors, there was an implication that the images stood in for the broader reality of Manila's Indian and Korean communities. They said things like:

These photos make me miss home. I'm surprised though that there are so many foreigners living there now. But then again, there's so much to love in Manila! (*Josh*)

Cool photos. Interesting to know more about all these non-*Pinoys* [non-Filipinos] calling Manila home. (*Tricia*)

Nice one, [Jason]! You always talk about this project of yours, but it's very different to see the photos of the Koreans and Indians themselves. Fascinating. (*Marky*)

I didn't realise they were this many already! Very iiiinteresting! (*Nene*)

What is interesting with these comments is how they indicate a predominantly iconic reading of the photo stories, especially since unlike the public exhibition, the website did not present the images in a streaming manner. On the contrary, it allowed the users to click and view the individual photographs (see Figure 7.8). It would seem then that the opportunity to dwell on each of the images notwithstanding, the viewers still seemed to focus on the representative quality of them. One can say that this continued primacy of the iconic could be, once again, due to the features of the space in which the photo stories were presented. After all, even in the online version of *Shutter Stories*, the participants' identities were still downplayed and the introductory text to the exhibition remained the same.

I would argue though that there might have been something else that impinged on the manner in which the photo stories were interpreted. Here I am referring to the concept I raised in Chapter 5: the cycle of strangeness and estrangement characterised by the increasing social distance between Manila's local Filipinos and diasporic communities. If one takes the comments of the online visitors together with the talk of the public exhibition visitors about the photo stories, one can see that much of what they said was suffused with the feeling of surprise. These locals were interested, fascinated, struck, and even amazed by the

images. Their visual encounter with the diasporic communities in Manila became an encounter with the Other: “distinct, beyond reach, yet occupying the same space, the same social landscape” (Silverstone, 1999: 134). Overwhelmed, most of them took to describing what they saw, with the exception of their favourite stories, in broad strokes. My contention here is that together with the kind of spaces in which the participants’ photo stories were presented, this kind of encounter predisposed the locals to see the photo stories not as the stories of the nine participants, but of Manila’s Indian and Korean communities.

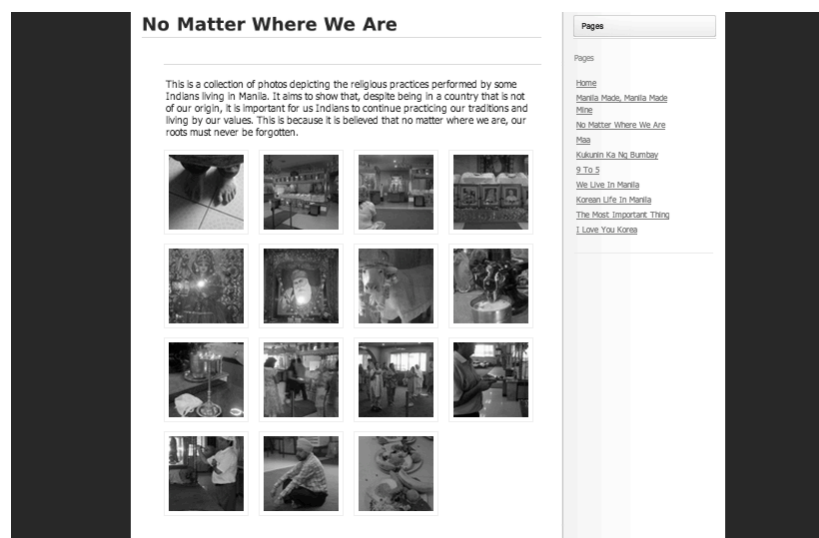


Figure 7.8 A Sample Photo Story Page Featuring Roshni’s ‘No Matter Where We Are’.

In the discussion above, I revealed how the photographic modes impinged on how Manila’s local Filipinos interpreted the photo stories in the *Shutter Stories* project (cf. Scott, 1999). My hope is that this has allowed me to talk back to Couldry’s claim that crucial to voice as a process is whether people’s voices are recognised, that is, whether their voices are listened to and are registered as important (Couldry, 2010). As regards whether the local Filipino viewers listened to the voices of the Indian and Korean participants (*ibid.*), I argued that they did, but in a very particular manner. Whilst these viewers were attentive to the indexical and, to a lesser degree, the symbolic qualities of the participants’ photographs, they were most receptive to the iconic quality of the images. Although the local Filipino viewers could hear the personal stories and the ideological messages behind the photo stories then, they primarily tuned into the representational stories that were

embedded in these works. To explain this, I identified three factors that came into play in the process of their listening: the dynamics of co-constitution that happened between the photo stories and the viewers (cf. Pinney, 2004), the characteristics of the domains in which the photographs were consumed (cf. Zelizer, 2006), and, as I have pointed out, the relevant wider social realities in which the photographs were embedded. Second, as regards whether the local Filipino viewers registered the voices of the Indian and Korean participants as important (Couldry, 2010), I showed that they did, at least in one very important way. Here I am referring to how the viewers were surprised by how the photo stories—both individually and collectively—told a (primarily iconic) story about the strong and diverse presence of Indian and Korean migrants in Manila. These viewers also seemed drawn to these migrants’ unexpected characteristics, ranging from Indians as celebrities to Koreans as Christians. In the end, a number of these viewers judged their encounter with the photo stories as “fascinating”, “interesting”, and “educational”. It can be said then that *Shutter Stories* succeeded in creating some degree of “interruption” (Pinchevsky, 2005) to the persistent cycle of social strangeness and estrangement in Manila. But as I elaborate in Chapter 8, the project was not really able to do this on a grander scale. And as I explain in the next section, whatever small success the project achieved was undergirded by a tension between allowing the participants to craft the stories they wanted to tell and teaching the participants how to craft stories to which people would pay attention.

7.2 Photographic practices and voice as a value

In this second half of the chapter, I analyse how the two key practices of creating photographs for the *Shutter Stories* project—that is, the selection and the representation of the photographic subject—played out during the photography seminars. Based on my participant observation in these events, I provide a reflexive account of the negotiations that happened between the photographic practices drawn on by the Indian and Korean participants and the photographic practices espoused by the photography scholars and myself (cf. Bourdieu 2003 [1990]; Thumim, 2009). On the one hand, I reveal that there was a collaborative relationship amongst the participants, the photography scholars, and myself. Throughout the entire process of creating the photo stories for the exhibition, there was a strong sense that everyone’s

contribution to the project was equally important. On the other hand, I also show that the kind of collaboration that emerged in the photography seminars was an asymmetrical one, with the photography scholars and I assuming a role akin to mentors and the participants assuming a role akin to pupils. Together with this reflexive account, I also attempt to make a reflexive judgment on whether these negotiations amongst the project collaborators enabled or undermined the status of the *Shutter Stories* project as an act that sought to embody the notion of voice as a value (cf. Couldry, 2010; Somekh, 2006). Here I posit that the limitations that the photography scholars and I set on how the photo stories could be crafted served as a meaningful frame from wherein the participants could tell their stories about their diasporic lives. But at the same time, I also acknowledge that our act of setting limitations threatened to undermine the empowering potential of the project.

7.2.1 On the process of selecting the photographic subject

From the very start of the photo selection process, the dynamics that developed amongst us project collaborators was already emerging. As I mentioned earlier, it was the photography scholars and I encouraging and helping the participants to tell their stories about their diasporic lives. But at the same time, it was also a dynamic that established an asymmetrical relationship, with the photography scholars and I setting certain parameters that we thought would help the participants' stories gain public recognition. This situation simultaneously opened up some possibilities and some hindrances to fostering the participants' voices.

I begin my discussion by reiterating that I had strong role in setting the initial direction of the subject selection in the *Shutter Stories* project. I must admit that from the very start, I was attempting to ensure that the topics of the Indian and Korean participants would be aligned with the aims of my interventionist research. As I recounted in Chapter 4, I told my participants that the most persistent stereotypes that the locals had about them were of the Indian as *bumbay* and of the Korean as weird. I also suggested that, perhaps, the most important thing was to break these stereotypes. I said, "Although you may have many problems that you want to share with the locals, they might not really listen to you if they do not, first and foremost, know and care about you." I used these intertwined points as a springboard to a discussion about what the public exhibition (and, later on, the

dedicated website) might feature. In the end, the participants and I came to an agreement that reflected this concern I had for breaking the cycle of strangeness and estrangement, which I fleshed out in Chapter 5. We said that for the *Shutter Stories* project, they were to each craft a photo story aimed at helping Manila's local Filipinos to become more familiar about their diasporic lives. I would say that this agreement between the participants and I provided a clear direction for the photo stories, something which eventually helped the ensuing photography exhibition attain some degree of cohesion. I would also note, however, that by influencing the participants to think primarily about the cycle of strangeness and estrangement, I closed off some other possible topics with which they might have wanted to engage. I would also admit that the way in which this agreement was reached contributed to instituting the problematic idea that there were leadership and follower roles in the creation of the project.

As the process of subject selection progressed, the negotiations shifted from the participants and myself to the participants and the photography scholar Ricky. Indeed, the final determination of the subjects of the photo stories was a product of the participants brainstorming to come up with topic ideas and Ricky commenting on the topic ideas that the participants were raising.

First, I turn to the participants. Affirming the observation of much of the literature on photography in the everyday, almost all of the initial topic ideas that they thought of were about special people or special events in their lives (cf. Bourdieu, 2003 [1990]; Harrison, 2002; Holland, 2004; Slater, 1995). Examples of those who wanted their photo stories to be about special people were Amisha (21, female, other Indian), who wanted to do something that documented the working lives of either her brother or her close relation Sam YG, and Matt (23, male, Korean), who wanted to give a glimpse of the everyday lives of his international set of friends in a university dormitory. And examples of those who wanted their photo stories to be about special events included Roshni (20, female, Sindhi Indian), who thought of taking images of either the worship Hindus did inside the *gurudwara* (or temple) or major Hindu religious feasts in Manila, and Sonya (22, female, Korean), who thought of capturing the interesting activities that Koreans did in Manila (but who also thought of interesting Koreans whom she had come across). Since Sang Mi (24, female, Korean) and Hae Jin (24, male, Korean) were both unable to immediately think of a topic that they wanted to work on, there was really only one

exception to the very ordinary practice that the participants performed in selecting their topics. This was Anil (23, male, Sindhi Indian), who wanted to make a photo story about how his Filipino-Indian identity influenced his cooking. I return to this later.

I would argue that part of the reason why the participants chose the usual topics of ordinary photography was because I asked them to share stories that came from their own diasporic experiences of Manila. Of course they would talk about those people and those events that mattered most in their everyday lives. To put it in another way, my request positioned the participants to perform the role of ordinary photographers and, as a consequence, sanctioned the socially entangled ordinary photographic practice of photo selection that came with this (Bourdieu, 2003 [1990]). Together with this, I would also say that the participants chose the topics that they did because of the practical considerations that the *Shutter Stories* project raised. First, the project schedule only gave the participants one week to put together their individual photo stories (see Table 4.6 in Chapter 4 for the schedule of the photography seminars). Because of this, they selected photographic subjects to which they had easy access. Matt (23, male, Korean) expressed this reasoning explicitly, saying, “It’s best that I choose a story that I can do without leaving U.P. We’ll have a lot of school work this week, so I’m sure I won’t have the time to leave the [university] campus.” Second, all throughout the photography seminars, the participants were very conscious that their works would be publicly exhibited. This made them choose topics that they could easily handle because of their familiarity, like Roshni (20, female, Sindhi Indian), for whom Hindu religious life was already a central life experience. The participants also chose topics that would allow them to pay tribute to people dear to them, like Sukhpri (19, female, Punjabi Indian), who from the outset was very excited to do a story on her mother.

Meanwhile, the intervention of the photography scholar Ricky in the process of photographic subject selection came in two forms. First, Ricky insisted that the participants think about whether their proposed stories could be translated to visually powerful images. A case in point was Ricky’s conversation with Anil (23, male, Sindhi Indian) during the brainstorming session of the photo narration seminar. This began with Anil saying that he wanted to tell a story about how his being a Filipino-Indian influenced his cooking, which he considered as one of his most significant passions in life. He said,

I don't think many people know, but I love cooking. I was actually considering it as a career at one point, especially since I got a culinary arts scholarship at Miele in Singapore. So in some ways, it's weird that I'm working in advertising now, since it has barely anything to do with food. So yeah, I was thinking that I'd reconnect with my passion for cooking by making a photo story about it...I want my story to be about how I draw from both my Filipino and Indian heritage when I cook. Like when I cook *adobo* [which is the unofficial national dish of the Philippines], I add spice to it so that it becomes a little bit Indian.

Ricky said that although this story seemed to be really important to Anil and might potentially be interesting to other people as well, it was very difficult to tell visually. Ricky contended that taste was something that photography would not be able to capture very well. Anil disagreed with this, saying that taste could be captured visually. He explained,

Maybe I can make the dish appear spicy by showing the chilli that I used. Maybe I could make the chilli a focal point in the photo?...Also, my *adobo* tends to be redder than the usual. So maybe, that red colour can convey [the spiciness of the dish].

But Ricky pressed on his argument, saying that a series of images about what certain foods taste like would not have the same impact on people as, say, actual food that these people could taste. Ricky and Anil continued on with several other similar points. But after much deliberation, Ricky managed to persuade Anil to see his point. Anil let go of his topic, despite his very strong attachment to it, and instead worked on what became the actual subject of his photo story, which was a series of images that established his intimate knowledge of Manila (see Figures 17.1 to 17.13 in Chapter 6).

I would like to point out two things in this negotiation between Ricky and Anil. One is that Ricky's insistence on making Anil think about the visual quality of his proposed story was not meant to stifle Anil's capacity for voice. On the contrary, Ricky was intent on trying to ensure that Anil's work would have public impact and that, as such, his voice would be listened to. I would say that Ricky was coming from the vantage point of a working photojournalist who values the importance of harnessing the qualities of the photographic medium. He was subscribing to a dominant belief in the local photography industry that the possibilities of the visual nature of photography need to be maximised and its problems minimised. That said,

my other point is that Anil's insistence on sticking with his story about his being Filipino-Indian and his cooking was not borne out of stubbornness. It was important for him tell this story because it was an expression of something very valuable to him. He was a frustrated chef who wanted to explore the issue of his cultural identity in relation to a long-held regret about him declining his culinary arts scholarship and attending university instead. The result of the negotiation between these two different concerns was that, on the one hand, Anil's desire to reflect on his hybrid cultural identity did become more visually powerful when he settled on making a photo story about his explorations around Manila. On the other hand, his desire to also reflect on his being a frustrated chef no longer figured his photo story. It can be said then that Ricky's attempt to help Anil make his story more visually appealing did help Anil in preparing his diasporic voice for public exposure. But this intervention also significantly limited Anil's ability to take full control of this voice.

The second intervention that the photography scholar Ricky made pertained to the feasibility of the participants' proposed topics. In his talk with the participants, he continually prodded them to think of the potential problems that might arise if they pushed through with the stories that they had in mind. The exemplary case for this was the discussion Ricky had with Amisha (21, female, other Indian) about the issues of anonymity in her work, which was something I discussed earlier in this chapter. Other than this however, Ricky also talked to Roshni (20, female, Sindhi Indian) about how she needed to rethink her idea of making a story about one of the biggest Hindu festivals in Manila because its celebration did not coincide with the week when she had to complete her photo story; to Preet (22, male, Punjabi Indian) about whether he needed to ask permission from his superiors if he was going to take shots inside his workplace, especially since it was private corporate office; to Sukhprit (19, female, Punjabi Indian) about the possible complications of doing a portrait of a person like her mother, whom she described as socially reticent; and to Matt (23, male, Korean) about the ethics that he had to consider if he planned to push through with taking photographs of people's private spaces in the dormitory.

In the instances I mentioned above, I would say that the parameters that Ricky set for the participants turned out to be helpful in terms of allowing them to exercise their voice. Unlike in his first intervention where he inadvertently stifled the voice of Anil (23, male, Sindhi Indian), here he was able to help the participants prepare for the logistical challenges that they might encounter in attempting to tell

the story that they wanted to tell. Nevertheless, it needs to be said that both of Ricky's contributions did reinforce the power asymmetry between the three of us project facilitators and the nine participants.

In an interesting twist, Ricky was not able to guide the photo selection of three of the four Korean participants during the photo narration seminar. For one, Sonya (22, female, Korean) needed to leave early during the day of this seminar, as she had a personal matter that needed attention. So the only guidance that she got was from a brief conference with me, which she initiated only a few minutes before she left. This was the discussion I mentioned earlier in this chapter about Sonya wanting to create a story about a Korean man who had survived living in Manila for decades without knowing how to speak English or Tagalog. Later on though, she nevertheless managed to develop a topic on her own. As it turned out, this was because she previously had Ricky as a photography teacher in one of her university classes. Meanwhile, Sang Mi (24, female, Korean) and Hae Jin (24, male, Korean) really struggled to come up with a topic during the brainstorming session. Although they said that they would send Ricky an email once they managed to think of a topic, they never did. As such, the photography scholar could not do anything but wait in surprise for what the participants would present in the next photography seminar. Interestingly, the form of the final topics that Sang Mi and Hae Jin came up with were based on the lecture that Ricky gave, and this is something that I return to in the ensuing discussion on the process of subject representation.

All in all, I would say that the particular way in which the process of photographic selection played out in the *Shutter Stories* project had a double-edged impact as regards valuing the voice of the Indian and Korean participants (Couldry, 2010). Central to this result was the decision that the photography scholars and I took to set parameters that would help the participants translate their raw ideas into visual works that the viewing public would understand and appreciate. In certain moments, these helped the participants to give a more definitive shape to their stories and to better prepare for the logistical challenges that they might confront in attempting to craft their photo stories. But at other times, these parameters foreclosed some of the stories that the participants wanted to talk about. I would say then that, on the one hand, the negotiations during the subject selection helped crystallise the participants' voices. But on the other hand, the fact that the photography scholars and I were the ones setting the parameters did at times take

away from the project's aim of enhancing the participants confidence in their capacity to take full control of their stories (cf. Gauntlett, 2011).

7.2.2 On the process of representing the photographic subject

The same asymmetrical dynamics discussed above continued to characterise the negotiations that happened during the process of determining the photographic representation of the subjects of the photo stories for the *Shutter Stories* project. There were also, however, significant differences in how the three of us project facilitators and the Indian and Korean participants engaged and collaborated with each other.

One key difference in this process was that I took a backseat during the discussions on how the subjects of the photo stories were to be depicted. Unlike the way that I helped set the initial direction of the process of subject selection, here I did not attempt to put in place parameters that the participants might consider in crafting their work. Since I did not consider myself an expert in the practice of professional photography, I was not confident enough to contribute to this aspect of the project. As a consequence of this, the participants had fewer filters to deal with in deciding how to approach their subjects. However, it is also important to point out that my lack of confidence in the practice of professional photography resulted in two important developments. One is that I asked the two photography scholars, Ricky and Terri, to help the participants in the process of subject selection. Second, and more significantly, I also decided to defer to the standards of photography to which the two of them subscribed. The implication of these two things was that Ricky and Terri's approach to taking images became the standard for the *Shutter Stories* project. In fact, I was hoping that through their guidance, the participants could, in their own ways, deploy the language of professional photography in their work.

My belief in the necessity of Ricky and Terri's professional guidance stemmed from my conviction that if the participants' photo stories were to challenge the images of Indians and Koreans in the Philippine mainstream media, then their works would have to "speak" the same language as that of the media industry. Clearly, my interest lay less in discovering how the participants actually used photography in the everyday, as in, for example, the study of Sharples and his associates of how children make sense of photography (Sharples et al, 2003).

Instead, my interest was more about exploring how the participants' ordinary practice might be melded together with the photography scholars' professional practice in order to explore photography's potential to reach out to a wider audience, as in the case with Burgess' notion of vernacular creativity (Burgess, 2006).

I was aware that my particular conviction above might be critiqued for leading the participants to "speak" the language of the mainstream media, a language that is not necessarily their own. Couldry himself warns of the dangers of using such a language, saying,

If, through an unequal distribution of narrative resources, the materials from which some people must build an account of themselves are *not* theirs to adapt or control, then this represents a deep denial of voice, a deep form of oppression. This is the oppression W.B. Du Bois described as 'double consciousness', a 'sense of always looking at oneself through the eyes of others'. (Couldry, 2010: 9).

In the case of the particular participants of *Shutter Stories* though, I thought that this was not the case. The participants were not using a language which they had no capacity to "adapt or control" (*ibid.*). From the very start of the project, they already had the (perhaps undeveloped) capacity to deploy and appropriate the language of the mainstream media; they themselves have been exposed to and have, in often unreflexive ways, used these same language of the mainstream media in their personal media projects, as in the case of the photographs that they take for the Facebook pages. They were very much unlike, for instance, the Indian participants in Pinney's study who had traditional photographic rituals that were at variance from Pinney's own thoughts about the practice of photography (Pinney, 1997).

One important observation I had about the negotiations that happened between the photography scholars and the participants was that, on the surface of things at least, the professional standards to which Ricky and Terri subscribed generally went unchallenged. The participants' reaction to Terri's basic photography seminar demonstrated this. Many of them expressed appreciation for the technical skills that they learned. The said things like:

I'm excited to try out all this new stuff that I've learned from Terri! (Sang Mi, 24, female, Korean)

I'm grateful for this seminar. It's like a refresher course. It has helped me remember the lessons that Ricky taught us [in university] before. (Sonya, 22, female, Korean)

The participants also excitedly exchanged stories about the hands-on activity that Terri made them do, which was to pair up and take at least one photograph which exemplified professional approaches to each of the following elements of photography: lighting, texture, focus, angling, composition, and colour. In a moment of light banter, Amisha (21, female, other Indian) told Preet (22, male, Punjabi Indian), “It seems like I’m better than you! You have to practice more!” She would then go on to show how she seemed to have better command of the photographic elements. To this Preet replied, “Maybe it’s all in the camera? Look at mine, it’s a poor point-and-shoot.”

The participants also drew heavily from Ricky’s lecture about the different narrative techniques that one can use to tell a photo story. This included approaches that followed the day in the life of a particular character, that played on contrast by juxtaposing particular images, and that covered the unfolding of a particular event. As I noted earlier, Hae Jin (24, male, Korean) and Sang Mi (24, female, Korean) might not have been able to come up with topics during the brainstorming session, but the ideas that they belatedly presented were clearly inspired by some of the sample photo stories that Ricky showed them. Specifically, Hae Jin used symbolism in his work on love (see Figures 6.5.1 to 6.5.24 in Chapter 6) and Sang Mi used a portrait series for her work the friends she has met in university (see Figures 6.6.1 to 6.6.11 in Chapter 6). Although Hae Jin did not explicitly acknowledge this, Sang Mi did, saying she “found the portraits that Ricky presented very attractive.”

Both examples above show that the participants did share in the belief that the photography scholars and I held about the value of using professional photographic techniques. More than that, they also seemed to share with the photography scholars the same resources for judging what a good photograph was and was not (cf. Silverstone, 2007) Here, I would reiterate that this is because of how the participants, together with the photography scholars, drew from the mainstream media for their understanding of the language of professional photography.

In contrast, I observed that the actual judging of the aesthetic value of the participants’ photographs was a more contentious matter. Throughout the photography seminars, and most especially during the photo selection seminar, Ricky and Terri consistently asserted their expertise in this matter. In many ways, I created the conditions that led them to do this. As I indicated in my earlier

discussion of the symbolic mode of the photograph, I provided the photography scholars time to comment on each of the participants' photo story drafts. I also invited them to a session a week after the photography seminars, so that the three of us could look at the project participant's pre-final photo story drafts and make suggestions as to how to improve individual images and how to best sequence the entire photo story.

I would say that there was nothing inherently wrong in allowing the photography scholars Ricky and Terri to establish their expertise in photographic representation. After all, this was their key contribution to the project. However, what made the situation problematic was that I did not do enough to foster a space wherein the participants could also argue for their own ways of depicting their subjects. What happened then was that they never really had much of a chance to express any challenge to the suggestions that Ricky and Terri made both in the first and pre-final photo story drafts. At most, all I observed was an unspoken tension between the photography scholars and the participants, which was most evident in how these two groups described the quality of the photo stories. Although this could be because the participants did believe in the capacity of the photography scholars, I would argue that this was more because of the tendency of Philippine society (and of many Asian societies in general) to be deferential to those who are considered as superior, teachers most especially.

For Terri and Ricky, the works of the participants were amateur, in the sense that these had yet to reflect mastery in maximising the potential of the photographic medium. From the photography scholars' vantage point, it was only natural to view the participants' works in this way. After all, their experiences included not only working as and with professional photographers, but also mentoring other professional photographers. In comparison with the standards they were used to, the works of the participants were certainly amateur. That said, they did appreciate the emergent professional qualities in some of these works. Indeed, they seemed to hierarchise the photo stories according to how close these were to the professional standards to which they subscribed. If my reading is right, they thought that most professional amongst the amateur photo stories were those of Amisha (21, female, other Indian), who did a story on Sam YG (see Figures 6.1.1 to 6.1.14. in Chapter 6), and of Sonya (22, female, Korean), who took a generational approach to Korean life in Manila (see Figures 6.9.1 to 6.9.38). The fact that the exhibition slideshow

was bookended with the works of these two was a clear testament to this. According to Terri and Ricky, the rationale they had for arranging the slideshow in this manner was that it had to start strong and to end strong. It can be derived then that the photo stories that they placed between these two supposedly strong works were relatively less professional. The fact that I assented to this arrangement of the photo stories, which did become the actual arrangement of the works during the slideshow for the public exhibition and the list for the dedicated website, clearly indicated that I was reinforcing Terri and Ricky's expertise.

Some of the participants had a rather different view of the quality of their works. Preet (22, male, Punjabi Indian), for example, did not see his works in the way that the photography scholars did. Although he never explicitly articulated it, he clearly believed that he was good at visual presentations. I could see why he would think this. He has had considerable experience of working in advertising. And, as he shared with me during one conversation, he often got a lot of praise from his colleagues because of the visual impact of his presentation slides. In fact, Preet's understanding of powerful visuals was clearly reflected in the slides he presented during the photo selection seminar. He manipulated the colours of the images so that they appeared stylised, cropped the images so that they particular objects within the frame came into focus, and put two or three images per slide so that he could play around with their juxtapositions. Later on, Terri and Ricky suggested that Preet might return the photographs to their original colour and size and might simplify their layout, since they wanted to see the raw images first. He did not challenge the photography scholars' advice, although it was evident in his body language that he was surprised by these comments. Unfortunately, I was not able to establish a mechanism that would allow Preet to overcome the local norms about engaging with those who are recognised as teachers. As such, he had no chance to elaborate the rationale and the value of his own approach to photographic representation. By not establishing the conditions that would give Preet confidence in his way of telling a story, I also by extension did not help in establishing a space that would foster his voice.

In light of the above, it is clear that in the particular case of the *Shutter Stories* project, the Indian and Korean participants, the photography scholars, and I all believed in the importance of weaving together the participants' everyday practice of photography and the photography scholars' standards of professional

photography. As I said, I hoped that this would foster what Burgess calls vernacular creativity, which pertains to the ability to communicate—to have a voice—by harnessing the links between the production logics that arise from people’s everyday lives and the production logics that dominate popular culture (Burgess, 2006). In practice, however, this attempt at melding together these two practices turned out to be quite problematic. The way I established the photography seminars did not valorise the ordinary photographic practices of the participants as much as it valorised the photography standards to which the photography scholars subscribed. As in the case with the process of subject selection then, the intervention of the photography scholars and I had the same double-edged effect. It refined the works of the participants and made it ready for a public exhibition, but also reinforced the asymmetric relationship between the so-called experts (that is, the photography scholars) and apprentices (that is, the participants). All in all then, this process once again both succeeded and failed embodying voice as a value. In attempting to foster voices that would give the participants a greater chance of being listened to by local Filipinos, it also undermined the nurturing of voices that the participants could fully own (cf. Couldry, 2010).

7.3 Conclusion

I began this chapter by analysing how the voices of the Indian and Korean participants of the *Shutter Stories* project were mediated by the simultaneously indexical, iconic, and symbolic character of the photographic medium (Scott, 1999; Zelizer, 2006). I focused on attempting to understand how the notion of voice as a process played out in relation to the photographic medium (Couldry, 2010). First, I examined how the participants produced the photo stories and considered what Couldry points to as the two key aspects of the materiality of voice: the social resources involved in producing people’s voices and the particular form that their voices actually take. In relation to Couldry’s notion of social resources, I showed that what mattered most in the *Shutter Stories* project was the capacity of the different project collaborators—comprised of the participants, the photography scholars, and myself—to make use of the various qualities of the photographic modes. And in relation to Couldry’s notion of form, I highlighted the key characteristics of the manner in which the photo stories were actually presented

during the public exhibition at The Block, SM North EDSA in Manila and via the dedicated website (*ibid.*). Second, I looked into how Manila's local Filipinos interpreted the photo stories to assess whether the participants' voices were recognised, which Couldry says would only have happened if their voices were listened to and were registered as important. Here I said the whilst the local Filipino viewers could hear the personal stories and the ideological messages behind the photo stories, they primarily tuned into the representational stories that were embedded in these works. I also said that one key piece of evidence that the local Filipino viewers registered their voices was that they were surprised by the photo stories' (primarily iconic) narratives about the strong and diverse presence of Indian and Korean migrants in Manila, as well as about how unexpected the characteristics of these migrants could be.

In the second part of this chapter, I explored how the notion of voice as a value unfolded in relation to the practices surrounding photography (Couldry, 2010). By looking at both the process of subject selection and subject representation (cf. Pink, 2007), I attempted to characterise the kind of negotiations that happened between the photographic practices drawn on by the participants and the photographic practices espoused by the photography scholars and myself (cf. Bourdieu 2003 [1990]; Thumim, 2009). I contended that, in many ways, the manner in which the photography scholars and I intervened in these processes helped to refine the works of the participants and ready them for public viewing. However, I also argued that, in many instances, our concern for the effectiveness of the participants' voices inadvertently resulted in the participants not being able to tell some of the stories that they really wanted to tell. Together with these, the interventions also had the problematic effect of reinforcing the notion that the photography scholars and I were the mentors and that the participants were the apprentices and, as a consequence, undermining the participants' confidence in using photography as a platform for their diasporic voices (Gauntlett, 2011). In summary, it can be said that in attempting to help the participants have a voice that would have a greater chance of being listened to by local Filipinos, the photography scholars and I also unfortunately undermined the nurturing of voices that the participants could fully control and could fully own (cf. Couldry, 2010).

I return to the insights I derived from my participant observation in *Shutter Stories* in Chapter 9. In that final chapter of this dissertation, I reflect on the ways in

which the insights above might address existing academic debates about the mediation of diasporic voices, as well as how they might inform the conceptualisation of future interventionist research projects. But first, I continue my discussion of the mediation of diasporic voices in the next chapter, where I examine how the participants' social experiences as a diaspora mediated the stories that they had to offer.

Chapter 8

On the Social Mediation of *Shutter Stories*

“In our experience the life history of each of us is caught up in the histories of others.”

-Paul Ricoeur, Oneself as Another

In the penultimate chapter of this dissertation, I complete my discussion of the empirical data I gathered during the course of my fieldwork. As I established in Chapters 2 and 3, this work seeks to examine how the *Shutter Stories* project mediated the voices of its Indian and Korean participants from two perspectives (cf. Couldry, 2010; Silverstone, 1999). In the preceding chapter, I already elaborated on the first perspective. Drawing on my participant observation in the *Shutter Stories* project, I looked into the mediation of the participants' voices in relation to the properties of and the practices surrounding photography in an interventionist project. Here, I move on to consider the second perspective. Weaving together the data I gathered from my participant observation in the project and from my life story interviews with the participants, I analyse the mediation of the participants' voices in relation to their diasporic social experiences in Manila.

The discussion below draws from the second half of this study's theoretical framework, which I developed in Chapter 3. I examine the participants' photo stories in relation to the three levels of the diasporic social experience. I begin by talking about the photo stories in relation to diasporic experience at the level of the self, where what comes into play is Couldry's notion of voice as a process (defined as the capacity of people to tell stories about themselves and their place in the world) (Couldry, 2010). I show how the participants' works demonstrated their ability to be reflexive, as they expressed their personal agency in dealing with the circumstances in which they were embedded (Archer, 2000; 2007; Layder, 2004). I then approach the photo stories in relation to the diasporic experience at the level of the cultural group, central to which are both Couldry's notions of voice as a process and voice as a value (defined as the act of fostering institutions that themselves foster voice as a process) (Couldry, 2010). Here I explore how the participants' works reflected the ways that they negotiated the boundaries of their cultural groups: mostly reinforcing although at times challenging them (Barth, 1976; Bauman 2001; Baumann, 1997).

Finally, I talk about the photo stories in relation to the diasporic experience at the level of the multicultural society, where it is Couldry's notion of voice as a value that is crucial (Couldry, 2010). In this final section of the discussion, I delve into how the participants' works were mediated by how much Manila's wider society was open and willing to engage in dialogue about the increasingly multicultural character of their city (Benhabib, 2002; Phillips, 2008; Said, 1994; Silverstone, 2007).

8.1 On the diasporic experience at the level of the self

At the first level of the diasporic experience, I could most clearly observe the dynamics of Couldry's notion of voice as a process in how reflexive the Indian and Korean participants were in crafting their photo stories (Couldry, 2010). Although the participants were drawing on experiences that they shared with their fellow Indian and Korean migrants, they still managed to "articulat[e] the world *from [their] distinctive embodied position*" (Couldry, 2010:8). Or to put in another way, even if the participants shared similar life contexts with the other members of Manila's Indian and Korean communities, they were nevertheless able to use their photo stories to reinforce their different personal life projects (cf. Archer, 2007).

8.1.1. The Indian participants: Stories about cultural identity articulation

First I talk about the case of the Indian participants. The common thread that ran through all their photo stories was a concern for articulating their stance about their own cultural identities. As I reveal in the ensuing discussion, the Indian participants seemed to be either choosing or, at times, negotiating between two particular cultural influences: the Indian-ness of Manila's Sindhi and Punjabi communities and the Filipino-ness of the wider society to which they belonged. One reason for this would be that all of them were second generation migrants (see Table 5.1 in Chapter 4). As the existing (though sparse) literature on Indians in the Philippines suggest, many of these non-first generation young Indians go through a stage where they attempt to figure out their relationship with the global Sindhi network (Thapan, 2002) or their local Punjabi community (Lorenzana, 2008), on the one hand, and with the local Filipinos, on the other hand. As all of the non-first generation Indians I interviewed said, being born and growing up in Manila meant

having to deal with the multiply contradictory characteristics of what they described as the heavily policed “traditional” cultures of the Sindhi and Punjabi Indian communities and the more “liberated” and Western-oriented culture of Manila’s local Filipinos.

It can also be said that the need of the five participants to articulate their culture identity was borne out of the relatively frequent interactions that they had with Manila’s local Filipinos. Anita Thapan suggests that in the case of the Sindhi Indians, this is especially true in those years when they are still in school, where they inevitably interact with their local Filipino classmates and teachers. In fact, some of these Sindhi Indians even have to adapt to the fact that most of the local Filipinos are Catholic just to get a good education; they learn, participate, and sometimes even convert to the Catholic faith primarily because they want to get into the city’s most reputable private schools, the majority of which are run by various Catholic orders (Thapan, 2002). This was certainly the case with all of the non-first generation Sindhi Indians I interviewed. Meanwhile, Lorraine Salazar contends that more than the Sindhi Indians, the Punjabi Indians interface in a much deeper way with Manila’s local Filipinos. As she puts it, they “represent the face of India to most Filipinos” (Salazar, 2008: 501). This primarily because of their *five-six* (or moneylending) work that, as I have previously said, necessitate operations “at the grassroots or community level” (*ibid.*: 502). This was affirmed by the non-first generation Punjabi Indians with whom I talked.

In spite of the similar social circumstances of the participants, the differences of their personal life projects meant that each of them took distinct positions as regards their cultural identities. In fact, they could be very well placed on a spectrum. At one end would be those who thought of the photo stories as a way to affirm their Indian-ness, such as Roshni (20, female, Sindhi Indian) and Sukphrit (19, female, Punjabi Indian). At the opposite end would be those who sought to affirm their Filipino-ness, as in the case of Anil (23, male, Sindhi Indian). And then there were those who sought to negotiate between their Indian-ness and Filipino-ness, such as Amisha (21, female, other Indian) and Preet (22, male, Punjabi Indian).

8.1.1.1 Affirmations of Indian-ness

In Roshni's (20, female, Sindhi Indian) photo story, she sought to acquaint local Filipinos with the practice of Hinduism, a religion to which many of Manila's Sindhi Indians subscribed (see Figures 6.8.1 to 6.8.14 in Chapter 6). The images she took detailed the various elements of everyday worship in a typical *gurudwara* (or temple) in Manila. Specifically, these photographs presented Hindu worshippers (for example, see Figure 8.1.1), gurus and gods (for example, see Figure 8.1.2), ritual practices (for example, see Figure 8.1.3), and temple food (for example, see Figure 8.1.4). As I mentioned in Chapter 7, Roshni actually wanted to juxtapose these with another set of photographs taken during one of their big religious festivals. She had to let go of this idea however, since that particular celebration did not fall within the weeks of the photography seminars. Nevertheless, Roshni explained that her much grander original plan would really have driven home her point that their Hindu religion was not only important to Sindhis during special occasions, but was equally important in their everyday lives.

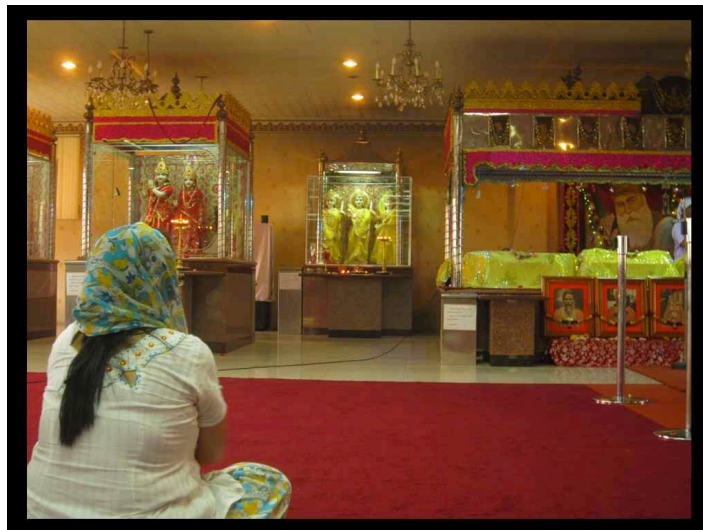


Figure 8.1.1 Photo 3 of Roshni's 'No Matter Where We Are'.



Figure 8.1.2 Photo 6 of Roshni's 'No Matter Where We Are'.



Figure 8.1.3 Photo 12 (L) and 13 (R) of Roshni's 'No Matter Where We Are'.



Figure 8.1.4 Photo 15 of Roshni’s ‘No Matter Where We Are’.

From my conversations with Roshni, it seemed that her choice to articulate her Indian-ness in relation to her Hindu faith was rooted in a concern for the ambiguity that characterised the actual religious practices of Manila’s Sindhis. She was, in fact, concerned that whilst it was true that her entire family made it a point to worship every week, they did not necessarily do so in the same temple. She explained that the different temples in Manila represent different ways of expressing their faith. Some are more “traditional” and are for those who are “more into praying to the Hindu gods.” Some others are more “modern” and are for those who are “interested in deepening their spirituality” (cf. Salazar, 2008, who affirms these views in her work). Although Roshni did not explicitly say it, she was certainly indicating a certain divide in her family, as some of them were more “traditional” and some were more “modern.” Between these two polarities, she identified herself closer to the “traditional” one. Although she defined herself as “not the type that’s ‘traditional traditional...[and doesn’t] accept everything that’s told to [her]’”, she also said that she was a “devout believer”. She recounted that she was serious about her worship time, strict about her vegetarian diet, and passionate about helping out with the Sunday school in her temple.

More than the above, Roshni’s photo story was also an attempt to show that her perceived fragmentation of Hinduism in Manila has not taken away the religion’s ability to provide the Sindhi community a shared identity. It seemed that beyond her worry about the practice of Hinduism, her deeper concern was for how her Sindhi community’s culture might be undermined by the local Filipino culture

that was more predominant in the city. This clearly mirrored her personal belief that her Indian cultural identity needed to be protected from the generally more influential Filipino culture. This was why although her education came exclusively from Manila's private Catholic schools, she never made much effort to engage with local Filipinos and their culture. As she claimed, "I've never eaten Filipino food...Really!" and "I don't have that many Filipino friends".

It can be said then that Roshni's work on the unifying quality of the Hindu faith was a manifestation of one of her personal life projects: the continued affirmation of her strong sense of belonging to Manila's Sindhi Indian community. This stance needs to be understood in relation to the larger context of how Sindhis like Roshni often shield themselves from Manila's violence and crime by minimising their interactions with local Filipinos, which is something I elaborated on in Chapter 5. Nevertheless, it also needs to be said that Roshni's lack of openness to local Filipinos and their culture is certainly problematic. This is especially since being a participant in multicultural dialogue necessitates a willingness to building connections with one's cultural others.

Meanwhile, Sukhprit (19, female, Punjabi Indian) intended her photo story to be an ode to her mother (see Figures 6.7.1 to 6.7.12). She wanted to portray her as the ideal of a traditional Punjabi Indian woman: a wife devoted to taking care of her husband and her children. The first set of photographs she took gave a glimpse of her mother at home. This included images of her mother doing traditional Punjabi rituals, like applying red paste on her hair to signify her married status and doing Sikh morning prayers in front of the family altar (for example, see Figure 8.2.1). There were also shots portraying her mother as a wife whose identity was tied to her husband and to her children (for example, see Figure 8.2.2). On a rather different note, there were a couple of photos of her mother indulging in a current fad participated in by many local Filipinos: taking care of pedigreed dogs (for example, see Figure 8.2.3).

Meanwhile, Sukhprit meant for the second set of images in her photo story to show how her mother possessed another important trait of a Punjabi woman: reticence. In order to elaborate on this, Sukhprit took photographs of her mother during a Sikh wedding party. In all of these images, Sukhprit said that she wanted to capture her mother's shyness. This was evident in the group shots where her mother cannot get herself to give a full smile (for example, see Figure 8.2.4) and the

dancing shots where she is always found to be somewhere in the background rather than in the middle of the action (for example, see Figure 8.2.5).



Figure 8.2.1 Photo 1 of Sukhprit's 'Maa'.

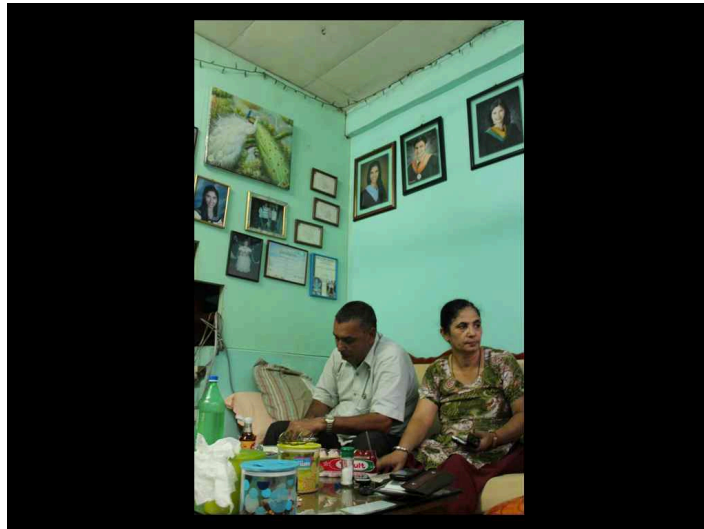


Figure 8.2.2 Photo 4 of Sukhprit's 'Maa'.



Figure 8.2.3 Photo 3 of Sukhprit's 'Maa'.



Figure 8.2.4 Photo 7 of Sukhprit's 'Maa'.



Figure 8.2.5 Photo 10 of Sukhprit's 'Maa'.

Interestingly, the photo story's strong affirmation of the value of being a traditional Punjabi Indian woman was driven by Sukhprit's struggle about her own identity as a woman. On the one hand, Sukhprit talked about her affinity for the notion of a traditional Punjabi Indian woman. And this was primarily because of how much she adored her mother, whom she described as "the greatest person in [her] life". There were, in fact, many times when she posited the traditional Punjabi Indian woman as the standard for judging her own woman-ness. In some instances, she highlighted the traits that she shared with this ideal in order to establish how good a woman she was. During her life story interview, she proudly pointed out, "You know in India, you're supposed to be the shy type, at home, and very much the wife. In some ways, that's me. I'm like that." In other instances, she equated the traits of the said ideal with her future goals for herself. This was the case during the photo narration seminar, when she said, "A part of me aspires to be a traditional housewife who will cook for my husband, fuss over my children, take care of our home, things like that."

On the other hand, Sukhprit also often argued for the value of being a modern woman. In talking about this, she discussed how her views in life were heavily influenced by two things: the different world views of her international set of friends and the intellectual currents she was being exposed to in the university. She summed up her belief about being a modern woman this way:

I have a knowledge of my abilities as an independent woman...I have the right to do the things that I want, of course in accordance to the morals of my parents...But I'm not always a good girl. I'm a teenager, you know!

Sukhprit's stance was made clear by the stories she shared about her life. These included relatively minor instances of going against tradition, such as thinking about how she could keep her burgeoning collection of designer clothes after getting married even when she claimed that it was customary for a Punjabi woman not bring her old stuff into her new home. This also included more significant departures from tradition, such as going against her parents' wishes by converting to and practising Catholicism whilst simultaneously maintaining and practising her Sikh faith.

In light of the above, it can be said that Sukhprit's photo story was an attempt to remind herself that she still valued and cherished the Indian values that her mother continued to believe and practice, despite her affinity towards the more Western-oriented values prevalent in Manila's local Filipino culture. In other words, she crafted a story about a traditional Punjabi Indian woman in order to counterbalance the lifestyle of a modern women that she actually lived.

8.1.1.2 Affirmation of Filipino-ness

Unlike the photo stories of Roshni and Sukhprit above, Anil's (23, male, Sindhi Indian) photographs of his wanderings in Manila showed how much he favoured his Filipino cultural identity over his Indian cultural identity (see Figures 6.4.1 to 6.4.13 in Chapter 6). Anil wanted to underscore how supposed "foreigners" like him can have an understanding of Manila that is, at times, better than that of the city's local Filipinos. In order to do this, he demonstrated his capacity to navigate not only through what Tolentino (2011) calls the first world hubs of the Philippine capital, but also through Old Manila's dark, dirty, and decrepit heart. His photographs included portraits of those people who (over)populate the underbelly of this place: street vendors, beggars, scavengers, and the working class (for example, see Figure 8.3.1). There were also landscapes that captured the area's sorry infrastructure: a street flooded with stagnant water, a badly maintained public transit system, and a building with peeling paint (for example, see Figure 8.3.2). And finally, on a lighter note, there was also a still life of one popular local street food: *santol* (wild mangosteen) dipped in salt and chilli (see Figure 8.3.3).



Figure 8.3.1 Photo 12 (L) and 13 (R) of Anil's 'Manila Made. Manila Made Mine.'



Figure 8.3.2 Photo 14 (L) and 15 (R) of Anil's 'Manila Made. Manila Made Mine.'



Figure 8.3.3 Photo 8 (L) Anil’s ‘Manila Made. Manila Made Mine.’

That Anil’s photo story showed how familiar he was with Manila is hardly surprising, as these images only reinforced his consistent actions of playing up his Filipino-ness and downplaying his Indian-ness. During the photography seminars, for instance, he often made ironic, reflexive, and humorous comments that expressed his views about his cultural identity. In his initial meeting with the other exhibition participants, the first thing he said when he entered the seminar room was, “Wow! I feel so out of place. There are so many foreigners here!” Throughout the rest of the seminars, he would crack similar jokes, as in those cases when he sarcastically asked, “Hey, why is there only coffee for the breaks? You know we Indians only drink tea!” and “You’re serving chicken curry for lunch? Really?!...That’s offensive!” More seriously, he explained to me during his life story interview that he saw himself as more Filipino than Indian: “I might look the part [of an Indian] because of my dad, but I’m completely Filipino.”

I would say that in order to understand Anil’s greater affinity for his Filipino-ness over his Indian-ness, it is important to compare him with his father, Rakesh (53, male, Sindhi Indian), who was one of the seventeen Indians I interviewed at the start of my fieldwork. In my conversation with Rakesh, he came across as someone who had immense pride in his Indian heritage. He himself said that he still had a “very Indian way of viewing the world”. But at the same time, Rakesh also had a sincere appreciation of other cultures. From what he recounted, it seems that this was because of his exposure to various culture brought about by his constant travels around the world during his younger days. This allowed him to “see the beauty of

diversity.” Above all, though, Rakesh said that he had the most appreciation for Filipino culture. The key reason for this was that he married a Filipina. Since this alienated him from Manila’s Sindhi community, it became necessary for him to know the Filipino culture that he was “getting more and more involved in”. This dynamic between his pride in his Indian-ness and his appreciation of Filipino culture was crystallised in his description of how he saw his cultural identity:

India’s the land of my roots. So some of my basic values about work ethics, frugality, and resilience are still Indian. But I have expanded myself. And my fruits are Filipino. My children are Filipino. And they are a heavy influence on who I am today...I see myself as a Filipino Indian...[which] means that my concerns are Filipino first and Indian second. But that doesn’t mean I’m not Indian anymore...While I’m here, I’ll keep on pushing for a deeper integration, respect—and even more than respect, love—between [Indians and Filipinos].

The fact that Rakesh has tried his best to embrace his Filipino-ness clearly helps us better understand why Anil himself has embraced his Filipino-ness. If a man who has lingering ties with the Manila’s Sindhi Indian community and has roots in India chooses to prioritise his being Filipino, then so too can someone who no longer has these kinds of direct connections to his Indian heritage.

8.1.1.3 Affirmation of Indian-ness and Filipino-ness

Amisha (21, female, other Indian) said that her photo story was meant to give a behind-the-scenes account of the life of Sam YG, the only Indian in Philippine show business whom I described with some depth in Chapter 5. She wanted to show how Sam YG could have an Indian heritage and yet be a Filipino celebrity (see Figures 6.1.1 to 6.1.15 in Chapter 6). The first part of her photo story was primarily about Sam YG at home, answering emails, preparing his clothes, and leaving for work (for example, see Figure 8.4.1). After this, most of the photographs were of Sam YG working at the television studio of *Eat Bulaga*, a top rated television programme on GMA Network where he is a regular guest (for example, see Figure 8.4.2), and, also at the radio studio of *Boys Night Out*, the top-rated radio programme on Magic 89.9 where he first became popular (for example, see Figure 8.4.3). Interestingly, she ended her photo story with a single photograph of the iconic *bumbay* headgear of Sam YG’s Shivaker character on top of all his stuff in his van (see Figure 8.4.4).

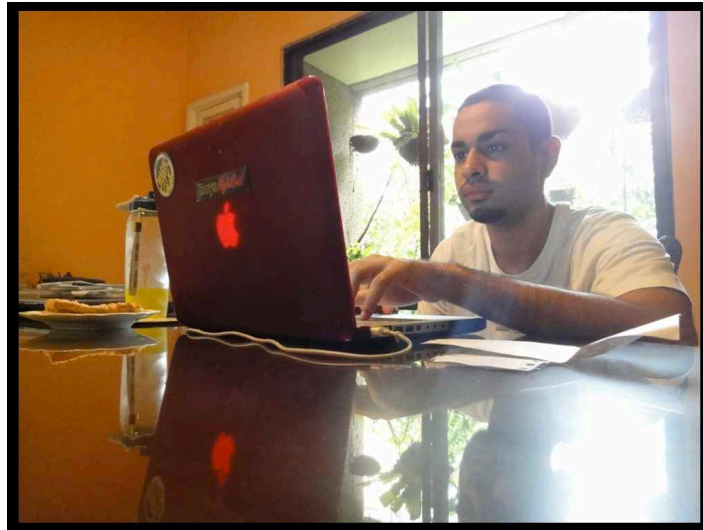


Figure 8.4.1 Photo 2 of Amisha's 'Kukunin Ka Ng Bumbay (The Bumbay Will Come And Get You)'.



Figure 8.4.2 Photo 6 of Amisha's 'Kukunin Ka Ng Bumbay (The Bumbay Will Come And Get You)'.



Figure 8.4.3. Photo 10 of Amisha’s ‘Kukunin Ka Ng Bumbay (The Bumbay Will Come And Get You)’.

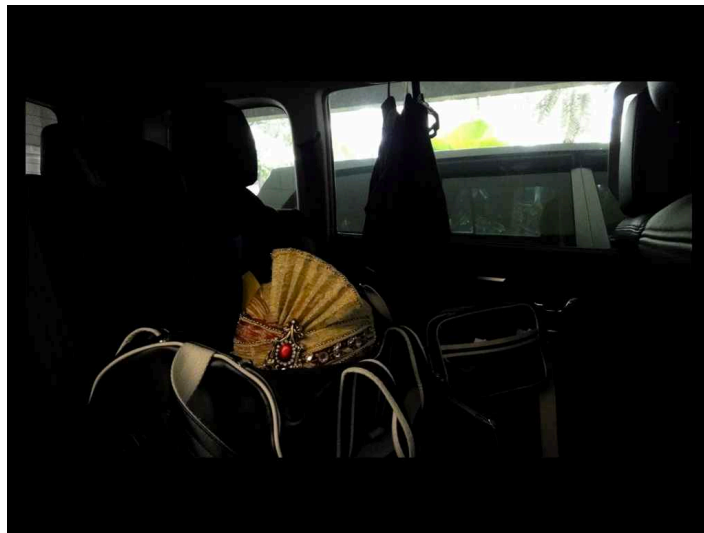


Figure 8.4.4 Photo 12 of Amisha’s ‘Kukunin Ka Ng Bumbay (The Bumbay Will Come And Get You)’.

Amisha’s photo story was clearly a reflective piece on what Ien Ang refers to as the hybridity of diasporic identities (Ang, 2003). And although she did not make herself the subject of her work, the story she made about Sam YG paralleled her own experiences as an Indian in Manila. On the one hand, Amisha told me during her life story interview that she was “a Filipina through and through.” She further explained,

I mean, I'm Indian, of course, but I grew up here [in the Philippines], so I really consider this my home. Like when I visit India, I can only stay there for so long. Maybe one month or less. After that, I'm not usually able to take it anymore. I have to go back here. The food, the environment, it's just so different. I do like to keep in touch with my Indian culture, but I'm really just at home here.

For her, the last link that connected her to her Indian-ness was that she was still considering going into an arranged marriage. And in many ways, this was really the case. Amisha's life did not resemble those of traditional Indian women in Manila as much as it resembled those of her independent, successful, and privileged local Filipina friends, most of whom belonged to the middle- and upper-classes (cf. Leyson, 2004). For instance, when she finished university, she did not find the need to get into the family business (as is the case with most Sindhi Indians), to put herself out for an arranged marriage (as is the case with most Punjabi Indians), or to prioritise getting a job that would provide a steady income (as is the case with ordinary local Filipinos). Instead, she focused on doing the things that interested her: conducting makeup classes for women, performing in a dance group, traveling the world, and the like.

Whilst Amisha's lifestyle might be typical for her privileged local Filipina peers, her reason for doing so was not. The kind of life she led actually reflected the deep-seated concern she had for being a dutiful daughter in an Indian family. She explained, for instance, that her decision to put off embarking on some long-term venture was in part due to the traditional expectations that her family—her mother, most especially—had of her. As she shared, “Growing up, my parents never really asked to see my report card. While they'd push my brothers to do well, they didn't really seem to have any expectation of me. I just did well out of my own initiative.” And now that she has finished university, “my mom sometimes raises the issue of my arranged marriage. It's still what she really wants. I think she knows she can't expect anything from my brothers [who are already quite Filipino], so she kind of things that I'm her last hope.” So whilst Amisha was in many ways Filipino, she also remained in many ways Indian.

Meanwhile, Preet (22, male, Punjabi Indian) said that he meant to do two things with his photo story about his father being engaged in *five-six* (or moneylending) and him being a yuppie (see Figures 6.2.1 to 6.2.15 in Chapter 6). Preet's hope was that his story would convince local Filipinos to accord more respect to the *bumbay* who does *five-six*. In line with this, he wanted to show the kind of hard work his

father did just to give him a good future. This was why the first part of Preet's photo story, subtitled "My Father", was about his father as a stereotypical *bumbay* on a motorcycle, getting ready for his daily ride around Manila (for example, see Figure 8.5.1). Preet also hoped that his story could show local Filipinos that Punjabi Indians do transcend the *bumbay* stereotype. As such, he thought of sharing his yuppie life, which was antithetical to the caricature of the *bumbay*. In the second part of Preet's photo story then, subtitled "Myself", he included images that not only showed his the interiors of his posh office (for example, see Figure 8.5.2) but also showed how his workplace was set firmly in the heart of Makati, which is the Philippines' central business district (for example, see Figure 8.5.3). To end his work, he chose a photograph that gave a glimpse of his very yuppie afterwork hours (for example, see Figure 8.5.4).



Figure 8.5.1 Photo 3 of Preet's '9-5'.

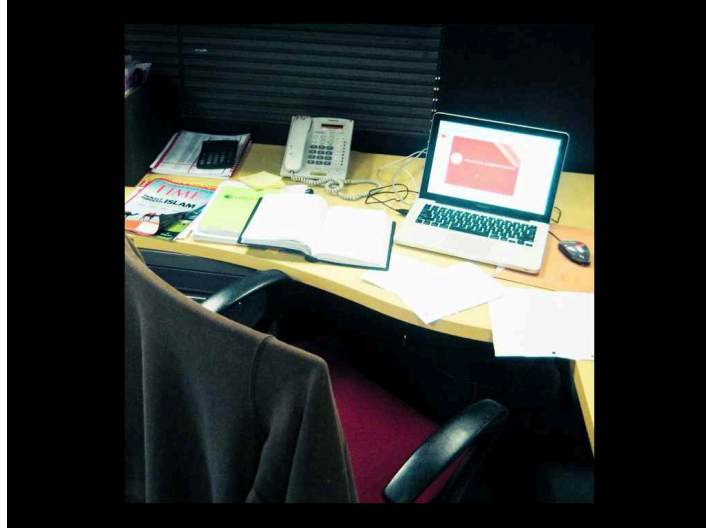


Figure 8.5.2 Photo 8 of Preet's '9-5'.

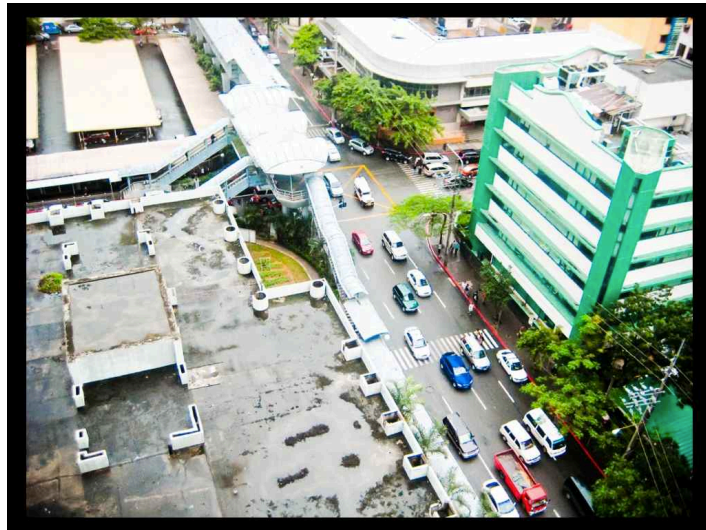


Figure 8.5.3 Photo 10 of Preet's '9-5'.



Figure 8.5.4 Photo 12 of Preet's '9-5'.

It might seem that Preet focused his photo story more on himself than on his father. But this was just because of the difficulties he encountered in taking more photographs of his father, who did not want his face revealed. As I mentioned in Chapter 7, Preet originally wanted to show his father's photos side by side with his photos. This idea included juxtaposing the images of his father's hand on the motorcycle handle and his hand typing on an Apple laptop, as well as of his father's foot on the motorcycle pedal and his foot walking down one of Makati's pedestrian overpasses. Although the final version of the photo story did not contain these juxtapositions, Preet still sequenced the photographs that he took of his father and of himself in a manner that evoked comparison. Throughout all these iterations, it was clear that Preet wanted to address both his Indian-ness and his Filipino-ness. I would contend that this dual affinity is primarily due to his deep respect for his parents and Indian culture, on the one hand, and to his deep relationships to local Filipinos and his equally deep immersion in Filipino culture, on the other hand.

Preet shared that he already had many negative encounters with the *bumbay* discourse predominant amongst Manila's local Filipinos. He said that he was deeply affected by this because many of his male relatives fit the stereotype. And of course, his father was no exception. He explained that this was why a part of him was ferociously committed to promoting his Punjabi Indian heritage. For example, he kept a blog during a recent trip to Punjab, on which he posted photographs, videos, and accompanying explanatory captions. Talking about this, he said,

That [project] was my way of showing people what Punjab really is. I wanted to feature the best of our culture. That's why I had an entry on the Golden Temple at Amritsar...I also uploaded stuff from this very lavish Indian wedding that my cousins and I crashed...I also uploaded these very colourful photos from one of our festivals.

At the same time, however, much of Preet's worldview was more akin to that of middle- and upper-class Filipinos than to that of Manila's Punjabi Indian community. From his stories, I could glean that this had much to do with how he took his studies seriously and, as such, how he was heavily influenced by the kind of intellectual discourses to be found in Manila's private schools. Take for example his decision to enrol in a top university, to work towards graduating as the top student in his course, and to aim for a post in one of the city's most prestigious advertising firms. Whilst these are things that are par for the course for most educated local Filipinos, they were something that Preet's parents did not immediately comprehend. He recounted,

[My parents] thought I was wasting my time with school and until recently, with job-hunting. They didn't really know what I was doing because things like that never really mattered to them and to all our other relatives...But they're coming around to it, now that they see that I have a good salary and that the office actually gave me my very own Apple laptop!

In light of the above, Preet's photo story can be understood as an argument for two sides of the same coin. In the part featuring his father, he was seeking to overturn the low status of Manila's Punjabi Indians. And in the part featuring himself, he was seeking to prove his affinity with middle- and upper-class Filipino cultural values. In all, Preet was really asking that his hybrid cultural identity be recognised as one worthy of the respect of Manila's local Filipinos (cf. Fraser and Honneth, 2003).

8.1.2. The Korean participants: Stories about cultural isolation

As in the case of the five Indian participants, the photo stories of the four Korean participants also shared a common concern. In this case, the shared issue was the theme of isolation from wider Filipino society. Interestingly, the current literature on Korean migration suggests that this is an experience common to many Korean diasporic communities in many countries around the world, such as Brazil (Guimaraes, 2006), Canada (Noh et al, 2012), and the USA (Laux & Thieme, 2006;

Park et al, 2004). These works contend that Korean migrants who attain high education, economic success, and upward mobility eventually become adept at interacting with the locals of these countries. Those who are not able to do these things, however, tend to live apart from the general population, preferring instead to concentrate themselves in areas that often become labeled as “Koreatowns”.

Although isolation appears to be a shared experience amongst diasporic Koreans, the diverse personal life projects of the Korean participants meant that they still approached this topic differently from one another (cf. Archer, 2007). Specifically, they addressed it on different levels, with the photo stories of Hae Jin (24, male, Korean) and Sang Mi (24, female Korean) presenting isolation at the level of the Korean individual, Matt (23, male, Korean) at the level of the Korean student group, and Sonya (22, female, Korean) at the level of the Korean community at large.

8.1.2.1 Isolation of the Korean individual

In Hae Jin’s (24, male, Korean) photo story, he argued that of all our human needs, love is the most significant (see Figures 6.5.1 to 6.5.24 in Chapter 6). This work was comprised primarily of images that depicted our diverse human needs, such as our fellow creatures (for example, see Figure 8.6.1), the natural resources around us (for example, see Figure 8.6.2), and the technological devices we have invented (for example, see Figure 8.6.3). Towards the end though, it featured two key images about love: the more figurative photograph of heart-shaped leaves (see Figure 8.6.4) and the more literal photograph of a couple looking over a field (see Figure 8.6.5).

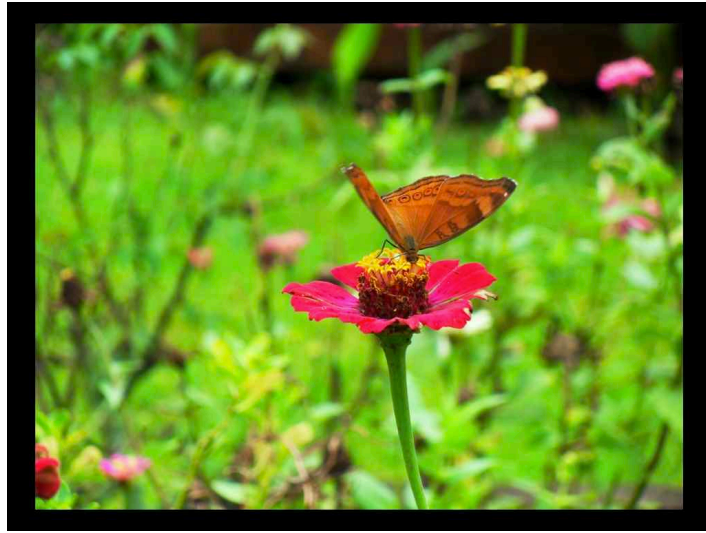


Figure 8.6.1 Photo 5 of Hae Jin's 'The Most Important Thing'.



Figure 8.6.2 Photo 3 of Hae Jin's 'The Most Important Thing'.



Figure 8.6.3 Photo 11 of Hae Jin's 'The Most Important Thing'.

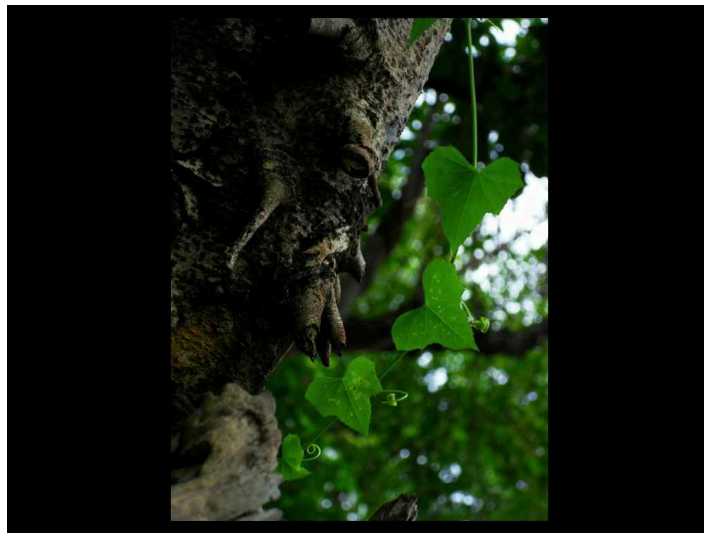


Figure 8.6.4 Photo 22 of Hae Jin's 'The Most Important Thing'.



Figure 8.6.5 Photo 23 of Hae Jin’s ‘The Most Important Thing’.

I was initially puzzled as to how Hae Jin’s photo story addressed the topic of being a Korean in Manila, as it dwelt on very abstract concepts such as “need” and “love.” I raised this concern during the photo selection seminar and Hae Jin corrected me by saying that his work had everything to do about him being a Korean in Manila. He explained that it was actually a visual representation of his reflection about what he labeled as the “weird welcome” that Manila gave him. By this, he meant his experience of having his mobile phone stolen by a pickpocket within his first month in the city. As he put it,

I thought about this photo story because of the shock I felt after [the incident]. I know it happens to many Koreans, but I never imagined that it would actually happen to me. Very unlucky, right? At first, I felt nothing. I said to myself, “That’s okay. Maybe it’s just Filipino culture.” But after one day, I started thinking “Why did this happen to me? Why me? Maybe if I didn’t come over here, I wouldn’t have experienced this [theft].”

Hae Jin said that the theft consumed him for several days, since it made him realise that there was truth behind the warnings he had read about crime in Manila. He continued to think a great deal about his safety because he did not want to be a victim twice over. What made matters worse was that he really could not do anything but just accept what had happened. First, it was not really an option for him to return to Korea, nor for his parents to come over and visit him. As they were firmly middle-class, they could not afford all the plane tickets this would require. Aside from this, he also felt that he could not approach the police about the matter.

He said that he had read in an online Korean forum that foreigners who went about searching for their stolen items were only asking for more trouble. And he certainly did not want that.

It came to a point, however, when Hae Jin felt that he could not carry on being paranoid all the time. So he made a resolution:

I've decided that I should forget about [the theft] and make the most of my stay here [in Manila]. I didn't really want to waste my time here thinking and thinking about that one negative experience...Apart from [the theft], it's really been very pleasant for me. Especially because of all the friends I've made in university.

According to him, this was what inspired the ideas in his photo story.

I would argue that the reason why Hae Jin put so much emphasis on his friends in the university was that apart from them, he was really on his own. Having only been in Manila for six months, he had yet to establish any significant ties with local Filipinos outside the confines of his school. And having come to Manila by himself, he did not have links to those who comprised the city's very insular Korean community: those Korean families who have long established themselves in the city and those members of Korean Christian groups who are bound together by their respective churches (cf. Miralao, 2007).

Sang Mi's (24, female, Korean) photo story was in some ways similar to Hae Jin's work, as it was also a celebration of the friends she had thus far made in her university (see Figures 6.6.1 to 6.6.11 in Chapter 6). Her work was comprised of portraits of some of these friends, many of whom came from outside the Philippines, such as East Asia (for example, see Figure 8.7.1), the Middle East (for example, see Figure 8.7.2), Australia (for example, see Figure 8.7.3), and North America (for example, see Figure 8.7.4). In each of the portraits, either one or two of these friends were depicted as holding a prop that Sang Mi herself made: a red heart-shaped paper cutout carrying the text "I love you Korea!" which was written in both Hangul and English.



Figure 8.7.1 Photo 2 of Sang Mi's 'I Love You Korea'.



Figure 8.7.2 Photo 8 of Sang Mi's 'I Love You Korea'.



Figure 8.7.3 Photo 7 of Sang Mi's 'I Love You Korea'.



Figure 8.7.4 Photo 4 of Sang Mi's 'I Love You Korea'.

Whilst Sang Mi's photo story might appear cheerful, our conversations revealed how her work was actually rooted in the lonely life she led in Manila. Like Hae Jin, she also did not know anyone from the city's established Korean community. And even if Sang Mi did have Korean friends in the Philippines, they were in places that were too far from Manila, such as Baguio (which lies 250 kilometres north of the capital) and Cebu (which lies 350 kilometres south of the capital). As she shared,

I see [my Korean friends] sometimes. But very rarely. I usually have a lot of assignments, so I don't always have the time to go out of town and visit them. It's also very expensive if I always did that. I'd run out of money!

Moreover, she seemed to want to build relationships with local Filipinos, but found it difficult to do so. This was partly because like Hae Jin and the other Koreans I talked about in Chapter 5, she had several experiences of being a victim of petty crime as well. Take for example one of her many stories about her jeepney rides:²⁹

I love the jeepney. You see different people, you pass around the money, you say "Para!" (Stop!). There's real interaction with Filipinos...[But] I'm careful when I ride the jeepney now. I think it over sometimes...because of that pickpocket. I didn't even know his hand was already in my pocket, taking away my mobile phone. And that's the second time I lost my phone to pickpockets.

At the same time, Sang Mi also found that making friends with her local Filipino classmates was not that easy:

I like it when [local Filipinos] say "Hello! Hello!" or "An-nyung-ha-se-yo!" (Hello!)...[But] I'm sad that even if I have many [local] Filipino classmates, I never get to know most of them. Many of them leave the university after their classes. They go home, I think, unlike us Koreans who stay around. So, most of my friends are the foreigners who live in the university residence.

It can be said that Sang Mi's work was borne out of the social distance between her and Manila's Korean community, the physical distance between her and her Korean friends, as well as the cultural distance between her and her local Filipino classmates. As in the case of Hae Jin, she was grateful to and appreciative of her friends in the university because she would be very much alone without them.

²⁹ For an in-depth discussion of the *jeepney* experience, see Mercado's (1994) work, which discusses how this ride is a veritable microcosm of Filipino society.

8.1.2.2 Isolation of the Korean student group

Matt's (23, male, Korean) photo story also dealt with Korean student life in Manila. But instead of focusing on his experiences as individual, he presented his life as part of a Korean student group in his university (see Figures 6.3.1 to 6.3.15 in Chapter 6). His first images established where their group lived: the residential quarters of U.P.'s International Center (for example, see Figure 8.8.1). These were followed by images about the group's everyday life activities in the different areas of the Center, such as the common room, the study hall, the hallways, one of their makeshift drying areas (for example, see Figure 8.8.2), and even the bedroom (see Figure 8.8.3).



Figure 8.8.1 Photo 1 of Matt's 'Korean Life in U.P.'.



Figure 8.8.2 Photo 5 of Matt's 'Korean Life in U.P.'.



Figure 8.8.3 Photo 14 of Matt’s ‘Korean Life in U.P.’.

In Matt’s photo story, he captured the sorry state of the place in which he and his fellow Korean students in U.P. lived. Whilst Matt himself refused to describe the International Center out of respect for his host institution, another Korean student whom I talked to gamely described it (after I promised to keep him anonymous). He said things such as: “It can be scary, especially for the girls,” “There are so many insects inside,” and “Sometimes there is no electricity and the lights just turn off”. What Matt admitted though was that in showing what their dormitories looked like, he hoped to dispel the myth that all Korean students lived comfortable and privileged lives.

Interestingly, Matt talked about the International Center with fondness. He even seemed uninterested in leaving the place and exploring the rest of Manila. I found this strange, as he was full of praise about the city and its locals, saying things like,

My experience is that Filipinos are a very kind people. This is not like what others told me. They say it’s dangerous here and that I should take extra care...I really believed before that Filipinos don’t like foreigners. Now I don’t believe that anymore.

Puzzled by this contradiction, I asked Matt why he preferred staying in the dormitories even if it did not seem to be the most ideal accommodation and given that he said that he found the world outside of it welcoming. He gave a little laugh and told me that this was not really difficult to understand. He said he chose to spend most of his time with his fellow Koreans in the International Center because “it

[was] just easier.” When I asked him if this had something to do with the cultural differences between Koreans and Filipinos, he replied, “You can say that. But really, it’s because sometimes, I want to talk about serious issues. And it’s hard to speak about it in English, because I’m not very good.” Aside from this issue with English, Matt said that he was also in the International Center a lot because, “My girlfriend [back in Korea] says I should talk to her every day! I can’t really do that, but I make sure to contact her at least twice a week...Yes, [I use] emails, online photos, and mobile phone calls. I’d just be in the lounge and do that.”

Matt’s photo story was clearly influenced by his positive experience with the Korean student group to which he belonged. Although his work showed that these student groups generally lived apart from Manila’s other Korean groups and from the city’s local Filipinos, the stories he told revealed how he did not find this situation all that troubling. It seemed that the friendships in his Korean group and the continuing relationships with people back in Korea were enough to sustain him. In his case then, one can see that whilst individual isolation might be lonely, belonging to an isolated group might not necessarily be so. Even if the group did little to help in fostering ties with other people in the city, it was able to offer a considerable degree of protection and comfort from the daunting challenges of diasporic life (cf. Laux & Thieme, 2006).

8.1.2.3 Isolation of the Korean community at large

Unlike the photo stories of the other three Korean participants, Sonya’s (22, female, Korean) work went beyond the life of Manila’s Korean university students. Her photographs provided a macro perspective of the lives of those who belonged to the city’s established Korean community (see Figures 6.9.1 to 6.9.38 in Chapter 6). These showed the diversity of their everyday activities in the city, which included attending school, attending Sunday worship, going on leisure trips, celebrating special occasions and taking care of a family business. To provide organisation for this narrative, Sonya arranged the photographs by age. The opening images were of children (for example, see Figure 8.9.1), followed by teenagers (for example, see Figure 8.9.2), by young adults (for example, see Figure 8.9.3), by adults (for example, see Figure 8.9.4) and, finally, by the elderly (for example, see Figure 8.9.5).



Figure 8.9.1 Photo 2 of Sonya's 'We Live in Manila'.



Figure 8.9.2 Photo 11 of Sonya's 'We Live in Manila'.



Figure 8.9.3 Photo 24 of Sonya's 'We Live in Manila'.

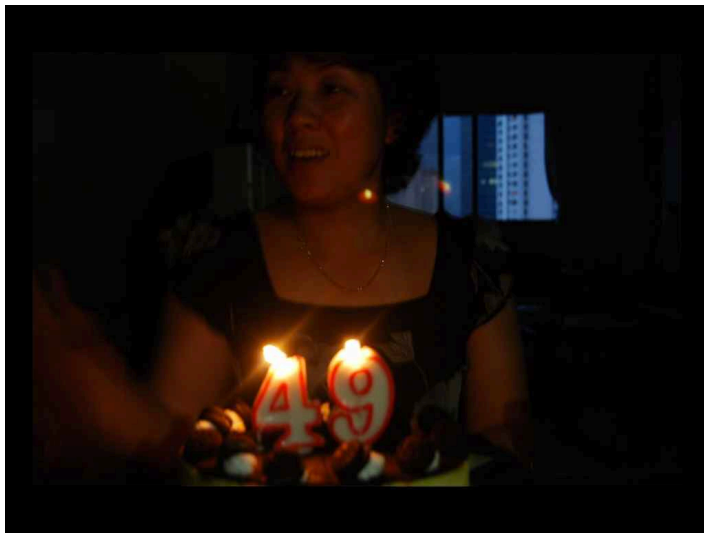


Figure 8.9.4 Photo 30 of Sonya's 'We Live in Manila'.



Figure 8.9.5 Photo 34 of Sonya’s ‘We Live in Manila’.

Sonya originally presented her photographs as three separate photo stories: one about Korean church life in Manila, one about her friends touring some of the heritage and shopping districts in the city, and one about an old couple tending to their family restaurant in the central business district of Makati. It was only after her conversations with the two photography scholars, Ricky and Terri, that she decided to merge these three stories into a single narrative. What is interesting here is that, from the very start of the project, Sonya already had so many things to say about Manila’s Korean community. She explained that other than her longstanding interest in photography, this was also because she had lived eight years of her “grown up life” within this community. She explained,

When I go to Korea, I don’t feel it’s home anymore. I don’t understand many things. It’s like I’m a foreigner there, really...I’m there every summer vacation to spend time with my family. I love them and all that, but it doesn’t take more than a month for me to miss Manila. Yeah, I enjoy [my family’s] company. But to be honest, my life is really here! I miss my friends and hanging out with them. I sometimes miss my stupid school too, if you can believe that!

Aside from this, Sonya’s stories also indicated that although her immersion in Filipino culture was relatively intense, she was still very much a part of Manila’s Korean community. On the one hand, she recounted that some of her best friends were her local Filipino classmates at university. She said, “We do everything together!” They would hang out, eat out, watch movies together, and do many other fun things. But on the other hand, she also said that she still had more Korean

friends than Filipino friends. Moreover, her stories also revealed that she continued to subscribe to the strong Confucian orientation characteristic of contemporary Korean culture (cf. Shim et al, 2009). One small but very telling example of this was when she explained that she still could not get used to the idea of students just using one hand when receiving papers from their university teachers. “They should use both hands. It’s rude!” she said indignantly. When I explained that this was perfectly all right for local Filipino teachers, she said “Still, I wouldn’t do it!”

I would say that Sonya’s photo story was marked by her strong sense of belongingness to Manila’s Korean community. The photographs revealed that much of her everyday life was still dominated by her fellow Koreans, like her relatives, her peers, and her churchmates. Moreover, these also revealed that the lives of most other Koreans were characterised by this same condition. From this, one can clearly see clearly the isolation of Manila’s Korean community from the city’s local Filipinos.

To end this section, I would like to further develop the idea that all the works of the participants of the *Shutter Stories* project clearly demonstrated how Archer’s concept of reflexivity can help flesh out Couldry’s idea of voice as a process (Archer, 2007; Couldry, 2010). All the data above reveal that although the participants of the *Shutter Stories* project drew from experiences that they shared with Manila’s other Indians and Koreans, they nevertheless crafted photo stories that were in line with what Archer refers to as personal life projects (Archer, 2007). I would argue that this is indicative of the participants possessing what Couldry calls voice as a process. Indeed, the participants were able to tell their own unique stories about diasporic life in Manila (Couldry, 2010). But as I have said many times throughout this dissertation, such voices are necessarily a compromise, as they go through a complex negotiation with various social forces (Coleman, 2013; Couldry, 2010; Thumim, 2012). As I showed in Chapter 7, the final version of the photo stories that the *Shutter Stories* participants eventually told were in many ways shaped by the properties of and the practices surrounding photography. And as I show in the next two sections below, these photo stories were also shaped by the particular dynamics of Manila’s Indian and Korean communities, as well as by the stance that the local Filipinos had towards the city’s multicultural character.

8.2 On the diasporic experience at the level of the cultural group

At this second level of the social mediation of voice, I examine how the photo stories of the Indian and Korean participants of the *Shutter Stories* project were shaped by their embeddedness in their particular diasporic communities. First, I look at how the participants' voices manifested Couldry's notion of voice as a process (Couldry, 2010). I present the ways in which their photo stories were attempts to speak on behalf of their fellow Indians and Koreans in Manila, to challenge the problematic discourses that the local Filipinos in the city had about them (Barth, 1976; Bauman 2001; Baumann, 1997). Together with this, I also analyse the participants' voices in relation to Couldry's notion of voice as a value (Couldry 2010). I delve into how their photo stories were circumscribed by their constant consideration of the dominant cultural practices in Manila's Indian and Korean communities (Barth, 1976; Bauman 2001; Baumann, 1997).

8.2.1 Cultural group stories and voice as a process

A key observation I had with the photo stories of the Indian and Korean participants was the way that these reflected the relationship between their particular diasporic communities and Manila's local Filipinos (cf. Sayad, 2004). Take for instance the case of the five Indians. As I already said earlier in this work, they belonged to a diasporic community that, in comparison with the Koreans, has relatively more significant interactions with Manila's local Filipinos, as well as with the city's local Filipino culture (Lorenzana, 2013; Thapan, 2002; Salazar, 2008). This kind of thick relationship manifested itself in the pervasive presence of Filipino cultural artefacts in their photo stories (cf. Miller, 2008). Aside from the work of Anil (23, male, Sindhi Indian), which intentionally emphasised his Filipino-ness, the other participants' photo stories also featured objects that strongly signalled the influence of Filipino culture. Examples of these were Preet's close up shot of a bottle of San Miguel Beer, which is the unofficial "national beer" of the Philippines (see Figure 8.5.4 in the preceding section); Amisha's choice of locations for her shoot, which are familiar to many of Sam YG's local Filipino fans (see Figures 8.4.2 and 8.4.3 in the preceding section); and Sukhprit's shots that show how their home is filled with Filipino food favourites, such as *patis*, which is a local fish sauce, and Yakult, which is a popular health drink (see Figure 8.2.2 in the preceding section).

Meanwhile, Roshni's photo story was the exception that proved the rule amongst the participants. The relatively thin relationship that she had with the locals and their culture also meant that her photo story contained no such Filipino cultural artefacts (see Figures 6.8.1 to 6.8.14 in Chapter 6).

However, the thick relationship that Manila's Indians have with the city's local Filipinos and local Filipino culture means that they are also acutely aware of the *bumbay* stereotype (Lorenzana, 2008). This was certainly the case with the Indian participants, as their photo stories were all clearly attempts to challenge this simplistic understanding of them. The photo story of Preet (22, male, Punjabi Indian) about his *five-six* (or moneylending) father and his yuppie self and, to a lesser degree, the photo story of Amisha (21, female, other Indian) on Sam YG were the two works that most directly addressed this stereotype (for Preet's photo story, see Figures 6.2.1 to 6.2.15 in Chapter 6; for Amisha's photo story, see Figures 6.1.1 to 6.1.14 in Chapter 6). However, this problematic representation was a discourse that all the other works addressed. The photographs of Roshni (20, female, Sindhi Indian), Sukhprit (19, female, Punjabi Indian), and Anil (23, Sindhi Indian) all emphasised how diverse the Indians in Manila were, as none of their subjects conformed to the stereotype of the turban-wearing, motorcycle-riding moneylender (for Roshni's photo story, see Figures 6.8.1 to 6.8.14 in Chapter 6; for Sukhprit's photo story, see Figures 6.7.1 to 6.7.12; for Anil's photo story, see Figures 6.4.1 to 6.4.13 in Chapter 6). I would contend that their attempts to subvert the image of the *bumbay* were not only driven by their desire for Manila's local Filipinos to appreciate Indian culture more fully. These attempts were also because of how they were second generation migrants who had a need to be recognised by the city that they already considered as home. Indeed, they refused to be continually placed at the bottom of Manila's social hierarchy. It can be said that their works are a call for participatory parity, a concept that the social theorist Nancy Fraser defines as "social arrangements that permit all (adult) members of a society to interact with one another as peers" (Fraser, 2003: 36).

In contrast to the Indian participants, the Korean participants belonged to two diasporic communities that have generally been isolated from Manila's local Filipinos: the city's international Korean students and the city's established Korean community. Because of this, the photo stories of the four Korean exhibition participants were almost completely devoid of the presence of either local Filipinos

or Filipino cultural artefacts. The only exception to this would be the portraits of the two Filipinas taken by Sang Mi (24, female, Korean) (see Figures 8.10.1 and 8.10.2). As one of the local Filipino exhibition viewers commented, “It’s such a strange feeling to look at the photos [of the Koreans]. The setting is the Philippines, but we [Filipinos] seem to have disappeared. It’s like an invasion happened!” This was, of course, in line with the discourse of Koreans as invaders, which was something I talked about in Chapter 5.



Figure 8.10.1 Photo 9 of Sang Mi’s ‘I Love You Korea’.



Figure 8.10.2 Photo 10 of Sang Mi’s ‘I Love You Korea’.

Despite belonging to cultural groups that are generally isolated from Manila's local Filipinos, the Korean participants were still aware of the stereotypes about them. And their photo stories were real challenges to such stereotypes. One such stereotype that the participants' photo stories went against was that of the wealthy Korean student, which I discussed in Chapter 5. The challenge to this was most evident in the photo story of Matt (23, male, Korean), as it revealed the relatively sorry living conditions in which some Korean students lived (see Figures 6.3.1 to 6.3.15 in Chapter 6). In a more subtle manner, Hae Jin's (24, male, Korean) photo story on love tried to dispel this stereotype by showing that, for him at least, relationships were more important than material things (see Figures 6.5.1 to 6.5.24 in Chapter 6). The other stereotype that the participants' photo stories tried to rectify was of the weird Korean, which I also mentioned in Chapter 5. Sang Mi (24, female, Korean) sought to address this by showing how well-loved Koreans were by their peers in the university, whilst Sonya (22, female Korean) underscored the ordinariness of the activities of Manila's established Korean community (for Sang Mi's photo story, see Figures 6.6.1 to 6.1.11 in Chapter 6; for Sonya's photo story, see Figures 6.9.1 to 6.9.38 in Chapter 6). I would contend that the participants' attempts to break the stereotypes reflected their desire to be able to conduct their lives in safety. They did not want local Filipinos to think that they were wealthier than they really were or that they were more different than they really were. After all, as I revealed in Chapter 5, both these things tended to get them in trouble. Whilst the locals continue to think otherwise, it is most probable that Manila's Koreans will also continue to isolate themselves. In some ways, this is a reversal of the "enclave society" that the sociologist Bryan Turner (2007) discusses. Unlike the developed world model where governments protect their relatively wealthy residents from the mobility of migrants by enclaving the latter, here we have relatively more mobile and relatively wealthier migrants enclaving themselves as a form of protection from the Philippines' immobile masses. This is something that is, of course, parallel to what upper class Filipinos have been doing for a long time (Pinches, 1996; Tadiar, 2004; Tolentino, 2011).

It can be said then that in both the case of the Indian participants and of the Korean participants, one can see the capacity of a cultural group for voice as a process. This is because both groups were able to speak collectively—as Indians and as Koreans respectively—about the place of their cultural group within the wider

society of Manila (cf. Couldry, 2010). For the Indians, the collective story that their photo stories told was one of troubled closeness with Manila's local Filipinos and the city's local Filipino culture. And for the Koreans, the collective story of the photo stories was one that showed the reality a community that wanted to find ways to bridge the distance it had with Manila's local Filipinos.

8.2.2 Cultural group practices and voice as a value

Another key observation I had about the photo stories of the of the Indian and Korean participants was that they tended to elide the more contentious issues within their particular diasporic groups. First, I discuss the Indians. In my conversations with the Indian participants in the *Shutter Stories* project and with the other young Indians I interviewed, they talked openly about their difficulties with certain aspects of how Indian culture was practised by Manila's Sindhi and Punjabi communities. This was especially true in relation to two things that came up again and again in the life story interviews: the practice of having an arranged marriage and their adherence to the Hindu or Sikh faith.

During the life story interviews, the practice of having an arranged marriage³⁰ was an issue common to almost all the Indian participants. And save for Anil (23, male, Sindhi Indian), whose father did not require him to follow any Indian tradition, the participants shared the view that it was *the* issue of their lives. In fact, all my interviews with them invariably included a section where they talked at length about this impending event in their lives. This was probably because they were in their late teens to their early twenties and, such fell within the age range where Indians are expected to start thinking about settling down (Brown, 2006).

For Roshni (20, female, Sindhi Indian) at least, having an arranged marriage was something unavoidable. She already accepted this as a fact of her life. As she put it, "[An arranged marriage is] definitely somewhere there in the future. My parents talk to me about it from time to time. I tell them it's okay, as long as they allow me to finish my studies first." But she seemed apprehensive about it as well,

³⁰ In the context of Manila's Indians, an arranged marriage can refer to two things. It can mean the traditional practice of two sets of parents matching their children. However, I have learned that it is also increasingly used to label the more contemporary practice of parents approving or denying their children's choice of a partner on the basis of set criteria (for instance, caste, religion, and country of birth).

because she added, “The thing is that I still want to do an M.A. We’ll see how that goes.”

Amisha (21, female, other Indian), Preet (22, male, Punjabi Indian), and Sukhprit (19, female, Punjabi Indian) had much stronger feelings of uncertainty about having an arranged marriage. This was something that they shared with all the other young Indians I interviewed, namely Preity (25, female, Sindhi Indian), Amir (25, male, Sindhi Indian), Kuldip (26, male, Punjabi Indian), and Ravinder (26, male, Punjabi Indian). As all of them were involved in a relationship with someone who could never be approved by their parents, they agonised a lot about what the future held for them. Whilst I do not want to reveal the details of their experiences, I can say that all of them were more than exasperated with the situation in which they found themselves. Preet was best able to capture their shared sentiments, saying,

It’s such a hassle to be an Indian sometimes. I don’t think I’ll ever have an uncomplicated relationship. There are too many rules! You can do this. You can’t do this. This is okay. This is not okay...My children will be lucky because I’ll know better than to force our traditions down their throats. I’ll allow them to marry whoever they love.

Anil, as I said above, did not have to worry about having an arranged marriage. But even he had something to say about it. He said that he did not really want to judge the practice. But then again, he also said,

[I cannot] imagine having to do that. I mean, there’s value to it of course. Like some people say [that] couples in arranged marriages stay together more compared to couples in love marriages...[But it’s] just so hard to go through it when everyone else around you gets to choose whom they want to be with for the rest of their lives. It’s kind of sucky, right?

Meanwhile, the concern about adhering to the Hindu or Sikh religion was something that Preet and Sukhprit raised. Whilst they were not as distraught about this issue as they were with the issue of arranged marriages, they did find it equally difficult to deal with. Their problem was not that they had lost touch with their faith. On the contrary, they still held their religious beliefs and practices with great respect. Preet and Sukhprit’s struggle stemmed from how they had also been thoroughly exposed to Christianity, which they came to know from all their years of being educated in Catholic schools and universities. This made them hold Christianity’s beliefs and practices with equal respect. Because of this, they

constantly had to negotiate these two systems of faith that held such a strong influence in their lives.

As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, Sukhprit decided to deal with this issue of religion by simultaneously practising Sikhism and Catholicism. She continued to be a Sikh, as was reflected, for instance, in her weekly visits to the *gurdwara* (temple). At the same time, she was also a baptised Catholic who visited heard holy mass every Sunday. She said that this path that she has taken makes sense because one “can learn much from both religions...I just take what’s good from each. It’s the best of both worlds, as they say.”

Preet was not so bold as to be an officially baptised Catholic. Nevertheless, his religious beliefs were in many ways similar to that of Sukhprit. On the one hand, he was proud of his Sikh faith. I came to know about this when he took me to one of their traditional Punjabi weddings, so I could see first-hand the rituals that were involved. He talked me through the entire ceremony, explaining with great detail everything that was happening. On the other hand, Preet also cherished what he had learned from Catholicism. In fact, he continued to maintain strong links with the Catholic university where he took his B.A. And one of the favours that he was doing for the university was to provide inspirational talks when its undergraduates went on religious retreats. He said that even if he has never professed allegiance to Catholic doctrines, he was “excited to share how Christian values can be a positive force in one’s life. You don’t really have to believe everything that the Church says to know that they have some very important lessons to share.”

Based on all the stories above, there is no doubt that like the other young Indians I interviewed, the five Indian participants had reservations about some of the cultural practices of Manila’s Sindhi and Punjabi communities. What is interesting is how their photo stories steered clear of discussing any of these issues. In fact, these works depicted the idea of Indian-ness—or in the case of Anil, Filipino-Indian-ness—in a decidedly positive light. I would argue that what was primarily at work here is what the anthropologist Michael Herzfeld calls cultural intimacy. According to him, members of a cultural group might contest their culture within their own group. However, they tend not to do this in public, when they are in view of their perceived cultural others. In such instances, Herzfeld argues that cultural unity becomes of paramount importance (Herzfeld, 1996). And as previous studies have shown, this is especially the case with diasporic groups whose cultural identities are marginalised

by the dominant culture (for example, see Cabanes, 2009; Madianou, 2005). This helps to explain why the participants were comfortable with critiquing their own culture in a one-to-one interview, but not in a photography exhibition that was open to a public that included local Filipinos who, as I indicated in Chapter 5, did not have a high regard for Indians.

Together with this, I would say that another key factor at work here are the strong surveillance mechanisms known to exist in tightly knit Indian diasporic communities (Brown, 2006; Gillespie, 1995; Thapan, 2002). Manila's Sindhi and Punjabi groups are no exception to this. The participants were very aware of this when they were creating their photo stories. Take for instance those among them whose works focused on individuals, such as Sukhprit (19, female, Punjabi Indian) who featured her mother, Amisha (21, female, other Indian) who featured Sam YG, and Preet (22, male, Punjabi Indian) who featured his father. They were all very careful in portraying these persons because they did not want to create any scandal amongst Manila's Indians. As Sukhprit said, "I had to think a lot about how best to portray my mother. I wanted to be sure that she would be proud of the photo story and that she'd be free to tell all her friends about it." Like Sukhprit, Roshni (20, female, Sindhi Indian) also wanted her parents to be happy when they saw her work, so she ensured that she properly portrayed their Hindu rituals. Even Anil (23, male, Sindhi Indian), who was not as engaged as the others were with Manila's diasporic Indians, avoided anything that other Indians might have interpreted as offensive. With all these precautions, it becomes obvious why they would not even start to think about sharing their stories that would reveal their doubts about having an arranged marriage and their difficulties with being exposed not only to Hinduism or Sikhism, but also to Catholicism.

The photo stories of the four Korean participants were very much like those of the Indians, in that they did not raise any issue with how Korean culture was practised in Manila. They also aimed to construct a positive image of Korean-ness. Here we see Herzfeld's cultural intimacy at play once again (Herzfeld, 1996). However, I would say that the Korean participants were more protective of their cultural group; they presented a positive portrayal of their Korean culture not only in their photographs, but also during their life story interviews. Coupled with this was their strong sense of pride in their Korean-ness. It appeared that much of this was due to the rise of the so-called *Hallyu* (Korean Wave), which pertains to the

exponential rise in the popularity of Korean culture in the Asian region, the Philippines included (Chua & Iwabuchi, 2008; Kim, 2007).

Despite the intentions of the Korean exhibition participants however, I observed that their photo stories inadvertently revealed at least two divides that persisted amongst Manila's Koreans. One was the strict hierarchy that segregated them by age. As many scholars have argued, these lines are very difficult to cross (for example, Ferrante, 2008; Jouhki & Paso, 2011; Kim & Ryu, 2005). The Korean linguistics scholar Kyungmin Bae (personal conversation, 10 March 2011) provides a concrete illustration of this, saying:

Korean language has five structures of honorific tongues. And you have to use the one that's proper to the age of the person you're talking to...Even if you're just one year or even just a few months younger than me, you're regarded as inferior to me. You can't speak directly to me. You have to be very polite. It's only when I allow you to speak casually that we start talking like friends...[But] no, [you] can't ask me for permission. It has to come from me. If I don't say anything, then our conversation just goes on as very stiff and rigid. No, there'd be nothing you could do about it.

The exhibition participants themselves echoed the same theme, saying that it was very difficult to establish ties with people who were of a different age, especially with those who were older than them. Hae Jin (24, male, Korean) put it most clearly, saying, "Every time I meet a Korean here [in Manila], the first question I ask is 'How old are you?' If we're the same age, I give a sigh of relief! It's even better when he's younger!" he said, ending with a chuckle. As I recounted in Chapter 4, I also saw this when I mistakenly tried to ask the four of them, as well as the other young Korean students I interviewed, if they could introduce me to older Koreans who could be potential interviewees for this project. The young Koreans participants told me things like:

I can try, but it's going to be difficult. I don't know too many old people. (Jessica, 22, female, Korean)

I can just ask my younger brother or sister, if you want...I'm not confident I can convince my parents. (Min Sik, 20, male, Korean)

Well, I have an aunt and an uncle who takes care of me. But I can't promise anything. (KC, 22, female, Korean)

It is no surprise, therefore, that the photo stories of Hae Jin (24, male, Korean), Sang Mi (24, female, Korean), and Matt (23, male, Korean) did not feature anyone outside of their age group. Whilst the photo story of Sonya (22, female, Korean) did so, it nevertheless ended up affirming how much their everyday life activities were determined by their age groups.

The other divide that the photo stories revealed was something that scholars have yet to comment on extensively: the rift between the so-called Korean international students who have come to Manila only within the last five years and the other Koreans in the city who comprise Manila's Korean community. Hae Jin, Sang Mi, and Matt all came from the first group. So did two of the other young Koreans I interviewed, namely Jessica and Su Yeon (26, female, Korean). Meanwhile, Sonya came from the second group, together with Ji Hun (20, male Korean), KC (22, female, Korean), Sang Jum (male, 21, Korean), and Min Sik (20, male Korean). All of them were either first generation migrants who had lived in Manila for at least eight years or second generation migrants who had lived most of their entire life in the city.

Earlier in this chapter, I already discussed that the works of Hae Jin, Sang Mi, and Matt showed how much the lives of the Korean international students were separated from Manila's established Korean community. This was made evident by the way that these three participants focused completely on their own lives as foreign students or on the lives of other Koreans who were in the same situation as them. Here I add that the life stories of Jessica and Su Yeon fell along the same lines, as they also talked primarily about their university life in Manila. Because of this, they never really got around to talking about Manila's Korean community.

Unfortunately, those who came from Manila's established Korean community had many negative things to say about those whom Min Sik condescendingly labelled as the "new arrivals." Sonya, for instance, said that she had never really associated with the Korean international students. She was, however, very careful in expressing this: "I don't really have anything against them. I just don't think I'd get along very well with them. I mean, they're Koreans like me, but they're very different [from us who have been here in Manila for a long time]...Or maybe it's just me. I've just been here for too long. I don't know." Sang Jum was much more scathing in his description of these students. He said, "They're rude. They're noisy. They don't really know how to behave here." Ji Hun had an

equally angry remark, saying “It doesn’t mean that because your parents are far away, you can be a complete ass. These guys think they can do whatever they want to do here in Manila...They embarrass me.” What seemed to be happening in these instances was that the young Koreans from Manila’s Korean community were blaming the Korean international students for affirming the negative stereotypes about Koreans that circulated among local Filipinos.

All the observations above support the assertion I made in Chapter 3 about the double-edged nature of cultural group voice. Recall that I said that such a voice can both embody and betray what Couldry calls voice as a value, as it can simultaneously foster and deny the voices of the members of a particular cultural group (Couldry, 2010). This was indeed the case of the Indian and Korean participants of the *Shutter Stories* project. Because both the Indian and Korean participants had much concern for their respective diasporic communities, they crafted photo stories that were primarily intended to reinforce, even defend, the boundaries of their cultural identity. Although the participants had reservations about some of their communities’ cultural practices, they did not address these in their works, especially since they knew that their photographs were going to be publicly displayed. They only challenged the boundaries of the cultural identities either during the life story interviews (as was the case with the Indians) or through other very subtle and very indirect means (as was the case with the Koreans).

8.3 On the diasporic experience at the level of the multicultural society

For the third and final level of the social mediation of voice, I turn my attention to whether and how Manila’s wider society embodied Couldry’s notion of voice as a value (Couldry, 2010). Here I briefly recall my discussion in Chapter 7 about the local Filipinos who viewed the Indian and Korean participants’ photo stories, whether at the public exhibition of the *Shutter Stories* project at The Block, SM North EDSA in Manila or from the dedicated website of the project. Through this, I underscore how my conversations with these local Filipinos allowed for some hope as regards the possibility of a multicultural dialogue in the city (cf. Benhabib, 2002; Phillips, 2008). However, I also build on my discussion in Chapter 5 about how the Manila-centric Philippine mainstream media marginalise the city’s Indian and Korean diasporas. I talk about how my experiences in dealing with these media

indicated a persistent diffidence about multiculturalism in Manila, which undermines the hope for a much grander multicultural dialogue in Manila (cf. Said, 1994; Silverstone, 2007).

8.3.1 The promise of a multicultural dialogue

Two of the most poignant moments I experienced during the fieldwork for this dissertation happened during the opening night of the public exhibition for the *Shutter Stories* project. One was my brief conversation with the parents of Roshni (20, female, Sindhi Indian). I particularly recall her father telling me about how touched he was with the exhibition. He said,

You know, in all my years of living here [in Manila], no one has ever paid attention to us [Indians]. This is the first time. Thank you for caring about us...I hope the others here learn a lesson or two about us.

The other moment was my conversation with Sonya (22, female, Korean). She revealed to me something that I did not know during the entire course of the photography seminars: that since she was about to finish university, her parents were sending her back to Korea. She said that although she would still shuttle back and forth from Seoul to Manila, she would now be spending more time in what she called “that other place”. It was in light of this recent development in her life that she said,

No joke, I’m really happy to be a part of this project...It gave me a chance to reflect on my beautiful life here [in Manila] and to leave a message to [the local] Filipinos...You know, that I love your country, really, and that I hope your country will love other Koreans the way it loved me.

In its own modest manner, the public exhibition and the dedicated website managed to realise the hope—held not only by Roshni’s father and by Sonya, but also by all of us project collaborators—that the *Shutter Stories* project could interrupt the problematic mediation of Manila’s Indians and Koreans. It did embody voice as a value, as it fostered the capacity of the Indian and Korean participants to tell Manila’s local Filipinos about their diasporic lives (cf. Couldry, 2010). As I discussed in Chapter 7, the local Filipino viewers who were able to engage with the participants’ photo stories did listen to their voices. Although these viewers were not

as attentive to the personal stories and the ideological messages behind these photographs, these viewers were nevertheless receptive to the representational stories that the participants embedded in these works. This meant that even if these viewers did not pay much attention to the personal circumstances and the ideological stances of the participants, they did engage with what the photo stories said about the collective lives of the Indians and Koreans in their midst. The key consequence of this was that the photo stories allowed the local Filipino viewers to rethink their understanding of these two diasporic groups. Many of these viewers expressed surprise about the diversity of Manila's Indians and Koreans. And it seemed that the most important thing that they took out of this experience was how unexpected these migrants could be, how they were not merely Indian *bumbays* and Korean invaders.

Unfortunately, the public exhibition of and the dedicated website for the *Shutter Stories* project only reached a very small audience. As I said in Chapter 7, although the opening night of the public exhibition at The Block, SM North EDSA in Manila managed to attract about sixty guests, the rest of the exhibition days saw only about one hundred and fifty viewers engaging with the photo stories. I also said that the dedicated website for the project did not receive any comment from its visitors and that I only saw about twenty two individuals making comments about the website via Facebook. Although this was partly due to a mix of logistical misfortunes and mistakes, this was also due to the difficulty of having the mainstream media pay attention to the project. It is this problem that I discuss below.

8.3.2 The problem of establishing a 'mediapolis'

Even months before the public exhibition of the *Shutter Stories* project, I was already working on having the Manila-centric Philippine news media take notice of the event. My hope was that this kind of coverage would amplify the remit of the project and, more importantly, would contribute to opening up a space in the mainstream media for what Silverstone calls contrapuntal cultures (Silverstone, 2007). In particular, I got in touch with several of my contacts from the country's leading media organisations. This included people from some of the Philippines' leading television stations, broadsheets, and online news sites. Whilst I got the initial cooperation of these contacts, they unfortunately did not follow through. Even if some of these contacts said that they would be present either during the opening of

the public exhibition or during rest of the exhibition days, they eventually reneged on these plans.

Of course, this turn of events was disappointing, as it meant that the *Shutter Stories* project would not have a chance to initiate a multicultural dialogue at a grander scale. However, I understood that my contacts in the news media could not really make the project one of their priorities because, as I said in Chapter 5, those responsible for managing the country's news organisations did not deem cultural diversity a significant issue. In fact, months after I completed my fieldwork, there was a series of public scandals that came out in the news media, all of which touched on the issue of the cultural diversity of Manila in particular and the Philippines in general. These scandals included the following:

(1) the comment made by the television reporter Arnold Clavio that the hyphenated Filipinos that comprised the country's Azkals football team, which went, "*Hindi naman sila Pilipino e, nagkukunwari lang silang kayumanggi* (They're not really Filipinos, they are just pretending to be brown-skinned)" (Arnold Clavio Trends, 2012).

(2) the decision of the editorial team of the Philippine edition of *For Him Magazine (FHM)* to run a cover juxtaposing the light-skinned actress Bela Padilla together with other black-painted Filipina models and carrying the textual caption "Bela PADILLA: STEPPING OUT OF THE SHADOWS" (Evangelista, 2012).

(3) the decision of the advertising agency of the local clothing company Bayo to release a series of posters that were supposedly racist in their valorisation of hyphenated Filipinas, whom Bayo identified with labels such as "50% Australian and 50% Filipino", "40% British and 60% Filipino", and "80% Chinese and 20% Filipino" (see Bayo Draws Flak, 2012).

What is important to note here is that the news coverage and the subsequent public discussions of these issues were generally framed in relation to the Philippine postcolonial nationalist project, as they focused on the need for Filipinos to gloss over their cultural differences and work towards fostering a cultural identity that all

of them can share, regardless of whether they were *mestizos* or *indios* (cf. Gonzaga, 2009). In contrast, I did not come across any news coverage that acknowledged how these issues were intertwined with the Philippines' longstanding internal cultural diversity and its increasing in-migration driven cultural diversity.

I would argue then that in relation to the issue of Manila's cultural diversity, the Philippine news media are dominated by what Couldry refers to as a voice-denying rationality (Couldry 2010). These media do not allow for narratives about cultural diversity that challenge the Philippine postcolonial nationalist project; not only do they fail to recognise these stories, they also block alternative stories that might allow for a greater valuing of diasporic voices. They are, in other words, very far from the ideal of the *mediapolis* that I raised in Chapter 1, which Silverstone defines as a space that is characterised by communication that is multiple and multiply-inflected, as well as by its openness to the diverse images and narratives that represent those whom we think of as our others (Silverstone in Dayan, 2007: 114-115). As a consequence of this, there was really very little chance that these media would recognise the value of the photo stories of the Indian and Korean participants of the *Shutter Stories* project. This raises the idea, originally articulated by Couldry, that the mainstream news media might have not been the most appropriate space for a project that attempted to promote multicultural dialogue in Manila (Couldry, 2003). This is something that I return to in the concluding chapter of this dissertation.

8.4 Conclusion

This chapter completes my analysis of the mediation of diasporic voices in a collaborative photography exhibition project. In the discussion above, I used the second half of this study's theoretical framework in Chapter 3. I looked into how the photo stories of the five Indians and the four Korean participants of the *Shutter Stories* were embedded in the diasporic social experience at the level of the self, the cultural group, and the multicultural society. At the level of the self, I pointed out that although the participants of the *Shutter Stories* project drew from experiences that they shared with Manila's other Indians and Koreans, they nevertheless crafted photo stories that were in line with their personal life projects (cf. Archer, 2007). I said that this indicated that the participants possessed what Couldry calls voice as a

process; they were able to tell their own distinct stories about diasporic life in Manila (Couldry, 2010). At the level of the cultural group, I explained that because both the Indian and Korean participants had much concern for their respective diasporic communities, they crafted photo stories that were primarily intended to reinforce, even defend, the boundaries of their cultural identity. So even if they had reservations about some of their communities' cultural practices, they did not address these in the stories they made (cf. Herzfeld, 1996). I argued that this clearly showed how cultural group voice can both embody and betray what Couldry calls voice as a value, as it can simultaneously foster and deny the voices of the members of a particular cultural group (Couldry, 2010). Lastly, at the level of the multicultural society, I recounted that, on the one hand, the Indian and Korean participants' photo stories were able to modestly contribute to initiating a multicultural dialogue with the local Filipino viewers who had the opportunity to engage with these works. However, I also said that, on the other hand, these photo stories were not allowed a space in the Manila-centric Philippine mainstream media, which tended to valorise the narrative of Philippine postcolonial nationalism over other narratives of cultural diversity (cf. Gonzaga, 2009). I contended that, on the whole, these media seemed to be characterised by their voice-denying rationality, which failed to embody voice as a process and that, as a consequence, undermined voice as a value (Couldry, 2010).

In the final chapter of this dissertation, I summarise my empirical findings and my overall arguments pertaining to each of the key research questions that I established in Chapter 1. I also situate the insights that I gleaned from all the empirical data that I presented in Chapters 5, 6, 7, and above in relation to the wider debates in the fields of migration studies and action research. Finally, I identify ways forward for interventionist projects that seek to harness the media to foster diasporic voices.

Chapter 9 Conclusion

*“Have Ithaka always in your mind.
Your arrival there is what you are destined for.
But don't in the least hurry the journey.
Better it last for years,
so that when you reach the island you are old,
rich with all you have gained on the way,
not expecting Ithaka to give you wealth.”*

-Constantine Cavafy, Ithaka

I began this dissertation by sharing two stories that exemplified the myriad difficulties faced by Manila's Indians and Koreans. I raised my concern about how many of Manila's local Filipinos have not heard of such diasporic stories and, equally important, about how the Philippines' Manila-centric mainstream media have rarely allowed the city's diasporas a space to tell these stories. Because of these concerns, this study sought to understand the mediation of multiculturalism in Manila by examining the relationship between how Manila's Indians and Koreans were represented by the Manila-centric Philippine mainstream media, on the one hand, and how these diasporic groups were talked about by Manila's local Filipinos, on the other hand. More importantly, this study also sought to “interrupt” (Pinchevsky, 2005) the mediation of multiculturalism in Manila by exploring whether and how a collaborative photography exhibition project like *Shutter Stories* might mediate the voices of Manila's Indians and Koreans. In this final chapter, I hope to provide a clear articulation of my answers to these two questions by summarising my empirical findings and my overall arguments pertaining to each of them. Beyond answering the questions above, I also discuss the implications of this work for the two key sets of literature from which it draws: migration studies and action research. Finally, I identify ways forward for interventionist projects that, as in the case of *Shutter Stories*, seek to foster the voices of the diaspora in Manila.

9.1 Summary of findings and arguments

9.1.1 On the mediation of multiculturalism in Manila

As I have mentioned above, the first question that I sought to answer in this dissertation was about the mediation of multiculturalism in Manila. Specifically, I asked whether and how the Manila-centric Philippine entertainment media's representations of Manila's Indians and Koreans were intertwined with how Manila's local Filipinos talked about these diasporic groups. This was a necessary prelude to the *Shutter Stories* project, since crucial to this attempt at interruption was an understanding of what precisely was being interrupted.

In Chapter 1, I unpacked the notion of mediation. Turning to the work of Silverstone, I defined this concept as the process in which meanings are circulated in society, and as a consequence, are constantly transformed (Silverstone, 1999; 2005; 2007; but see also Couldry, 2008; Couldry, 2012; Livingstone, 2009; Madianou, 2005; Ong, 2012; Thumim, 2012). According to Silverstone, central to understanding this process is “enquir[ing] into the instability and flux of meanings and into their transformations, [and] also into the politics of their fixing” (Silverstone, 1999: 16). For him, this requires an examination of the media and how these “change the social and cultural environments that support them as well as the relationships that participants, both individual and institutional, have to that environment and to each other” (Silverstone, 2005: 3). He also says that in turn, there should be an examination of the social processes of reception and consumption and how these transform the “institutions and technologies as well as the meanings that are delivered by them” (*ibid.*).

In Chapter 5, I used the above-mentioned arguments of Silverstone as a guide to analysing the mediation of multiculturalism in Manila. To shed light on the media's transformative role in this process, I presented the data I gathered from my thematic analysis of how the Manila-centric Philippine mainstream media represented the city's Indians and Koreans. And to shed light on the social's equally transformative role, I shared my findings from my six focus group discussions that probed how Manila's local Filipinos talked about the diaspora in their midst. Drawing on these complementary sets of data, I posited that the mediation of multiculturalism in Manila can be characterised by three key things, each of which I elaborate on below.

9.1.1.1 Link to the cycle of strangeness and estrangement

First, I argued that the mediation of multiculturalism in Manila contributes to the problematic cycle of strangeness and estrangement between the city's local Filipinos and the city's Indians and Koreans (cf. Ang-See, 1992; Miralao, 2007b; Salazar, 2008). This is primarily because the predominant media discourses and social discourses in Manila tend to reinforce each other in symbolically marginalising these diasporic groups. These predominant discourses discourage any serious attempt at a nuanced understanding of these groups. The city's Indians and Koreans are generally absent in the news media (save for occasional articles and reports about them that very few seem to have come across) and in the entertainment media (save for one Indian celebrity, namely Sam YG, and four Korean celebrities, namely Grace Lee, Sam Oh, Sandara Park, and Ryan Bang). Similarly, their lives are also generally unknown and, as such, unimportant to Manila's local Filipinos, some of whom even show surprise when told that there is actually a significant Indian and Korean population in the city. Related to this, these predominant discourses also resort heavily to stereotyping the city's Indians and Koreans. When these diasporic groups appear in the media, they are often depicted stereotypically. The Indian is portrayed as a *bumbay* (that is, the turban-wearing, beard-covered loanshark-slash-appliance salesman who plies the streets of Manila on his motorcycle) and the Korean portrayed as invaders (that is, weird-looking and weird-acting foreigners who, in recent years, seem to be coming to Manila in droves). Paralleling this, in those times when the local Filipino participants in this study talked about these diasporic groups, they often ended up labelling Indians as the "*bumbay*" or "*five-six* (loanshark)" person notorious for being "*madugas* (a cheat)", and "*mabaho* (smelly)". In a similar vein, they also called Koreans invaders and characterised them as "*kakaiba* (strange)", "*abning* (abnormal)", and "*sintu-sinto* (crazy)".

9.1.1.2 Link to the Filipinos' racial hierarchy of their cultural others

Second, I also argued that the mediation of multiculturalism in Manila further entrenches the implicit though persistent skin-tone-based racial hierarchy of cultural others to which many local Filipinos subscribe (cf. Aguilar, 2005; Gaborro, 2008; Simbulan, 2005 and their argument about the Filipinos' racial hierarchy of themselves). This can be seen in the distinction in how the predominant media and social discourses in Manila portray the Indians, on the one hand, and the Koreans,

on the other hand. Whilst these discourses do generally symbolically marginalise city's diasporic groups, these discourses nevertheless valorise Koreans more than Indians. This difference in treatment can be seen in how, in the last year or so, the entertainment media have slowly but surely opened their doors towards Korean celebrities in Manila, whilst remaining firmly closed to potential Indian celebrities in the city. Examples of these include how the 2010 Pinoy Big Brother Teen Edition aired by the leading television network ABS-CBN featured five Koreans (but not one single Indian), as well as how a recent fashion campaign by the local clothing giant Bench has started using Korean models (an opportunity that has yet to be offered to Indians). This difference can be seen as well in how the local Filipino participants in this study seemed to have more positive things to say about Koreans over Indians and, conversely, more negative things to say about Indians than they did about Koreans. These local Filipinos also repeatedly ranked Koreans higher than Indians when asked about questions that ranged from "Who would you like to have as a friend or as a potential partner?" to "Who do you think contributes more as residents of Manila?"

9.1.1.3 Link to the contemporary project of Philippine postcolonial nationalism

Finally, and most crucially, I argued that the two observations I made above were merely symptoms of a larger dynamic at work. I posited that at the heart of all of these issues was how the mediation of multiculturalism in Manila is entangled with the broader dynamics of the mediation of Filipino cultural identity. The reason why Manila's locals are inattentive to the issues of the city's Indians and Koreans is the rise of the contemporary project of Philippine postcolonial nationalism (Gonzaga, 1999). As this project's overriding concern is to establish a singular and unifying cultural identity that all Filipinos can share, it has tended to set aside any discussion about the internal cultural diversity of Filipinos (San Juan, 1999; Teodoro in PNS, 2010) and, together with this I contend, any discussion about the increasing cultural diversity of Manila's population. Of course, that has also meant the setting aside of any discussion about the persistence of the unspoken racial hierarchy that local Filipinos have not only for themselves, but also for their cultural others.

9.1.2 On the mediation of diasporic voices in the *Shutter Stories* project

The second and more crucial question that this dissertation raised was about the possibility of interrupting the problematic mediation of multiculturalism in Manila. Specifically, it asked about how a collaborative photography exhibition project might mediate the voices of Manila's Indians and Koreans. In Chapter 1, I began laying the groundwork for answering this question by providing preliminary definitions of the two concepts most relevant to it: mediation, and voice.

First, I defined the concept of voice. I drew from Nick Couldry's important work, *Why Voice Matters*, which posits voice as having two registers:

(1) voice as a process, which refers to "the human capacity to give an account of themselves and of their place in the world" (Couldry, 2010: 10) and

(2) voice as a value, which is about "the act of valuing, and choosing to value, those frameworks for organising human life and resources that themselves value voice (as a process)...[and] discriminating against frameworks of social, economic and political organisation that deny or undermine voice" (*ibid*: 10-11).

At the same time, however, I also indicated that I wanted to further Couldry's concepts of voice as a process and as a value. In Couldry's book, he used these concepts as a framework from where he could point out ways in which to challenge the rise of neoliberalism in the West, most especially the UK (*ibid.*). In this dissertation, I attempted to use the same concepts as a basis for examining how a collaborative photography exhibition project could interrupt the problematic mediation of multiculturalism in Manila.

Second, I sought to further develop Silverstone's conceptualisation of mediation (Silverstone, 1999; 2005; 2007) through the work of Nancy Thumim (Thumim, 2012). According to Thumim, an inclusive view of mediation in relation to projects of self-representation requires a consideration of its various dimensions. She identifies these as:

(1) institutional mediation, which pertains to “the production contexts of the media industries...[but also] individual persons directly working on producing self-representations with/by members of the public, with those many others in the institutions and related bodies, such as funders and partner organisations” (*ibid.*: 85);

(2) cultural mediation, which is about “what the audience/participants bring to the production of self-representation in terms of abilities, expectations, understandings—what is brought to the mediation process from the participants who are outside the institution” (*ibid.*: 86); and

(3) textual mediation, which is an analysis of the properties of the medium involved but, crucially, understood “in relation to the context in which they are produced” (*ibid.*: 88).

In this dissertation, I paralleled these dimensions that Thumim suggests, as I looked into how the voices of the Indian and Korean participants of the *Shutter Stories* project were mediated institutionally (that is, in relation to the practices surrounding photography), textually (that is, in relation to the properties of photography), and culturally (that is, in relation to the social experience of being a diaspora in Manila). However, I also expanded the use of these dimensions, since Thumim originally used them to in relation to formal institutions such as the BBC and the Museum of London (*ibid.*). Meanwhile, I used them in relation to an action research endeavour, namely the *Shutter Stories* collaborative photography exhibition project.

Building on these initial discussions of voice and mediation, I constructed the theoretical framework for this dissertation. The overarching thesis for this approach was that an understanding of how diasporic voices are mediated in a collaborative photography exhibition project necessitates an examination of the two distinct but intertwined aspects of this process. In Chapter 2, I fleshed out the first of these two aspects: the mediation of voice via the photographic medium, with its distinct properties and practices. Here I described the ways in which the simultaneously denotative and connotative character of photography (cf. Scott, 1999; Zelizer, 2006) might impinge on what Couldry refers to as voice as a process (Couldry, 2010). I argued that photographs promise to contribute to the creation of

powerful narratives because of how they can activate personal memories (as in the case of photographs in the indexical mode), collective memories (as in the case of photographs in the iconic mode), and even conceptual meanings (as in the case of photographs in the symbolic mode). But at the same time, photographs can also complicate the process of storytelling because of how they can only evoke memories and meanings but not fix them with finality. Aside from this, I also talked about how the influence of popular photography and institutional photography on both selecting and framing the photographic subject (cf. Bourdieu, 2003 [1990]; Thumim, 2009) might impinge on what Couldry calls voice as a value (Couldry, 2010). I pointed out that this situation opens up the possibility of a productive tension between participants, who tend to draw more from popular photography, and researchers, who tend to draw more on institutional photography. This usually means researchers being able to provide a structured space from which migrants are able to tell the stories they want to tell. Of course, the situation also raises the possibility of a problematic tension between research and participants. This usually manifests itself in researchers creating a stifling space that negates the capacity of migrants to tell the stories they want to share.

In Chapter 3, I fleshed out the second aspect of this study's theoretical framework: the mediation of voice via the diasporic social experience at the level of the self, the cultural group, and the multicultural society. First, I suggested that at the level of the self, it is Couldry's notion of voice as a process that is emphasised (Couldry, 2010). In this instance, voice is mediated primarily by people's personal experiences of being in a multicultural society and that, as such, the central tension at play is between agency and circumstance (Layder, 2004). To develop this idea further, I turned to Archer's concept of reflexivity, which according to her "mediate[s] the role that objective structural or cultural powers play in influencing social action and are thus indispensable to explaining social outcomes" (Archer, 2007: 5). Second, I suggested that at the level of the cultural group, both Couldry's notion of voice as a process and voice as a value are emphasised (Couldry, 2010). At this level, the mediation of voice is characterised by the tension between security (which is the value attached to the collective voice of the cultural group) and freedom (which is the value attached to the individual voices of people within a cultural group) (Bauman, 2001). In order to shed more light on this, I used Barth's concept of the negotiation of cultural group boundaries, which highlights how these

boundaries are constantly drawn and redrawn by the acts of the people who self-ascribe as cultural group members (Barth, 1976). Lastly, I suggested that at the level of the multicultural society, it is Couldry's notion of voice as a value that comes to the fore (Couldry, 2010). Here, voice is mediated by a multicultural society's willingness or otherwise to engage with cultural minority voices and that, because of this, the central issue is counterpoint and dissonance (Said, 1994). To make sense of this, I drew from Phillips' notion of multicultural dialogue, which is about how "people from different cultural backgrounds explain to one another why they favour particular laws or practices, and develop the skills of negotiation and compromise that enable them to live together" (Phillips, 2008: 180). I also made use of Silverstone's notion of the *mediapolis*, which asks people to view the media contrapuntally by being sensitive to the ways that migrant cultural minorities appear and disappear in the screens of the world (Silverstone, 2007).

Using the theoretical framework above, I analysed whether and how the *Shutter Stories* project created a space from which Manila's Indians and Koreans could interrupt the present mediation of multiculturalism in Manila. In Chapter 6, I presented the photo stories crafted by the five Indians and four Koreans who participated in this collaborative photography exhibition project. Then in Chapters 7 and 8, I directly addressed the question of how these photo stories were shaped both by the properties and the practices of photography and by various levels of the diasporic experience. In order to do this, I weaved together the data I gathered primarily from my life story interviews with Manila's Indians and Koreans and my participant observation in *Shutter Stories*, as well as secondarily from my focus group discussions with Manila's local Filipinos and my impressionistic analysis of the Manila-centric Philippine mainstream media. Below, I present the key arguments and insights I derived from all these data.

9.1.2.1 On the photographic mediation of voice

9.1.2.1.1 Key arguments about voice and the properties of the photographic medium

In the first part of Chapter 7, I sought to understand how the notion of voice as a process played out in the way in which the Indian and Korean participants produced their photo stories. In order to do this, I considered the two key aspects of the materiality of voice: the social resources involved in producing people's voices

and the particular form that their voices actually take (Couldry, 2010). In relation to the notion of social resources, I showed that for the *Shutter Stories* project, the most important thing turned out to be the capacity of the different project collaborators—comprised of the participants, the photography scholars, and myself—to make use of photography’s three key modes: the indexical, the iconic, and the symbolic (Scott, 1999). For the participants, this meant emphasising the possibilities of these modes. And for the photography scholars and myself, this meant pointing out the limitations of these modes. In relation to the notion of form, I described how the photo stories were actually presented during the public exhibition and on the dedicated website (*ibid.*). I showed that the negotiations between the participants, on the one hand, and the photography scholars and I, on the other hand, meant that the public exhibition ended featuring neither the individual voices nor the collective voice of the participants. Instead, it became the collective voice of all the project collaborators.

Together with this, I also looked into voice as a process not just as a process of speaking, but also of being heard (Couldry, 2010). In particular, I sought to describe the conditions in which the participants’ photo stories were received by the local Filipinos viewers (Zelizer, 2006). I also sought to determine whether and how these conditions allowed for the participants’ voices to be recognised, that is, to be listened to and to be registered as important. What I found out was that the local Filipino viewers did listen to the voices of the participants. However, these viewers primarily interpreted the participants’ photo stories as a representation of the stories of those who belonged to Manila’s Indian and Korean communities. In other words, these viewers saw the images as, first and foremost, iconic (Scott, 1999). As a consequence of this, one key thing that these viewers took out of the works was a feeling of surprise not only about the strong and diverse presence of Indian and Korean migrants in Manila, but also about how these migrants had unexpected characteristics that broke the stereotypes of the Indian as *bumbay* and the Korean as invader.

9.1.2.1.2 Key arguments about voice and the practices surrounding the photographic medium

In the second part of Chapter 7, I drew links between the notion of voice as value and the practices surrounding the practice of photography in interventionist research (Couldry, 2010). In order to do this, I looked at both the process of subject

selection and subject representation (cf. Pink, 2007) and sought to characterise the kind of negotiations that happened between the ordinary photographic practices of the participants and the institutional photographic practices of the photography scholars and myself (cf. Bourdieu 2003 [1990]; Thumim, 2009). Here I showed that the manner in which the photography scholars and I intervened in these processes had an important value, as we were able to prepare the participants' works for public viewing. However, I also argued that, in many instances, our concern for the effectiveness of the participants' voices inadvertently resulted in the participants not being able to tell some of the stories that they really wanted to tell. I also pointed out that our interventions led to the unintended reinforcement of the idea that the photography scholars and I were the mentors and that the participants were the apprentices and, as a consequence, undermining the participants' confidence in using photography as a platform for their diasporic voices (Gauntlett, 2011). So whilst the photography scholars and I were in some ways nurturing the participants' voices, we were also in some ways undermining them (cf. Couldry, 2010).

9.1.2.1.3 Key insights about the photographic mediation of voice

The data about how diasporic voices are mediated by the properties of the photographic medium affirm Zelizer's claim that it is important to pay attention to the discursive formations that predominate the social domain wherein images are displayed (that is, how voices are listened to) (Zelizer, 2006). The data also suggest, however, that there is a need to complement this claim with a second claim: that it is equally crucial to pay attention to the discursive formations that shape the spaces in which images are produced (that is, how voices are articulated). I would argue that it is only in considering both the contexts of consumption and production that one can fully understand why certain aspects of the photographer's narrative are heard and which ones are not heard. In the case of the *Shutter Stories* project, for instance, the local Filipino viewers saw the participants' photo stories as primarily iconic because both the public exhibition and the dedicated website did not really emphasise the personal and ideological character of the images. Because of several factors—such as the decision that the project collaborators took to downplay of the participants' identities, the promotional materials that accompanied the images, and Manila's cycle of strangeness and estrangement—both the exhibition and the website tended to underscore the representational character of the images. This was starkly different from what the Indian and Korean participants experienced, as they were conscious of all the modes of the photograph. The photography seminars allowed for them to think of their photo stories as indexical (as it emphasised that the participants are

telling their own stories about their own lives), as iconic (as it emphasised that the participants are sharing stories about the realities of Indian and Korean life in Manila), and as symbolic (as it emphasised that the participants can harness the various elements of photography to embed conceptual meanings into their images). I would suggest that future studies on the photographic mediation of voice look further into characterising this interplay between the convergences and divergences of the contexts of photographic production and photographic consumption. The hope is that this might enable those who seek to harness photography as voice to better harness the medium, notwithstanding the medium's inherent inability to fix meanings with finality (Barthes, 1981; Messaris, 1997).

Meanwhile, the data about how diasporic voices are mediated by the practices of photography in an action research project highlight a significant hurdle in producing what Burgess calls vernacular creativity. As I mentioned in Chapter 2, she defines this concept as the “productive articulation of consumer practices and knowledges...with older popular traditions and communicative practices” (Burgess, 2006: 212). The data suggest that the key difficulty with this kind of articulation is that the practices of the mainstream media (that is, the so-called consumer practices and knowledges) tend to be valorised over the practices of ordinary people (that is, the so-called older popular traditions and communicative practices). This is primarily because the practices of the mainstream media are often what make creative works more accessible to the wider public. This was clearly what happened in the *Shutter Stories* project. To be sure, the photography seminars helped the participants to harness the mainstream media's techniques for taking photographs and, as a consequence, to make their photo stories more attractive to the wider Filipino public. Because of the intense focus on this task though, these seminars did not have sufficient mechanisms that might have encouraged the participants to also draw from their own techniques for taking photographs.

I would submit that central to the difficulty of drawing from the practices of the mainstream media is that these practices are imbricated in the wider discursive formations that predominate the creative industries. These practices therefore tend to carry with them the ideological baggage of these industries. Examples of such a baggage are two assumptions that I had throughout the project: that it is imperative to use the language of the mainstream media in order to communicate well to a wider public and, perhaps more crucially, that one necessarily has to reach a wider public to succeed at communicating a message (cf. Couldry, 2003; 2009). In light of this unsettled problem, future studies can delve into action research projects that do not assume the necessity of having to engage with the practices, and by extension the ideological baggage, of the creative industries. In so doing, perhaps these works can better contribute to de-naturalising the centrality of such industries—most

especially the mainstream media—and to establishing alternative spaces from wherein marginalised groups like diasporic communities can articulate their voices (cf. Corner, 1996 ; Couldry, 2000; Downing, 2002).

9.1.2.2 On the social mediation of voice

9.1.2.2.1 Key arguments

In Chapter 8, I unpacked the ways in which the photo stories of the Indian and Korean participants of the *Shutter Stories* were shaped by the various levels of their diasporic social experience. I showed that at the level of the self, Couldry's notion of voice as process was most evident, as the participants' photo stories clearly demonstrated their capacity to tell their own stories about their place in the world (Couldry, 2010). Here the central concept at work was reflexivity (Archer, 2007), as their photographs pointed to their ability to draw from experiences that they might share with Manila's other Indians and Koreans and yet craft diverse photo stories that were in line with each of their personal life projects.

At the level of the cultural group, meanwhile, I argued that both Couldry's notion of voice as a process and as a value were at play (Couldry, 2010). At this level, the central concept at work was that of fluid cultural group boundaries, most especially as enacted via the dynamics of cultural intimacy (Herzfeld, 1996). On the one hand, the participants' cultural group voice manifested voice as a process in those times that their photo stories reinforced the boundaries of their cultural groups. This was because these moments affirmed their capacity to collectively speak about their place of their Indian and Korean communities within the wider society of Manila. But on the other hand, the participants' deference to this cultural group voice also manifested (a lack of) voice as a value, most especially because they found it difficult to use their photo stories to challenge the boundaries of the cultural groups. Indeed, this revealed their inability to publicly raise the issues they had with their groups, primarily because this would only add to the negative stereotypes that local Filipinos had about them.

Finally, I contended that at the level of the multicultural society, it was Couldry's notion of voice as a value that was most salient, as it was here that one could see whether and how Manila was fostering of or at the very least listening to the voices of its Indian and Korean diasporas (Couldry, 2010). The central concept at work here was that of multicultural dialogue (Benhabib, 2002; Phillips, 2008). I

revealed that at the very least, the participants' photo stories were able to contribute modestly to initiating a multicultural dialogue with the local Filipino viewers who had the opportunity to engage with these works, as these created an interruption into their stereotyped understandings of Indians and Koreans (cf. Pinchevski, 2005). Unfortunately though, these photo stories were not allowed a space in the Manila-centric Philippine mainstream media, which generally had a voice-denying rationality that valorised the narrative of Philippine postcolonial nationalism and stifled all other narratives that might pertain to cultural diversity (cf. Gonzaga, 2009).

9.1.2.2.2 Key insight

The data on the social mediation of voice validate the importance of Couldry's claim that beyond recognising the importance of voice as a process, it is also significant to recognise the significance of voice as a value (Couldry, 2010). Certainly, the data demonstrate the capacity of people to navigate their social world in a manner that allows them to further their personal life projects (Archer, 2007). This can be seen in how the participants of the *Shutter Stories* project told their own unique stories about their lives, despite their shared diasporic experiences and despite the myriad considerations they had to take into account as members of their particular cultural groups. But then again, the data also underscore that people can only do so much to further their personal life projects when the contexts in which they find themselves are not encouraging of these projects. This can be seen in how the participants had to let go of some of the stories they wanted to tell in deference to the cultural groups to which they belonged. This can also be seen in how the participants, together with the photography scholars and myself, were unable to initiate a multicultural dialogue with local Filipinos at a grander scale. These limitations serve as a reminder that beyond the already difficult task of helping marginalised groups to articulate their voices, there is still the much more difficult task of helping establish a society that is willing to foster such voices. Indeed, it is important to establish how might one address Husband's assertion that it is imperative for people to understand what it is that their cultural others are saying (Husband, 1996; 2000). I return to this issue towards the end of my ensuing discussion on how this study contributes to the field of migration studies.

9.2 Contribution to relevant literatures

9.2.1 On migration studies

9.2.1.1 Key arguments

At the global level, this study contributes to migration studies by helping de-Westernise our understanding of the dynamics of multiculturalism, as well as of its attendant issue of racism. As I indicated in Chapter 1, most of the contemporary works that explore the role of the media in relation to these subjects are set in the cities of the developed world (examples include Ang et al, 2008; Deltombe, 2005; Georgiou, 2009; Hamilton, 1997; Parekh, 2000; Richards, 2007). Consequently, these works have particular assumptions that tend to hold only in these particular contexts.

For instance, it is often said that the economic and symbolic marginalisation of the diaspora tend to be intertwined (for instance, Lentin and Titley, 2011; Roberts and Mahtani, 2010). In Manila, however, this does not seem to be the case. Confirming my claim in Chapter 1, the life stories that I heard from the city's Indians and Koreans depicted a situation in which economic marginalisation and symbolic marginalisation are divorced from one another. In this city, Indians and Koreans tend to be economically superior to the locals, but are nevertheless symbolically erased from predominant media and social discourses. Because of this, the social problems that they face tend to be a product of this circumstance. For instance, the key issue that hampers the quality of their lives is that they face a lot of threats to their personal security and property (whether real or imagined) and that these go unnoticed by Manila's local Filipinos. Here, what comes to mind are the stories that I have heard about Punjabi Indians being held at knife point by petty thieves, Sindhi Indians being swindled by their local Filipino partners, and Koreans being victimised by government officials.

Another assumption that this study challenges pertains to the dynamics of racism towards diasporic cultural minorities. A significant body of the existing literature on this subject emphasises how these groups are, first and foremost, victims of cultural majority oppression (for instance, Brown et al, 2003; Mason, 2000; Solomos, 2003). In contrast to this, the hierarchy of cultural others to which local Filipinos subscribe tends to be more nuanced. In this particular case, affinity is shown not only to those at the top rung of the racial ladder. As I have discussed in

Chapter 5, local Filipinos are generally enamoured with those whom they often refer to as foreigners, regardless of their race. In the same way, reservation is shown not only to those at the bottom rung of the racial ladder. As I also said in Chapter 5, local Filipinos tend to have qualms about foreign cultures as well. What constitutes the local Filipinos' hierarchy then is the fact that they have more affinity for and less reservation towards those who occupy the top rung of the ladder (that is, those who are more light-skinned) and, conversely, have less affinity for and more reservations towards those who occupy the bottom rung of the ladder (that is, those who are more dark-skinned). I would say that both of these counter-assumptions are sufficient to underscore the importance of paying attention to the ways in which multiculturalism and racism might play out in other developing world contexts.

At the local level, meanwhile, this work significantly extends existing work on diasporas in the Philippines. To the already existing literature on the Indian diaspora (for instance, see Lorenzana, 2008; Thapan, 2002; Salazar, 2008), this study adds its insight on the centrality of romantic love in the cultural identity negotiations of second generation Indians. The life stories of Amisha (female, 21, other Indian), Preet (male, 22, Sindhi Indian) and Sukphrit (19, female, Punjabi Indian) all attested to this, as these young Indians struggled with the thought that their choice to be more Indian or to be more Filipino was heavily determined by whether or not they would follow Indian norms on courtship and marriage. To the still relatively underdeveloped literature on the Korean diaspora (for instance, Miralao & Makil, 2007), this study adds its insight about the divides that separate the Koreans living in Manila. Whilst the life stories of Hae Jin (24, male, Korean), Sang Mi (24, female, Korean), and Matt (male, 23, Korean) all focused on the sharp delineation between recently arrived Korean students like them and the already established Korean community in Manila, the photo story of Sonya (22, female, Korean) concretely showed the rigid age divides amongst the established Korean community in Manila.

I would also contend that this dissertation adds a new angle to the study of diasporas in the Philippines. This is because none of the previous works have sought to provide a nuanced characterisation of the dynamics behind how local Filipinos deal with their cultural others. This work fills this gap by explicitly making the connection between the local Filipinos' insecurity about their shared identity and their ambivalence in their relationships with their cultural others. As I have

mentioned many times in this work, one of my key contentions here is that the preoccupation that local Filipinos have about finding their unique shared identity prevents them from acknowledging their internal diversity and, in turn, their persistent racial hierarchy of themselves. It is also this same inward-looking stance that hinders local Filipinos from confronting the increasingly significant presence of diasporic groups in their midst and, together with this, their longstanding racial hierarchy of their cultural others.

9.2.1.2 Key insight

The arguments above clearly indicate that in the context of developing world cities such as Manila, it is possible for issues pertaining to multiculturalism to remain publicly unacknowledged and undiscussed. This situation can be very pernicious, since it tends to discourage attempts at addressing the very real consequences of the issues of multiculturalism on the lives of many diasporas. One of my more worrying discoveries in this research is that, in general, Manila's wider society still finds it difficult to listen to the stories of the city's Indians and Koreans. Indeed, the manner in which Manila's diasporas are represented by the Philippine mainstream media and in which they are talked about by the city's local Filipinos betray this society's inability to register and recognise multicultural voices. It also seems that this society does not yet to possess the necessary resources for such a task. This is most probably because they are too preoccupied with their concerns regarding the project of postcolonial nationalism (Gonzaga, 2009). I would argue that this is one of the central reasons as to why the *Shutter Stories* project failed to initiate a multicultural dialogue at a much grander scale than what it was able to do.

The issue at hand returns us to the concern I raised in the previous section, which was about how Husband's notion of the right to be understood might be established in the context of a city like Manila (Husband, 1996; 2000). Unfortunately, this dissertation was not able to address this issue; although it looked at how a collaborative photography exhibition project might value voice, it was beyond its remit to examine how Manila's wider society might do the same. I would suggest that future studies on multiculturalism in Manila take one step step back; instead of examining the ways in which some other projects can help the city's diasporas articulate their voices, they might first explore how the city's locals can better listen to the voices of its diasporas. In particular, some of these works can look into how media literacy can play a role in establishing the conditions necessary for making Manila's wider society more hospitable to multicultural voices and, eventually, more open to multicultural dialogue (cf. Silverstone, 1999).

9.2.2 On action research

9.2.2.1 Key arguments

One key contribution of this dissertation is that it provides a comprehensive theoretical framework for considering how a collaborative photography exhibition project might allow for a space that fosters diasporic voice. Because of the unique ability of the photographic medium to allow project participants to advocate their own perspective of reality (da Silva and Pink, 2004: 158; Krieg and Roberts, 2007; Singhal et al, 2007) and to make the narratives shared by the participants more accessible and interesting to a wider range of audiences (Pink, 2006; Steele and Lovejoy, 2006), I would contend that this is a welcome addition to the increasingly diverse tool kit of action research (cf. the edited collections of Day et al, 2002; Kindon et al, 2007; Reason and Bradbury, 2001). As I have mentioned earlier in this discussion, it was in Chapters 2 and 3 that I sought to establish the complex ways in which the photo stories of the diaspora might be shaped by the simultaneously denotative and connotative character of the photographic medium (Scott, 1999; Zelizer, 2006), the interplay between legitimised and popular photographic practices (Bourdieu, 2003 [1990]; Thumim, 2009), and the tensions present in the various levels of the migrant social experience (Layder, 2004; Bauman, 2001; Said, 1994). In so doing, I hope to have underscored how such a project might produce uneven results. Of course, it can be disheartening to know that one can gain ground on certain fronts and at the same time lose ground on others. But I would argue that what matters here is that researchers become aware well in advance of the potential possibilities and problems of the project in which they have chosen to engage. Whilst this should make them more careful, this should not make them less committed towards their work.

As a complement to the above, this study also allows for what Couldry calls a neo-Aristotelian approach in assessing the collaborative photography exhibition project as a tool for action research (cf. Couldry, 2012). As I said in Chapter 1, this approach is founded on the argument that the right and the good cannot be determined in abstraction and, instead, can only be understood in relation to the circumstances that are present in a particular case. Drawing on the empirical data I shared in Chapters 7 and 8 then, one can begin thinking about which particular practices should be cultivated because these contribute to making the collaborative

photography exhibition project more successful in being participatory, being interventionist, and, as a consequence, giving more value to diasporic voices. Conversely, these data also allow one to recognise which particular practices should be avoided because these undermine the ability of the project to be participatory, interventionist, and valuing of voice. In the final section of this dissertation, I develop these claims by identifying both the practices that seem to have fostered and seem to have undermined voice in *Shutter Stories* and, on the basis of these, suggesting possible ways forward for interventionist research projects that seek to foster a Manila that is more open to its increasingly more pronounced multicultural character.

9.2.2.2 Key insight

In light of the above, it becomes clear that in order for action research projects to better reflect the spirit of collaboration and the intent for intervention (Green et al, 2003; Somekh, 2006; Wadsworth, 1998), they must be open to the possibility of revision and refinement. As my experience with the *Shutter Stories* project demonstrates, it is only in actually undertaking a project that one can better understand how the said project can be more participatory and more effective in pushing for social change. This initial step can then be the basis of more sophisticated future projects. I would say that this iterative nature of action research lends itself well to the demands of multicultural dialogue. This is because dialogue also necessitates an openness towards engaging with diverse ideas, testing these ideas, and refining how to engage with these ideas (cf. Fraser, 2003). For example, future studies that aim to build on the *Shutter Stories* project can make use of the feedback I received from the local Filipino viewers of the public exhibition and the dedicated website in order to help the city's diasporas craft stories that can respond to these comments. In so doing, these future works will be able both to refine the way in which the Manila's diasporas articulate their voices and to continue the dialogue between these diasporas and the city's local Filipinos.

9.3 Ways forward

One key realisation I had from my interventionist endeavour is that whilst there are varying levels of participation that is accepted in action research (cf. Hart, 1992; Pratt, 2006; Pretty et al, 1995), asking Manila's Indians and Koreans to be

more involved in the preparatory stages of the project would have contributed to fostering their voices further. In hindsight, I can see that the preparatory steps I took before starting with the project proper were rather top-down. On the basis of my life story interviews with 17 Indians and 15 Koreans, my focus group discussions with 6 sets of local Filipinos, and my impressionistic analysis of the Manila-centric Philippine mainstream media, I determined that the goal of the project should be to interrupt the mediation of multiculturalism in Manila. I also determined that the way to do this was to ask some Indians and Koreans to share their stories about their diasporic life, which would hopefully contribute to breaking the problematic cycle of strangeness and estrangement between their respective groups and Manila's local Filipinos. It was these determinations that I shared with the exhibition participants and that eventually set the parameters for the photo stories that they crafted.

Whilst I can say that the approach I took in setting up the *Shutter Stories* project was rigorous and systematic, it was nevertheless lacking in engagement with Manila's Indians and Koreans. As in the case of some existing action research projects (for instance, Pratt, 2007), I could have sat down with some of them in order to collaboratively define the problem, as well as to collaboratively identify a possible solution which all of us would have been interested in undertaking. Doing this would have given them not only a greater say in the project, but also a greater stake in it. And based on the data that I gathered, making Manila's Indians and Koreans feel that they own the project matters, since many of them want to have closer ties with city's local Filipinos but are also wary about doing so. This is evident in how both the Sindhi and Punjabi Indian communities continue to strictly police the boundaries of their cultural group, as well as in how both the established Korean community and the incoming set of Korean students continually claim that they "just want to go on with [their] ordinary lives." I would say then that missing the chance to have worked more closely with the diasporic groups was one of the most main downsides of this project (as well as an important learning moment, of course). Future interventionist researchers would do well to rectify this misstep by being more cognisant about the particular dynamics of multicultural relations that are at play in Manila, as well as the attendant degree of participation that this particular dynamics demands.

The other important realisation I had from my participant observation is that the tension between what Silverstone refers to as production ethics and aesthetics is

something that cannot be settled with finality (Silverstone, 1999). I would argue that the balance between these two has to be judged in relation to the goals of a particular action research project. In the case of the *Shutter Stories* project, the objective that I set was to interrupt the mediation of multiculturalism in Manila. This entailed being able to capture the attention of Manila's local Filipinos and, if possible, even the Manila-centric Philippine mainstream media. It appears reasonable then that I decided to provide an ideological frame for the photography exhibition and to allow the photography scholars to set professional photographic standards for the exhibition participants. Indeed, allowing Manila's Indians and Koreans to craft their photo stories solely on the basis of their personal choice in subject selection and subject framing would have been counterproductive if, in the end, these were not able to engage its potential viewers. As Couldry says, voice is not just about speaking, but also about being heard (Couldry, 2010).

It must be said however that, at the very least, the seeming valorisation of aesthetics that the photography scholars and I enacted needs to be toned down. One of the reasons for this is that, as I have said earlier, it appears to have inadvertently filtered out too many of the stories that the exhibition participants wanted to tell. Recall for example that in Chapter 7, a lot of the initial ideas of the exhibition participants were closed off because they were difficult to translate into the particular grammars that constitute the visual narrative. More than this reason however, I have also said earlier that the photography scholars and I seemed to have inadvertently reinforced the idea that we were the mentors and that the exhibition participants were the apprentices. This posed a serious challenge to the project's hope that the exhibition participants would gain confidence in their own ability to tell stories through photo stories. Most important of all, the valorisation of aesthetics over ethics did not necessarily produce the desired result. As I revealed in Chapter 7, the number of local Filipinos who attended the public exhibition and who made online posts or comments about the website left much to be desired. It appears then that beyond a consideration of ethics and aesthetics, there also needs to be a consideration of other forces at play. These include, among others, the ability of the project organisers to raise money for a more well-funded project, to use their social connections to generate interest in the event, to harness the affordances of the various media—most especially the social media—that might broaden the remit of the photography exhibition. Future interventionist researchers would do well not just

to think about how they might allow their participants to tell their stories, but how they themselves need to develop the relevant skills necessary to support their participants in this endeavour.

In light of all these things, it is clear that this attempt at doing interventionist research is characterised both by its successes and, many times, by its failures as well. Despite these mixed results, I hope that sharing the process that I went through means that I am able to contribute to what Gibson-Graham call “a politics of possibility” (Gibson-Graham, 2006: xiv) and what Chomsky refers to as an attempt to grope towards “true humanly, valuable concepts” (in Chomsky and Foucault, 2006 [1971]: 55). More specifically, I hope that this work helps others to better understand how to address the problematic mediation of multiculturalism in Manila. Consequently, I hope as well that this helps open up the possibility for Manila to remember its past as “the world’s first global city” (Irving, 2010: 19) and, more importantly, to come to terms with its present and future as a global city in the twenty-first century.

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Appendix A: Life Story Interview Guide

- (1) Tell me about yourself. Perhaps you can begin with when and where you were born. *[Probe family history of migration, that is, grandparents, parents, siblings, and children.]*

- (2) In your opinion, how much do you know about Indian/Korean culture? Filipino culture? *[Probe their resources for understanding these cultures. Include the media.]*

- (3) How much of you is Indian/Korean? And how much of you is Filipino? *[Probe their likes and dislikes about the cultural values and practices of each group.]*

- (4) Do you display your Indian-ness/Korean-ness? How about your Filipino-ness? If so, how? If not, why? *[Probe if there is a media angle to this.]*

- (5) What is India/Korea for you: where your roots are, the home you are going to return to, a distant place, etc.? How about the Philippines? *(Probe their future plans for themselves and for their family members.)*

- (6) What is home life like for migrants in Manila? *[Probe the dynamics (a) between family members and (b) of how cultural identity is preserved, rejected, or negotiated. Include media consumption practices at home.]*

- (7) Which Indian/Korean cultural values and/or practices, if any, would you like to pass on to your (future) children? Filipino cultural values and/or practices? Why so?

- (8) How many Indian/Korean friends do you have? Local Filipinos? Other nationalities? Why is this the case?

(9) What kind of relationship, if any, do you have with your non-Indian/non-Korean neighbors? schoolmates/officemates? friends? *[Probe (a) instances of discrimination and, conversely, of special treatment and (b) how they perform their cultural identity in the presence of cultural others.]*

(10) What kind of relationship, if any, do you have with the members of the Indian/Korean community in Manila? *(Probe issues of class, gender, age, ethnicity, religion, and geographical location.)*

(11) Do you think the recent rise of the popularity of Indian/Korean popular culture in the Philippines has had any positive influence in the way other people in Manila relate with you? Negative influence?

(12) How do you feel about the way Indians/Koreans are represented in the Philippine media? International media? *[Consider showing clips of the popular representations of Indians and Koreans in Manila that have circulated on Philippine TV.]*

(13) What should Filipinos know better about Indians/Koreans? *[Probe if there are media sources that they think provide problematic depictions of them.]* know about? If yes, what would these be? If not, why so?

(14) Are there any issues affecting Indians/Koreans in the Philippines that local Filipinos should know? If yes, what are these? If no, why none?

(15) Do you think making Filipinos aware of the lives of migrants in Manila would have any positive benefit for your cultural community? Negative effect?

Appendix B: Focus Group Discussion Guide

(1) **PERSONAL CONTEXT AND CURRENT DISPOSITION:** Please provide a brief introduction of your personal background. Perhaps you might begin with where and when you were born and then go on from there.

PROBE:

(a) educational attainment

(b) occupation

(c) family background (for example, number of siblings, status of parents, number of children, and civil status)

(d) recent history (that is, comparison of previous year and present year)

(e) aspirations (that is, goals and dreams for the near future)

(f) experiences of internal and/or external migration

(2) **MEDIA CONSUMPTION:** Which media—television, radio, newspapers, the Internet, and the like—do you consume? Why?

PROBE:

(a) media consumption practices: weekday vs. weekend (what, where, how often, with whom, how exactly, and why)

(b) views about the media: foreign and local, news and entertainment, et cetera

(3) **MIGRANTS IN THE MEDIA:**

(a) Do you consume foreign media, like Hollywood movies, Koreanovelas, and the like? If so, could you please rank them according to those that you consume the most to those that you consume the least? If not, why so?

PROBE:

- (i) reasons for consuming these media*
- (ii) what they have learned about foreigners through these media*
- (iii) their agreement and/or disagreement with how these media represent foreigners*

(b) Have you ever seen media representations of foreign residents of Manila? If so, how was/were this/these? If not, then why?

PROBE:

- (i) reasons for consuming these media*
- (ii) agreement and/or with media representations and their bases for these*
- (iii) comparison between foreign media's representation of Filipinos and Philippine media's representation of foreigners*

(4) FILIPINO'S EVERYDAY EXPERIENCES OF MIGRANTS: Aside from you media experiences of migrants, have you ever had the chance of interacting with foreigners?

PROBE:

- (a) their memorable encounters with foreigners*
- (b) the quantity and quality of their relationships with foreigners*
- (c) their general opinion of foreigners (for example, their appearance, attitudes, beliefs, practices, etc.)*
- (d) their racial hierarchy of foreigners, if any*
- (e) if you were to personify the migrants according to your level of relationship with them, how would you do it?*

(5) Before we end, perhaps you might have any last comments?