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From the Margins: Filipina Skilled Migrants tell their Stories

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ABSTRACT

For decades, the Philippine government has sent many of its citizens overseas as part of its labor migration policy. Filipinos also leave home due to the economic instability, graft and corruption that have plagued the country post-colonially. When feminized labor demand increased, around the 1990s, the phenomenon of mass Filipino women migration began and continues to this day. Filipinas living or working overseas are often ethnically stereotyped as either ‘maids’ or ‘mail order brides.’ The dominant focus of previous research on Filipina domestic workers and mail order brides has, in some respect, reproduced and reinforced these racial, sexist and classist stereotypes. This literature has all but neglected the fact that many Filipina migrants are skilled professionals. Except for the nursing profession, the migration experiences of skilled Filipina professionals remain invisible in the literature. This study addresses this gap in the literature and creates a space for the experiences of Filipina professionals living and working in New Zealand to be brought to the fore. I conducted repeat interviews with seven Filipinas who migrated to New Zealand. The interviews focused on their migration experiences, how they made sense of their migration, and how they negotiated their identities as women and as migrants somewhere new. Using a narrative approach, I was guided by feminist and *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* research principles that placed the women’s voices and narratives at the center throughout the whole research process. More specifically, I used Brown and Gilligan’s (1992) voice-centered relational method to analyze the transcriptions. This method complemented both feminist and *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* principles because it allowed the women’s voices to be heard more clearly and provided a sensitivity to the diverse perspectives that emerged. Although the women were all Filipinas, the diversity across their migrant experiences ranged from feeling humiliated by participating in menial household tasks, to drawing closer together as a family, through to feeling proud of being able to accomplish many tasks alone. There were also commonalities with regard to the physical, social, and professional transitions that they encountered. As a whole, the women made successful transitions as they assimilated into New Zealand society. These women were happy about the decision to make New Zealand their home. This research contributes a new narrative to Filipina migrant experiences that celebrates the stoicism and successes of the Filipina.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Migrant and Researcher

When I was about 2 years old, my mother left my infant sister and me in the care of my maternal grandparents to work overseas. She could be one of the forerunners of female migrant workers in the 1960s that left the Philippines to seek better employment opportunities and provide a better life for her family by going abroad. The United States government was recruiting civilian personnel for their military offices in Vietnam. My mother answered the advertisement for a personal executive assistant and within a few days of her application, she was on a plane to Saigon. She was able to help my father find work there after she arrived and he followed her shortly after. For a young couple with two children in the 1960s, good employment was already difficult to find in Manila. Within a year of their departure, my sister and I followed them to reunite our family. Shortly before Vietnam fell to communism, we returned home to the Philippines. However, in Manila, our friends, family members, and acquaintances were leaving the country throughout my growing years. As I grew older, my mother also constantly urged me to apply for immigration overseas. The promise always of a better life abroad was the biggest attraction for me, and when my opportunity to leave came, I took it. Unbeknownst to me then, I was growing up in a 'culture of migration' (Asis, 2006). This concept evolved as a result of the country's long history of sending workers overseas, thereby building its reputation as a 'sending nation' (Abella, 1993; Martin, 1993; Ronquillo, Boschma, Wong & Quiney, 2011; Tan 2001). Sills (2007) also confirmed that due to the country's political, linguistic and cultural ties with Western nations as far back as the late 1800s, Filipinos were already emigrating to Europe, Mexico, and the US. This engendered in the national psyche a desire to emigrate (Garchitorena, 2007; Ronquillo et al., 2011; Sills, 2007).

In the 1990s, more and more Filipinas (as our women are called) left to work overseas, mostly as domestic helpers. I was not aware that this growing labor migration of our women created an image of us as 'maids' until I arrived in New Zealand. I was also unaware that we were stereotyped as 'mail order brides' in some parts of the world. I am a Filipina and an immigrant to New Zealand. Like my mother before me, I left the Philippines in 2001 seeking a better life for me and my family. Unlike her, though, I left permanently and settled in New Zealand, where I am a minority.

Sometime after that, I became a student of psychology and one of the papers I enrolled in was Women and Psychology. Although I was not new to feminism (I had embraced its principles wholeheartedly in my undergraduate and postgraduate literature classes at university), the course provided fresh perspectives on women's struggles and challenges, particularly for ethnic minorities. I began reading about the Philippine

migration narrative, and particularly about research on Filipina migrations. I discovered that we have internationally been homogenized and categorized into one of the following groups, depending on where in the world we are situated: ‘maid’ in Europe, the Middle East, and Asia; ‘mail order bride’ in the US, Australia, and New Zealand; and ‘entertainer’ in Japan and Korea. These terms have assumed derogatory connotations for the Filipina.

The Filipina is more than this. Our women are also professionals, successful and respected in their chosen fields of specialization. The only professionals Filipinas are associated with are nurses because the country provides an overwhelming supply of them around the world. Caritas Internationalis (n.d.) confirmed that “except for the nursing profession, the migration of highly skilled women is relatively invisible” (p. 7).

Their very silence and non-representation in the literature have marginalized skilled migrant women. I belong to that group and this deficit in the knowledge of and about Filipinas needs to change. This is the reason for this research because for too long the Filipina has been misunderstood and stereotyped. The diverse experiences of Filipina migrant professionals are under-documented in psychological research. There is a need for the stories of professional migrant Filipinas to surface in order to correct the imbalance in the over-representation of other labor groups. It is my hope that by providing other women a space for their stories, through this study, the stereotypes about Filipinas is, at the least, changed. I also hope to contribute new knowledge and change the narrative about the Filipina migrant experience. Hence, this study examines how Filipina migrant professionals make sense of their migration experiences and negotiate their identities as Filipina migrants in New Zealand society. To better appreciate the context from which the narratives emanate, though, it is important to first briefly discuss the history of Philippine international migration, how this evolved into a ‘culture of migration’ in the national psyche, and how the feminization of Philippine labor migration developed.

Philippine migration – a brief history

We Filipinos are no strangers to migration. Since the beginning of the 20th century, we have been migrating in significant numbers, as attested by our country’s migration history. Whether working as temporary labor migrants or living permanently as immigrants abroad, we are found in practically every corner of the world today (Liebelt, 2008). Garchitorena (2007) further estimates that there are over 8 million Filipinos living and working in 193 countries around the world. Of that number Browne and Braun (2008) report that 5 million are Filipinas. Although there may have certainly been more unofficial movements previously, the first, earliest recorded journey was in 1417 when Sultan Paduka Batara sent a mission to China to improve trade relations with that country (The Center for Migrant Advocacy, n.d.). Then, during the Spanish Colonial Era, from 1521-1898, trade relations between the Philippines and Mexico were established since both countries were Spanish colonies, instituting the migration of the early Filipino seafarers (The Center for Migrant Advocacy, n.d.).

However, the first huge wave of Filipinos migrating started in the early part of the 20th century, after the Philippines was annexed to America in 1898 as a colony (Camroux, 2008). The first group of Filipino male workers sent to the sugarcane and pineapple plantations in Hawaii and California arrived on December 20, 1906 (Asis, 2006; The Center for Migrant Advocacy, n.d.). This systematic labor migration to the US continued until the 1940s. When young American men fought in the Vietnam War during the 1960s, Filipino doctors, nurses, and engineers migrated to the US to support its booming economy (Garchitorena, 2007). Many remained and became US citizens.

In the 1970s, the economic situation in the Philippines worsened due to the ‘push factors’ of severe balance of payment problems, high unemployment rates, and labor shortages. To address this, the government established a labor migration policy to stimulate its flagging economy (Asis, 2006; Garchitorena, 2007; The Center for Migrant Advocacy, n.d.). At this same time, certain ‘pull factors’ further encouraged the out-migration (del Rosario, 2005) of Filipinos to the Middle East, which was experiencing an oil boom and needed professionals, both skilled and semi-skilled, for their petrochemical and infrastructure industries (Garchitorena, 2007). This second huge wave of labor migration was comprised mainly of Filipino men.

The labor migration policy and the ‘push factors’ of the 1970s were meant to be a temporary situation. Unfortunately, the high levels of poverty and unemployment persisted and labor migration among Filipinos continues to this day (Browne & Braun, 2008). Asis (2006) confirms that the ‘push factors’ of the 1970s have not abated, and the absence of any concrete economic development, a growing population, and low wages compound the problems. Migration has thus become the country’s permanent national development strategy, with the government relying heavily on remittances from its overseas Filipino workers (OFW) (Amrith, 2010; Liebelt, 2008) to sustain the national economy and provide a continuous source of funds (Sills & Chowthi, 2008). The remittances have, in fact, become an important pillar of the Philippine economy (Asis, 2006; Browne & Braun, 2008), accounting for 10% of the country’s GDP (Kelly & Lusia, 2006). Kelly & Lusia (2006) report that, in 2003, over US\$7 billion was remitted through formal channels. According to Badkar, Callister, Kirshnan, Didham, & Bedford (2007), today the Philippines is the largest exporter of migrant labor in the world, and the country continues to promote and encourage the migration of its citizens. For close to 5 decades, it has supplied both skilled and low-skilled workers to the United States, Canada, Australia, the Middle East, Asia, and Europe (Asis, 2006), favored destinations for its citizens.

The feminization of Philippine labor migration

As world labor market demands change, the Philippines continues responding to these changes (Browne & Braun, 2008) by quickly adapting to any employment opportunities overseas to export and exploit its human capital (Camroux, 2008). The onset of globalization, for instance, created a new demand for feminized labor.

The need for domestic helpers and nannies (del Rosario, 2005; Novek, 2013; Parreñas, 2001) emerged because women in developed or developing countries were entering the workforce and needed reproductive labor for their households (Browne & Braun, 2008; Caritas Internationals, n.d.; Fleury, 2016; Martin, 2003; Tondo, 2012;). These countries turned to poorer countries, like the Philippines, to address this demand. Hence, by the third decade of Philippine labor exportation, roughly the 1990s, the increase of Filipino women migration began (Asis, 2006; Sills & Chowthi, 2008). From that point onwards, the Philippines continually increased its export of domestic helpers, nurses, nannies, and caregivers to North America, Europe, Asia, and the Middle East (Camroux, 2008; Lindio-McGovern, 2003; Sills & Chowthi, 2008). Closely following suit, Japan and South Korea recruited entertainers and sex workers, the only jobs available in those countries for female labor migrants, adding a further stereotype for the Filipina (Faier, 2007; Parreñas, 2010; Ryogo, 2009; Yea, 2008). The latter group was deceptively recruited with the promise of jobs as waitresses, singers, or ‘cultural dancers’. The moniker for them in the Philippines is *japayukis*; I had first cousins who worked in Japan as ‘cultural dancers’, but we all knew what kind of work was involved. By sharing the story of my mother’s work experience in Vietnam and my cousins’ own foray into working overseas as examples, I believe it is safe to say that every Filipino will know someone who has worked or left to live overseas.

In recent years, developed countries began experiencing the increase of an ageing population and again turned to poorer countries for the labor needed to care for their elderly citizens; this time the demand was for caregivers and nurses (Amrith, 2010; Ayalon, Kaniel & Rosenberg, 2008; Liebelt 2008b; Novek, 2013; Parreñas, 2001; Tondo, 2012). Studies conducted in Canada (Novek, 2013), Israel (Ayalon, Kaniel & Rosenberg, 2008), and New Zealand (Badkar, Callister, & Didham, 2009) investigated the experiences of Filipino caregivers in nursing homes and rest homes. Novek’s (2013) study explored the employment experiences of Filipino health care aides in Canada. The in-depth interviews revealed a difficulty most migrants encountered: their educational qualifications were unrecognized and since finding immediate employment was crucial, many accepted the lower-skilled role of health care aide. Most were Filipinas. In addition, despite many of the caregivers being overqualified for the role, they used this as a pathway to gain permanent residence in Canada. Canada is the only country that allows eventual permanent migration for its health care service workers, making it a popular destination for many Filipinos (Barber, 2008).

Ayalon, Kaniel and Rosenberg (2008) also discovered that mostly Filipinas provided home care service to elderly Israelis; in fact, Filipinos comprised 70%-80% of the work force in this sector. The study, however, did not incorporate their viewpoints, focusing instead on the feedback of social workers who worked closely with them. The interviews revealed that Israelis had a misconception that Filipinos only worked for the money, that they were “robots, without feelings because they left their families and children...to make money” (p. 129). Such statements revealed ignorance about the reasons why the workers left their families behind. It was rather

ironic that the elderly Israelis' own family members preferred to pay strangers to take care of them, yet they were quick to criticize Filipinos for leaving their families behind. Filipinos, though, were generally well-liked because of their patience, obedience, and the respect they show for their elderly wards, making them attractive employees to the Israelis. However, as migrant workers, there are limited opportunities available to them. The social workers reported that the most common form of abuse faced by Filipinos in Israel was financial abuse.

Meanwhile, Badkar, Callister and Didham's (2009) research on migrant caregivers in New Zealand also showed that a majority of the workers were Filipinas. The increase in Filipino caregivers is a recent occurrence. Despite the country's immigration policy focusing on highly skilled migrants and the absence of a formal scheme for recruiting caregivers from overseas, the authors suggested that some migrants could have changed their occupation after settling in the country because they were unable to obtain employment in their profession. For instance, the authors claimed that many migrant nurses who were unable to gain registration in New Zealand could have ended up assuming this role. They cited the example of Filipino live-in caregivers in Canada who trained and certified as midwives or registered nurses but used the pathway of caregiving to gain permanent residency. In fact, Barber (2008) reported that many nurses, unable to access nursing employment, downgraded their qualifications to work as caregivers.

Statistics New Zealand (2007) reported that from 1991-2000, of the 500 Filipina professionals who arrived as permanent residents, 60% of the group were nurses or health professionals. In recent years, New Zealand, like many other Western countries, has begun to experience a nursing shortage and to address this has recruited nurses from overseas (Jenkins & Huntington, 2016) due to constraints on increasing its number of domestic-trained nurses (Nana, Stokes, Molano & Dixon, 2013). Although there is substantial research overseas about Internationally Qualified Nurses (IQN), mostly from Australia, Canada, the UK and the US (Alexis & Shillingford, 2012; Nichols & Campbell, 2010; Okougha & Tilki, 2010; Smith, Fisher & Mercer, 2011; Wheeler, Foster & Hepburn, 2013), these studies have not focused specifically on Filipino nurses or their work or migrant experiences. Jenkins and Huntington (2016) have found very limited information specifically on Filipino nurses' experiences in New Zealand: "none of the local research is specific to IQNs from the Philippines" (p. 11). The only venue for gaining some glimpse into the experiences and stories of Filipino nurses in New Zealand is through the Kai Tiaki Journal of Nurses, which features articles about New Zealand nurses. A survey of the literature has produced very limited studies on the working and living experiences of Filipino nurses overseas. This area requires further research.

Two separate studies on Filipino nurses' working experiences in Singapore (Amrith, 2010; Choi & Lyons, 2012) were the only ones found so far. Both reported the deskilling and marginalization of the nurses working there, as well as the wage discrimination the women faced. Amrith (2010) and Choi and Lyons (2012) claimed that many Filipino nurses were employed at a lower grade than their Singaporean counterparts and started as

entry-level nurses, despite having many years of work experience in the Philippines and being more highly qualified than the locally-trained nurses. Apparently, in Singapore, nursing is categorized a semi-professional occupation. To compound matters, there is also a huge domestic work force in Singapore, with Filipinas comprising 80%-90% of that sector (Choi & Lyons, 2012). This dominance of Filipinas in that sector has made the word 'maid' associated with all Filipinos to Singaporeans. The Filipino nurses, thus, feel a sense of shame and humiliation and distance themselves from their compatriots. Consequently, Filipina migrant professionals have been included in the ethno-racial stereotyping.

Today, Filipina labor migrants continue to outnumber their male counterparts. Camroux (2008) estimated that two-thirds of Filipinos working overseas were women, while Garchitorena (2007) reported that women account for nearly 70% of overseas Filipinos. As a result, the Filipinos have become the country's most valuable export, maintaining the 'culture of migration' (Asis, 2006; Garchitorena, 2007) over the decades, with millions of Filipinos eager to work or live abroad. The recurring reason is usually economic: working overseas provides us the opportunity to earn a good living and remit money home that improves the lives of our families and sends our children to good schools. To some extent, my own migrant experience mirrored this. When I first arrived and found subsequent employment, I remitted money to my family back home. Somehow, it was the 'right' thing to do. I was being a dutiful daughter. Our sense of collectivism and responsibility to our families is a common theme in many Filipina migrants' experiences. Asis (2002), for instance, in her study of overseas Filipina migrant workers, reported that most women considered migration not so much for personal ends but for the family's well-being; helping the family was "the natural thing to do" (p. 77). She also found that regardless of marital status, unmarried women were as devoted in providing financial support to their families. In addition, for many middle class Filipinos, the other main push factor was dissatisfaction with the political graft and corruption, and the economic instability of the country (Barber, 2008). It was for these very same reasons that I left.

Another contributing factor to the 'culture of migration' is the collective belief that it also raises an individual's – and consequently, the family's - social standing. Kelly and Lusi (2006) claim that "the assets that mark status in the Philippine setting have become distinctively associated with, and dependent upon, 'going abroad'" (p. 841). Migration through the years has become a way of life for Filipinos, and the expectation is that one will leave for overseas to work and, for many, reside permanently abroad. The choice is not about leaving or remaining in the country, but rather, where to go (Sills & Chowthi, 2008). Leaving signifies an improved life overall and better employment and career opportunities.

Despite the huge waves of women leaving the Philippines, however, the labor market for them remains very narrow and limited because the global economy is highly gendered and based on an international division of labor (Liebelt, 2008), with millions of jobs focused in the health care and domestic services sectors (Novek,

2013). Calavita (2006) reported that Filipinas were over-represented in domestic work, caregiving, elderly and childcare. In studies on the feminization of migration, no other group of immigrant and migrant women has attracted more attention than Filipinas (Bonifacio, 2009), and the two groups that have received the most scrutiny are the mail order brides and domestic workers (Tondo, 2012). However, more recent studies have begun focusing on Filipinas as caregivers (Amirth, 2010; Ayalon, Kaniel, & Rosenberg, 2008; Novek, 2013) and entertainers (Faier, 2007; Parreñas, 2010; Ryogo, 2009; Yea, 2005). These still provide a negative image for the Filipina.

There is a bias permeating the literature with this singular focus on these groups which further reinforces the stereotypes of the Filipina as ‘maid’, ‘caregiver’, ‘entertainer’, or ‘mail order bride’. A fact that is often overshadowed in the studies on the lived experiences of the mail order brides and domestic helpers is that the women are, for the most part, professionally skilled and even more highly educated than their husbands and employers (Tondo, 2012). The gendered stereotype of a ‘mail order bride’, for instance, is “subsumed as a Filipino racial and ethnic identity marker” (Tondo, 2012, p. 220) and thus encompasses the identity of all Filipinas. Studies that persist in focusing on these categorizations therefore continue to fortify ethno-racial stereotyping. I explore these two predominant stereotypes held of Filipinas – the mail order bride and the domestic worker - and what the literature reports.

The Filipina as mail order bride

The global phenomenon of the mail order bride concept emerged in the 1970s after the Women’s Movement in the US gained momentum and Western men began to look overseas for wives who were ‘old-fashioned’ and traditional in their values (Chun, 1996); it also coincided with the general patterns of feminized overseas migration happening around the same time (Angeles, 2007). Over the years, this search for ‘old-fashioned’ and ‘traditional’ created a stereotype image of women, usually from Asia, who are submissive, conservative, and less demanding. A common misrepresentation of the mail order bride is a woman from a poor country who requires rescue by a Western male (Saroca, 2006). This image persists to this day and raises the issue of the intersectionality between the cultural migration, on the whole, of Asian women, and the notion of heteronormativity: only women from the East can satisfy and fulfill the needs of Western men. The West is the superior race while the Eastern woman is lower on the social hierarchy. When the Philippines began its exportation of women for labor and marketed the Filipina as a commodity, it paved the way for mail-order bride agencies to attract our women with promises of a better life if they married foreign men. Hence, mail-order bride agencies commodified femininity and one crucial factor that facilitated this, at least in the Philippines, was our colonial mentality.

Filipinos have a deeply ingrained colonial mentality. The country's colonization by both Spain and the US projected a racial and cultural superiority that instilled a sense of inferiority in the national psyche (Tondo, 2012). However, despite 300 years of Spanish rule, the American influence that had a more lasting effect. Forty-eight years of American colonization instilled a fascination for everything American: products, education, movies, and fashion, to name a few (del Rosario, 2005). American colonization, thus, in contrast to Spanish colonialism, "was less about imposition than it was about seduction" (del Rosario, 2005, p. 260). Through a campaign of providing public Westernized education, the American colonial effort successfully brainwashed the populace into adapting and loving the American way of life. Consequently, it became the ultimate dream to immigrate to America, considered by Filipinos as the land of milk and honey. One of the fastest ways to realize this dream was by marriage to an American. It was also the fastest way to gain employment overseas and remit money home to the family. Americans and American culture were superior; in fact, any association with Western culture was – and is – desirable. In recent years, aside from the US, Australia became another favored destination for Filipina marriage migrations in 2003 (Saroca, 2006). In New Zealand, Filipino migration records showed that the first general wave (Tondo, 2012), namely between 1970 to the mid-1980s, was composed mainly of brides ('mail order brides').

Lauser (2008), in her study on Philippine women marrying cross-culturally, outlined three major factors that influenced a Filipina to look for a foreign partner. They were, namely: they were less marriageable due to their age; they were single unwed mothers and because of their previous 'romantic' affairs, they were less marriageable and less respectable; and it served as a vision of remarriage for separated mothers and middle-aged widows.

Firstly, in the Philippines, unmarried women – particularly when they reach a certain age (beyond 25-30 years) (del Rosario, 2005) – become less desirable on the marriage market. In addition, women who prioritize their career over starting a family become intimidating to men and therefore are less desirable. However, starting a family, having children, and being married are highly valued in Philippine culture, particularly for women. Marriage migration, therefore, becomes a way to reconcile the ideals of becoming a wife and having children.

A second factor contributing for many Filipinas seeking foreign husbands or romantic partners is the sexual double standard deeply embedded in the culture (Lauser, 2008). Filipino men may have as many sexual encounters and partners as they wish, and even after marriage can have a mistress or two. This is 'macho' and is highly regarded by other men. Of course, the proviso is that they can financially provide for their first family as well as any other families they have. It is common, therefore, for some Filipino husbands to have another family – or two – while maintaining the 'official' family. The women are prohibited such sexual freedom. In fact, a woman must save her virginity for marriage or be regarded as 'soiled' if she has sexual relations out of wedlock. To compound matters, both the government and the Catholic Church prohibit divorce (Lauser, 2008).

Marriage annulment is a very difficult and costly process and most people cannot afford it. Hence, couples separate informally and enter into other conjugal relationships, although on paper they are officially married to someone else.

The double standards, however, still permeate these common-law, conjugal relationships. Women who have had multiple romantic or sexual partners are not highly regarded by the society. In order, thus, to escape bad marriages or relationships, and the censure of the community, quite a number of women leave for overseas, seeking foreign partners who will not judge how many sexual partners they may have had previously. Furthermore, the cultural double standards place these women at a disadvantage if their marriages or relationships fail. With no man to look after or protect them, they are fair game to other men. Single mothers or widows suffer the same fate. Hence, looking overseas to find a foreign marriage partner is an avenue for such an 'escape.' Marrying foreign spouses is a form of protection from the 'social harassment' (del Rosario, 2005) single women, widows, mistresses, and separated women are subject to: innuendos and speculation about their status are a constant source of stress and pressure. It also allows them the opportunity to start anew.

Saroca (2006) also added another reason why Filipinas marry foreign men. She reported that in many cases, "marriage and migration are not simply ways out of hardship...they love their husbands or fiancées and hope to establish families in a caring relationship" (p. 89). This fact, buried under the stereotype of mail order bride as a scheming gold-digger who merely sought a ticket out of the country, was never mentioned in the literature. Like most women, the Filipina seeks love and a lasting relationship.

In Australia, the media created a negative perception of all Filipinas as mail order brides, regardless of how they migrated there (Saroca, 2006). They were portrayed as 'gold diggers' and women who used Australian men as passports to gain access to a better life. As a result, even the Filipinas who migrated to Australia independently and subsequently married Australian men, were categorized as such. This makes me wonder about a friend who migrated to Australia many years ago and met her Australian husband there. Did the community consider her as a mail order bride? She studied and practiced to be an architect, by the way.

Another little known fact is that the women who become mail order brides are actually professionals and educated (del Rosario, 2005; Saroca, 2006; Tondo, 2012). Del Rosario's (2005) study on Filipinas married to American men found that all the participants were professionals with long-term careers before they married; they were well-educated and came from middle-class backgrounds. Furthermore, the women had their own bank accounts and cell phones, material and social assets not readily available to the stereotype of a 'desperate, poor, Third World woman.' Doar's study (2011) of Filipina migrants married to or in de-facto relationships with New Zealand men also found all of the participants, except one, were tertiary educated. Recent studies on Filipina marriage migrants all revealed the women as university educated, and having held various skilled occupations, for instance teachers, midwives, office employees, accountants, and librarians (Bonifacio, 2009;

Lauser, 2008; Saroca, 2006). These confirmed Lauser's (2008) findings on the reasons why Filipinas seek a foreign partner. Unfortunately, the media representations of our women who marry foreign men portray them as marrying out of economic desperation.

In New Zealand, records on Filipino women migration showed two general waves (Tondo, 2012), namely between 1970 to the mid-1980s, composed mainly of brides ('mail order brides'), and after the 1987 Immigration Reform Act, composed mainly of skilled professionals. In the first wave, until the 1990s, young Filipina migrants to New Zealand were composed mainly of 'mail order brides' (Aguirre, 2014). Like Australia, New Zealand media portrayed the Filipinas as women who married strangers out of economic desperation (Tondo, 2012). However, the study also revealed that the brides were actually better educated than their Kiwi husbands. Unfortunately, the public perception of a mail order bride persists and among their own compatriots, mail order brides can experience marginalization and isolation. Two of the women in this study, for instance, narrated how they avoided interactions with them. However, this has more to do with social class standing which will be explained at length in the analysis section.

The Filipina as domestic worker

Filipina domestic helpers can be found predominantly in Hong Kong, Singapore, and Taiwan; the Middle East, Israel; Western Europe, notably Italy, France, Spain; and Canada. Rome has the largest Filipino community in Europe (Magat, 2007), with domestic helpers working there since the 1960s. These studies reported that many of the women experienced a downward social mobility because many were university educated. In Italy, it is considered a status symbol to have a Filipino maid, the reason being that most are educated and can speak English. Thus, in addition to their domestic duties, they double up as a sort of governess, teaching English to their children's employees (Magat, 2007). Due, however, to their position and role as 'maid' and the stereotyped notions associated with them, the women continue to be marginalized by the community.

In the Asian and Middle Eastern countries, however, the marginalization, discrimination, and maltreatment are more pronounced and blatant. Aguirre (2014), Sills and Chowthi (2008), Law (2001), and Liebelt (2008) conducted studies on Filipina domestic workers who report the recurring theme of abuse. Aguirre's (2014) research confirmed Filipinas were exposed to physical, verbal, emotional and psychological abuse since they were considered a lesser race, while Sills and Chowthi (2008) reported that the conditions under which Filipinas migrate were dehumanizing. Law's research (2001) confirmed that the maltreatment of domestic workers ranged from being provided insufficient food, inadequate living conditions, sleeping on the kitchen floor, to their passports being taken away from them upon arrival. In Israel, Liebelt (2008) claimed that the plight of the domestic helper was similar to their counterparts in other Middle Eastern countries like Kuwait or Saudi Arabia:

their salaries were either unpaid or delayed, they were raped, or they encountered sexual harassment, to name a few.

The singular focus on the image of the Filipina as a 'maid' conveniently overshadowed the fact that the majority of these domestic helpers were better educated than their employers. Philippine and overseas media have consistently portrayed the Filipina migrant as poverty ridden, unemployed, uneducated, and desperate (Saroca, 2006; Tondo, 2012). This image places them low on the social hierarchy and exposes them to abuse and exploitation. Being 'poor' and 'uneducated' also suggests the women are ignorant of their rights as women and as employees. Being 'desperate' suggests they are willing to undergo any treatment because their desperation entails a need to have employment and they would be grateful for *any* job. The label of 'maid' in itself is synonymous with a low-status feminized type of labor and commands no respect. As a result of this, "Filipinos are bestowed identities that have largely been defined not by their inherited culture and history but by their occupation and, in many cases, lower status as a group of people in receiving countries" (Aguirre, 2014, p. 7). For those receiving countries, mainly patriarchal, where women have a lower social status, it makes it doubly difficult for Filipinas to receive fair treatment. Considered a lesser race, Filipina domestic helpers become vulnerable to exploitation and abuse (Aguirre, 2014). Furthermore, in many countries, national labor laws do not extend to domestic work because the home is not judged a workplace (Sills & Chowthi, 2008).

The abhorrent treatment of domestic workers, particularly in the Middle Eastern countries, are attributed to the *kafala* system (Bacon, 2016; Begum, 2014; Hilleary, 2012), which is a visa sponsorship system that applies to all foreign workers. A foreign worker must have a 'sponsor' (i.e., employer, recruitment agency, or middleman who offered the job) who arranges the visa. In many cases, particularly for domestic workers, employees can confiscate their passports. This is often the case for Filipina domestic workers. This effectively prevents the women from changing jobs or leaving the country without the employer's permission. The system has been widely criticized by human rights organizations as it has created opportunities for the exploitation and abuse of workers. It also provides very little in terms of legal repercussions (Hilleary, 2012). Female domestic workers from overseas, particularly, have the least protection under such a system. Reports from human rights groups are rife about the abuses and murders committed by Middle Eastern employers on their domestic helpers.

Still, it begs the question that if they are educated, why do the women tolerate such treatment? Barber (2008), in her study of how Filipinos immigrated to Canada, proposed that:

There is a pattern of migrant self-awareness about the need to downplay their skills, sexualities and class identities: 'performed subordination' was apparent in migrants' self-representation as properly demure, subordinate, maids, capable of contributing English education to employer's children but not so educated and worldly that it might be difficult for the employers concerned to tightly control their live-in 'maids.' (p. 1274)

This may well be the case for Filipina domestic workers worldwide. Magat (2007) also proposed that our cultural background of colonialism, particularly the religious values instilled by the Catholic Church has had a huge influence on the Filipinos' predisposition for dominance and subservience: "Philippine religious values are fused with 'patience, suffering, and endurance'" (p. 611). Most Filipinos are very religious and these values surface when facing adversities. In her study on Filipina domestic workers' experiences in Italy, Magat (2007) found that the regular abuse and humiliations that the women experienced were accepted without complaint and were rationalized as being part of their job. The underlying belief was that all the suffering would eventually be rewarded. Seen through this lens, it makes it understandable – but no less acceptable – why Filipina domestic workers worldwide remain subservient.

However, studies consistently revealed that the majority of Filipina labor migrants were not from the working class at all; Philippine labor migration is, in fact, selective for the educated and middle-class (Tondo, 2012). For instance, Sills and Chowthi (2008) discovered that the young Filipina women they interviewed in Taiwanese factories were skilled and highly educated, but forced to accept low-status positions with inadequate pay and few benefits. Liebelt (2008), in his study of Filipina domestic workers in Israel, also found that they were not from the working class: many came from middle-class backgrounds yet experienced a downward social mobility when they engaged in low wage labor as workers. A Canadian study on Filipino health care aides (Novek, 2013) also revealed that the respondents were college educated, but that financial need and limited job opportunities in Canada forced them to work in these lower-waged roles. Caritas Internationalis (n.d.) confirmed that the huge flow of female workers towards domestic service concealed the reality that a significant number of the women were, in fact, professionals. In many cases, the migration of women is unrelated to career advancement and skill acquisition: many Filipinas with college degrees work in domestic service, caregiving, or the entertainment industry (Kawar, 2004). Why then do they assume such roles? Simply because jobs overseas, no matter how menial, earn them more than if they remained in their own country. Hence, many university graduates leave and work in low-status jobs (Chun, 1996).

These studies on mail order brides and domestic workers stress that the women are far from being uneducated, or poor. The most common denominators are to seek better employment opportunities, a better life, higher pay in comparison to what they would earn at home, and to escape the restrictive cultural gender norms. However, due to the years of labor exportation, the stereotypes have taken root in the minds of the host nations. These remain difficult to shift or change due, also, to the over-representation of Filipinas in these groups. Choi and Lyons (2012) stated that the high visibility of Filipinos, particularly in the domestic work sector in countries like Singapore, Hong Kong, or the Middle East, has caused the term 'maid' to be associated with Filipinas in the minds of the locals.

Filipino migration to New Zealand

New Zealand is a recent popular destination (Statistics New Zealand, 2007) for Filipinos. In fact, compared to Chinese and Indian groups, Filipinos are relatively new arrivals to the country (Tondo, 2012). This may be partly due to the Immigration Reform Act of 1987, when a policy change allowed skilled migrants entry to the country, regardless of race (Tondo, 2012). Hence, new immigrants were selected based on their skills, qualifications, and assets (Lidgard, 1996), resulting in a significant number of people from different Asian countries entering, including Filipinos. Today, Filipinos are the third largest Asian group (Statistics New Zealand, 2013), with its population tripling in size since 2001 and currently estimated at 40,350.

The second huge wave of Filipinos arriving in New Zealand after the 1987 Immigration Reform Act was composed mainly of skilled professionals, with the largest in-flow occurring from 2006-2013 (Friesen, 2015). By the end of June 2007, Statistics New Zealand (2007) showed that the Philippines was the second largest contributor to net permanent and long-term (PTL) migration to the country. Furthermore, compared to the other Asian groups, the Philippines was the only country with a significant increase in 2006, namely 144% (Friesen, 2015). This meant a rise of roughly 3000-4000 Filipino immigrants per year; the sharp increase was partly due to the new 'work to residence' scheme of the immigration policy (Friesen, 2015). Filipino professionals and their families arrived for work and residency and contributed to the increase in the Filipino diaspora in many cities and towns across the country (Tondo, 2012); most settled in Auckland. The influx of Filipino migrants also changed the gender composition. Whereas the diaspora, pre-1987, was composed mainly of brides, more men comprised the group post-1987. These migrants were mostly skilled technicians in the fields of engineering, information technology, and computer programming (Tondo, 2012).

New Zealand does not hire reproductive labor like the other countries hence there are no Filipina domestic workers, although due to the high demand for feminine-oriented professions in recent years, like nursing, caregiving, and accountancy (Statistics New Zealand, 2007; Tondo, 2012), Filipina migrants again outnumbered their male compatriots. Despite this, the skilled migrant category allowed many Filipina skilled professionals to be employed in fields other than nursing, for instance, accountants, information technologists, academics, and businesswomen. Aguirre's (2014) study confirmed this. In fact, Statistics New Zealand (2007) reported that female permanent long-term arrivals from the Philippines belonged to the business professionals group.

In addition, Badkar et al.'s study (2007) found that 33% of the employed Filipinas aged 25 or older in 2006 were professionals. The authors claimed that this was higher than the overall 26% of employed women in this age group in the country's professional occupations. They also reported that the Filipina-dominated inflow of migrants did not have secondary applicants; in short, the migrants arrived independent of partners and/or children. These statistics and data confirmed that the new Filipina migrants to New Zealand have a high level of education and were generally not in the country to undertake low-skilled domestic work (Badkar et al., 2007).

Furthermore, New Zealand's immigration policy for residency, with its focus on highly skilled immigrants, allows for very limited entry of lower skilled migrants.

Chapter 2

Methodology

This research aims to create a space for Filipina professional migrants' stories. There has been an imbalance in the general narratives generated about us. The focus until now has been on our women's experiences as mail order brides, domestic workers, or caregivers, which racially stereotypes us. I want to change the narrative from being negative to one of success and triumph. I wish to provide diversity to a narrative that has been largely homogenous thus far. It is not my intention to downplay or discredit our other compatriots' experiences, the Filipinas who have made personal sacrifices for their families. Indeed, their endeavors are heroic. However, the narratives in this study celebrate the stoicism and challenges overcome by other Filipinas who chose to migrate despite relatively comfortable lifestyles back in the Philippines. Their stories provide insights into the shared understandings and diversities of skilled Filipina professionals who have made New Zealand their home. This chapter discusses the rationale for the method and the principles underlying the research process.

Rationale

The choice of a research topic is usually due to societal and personal reasons. This was certainly the case for me. Four particular factors influenced my choice of topic, the method, and the approach for analyzing the data. The first factor relates to my own experience of being a Filipina migrant. My personal interest in the migrant experiences of other Filipinas to the country, particularly the skilled professionals, is because of the fact that I am one myself. When I left the Philippines 15 years ago, I had no real notion of what the Filipina image was overseas, never having left the country for an extended period. I only knew that many people were leaving as domestic helpers or working as entertainers in Japan. I did not realize the extent of the seriousness of the stereotyping. However, one incident which emphasized this for me was some years ago when, after a lecture I delivered at Massey University, a number of students came up to me at the end and asked further questions. One of them asked me where I was from and when I told her I was from the Philippines, she said, "Oh, we had a maid from the Philippines." The response caught me off guard and I realized, sadly, this has become the image for the Filipina over the past decades: domestic helper or mail order bride. When all Filipinas are seen or categorized as only such, it becomes a problem because our identity as a race has become associated with low status occupations; the rest of the world does not realize or seems to be aware we are so much more than these stereotypes. This negative perception also lumps all of us as though we were a homogenous group, which obviously we are not. There is diversity always within any racial or ethnic group, whether it is values, behavior or personal experiences like migration.

That incident was the catalyst for this research. I wanted to create a space for the stories of skilled Filipina professionals because there are as many of us living and working as migrants in the society and around the world. Our voices have remained unheard or silent. Barber (2008) confirmed, for instance, that:

The most overlooked and least researched category of immigrants to Canada enter under the skilled worker stream: these workers, drawn from the Philippine middle class, are deemed eligible to enter Canada because of their ranking under a points system which scores levels of education and employment experience (p. 1280)

The same situation exists in New Zealand. Our stories, I believe, can add diversity to the commonly held assumption that locate us socially as either maids or mail brides, assumptions that result in our women not being taken seriously nor respected by society. Hence, my position as an insider – as a migrant Filipina professional – provided a valuable opportunity to approach the women who participated in this study and ask them to share their own stories. Sharing the same cultural background and speaking the same native language, aside from English, facilitated the process.

The second factor for this research concerns the Filipinas themselves. Their stories are valuable because they are the experts on migration, some having lived here many years. The development of feminist research in psychology has provided an opportunity for more studies to focus on women: their lives, their experiences, and the challenges they face as women. This resulted in a plethora of studies on women's migration around the world (Anbesse, Hanlon, Alem, Packer & Whitley, 2009; Bonifacio, 2009; Fassaert, De Wit, Tuinebreijer, Knipscheer, Verhoeff, Beekman & Dekker, 2011; Im & Yang, 2006; O'Mahony & Donnelly, 2010; Torkington, 1995;). Studies on Filipino women abound as well (Abe-Kim, Gong & Takeuchi, 2004; Aguirre, 2014; Asis, Huang, & Yeoh, 2004; Barber, 2000; Barber, 20008; Doar, 2011; Fresnoza-Flot, 2009; Kuo & Tsai, 1986; Lindio-McGovern, 2003; Mossakowski, 2003). During the course of my studies in psychology, I discovered that although there are substantial studies on Filipina migrants and overseas workers, these have tended to focus on certain groups, which I have already identified earlier. However, even narratives of their own experiences are minimal. For instance, Camroux (2008) reported that the thousands of domestic workers in the Middle East are invisible as well in the literature in terms of "their narratives of their lived experience" (p. 14). Most studies about them are descriptive and interpreted by outsiders. Filipina skilled professionals' voices, in particular, are missing from the literature both locally and internationally. This research contributes to that women's knowledge agenda and fills the gap. It is conceivable that their experiences are different from other Filipinas who migrate for temporary overseas work or those who migrate for marriage purposes (mail order brides). Certainly, they will not be representative of all Filipina skilled professionals but there is much to learn from their stories, which are worthy of attention.

In addition, New Zealand society's growing cultural diversity requires examination of its various ethnic groups, thereby making this the third factor influencing this research. Filipinos, despite being the third largest Asian group, are still a silent minority. My research seeks to understand the social and cultural experiences of Filipina migrants as they negotiate their lives in the New Zealand context. I wanted to understand how the women integrated into the society and treated by their host country that is now their home. The few studies on Filipinas in New Zealand focused on the mail order brides who arrived here (Doar, 2011; Lawton & Callister, 2011; Tondo, 2012); they already have their space and their experiences are valid, too. However, my study seeks to add diversity to the narrative.

Finally, the nature of my topic required approaches compatible with research on women and Filipinos. Since the focal point of my research is on women and their narratives, it is appropriate that feminist research principles guide this investigation. Feminist research produces "a study not just *of* women, but also *for* women" (Riger, 1992, p. 736), considering where women are located in the world and their perspective of that world as the starting point. It allows for the consideration of an alternative perspective that is the participants' experiences (Paliadelis & Cruikshank, 2008). The availability of an indigenous psychology, *Sikolohiyang Pilipino*, is also invaluable in ensuring that the participants are treated with respect and in a culturally acceptable manner throughout the research process; it provides a Filipino perspective to understanding Filipino thought and experience. Aside from sharing a few basic principles, I have found these two approaches to complement each other.

Collectively, the four factors, namely my personal experience of being a migrant, the desire to create a space for other Filipina migrants' stories, to contribute to the larger narrative of New Zealand's growing multi-cultural society, and this study's focus on women helped me realize the importance of conducting this research. New voices amongst Filipina migrants need to surface. Conducting this research as an insider, I can locate myself in the group while it enables me to examine my own experience and sense of self in the process. In listening to the stories of Filipina women migrants, a narrative method is appropriate since it is the participants' viewpoints on their experiences that are the focal point (Parker, 2005), and this is guided by the principles of feminist research and *Sikolohiyang Pilipino*.

Narrative Research

An appropriate way to start my discussion of the narrative method that is central to this project is to consider what I mean by narrative. A narrative, simply defined, is a story or account of events or experiences. Myths, legends, fables, stories, fairy tales, epics, to name a few, have all been a significant part of humankind's existence and are present in every culture. They comprise a very important part of a people's identity, reflecting the cultural values of a group and fostering a sense of belonging. Through storytelling, groups and individuals

construct their identities. They can also mobilize people into social action. My study, for instance, focuses on professional Filipina migrants' experiences in New Zealand. In their stories and through their sharing, both the women and I construct our own identities as Filipinas living in a new country. Our cultural values integrate and weave through the narratives, reminding us of our cultural heritage while we navigate our new lives in our new home. The sharing unites us as an ethnic group and reminds us of our identities as Filipinos, while alerting us to our membership in the new home. In the sharing of our stories, we learn how to improve and change not only ourselves but also help us realize how we may contribute our knowledge and distinct experiences to the wider community. We fuse the best of the Filipino and Kiwi cultural values.

Narratives are important not only to groups but to individuals as well. For individuals, narratives serve a different purpose: they are a means by which we can share experiences with others and ascribe meaning to the world around us (Riessman, 2008). A significant feature of narratives is that they help us to remember events from the past. All stories are historical and occur within their particular contexts. 'Re-creating' the past allows narrators to understand themselves and their lives, and how these historic experiences influence the present, as well as their future (Gergen, 1988; Sarbin, 1986). Each one of the women in this study shared her migration experience openly and candidly. The dialogue allowed for a better understanding of their experiences in retrospect because many questions and answers exchanged between us. For those who have lived here many years, the opportunity to reflect on their early years made them eager to share what it was like for them. I could sense that each woman, by the end of the interview, gained a better understanding of herself and how she changed as a person. The sharing allowed a self-reflection that perhaps none indulged in more closely until this point. It also allowed us all to look forward to many more years of living here and making a difference in our community.

For Polkinghorne (1988), who equates 'narrative' with 'story', narrative helps people render human experience meaningful. Following a similar train of thought, Sarbin (1986) defines a story as a "symbolized account of actions of human beings that has a temporal dimension" (p. 3). All stories have a beginning, middle, and end and these are held together by patterns of events called plots. We organize our experiences into temporally meaningful events by narrating them in a manner that unites the events or episodes into unfolding themes. Thus, by choosing what to tell and linking the various bits of experiences, we structure the flow of these experiences into themes that help us understand our lives (Wertz, Charmaz, McMullen, Josselson, Anderson, & McSpadden, 2011). The stories reflect what is happening in our internal world as well as facets of the social world that surrounds us (Wertz et al., 2011). Every one of the stories reflected what each woman thought and felt as she recounted her experience. Through their sharing, it was evident how they each understood how the wider society affected them as women and migrants.

Although narratives are often synonymous with stories, there is more happening than simply recounting a story. Narration also encompasses the context and purpose for telling particular experiences. In other words, narrative inquiry allows us to pay attention to the context (both relational and social) in which the narrative is constructed (Wertz et al., 2011). These constructions are not merely products of cultural histories; rather, they are the products of dynamic social relationships within which the narrator is embedded (Gergen, 1988). Furthermore, narratives show how the narrator positions herself in relation to others around her. These social encounters, what Riessman (2001) labels as ‘personal troubles’, are represented in the stories and reveal the social and historical processes impinging on them at that moment in time and place. These ‘personal troubles’ also encompass what is happening in the societies they live in at that moment. For researchers, therefore, the data gathered from narratives should not be construed as truths about the person’s life (Gergen, 1988). Rather, they are what seem appropriate and significant from the narrator’s viewpoint *in the moment*. Hence, narratives “privilege positionality and subjectivity” (Riessman, 2001, p. 696). As I listened to each narration, I was made aware that every woman shared what she thought was significant about her experience. This ‘choice’ of what to recount was what made each story distinct and unique and provided the diversity to the migration story. The ‘positionality and subjectivity’ Riessman (2001) speaks of lend themselves well to the concept of diversity of experience. In other words, despite sharing a national culture and the experience of migration to a shared country (New Zealand), each woman’s story is valid and appropriate to herself, making each one stand out as an individual.

Narratives are also context-sensitive, both when shared with others and in the meaning they ascribe to events (Polkinghorne, 1988). Riessman (2008) emphasizes that all narratives are co-constructed because it is a relational activity. Listeners are needed for the stories to be shared and to empathize with the storyteller (Riessman, 2001). The relational activity of sharing and listening transforms it into a collaborative process where tellers and listeners interact within a particular “cultural milieu – historical contexts essential to interpretation” (Riessman, 2001, p. 698). These ideas are compatible with the emphasis feminist and indigenous scholars place on reflexivity in qualitative research and analysis. The interviews were more in the nature of dialogues or conversations between women from the same racial and cultural background, sharing their thoughts and feelings on life in New Zealand. Through the sharing, all parties learned from one another – not only about the other’s life but about each other as individuals, and about us as an ethnic group. This is true collaboration, I believe, because the sharing enabled us to understand what it meant to be a Filipina migrant living in New Zealand. Below, I consider feminist principles that inform my research before outlining key aspects of an indigenous Filipino Psychology that has also shaped my approach.

Feminist Research Principles

Harding (1987) claimed there is no one distinctive feminist method; the literature attests to this as feminist researchers still debate the meaning and focus of feminism (Berger, 2004), which is considered more of a social movement that varies depending on the context in which it is situated. In other words, feminists are not a homogenous group because “the fact that there are multiple definitions of feminism means that there are multiple feminist perspectives” (Reinharz, 1992, p. 241). Hence, feminists use a range of research methods and multiple tools in understanding the world. There is, though, a high degree of consensus in the epistemological principles in feminist methodology, which are centered on: privileging women’s experiences, contextuality, minimizing the power between researcher and participant, and reflexivity (Gray, Agllias, Boddy, & Schubert, 2015). Gergen (1988) specifically proposed five principles for a feminist method of research that encompass values from three epistemological positions of psychological research on women, namely, feminist empiricism, feminist standpoint epistemologies, and feminist postmodernism. These principles guide the researcher in the conduct of her study, interviews, collection and analysis of information. The principles also complement narrative research. Gergen’s five guiding principles are: (1) an awareness of the interdependence between researcher and participants; (2) the avoidance of participants’ or researcher’s decontextualization from the social and historical environment; (3) an awareness and sharing of the nature of values in the research context; (4) the establishment of an egalitarian relationship between researchers, participants, and subsequent users of research and; (5) an awareness of the important role language plays in the discourse of women’s experiences.

Firstly, the privileging of women’s experiences draws heavily from feminist standpoint epistemologies which place women and their experiences centrally to the investigation (Riger, 1992), thereby valuing them, as well as their needs and ideas. It begins with the researching of women by women in a way that provides them a voice and space, and asks “whose experiences are represented and validated with research?” (Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor, & Tindall, 1994, p.124). This emphasis also empowers women because in hegemonic research, women’s voices are rarely heard. Theoretical frameworks, research questions, and methodologies were traditionally constructed from a male-centered perspective (Berger, 2004). By giving voice to women’s perspectives, according to Riger (1992), we can identify what they need and want, and work towards social change for their benefit. The women hold a better understanding of a particular experience and from whom we can glean some understanding of the phenomenon (Parker, 2005) because the participant is the expert of her own experience and no one else.

In this regard, it is important to note that it is through ordinary language that the meaning of women’s experiences is expressed, and this meaning is “best captured through the qualitative nuances of its expression” (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 10). Riger (1992) further emphasizes that language does not necessarily reflect the experience objectively since linguistic categories are not neutral: there are multiple versions of reality or

multiple discourses. This leads to the fact that the women's narratives are neither universal nor reducible. Women and their stories are diverse. There is no one 'woman' or 'woman's experience' (Harding, 1987). We, thus, cannot assume a commonality to all women's experiences or we risk missing the differences among women of different racial and ethnic groups, as well as of social classes (Riger, 1992) and thereby do them a disservice. Even within racial and ethnic groups, and social classes, the differences persist. The significance of these differences contributed to the development of intersectionality theory.

Intersectionality considers "the meaning and consequences of multiple categories of social group membership" (Cole, 2009, p. 170). In other words, women's experiences are not only the result of their being women and categorized as such, but they also belong to the categories of race and social class. Filipino women migrants' identities, for instance, intersect at the categories of race, gender, and class. They hold multiple social statuses that may be experienced simultaneously (Cole, 2009). How do these social categories differentiate them from each other, and from the wider society? In what way do they share similar experiences? How do their migrant experiences differ despite having come from the same cultural background? Intersectionality allows for a closer examination of the similarities and differences.

Secondly, the epistemological principle of contextuality seeks to understand the women's experiences. This means it is essential that women are viewed within the context of their socio-political and historical environments. Gergen (1988) claims that all knowledge is culturally embedded; women do not exist in a vacuum, separate from their social, historical, economic, and political environments. Knowledge is socially constructed within certain contexts and it must be grounded within the specific context in which such knowledge is generated. Additionally, both researcher and participant will bring their own set of values, experiences, beliefs and expectations to the interview and interaction. These cannot be isolated from the investigation and will be a part of the social encounter. Since every narrative is unique, diverse perspectives are shared (Wilkinson, 2001). In this study, it is the Filipina women's stories that comprise the main data. Their coping strategies and backgrounds are the influential factors to their respective adjustments.

A potential problem to this principle resides with the stories themselves. Similar patterns in experiences may emerge but this does not mean the meanings are the same for all women. Hence, there must be caution in "assuming a commonality to all women's experiences" (Riger, 1992, p. 734). Amidst the commonalities of the Filipina migrants, I must be more conscious of the diversity among the women. There may be similarities in our experiences as migrants, but there will also be differences due to the historical, socioeconomic contexts in which we are oriented as individuals.

Closely linked to this is the principle that recognizes the values each party brings to the research context. Values, like the social and historical factors that shape an individual, are an integral and inherent part of the person as they guide and influence thinking and behaviors. It is particularly essential for researchers to

remember that values play a significant role when researcher and participants interact. Like post-positivism, “there is no one objective reality” and the researcher must “understand how the values of both the researcher and the participants determine perceptions of the social world” (Campbell & Wasco, 2000, p. 780). Paludi (1992) emphasizes the “psychological research process is not value free” (p. 29). Thus, in the context of this study, the set of values of each woman influences her reaction and ability to cope with her new life. These values must be respected, more especially if they differ from mine. Even members of the same culture will have differing values. It is important that I maintain an open mind and avoid experimenter bias (Campbell & Wasco, 2000). The awareness of my own value system is important as it can influence my analysis of the data. Furthermore, Riger (1992) stresses that individuals have multiple versions of reality. In the analysis of the data, the researcher must consider whose values and realities are driving interpretations – the researcher or the participant? Whose meaning prevails? Are the interests of the participants served in providing meaning to the experience? This implies a risk of interpreting the data from the researcher’s perspective, rather than the participants.

Another principle guiding feminist research is minimizing the power between researcher and participant; in short, this values establishing an egalitarian relationship between the researcher and the participants, including the subsequent users of the information. Hegemonic research has an imbalance of power between the researcher and the participants, and feminist research actively and consciously seeks to address this power inequality (Gray, Agllias, Boddy, & Schubert, 2015; Riger, 1992) by making central the participants’ experiences and privileging their voices.

Research guided by feminist principles allow the participants to be more deeply involved by privileging their experiences and placing them as knowers of their own experience (Berger, 2004; Gergen & Gergen, 1991), thereby making the research a collaborative effort. Establishing an egalitarian relationship respects the knowledges from different standpoints. The sharing of women’s experiences and knowledges enables women a voice and space. Hence, it is not only the researcher’s knowledge that is a valid source of ‘reality’ but feminist research encompasses that of the participants’ as another valid source. Campbell and Wasco (2000) claim “there is no ‘real’ reality, no single truth, but multiple truths that are individually constructed” (p. 780). It is thus important to maintain the different voices of interviewer and interviewees. The stories of the Filipino women migrants provide these multiple truths.

In an interview setting, Taylor, Gilligan and Sullivan (1996) raise concerns regarding who is listening, as well as who is speaking. This exchange becomes essential in the interaction as “a narrative account is produced interactively, depending not only on the questions of the interviewer and the experiences of the narrator, but also on the ‘social location’ of both” (p. 235). This implies that in the social encounter of the interview, the researcher gives up the fixed interview format in order to allow more equality – and sometimes uncertainty – in

a 'true' conversation between peers. By encouraging participants to speak and tell their stories their own way, power shifts and disparities diminish (Riessman, 2008). Researchers must learn to listen in an "emotionally attentive and engaged way" thereby allowing "new possibilities and frameworks of meaning" so that we can "enter the world of another" (Riessman, 2008, p.27). Hence, both the telling and hearing of the stories will be influenced by a myriad of factors that include "race, ethnicity, gender, class, age, sexual orientation, religious background, personal history, and character," to name a few (Taylor, Gilligan, & Sullivan, 1996, p. 235). This is what constitutes narratives being co-constructed encounters as the research becomes a collaborative effort between the researcher and the participant. All parties bring into the dialogue their values and beliefs, resulting in a synthesis of the information and knowledges shared.

This study is an extension of my life experiences. In undertaking this research, I am not an objective observer but rather I am seeking a better understanding of my own experience as a woman migrant through dialogue with other Filipinas. I am aware that together we are active and embodied in the production of knowledge because the interviews become dialogues. Both the participants and I are attempting to mutually clarify and expand our understanding of our migration experiences (Riger, 1992). This process encourages self-disclosure, a feature advocated by feminist research, on both the part of the researcher and the participant. Disclosure puts women at ease to initiate dialogue so that both parties become co-researchers (Reinharz, 1992). Being also a Filipina and a migrant greatly enhances and facilitates their willingness to share their stories.

The fourth principle, reflexivity, is a cornerstone of feminist research. Hesse-Biber (2007) defines reflexivity as the "process whereby researchers recognize, examine, and understand how their social background, location, and assumptions affect their research practice" (pp. 16-17). It allows a constant self-critical examination of the researcher's chosen methods, her role in the research process, her relationship with the participants, and her social position in the research process (Hesse-Biber & Piatelli, 2007). Doing so keeps me continuously aware of my feelings, attitudes, and expectations of the research and allows me to appreciate my own experiences and my interactions with participants (Shaw, 2010). In doing so, I can better understand my role in the research process and my own emotional reactions to the phenomenon under investigation. Reflexivity allows me to be more highly attuned to any biases and assumptions I may have, and to how these could influence the research at every stage of the study. By engaging in reflexivity, I am also able to enter into dialogue with my participants and use their "presentation of self to help revise our fore-understanding and come to make sense of the phenomenon anew" (Shaw, 2010, p. 238). Thus, reflexivity contributes to minimizing the power relationship because it encourages sharing and engaged relationships between researcher and participant.

As a whole, a feminist qualitative approach allows for better insights into each migrant woman's experience and life. Furthermore, the element of reflexivity threading throughout the whole research process allows the researcher to have a heightened awareness of the women's differences and respect the differences. The common

ethnicity also provides a bridge to establishing trust, rapport and friendship. However, despite this shared ethnicity, other factors such as social class standing or education may still cause difficulties that, in turn, may influence the interpretation and analysis of the data. Hence, reflexivity on the part of the researcher is crucial at every stage for these reasons. Keeping a journal that records my reactions, emotions, and thoughts to the stories ensures I constantly practice reflexivity throughout the research, particularly and most importantly, during the analysis process.

Sikolohiyang Pilipino

Sikolohiyang Pilipino (Filipino Psychology) was introduced by Virgilio Enriquez in the early 1970s (Pe-Pua & Protacio-Marcelino, 2000) after he returned to the Philippines from the United States. At the time, Enriquez realized that the use of Western theory and methodology in the Philippine setting until that time was inadequate and unfair to the understanding and study of Philippine psychology. It is an indigenously developed psychology that provides a Filipino perspective to understanding Filipino thought and experience. It is different from Anglo-American hegemonic principles of psychology as it is more holistic in approach: it encompasses the “study of emotions and experienced knowledge, awareness of one’s surroundings, information and understanding, habits and behavior, and the soul” (Pe-Pua & Protacio-Marcelino, 2000, p. 52). Its five guiding principles are similar to feminist research in certain ways and are even complementary to it. These principles are outlined below.

The first principle states that the *quality/level of interaction or relationship existing between the researcher and the participant determines the quality of data obtained in the research process or interview*. Filipino culture has differing levels of engagement in conversations and relationship-building. At the heart of Filipino psychology and Filipino cultural values is the concept of *kapwa* (shared identity) which has different levels (Pe-Pua & Protacio-Marcelino, 2000). In their interpersonal encounters, Filipinos value *pakikipagkapwa*, which is, treating the other person as a fellow human being (Pe-Pua & Protacio-Marcelino, 2000). At the minimum, it is crucial to establish *pakikipaglagayang loob* (mutual trust, understanding, rapport) in order for the researcher to obtain good quality data. The participant should feel comfortable and safe enough with the researcher to divulge more personal information. When rapport is established between the researcher and participant, the latter is more trusting of the former, and becomes more open and candid with her sharing of her story. As the relationship reaches higher levels, the interaction becomes better and deeper. The highest level is *pakikiisa* (being one with) and can be achieved when both parties share their experiences and empathize with each other. Being a migrant and Filipina can facilitate reaching this level with my participants.

The second principle stresses that *participants must be treated as equal to the researcher, if not superior*. This is very much similar to the feminist research principle of minimizing the power imbalance between researcher

and participant. It implies the importance of respecting the contribution of the participant, as well as considering her an equal in the research process. This approach allows participants to ask as many questions as they like, in effect, making them ‘researchers’ themselves. Consequently, participants have input in the research process itself, though they may be unaware of it. The researcher should respond with as much honesty as possible and should not avoid or ignore the questions.

The third principle *prioritizes participants’ welfare take priority over the data*. This is an important ethical consideration that is sometimes overlooked in the research process. In some cases, in the quest to understand and gather knowledge, researchers ignore the importance of the people they are ‘studying’. This principle emphasizes that “the primary ethical responsibility of researchers should be to the people and not to their institution or funding agency” (Pe-Pua & Protacio-Marcelino, 2000, p. 60). If the dissemination of the information gained will jeopardize or harm the very people from which the information was taken, then it should not be made public. It goes further by stating that if in the course of the research process, the needs of a community are revealed, it becomes the researcher’s responsibility to help if it is within her power to do so. Aside from enlightening and educating others, the research must be empowering – not only to those who read but for those from whom the information was gathered. Like feminist research, this principle empowers the participants by going beyond the research outcomes by “challenging, and where appropriate, mitigating power relations within and outside research contexts” (Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor, & Tindall, 1994, p. 124).

Another principle states that *the research method used should be appropriate to the population or participants and adapted to existing cultural norms*. This takes into consideration, the cultural norms of the participants. For instance, in order to establish *pakikipaglagayang loob*, it is necessary for the researcher and participant to gain a sense of getting to know one another first informally. Rather than plunging straight into a formal, structured interview and asking questions on topics that are not usually asked, mutual respect and trust should be established so there is a comfortable and non-threatening atmosphere created. In relation to this, the trait of *pakikiramdam* (sensitivity) is crucial in guiding the researcher in deciding what research method will work best. Furthermore, *pakikiramdam* is a special kind of sensitivity whereby the researcher picks up cues from her interaction with her participants: knowing when to pursue the topic and sensing when it is too personal and uncomfortable for the participant. Filipinos mainly use indirect and non-verbal manners of communicating and expressing thoughts, attitudes, feelings, and emotions. Another Filipino is able to pick up these subtle cues.

Finally, *the language of the participant should be the language of communication used*. In the interviews, the researcher must be able to use the language of her participants if she is to communicate well with them, establish rapport, and ask questions that are clearly understood. People can best express their innermost thoughts, feelings, and perceptions in their mother tongue. Furthermore, there are words in the native language

that best capture the subtle nuances of meanings that English cannot. It also facilitates the dialogue between the parties concerned.

A potential challenge will be translating the data from Pilipino to English without losing the subtle nuances and meanings in the original language. Enriquez faced the same dilemma when he argued for this last principle in English. However, writing this research in English allows for other non-Filipino speaking researchers to further understand *Sikolohiyang Pilipino*. Furthermore, since the majority of Filipinos speak English, it will still be valuable to them.

The Research Process

Ethics

This research met the Massey University Human Ethics Committee criteria of being low risk. According to Massey University's (2017) Guidelines for Low Risk Notifications, low risk is a "research project...in which the nature of the harm is minimal and no more than is normally encountered in daily life" (para. 2). Since the interviews were considered interactions to generate shared stories, hence, these were experiences that could be exchanged between migrant women and in the course of conversations among friends. This deems it as low risk as interactions were of an everyday nature.

The women were assured that every effort would be made to ensure their privacy by using their chosen pseudonyms on all transcribed material. It was emphasized, however, that anonymity could not be completely guaranteed as excerpts of their interview would be included in the final publication. Any identifying information was changed to protect their identities. They were also assured that the audio recordings would be disposed of once transcriptions and the study was completed.

As expected, there was no tension or uncertainty between myself and the participants because we come from the same ethnic background and culture. I followed proper cultural protocol because I was guided always by the principles of *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* outlined earlier, as well as the feminist principles for conducting research. The interview was initiated by indulging in small talk such as asking where each woman was from. In Philippine culture, Filipinos ask each other which province or region they hail from. Sometimes when Filipinos find that they come from the same province or region, this establishes the beginnings of rapport ensuing in a more open and welcoming atmosphere that pervades the social encounter. Other topics in the small talk included common friends, activities, discussions of how long they have been in the country, how their family is doing back home, and so on. Some of the women had also graduated from the same university I graduated from in Manila. This established a common ground of sorts to feel at ease with one another. All these 'rituals' are necessary before embarking on the formal part of the interview; the small talk is essential because it places the participant in a state of ease and familiarity.

Participants

Half the population of Filipinos in New Zealand reside in Auckland (Statistics New Zealand, 2013). This facilitated the recruitment of the participants who all live in Auckland, as do I. Purposive sampling was used to allow for a selection of participants with experience in the phenomenon under investigation (Polkinghorne, 2005). The only criteria were that they were Filipino women migrants and were working professionals. Seven Filipina professionals were interviewed. A couple is known personally to me, while the rest are acquaintances who I met through social events in the Filipino community. I personally approached and invited each one to participate in my research.

When they signified willingness, I provided them with an Information Sheet outlining the study's aims and objectives (see Appendix 1). They were encouraged to ask questions about the research before agreeing to participate. When they confirmed their participation, their rights as participants were discussed and each woman signed a Consent Form. These forms were collected before the start of the interview. Each woman was also asked to use a pseudonym of their choosing. Asking them to choose their pseudonym achieved a dual purpose: it prevented any association with their real identities to ensure some degree of privacy, and it respected their rights as women (empowering). The women were Bella, Catherine, Clary, Darna, Elena, Dr E, and Mary.

The ages of the women ranged from 35 to 64 years. Their years of stay in New Zealand were varied as well, ranging from 8 to 29 years. The professions were likewise diverse: Bella is a crisis nurse, Darna is an insurance advisor, Catherine works as an IT application support analyst, Clary is an executive assistant, Elena is a music educator and owns a music academy, Mary works as a secondary school teacher, and Dr E is a general practitioner. Three of the women were already married when they migrated with their families, three others were single when they arrived, while one came as a new bride with her Kiwi husband. Their civil status upon arrival is significant to the story as it indicated whether there was a strong sense of the "I" or "we." The "we" personae were evident with the married women because the decisions they made were in conjunction with their husbands.

Interviews

Dates, times, and venues for the interviews were negotiated with each participant. The interviews were mainly held in their homes. Two interviews were held at their offices. The interviews lasted for no more than an hour. These were audio recorded when each woman began to narrate her migrant story.

The interviews were more conversational in nature in keeping with the aim of making it a story-telling session (*kwentuhan*). To begin, the following questions were used as general guides, but since I requested and wanted the women to speak as freely and comfortably as possible, they were encouraged to expand on their experiences however they wished.

1. Why did you leave the Philippines?
2. What were your reasons for choosing New Zealand?
3. What were the difficulties you faced or are still facing as a migrant and, perhaps, as a woman?
4. As a whole, what was the migrant experience like for you?

The interviews were conducted mainly in English as most Filipinos speak the language very proficiently. The women were also more comfortable using English. Occasionally, Taglish was used, which is a mixture of both English and Tagalog (one of the main languages used in Manila to communicate). This is a distinctive feature in Philippine conversations: code-switching by using both languages. Only one woman chose to speak mainly in Tagalog as she felt she could express her ideas more effectively; however, she also tended to use Taglish. For the purposes of easy reading to the non-Tagalog speaker, I translated this woman's story into English. It was not difficult to translate because the words she used had ready English equivalents.

I took notes while I listened, sharing my own experiences when appropriate, and also writing down my own reflections immediately after the interviews were completed. For the most part, however, the women did most of the talking. I did not interrupt their flow as many were very much into their storytelling. I was also guided by Riessman's (2008) suggestion that storytelling must be allowed with minimal interruption when we desire to hear narratives of experience. I only asked further questions when there was a slight pause in the narration or to ask for clarification. In this way, the interviews, thus, became a collaborative effort; during the course of the conversation, each participant and I became partners in understanding the meaning in their stories (Polkinghorne, 1988; Riessman, 1993) and our shared experiences as migrants.

At this stage of the research process where the principles of *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* were more evident. Our shared ethnicity of being Filipinas facilitated the establishment of trust, rapport, and friendship mentioned earlier. Thus, my hour of *kwentuhan* with each woman allowed us to reach the level of *pakikiisa* because of our shared experience of being migrants to New Zealand. The women knew that I showed empathy for their experiences and difficulties because I encountered it myself. This awareness encouraged them to be more open and engaged with me. By the end of the interview, we had established a closer relationship. It was not one of participant-researcher, but one of friendship.

Throughout the interview, I interjected as minimally as possible so that they could recount their stories as they wished and to give them more control over the interview process. In this way, the second principle of *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* of treating each woman as equal to me was met, because the woman and her story was valued and placed in the center of the research. Thus, as the researcher, I took a secondary role by empowering them to narrate their stories with all attention and focus on them.

During the course of the interview, the third and fourth principles surfaced as well. The cultural norms of engaging in small talk and sharing of food started each session. After the interview, we continued engaging in

small talk before I took my leave. Where I felt that a particular part of the story made the woman uncomfortable, I used *pakikiramdam* where I picked up cues on when to pursue the topic or to keep quiet when it felt too personal for her.

We shifted to communicating in Filipino when the situation required it. One participant, Mary, preferred to use Filipino predominantly throughout her story-telling and I spoke it as well. This was *Sikolohiyang Pilipino*'s fifth principle of using the language of the participant for communication if she was more comfortable with it.

Transcription and analysis

I personally transcribed all the recorded interviews verbatim immediately after each session. The transcriptions included both my and the participant's contributions to the conversation. While listening to the narratives, I mentally noted my initial reflections. Immediately after the interviews, I wrote these down and any further reflections. The 'raw' transcription included all the recorded redundancies, false starts, filler words, slang language and shared laughter was noted in brackets. I wrote further annotations in the margins of the typed transcription. I provided each woman a copy of her transcription for changes and asked for authorization to proceed. It was also an opportunity to update them on my research progress and to touch base with them since the interview. There were very minimal revisions needed and I made the necessary corrections before proceeding.

As a researcher, transcribing the interviews became a challenge since I had to decide how to display the text. However, as my intention was to deliver a readable whole story for each woman, I undertook a second transcription, omitting all redundancies, false starts, filler words, slang and conjunctions. Hence, I created a core story for each narrative by reducing "full length stories to shorter stories to aid the narrative analysis process" (Emden, 1998, p. 35). In this manner, I could gain a better sense of the migrant story of each woman.

I used Brown and Gilligan's (1992) Listening Guide, a voice-centered relational (VCR) method, to analyze the women's narratives because this method of analysis complements both feminist research and *Sikolohiyang Pilipino*. By its very nature and procedure, it places the voices of the participants in the center and allows them to be heard more clearly (Paliadelis & Cruikshank, 2008), as well as providing a sensitivity to diverse perspectives (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). The data transcripts go through 4 cycles of analysis, and for every cycle each narrative is better explained and understood in relation to the participant's relationships and the socio-cultural contexts in which they live. According to Brown and Gilligan (1992), our experiences are relational in nature and involve a polyphony of voices, meaning that our sense of self changes throughout the life course as influenced by the experiences we encounter and the relationships we form. The language we use to express our experiences carry our voice or voices. It is these voices that constitute the polyphony in the stories we tell. The different voices come from our various relationships throughout our life time. These voices and relationships

are part of our experiences and the stories we tell about them. The voices may co-exist simultaneously in a narrative and the Listening Guide allows the researcher to undertake recurrent readings and ‘listenings’ in order to attend to those different voices. Brown and Gilligan (1992) call these contrapuntal voices.

In my research, I analyzed the stories and social relationships of the Filipina migrants as I searched for the meaning in their experiences. The Listening Guide seemed the most appropriate method to analyze their narratives as it is a voice-centered approach. Furthermore, it enables marginalized and understudied experiences to surface by investigating the numerous voices that may remain unheard (Harel-Shalev & Daphna-Tekoah, 2016); “researchers can hear how interviewees present themselves before interpreting their narratives, and it guides the researcher in the search for hidden and silenced voices” (p.2). Furthermore, through the multiple listenings and analyses, I became familiar nuances of each story, paying close attention to the important themes and relationships that were emerging (Woodcock, 2010).

The first cycle traces the central story lines of each participant through listening to and reading the transcript in its entirety (Paliadelis & Cruikshank, 2008), also called ‘listening for the plot’ (Gilligan, 2015; Harel-Shalev & Daphna-Tekoah, 2016). I first listened for the unfolding plot of the speaker by analyzing the story in its context. This means trying to gain a sense of the events and action significant to the story’s outcome and development. While listening and reading, I identified any recurring images, words, key metaphors, and the dominant theme (Harel-Shalev & Daphna-Tekoah, 2016). This alerted me to where the speaker was located in her narrative (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). At the same time, in this first cycle, I reflected on my own feelings and thoughts regarding the women I listened to and the stories I heard. In other words, I was made more aware of my own assumptions and views of each story, writing about my own reactions and how my interpretation of each story could affect the subsequent analysis. This reflexive stance helped me to be more aware of how my own understanding influences what I heard. As women who come from the same ethno-cultural background and who shared the experience of migration, I needed to listen to the point of view of each woman because the way in which I heard them could influence my own migrant story. I listened for differences as well as similarities.

When all the interviews were transcribed, I listened carefully to each interview while reading the typed transcript. There were two objectives for this reading: to identify the emerging story line of each narrative and to be aware of my reactions to what was being said. As I listened for the story line, I made notes in the margin. These notes included my reactions, assumptions, thoughts, and emotions to what I was hearing and reading. Furthermore, listening in this first cycle enabled me to notice the basic trends and themes already emerging from each woman’s narrative (Woodcock, 2010), thereby gaining an overall understanding of each participant’s migrant experience and also identifying the differences across the stories. This ‘listening for the plot’ (Gilligan, 2015; Harel-Shalev & Daphna-Tekoah, 2016; Woodcock, 2010), helped me create the first layer of analysis of each woman’s story, and is discussed in Chapter 3.

The second cycle places the narrator at the center of the narrative as attention is shifted to the active “I”. By identifying the number of times “I”, “me”, or “my” surfaced in the narrative, I gained a clearer notion of the narrator’s sense of self (Paliadelis & Cruickshank, 2008) and was able to attend closely to her thoughts, desires, hopes, conflicts, and silences (Woodcock, 2010), that were also specifically Filipina. I could hear how each woman spoke of herself before I spoke about her. At the same time, I was able to identify the places where this sense of self shifted to others when “you” or “they” were used, for instance (Doucet & Mauthner, 2008). This alerted me to the different perceptions of self of the narrator.

For the second reading, I constructed an ‘I’ poem for each woman. First, in the transcript, I highlighted in one color all the “I’s,” “me’s”, and “my’s”. This revealed how strong the woman’s sense of self surfaced in her story. Then, I copied the “I” phrases in order of their appearance in the transcript, including the verbs or significant phrases accompanying the “I”. I placed each on a separate line, as in a poem. I could then see how each woman perceived herself in relation to others and her social world. The first person voice, thus, reveals a ‘stream of consciousness’ (Woodcock, 2005) that provides a depth to the narrative that is not immediately evident in the first reading (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). I also highlighted the “we” in some of the stories, as these were very prevalent particularly in the narratives of the married women; I highlighted these in a different color. The “we” encompassed the couple’s experiences and decisions made as a team. My transcript thus resulted in a document with two different colors, or two different positions of the narrator: the self, and the partnership in the marriage. Looking overall at the document, I could see where the active “I” was dominant or where “we” was more important. Some of the women’s transcripts were more about “we” than “I”, providing an important insight into how the women viewed themselves in the decisions they made: that it was always in consultation with their husbands. The women who were single had a stronger sense of “I” in their stories. This second cycle provided a depth to the stories that are not immediately evident in the first reading/cycle (Brown & Gilligan, 1992).

In the third cycle, I focused on how each woman spoke of the relationships in their lives by identifying the shifts to “you” and “they.” I highlighted them in different colors in order to get a sense of how the woman contrasted herself with the other, the “they.” This provided me insights into how the women attended to their migrant lives, their social networks, and their close relationships. The transcript, thus, was multi-color-coded, revealing the different or contrapuntal voices and their relationship to the women. This allowed me to examine their relationships with others and the wider society to discover the possible power dynamics at play in their stories (Paliadelis & Cruickshank, 2008). This helped uncover possible experiences of oppression (Paliadelis & Cruickshank, 2008) or “gender stereotypes” (Brown & Gilligan, 1992, p. 29), which are essential in feminist studies for contextualizing the narrator’s experiences in her social and cultural environment, providing “insights into how the participant attends to her life, as a way of knowing or as a channel of discovery” (Woodcock,

2010, p. 150). By focusing on the contrapuntal voices, I could pick up any possible tensions, harmonies and dissonances between the different voices (Gilligan, 2015).

In the fourth cycle, I began interpreting the transcriptions, synthesizing what I'd heard and learned from each woman's narrative. Through assembling the evidence drawn from each of the previous three cycles, I began composing my analysis. At this point, I returned to my research question/s to steer me towards the voices in the text that speak to my inquiry that is the Filipina's migrant experiences in New Zealand. Thus, from a micro-level that is the narrative, the final cycle provides a link with macro-level structures (Doucet & Mauthner, 2008). By going through this multi-stage process, I was able to compare my impressions and interpretations of the text with the various listenings and readings (Harel-Shalev & Daphna-Tekoah, 2016). I was also able to examine the similarities and the general themes that emerged.

At this stage, *Sikolohiyang Pilipino*'s third principle guided which prioritizes the participants' welfare over the data. By sharing their stories, the study empowered the women because they were provided a space to tell their stories. The suggestions for future research on Filipina women in the last chapter addresses the matter of "challenging, and where appropriate, mitigating power relations within and outside research contexts" (Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor, & Tindall, 1994, p.124). At the same time, my primary responsibility has always been to the women first, and research second. I have been very respectful and aware of the women as individuals and have not ever considered them as 'subjects for studying.' In this regard, I keep faithful to the principles of *Sikolohiyang Pilipino*.

In the next chapter, I present each of the women's stories and 'I' poems. These are the first and second layers of analysis which I combined in order to trace the story line and hear what the women believed about themselves. By combining the two cycles in one chapter, I can connect the women's identities to their stories, enabling me to see the relationship between the actions and events in their migrant experiences and the meaning they ascribed to their identities as a result of their migration. I incorporated my own reactions or interpretations through each story, guided by the reflexive stance I kept at the forefront of the first cycle of listening and reading. I listened for the differences as well. The stories reveal both the internal and external factors that shaped each woman's life, as well as what she considered significant in the moment.

Chapter 3

The Women's Stories and 'I' Poems

The narratives of migrant professional women are missing from the larger narrative of the Filipina migration experience. The stories collected in this study are valuable because they provide an insight into the internal and external forces that influenced the women to leave their country of birth permanently and how they coped. In this chapter, I identified the plot of each story by asking who? what? when? and where? This helped me understand how the wider social and cultural contexts related to the stories' construction (Wertz et al., 2011). I also included each woman's 'I' poem at the end of each story, thereby creating a space that allowed the woman to present herself and for me to hear what she believed about herself. This chapter also reveals the diversities in the experiences before I synthesize their similarities later. In each story, Filipino culture is evident when the women speak of how their life was and how this has changed. Certain Filipino cultural values, like the closeness of family, the deep faith in God, the food, and the social class distinctions, are evident. The differences, thus, distinguish the women as individuals, placing them at the center and allowing them to be heard more clearly while giving providing the reader a glimpse into the Filipino way of life. By combining the story with the poem, I can better understand how the actions and events in their stories linked to the meaning they ascribed to their identities as women and migrants to New Zealand.

As I listened to each story, I discovered that each woman's migration experience revealed key messages different from each other. It is these diverse themes that also distinguished each woman because she shared what she thought was significant about her experience. For each woman's story, I used a direct quote from her transcript which I felt encapsulated her unique experience, as I heard it. Here I invite the reader to also listen to her shared understanding of herself as a woman and a migrant. While listening, I felt humbled by their experiences and journeys. As will be evident, every one of the women was proud of her achievement. Moving to New Zealand is a personal success each one of us shares and that we made it work is the biggest thing to be proud of.

Bella : *"Life here in New Zealand suited my personality"*

Bella's story revealed four key messages: her easy acculturation into the society, the stereotypes she encountered during her social interactions, the issues of mixed marriages, and the discrimination she faced from her own kind.

Bella arrived in New Zealand in 1987 and is the longest-staying migrant among the group. She initially studied to be a doctor and was originally meant to follow her aunts, who are also doctors, to the United States. But when she met her Kiwi ex-husband in the Philippines just before she began her formal training as a doctor, the

course of her life and career changed and she ended up in New Zealand instead, as a crisis nurse. Initially, she accompanied her husband when his job took him around the world. Hence, her first few years in the country were spent globe-trotting. By the time she realized that she needed to re-study to register as a doctor here, she was left with one year of preparation. Then, in the middle of her studies, she became pregnant with her first child and had a very difficult pregnancy. After giving birth, she decided to devote her time to her newborn infant and shelved the plans for further medical study. But the marriage did not last and Bella found herself as a single mother with two daughters. In order to support them and herself, she retrained to be a nurse as it enabled her to work and support her family.

For Bella, acculturating into the society was easy. Bella spoke fluent English and on the occasions when she did not accompany her husband overseas, she explored Auckland on her own. She shared:

“I just went on the bus...I’m just the sort of person who would probably it says on my forehead ‘you can say hello to me’ [shared laughter here] because the people do say hello. Cause I’d say ‘hello, hello’ and then I don’t mind talking to people if I’m waiting for the bus. I’ll start interviewing all the people in the bus, you know, waiting in the bus stop.”

Her desire to explore her new home alone reveals a confidence some migrants may not initially have. It is easy to feel lost by the unfamiliarity of the environment. I remember that when I first arrived here, on my first night, I looked out the window and felt an overwhelming sense of disorientation and desperation and wondered if I would ever be able to navigate Auckland’s streets the way I did the streets of Manila. Bella’s strategy of familiarizing herself with her environment by riding a bus was possibly the best way for her to overcome this sense of uncertainty. Furthermore, since Bella spoke English well, there was no anxiety about interacting with people. Her friendly attitude towards people she met and her ‘interviewing’ them shows a very proactive manner of acculturating. She would have learned much about the people and their customs. Even at parties she attended with her ex-husband, she said she enjoyed mingling with other guests. She recounted that there were other Filipinas present but that they tended to stay on their own or amongst fellow Filipinos. I think the reasons for this may be: to be able to talk in the native language, they are shyer, and/or their fluency in English may not be as good as Bella’s. I have seen this scenario at many social functions where there are Filipinos among the group. However, Bella preferred to go around:

“I always want to ask people about what they do, cause I always want to know something different. I always want to try things and am interested in people so I usually could go and kind of walk around and chat with a lot of people.”

Actively engaging with other people, particularly locals, in a new country facilitates the acculturation process and builds confidence in new migrants. Bella, thus, had no difficulties in this regard and quickly made new friends and built a strong social network.

However, despite her easy acculturation and adaptation to life in New Zealand, she discovered the stereotypes that locals held of Filipinas. When she began working as a nurse, one of her Pākehā colleagues observed that she *“blew off all of the ideas that they had about a Filipina woman because I’m not that.”* When she asked what that meant, the response was that their idea of a Filipina woman was someone Asian, docile. It would seem that even in the nursing profession, stereotypes persist regarding Asians and Filipinas. On the whole, though, I would agree that Filipinos tend to be quiet and unassuming. We go peacefully about our work and avoid any confrontations and conflicts as much as possible. This can be attributed to one of our cultural values of desiring to keep the peace at all cost and not ‘rock the boat’.

Having lived here for close to 30 years, Bella’s story of her interactions with the Filipino community provided confirmation of the other stereotypes held by locals of the Filipina as a mail order bride: older man and much younger woman. During her early years as a young bride, she recounted that when they attended social functions, people would look at her and her ex-husband and claimed *“Oh, it doesn’t look like there’s any age gap between the two of you.”*

“That was a common comment...and then when they see my husband they’re really surprised. They always expected that my husband would be much older than me.”

One time, an elderly patient asked her how she obtained her citizenship papers. Knowing she was Filipina, he just assumed she was married to an older man. The reality of this was driven home when, during her first or second week in New Zealand, she watched a documentary on television about Filipina mail order brides.

“One that stuck in my head was this pair who lived down in Rotorua in a caravan...the guy is retired and of course the Filipina lady with him was much, much, much younger than him... And then there was another Filipina lady featured who was working in a farm. She married a farmer, an old farmer, and she’s much, much younger and even a lot of my friends were married to older guys, much older guys.”

When I asked how she felt about this, considering she was new to the country and encountered this image about her countrywomen, she was *“OK with it but I just thought that it was a bit of a sad situation.”* When I asked why she found the situation sad, she said that many of the women she knew personally, some of them mail order brides, were discriminated against by their mothers-in-law, husbands, and children.

“I did come across some of my friends being discriminated on by their mothers-in-law because they’re Filipinas and the mothers-in-law think they’re not educated well enough or their English is not good enough.”

From this statement, apparently Filipinas who did not speak English very well were viewed by Kiwis as uneducated, adding their own stereotype feature about our women. The fact, however, is that by being simply Filipino already created a perception that we were not educated. As a third world country, we were perceived as backwards. However, she also stated that even the Filipinas who were not mail order brides were also

discriminated against by their own husbands. Friends of her ex-husband complained to her about their Filipina wives because their English was not good. This hurt Bella, and she showed a concern for her countrywomen as she recounted the conversation:

“...and what hurts me sometimes is like some of my ex-husband’s friends before would say, would complain ‘oh, my wife does not even speak good English and we couldn’t even keep a good conversation.’ And I thought, ‘you knew that when you met her. You knew that.’ So why are you taking that against her now?”

This statement revealed an insight into the plight of some Filipina migrants who entered into mixed marriages: they were expected to speak the language proficiently, otherwise they remained ‘outsiders.’ Their ethnicity and inability to speak ‘good’ English placed them at a social disadvantage resulting in social and relationship discrimination. One of the markers of successful acculturation is proficiency in the language of the adopted culture (Padilla & Perez, 2003). This aptitude, though, occurs in varying degrees and does not necessarily imply unsuccessful assimilation as there are other factors involved like changes in behavior patterns, norms, ways of thinking, and values. Bella’s issue was that the husbands knew from the start that their wives were not very fluent in English. Why were they only complaining now? Was it because of the expectation that over time, they would be able to speak more competently? And why compare Bella with their wives? The husbands saw a glaring difference between their wives and Bella and that difference can be explained by the notion of class. Philippine society has very clear and distinct social stratifications. One of the markers of belonging to the upper classes is the ability to speak and write fluently in English. Bella is different from the other Filipino wives because of this: she belonged to the upper class. The Kiwi husbands, of course, could not know this when operating from a stereotype, hence, the amazement at the differences in English competency.

I myself received similar questions in the past from Kiwis who had met a number of Filipinos: why was my English better than other Filipinos? I myself question why this is so important. Admittedly, there is a need to be able to communicate ideas in most social encounters; however, I believe it is not essential to be able to speak perfectly in English. Migrants from the same ethno-cultural group, depending on their social, educational, and economic backgrounds, will have varying abilities in speaking the language. And even amongst Filipina migrant professionals, there is diversity. Be that as it may, though, the ability to speak English does not necessarily mean that the migrant women are not intelligent, smart, or uneducated.

All Filipino professionals, however, can speak English fluently. They attended schools where the medium of instruction was English and that at home, most upper and middle-class Filipinos are bilingual and speak both English and Tagalog quite fluently. Hence, Bella did not have difficulty integrating into New Zealand society because she spoke English well and was able to acculturate more easily.

Unfortunately, the Filipino wives were not only discriminated by their mothers-in-law and husbands, but by their children as well. Bella recounted that some of the children from these mixed marriages made fun of the way their mothers spoke English. Her admirable retort to this was: “*Well you don’t speak good Filipino, do you*”?, effectively defending the other Filipinas. This is a strange situation where the children are both Filipino and Kiwi but they enjoy the social privilege of assimilation while stereotyping their mothers. By asking her question, Bella effectively countered the stereotype by suggesting they were not fluent in Filipino and turned the table against them.

Bella’s own marriage was a cross-cultural one and her ex-mother-in-law believed that the children of such unions would grow up confused. Bella recounted:

“She’s got this attitude that mixed marriages like mine back then with her own son ends up with confused children... I just thought, ‘just gonna put that on one side actually, I’m not gonna take that as a personal offense,’ but she said ‘children of mixed marriages are confused. The poor children they don’t know what they are. They don’t know whether they’re Kiwi, they don’t know whether they’re Filipinos.’”

For Bella, there was no issue or problem. Her children grew up knowing about their two cultures. The Philippines has a long history of cross-cultural marriages and, in fact, value the offspring of such unions. I asked if they *were* confused, as to their grandmother’s prediction, and she said that when they were actually asked that, their response was:

“Because we mainly grew up here well probably we’re mainly Kiwi but there are a lot of other nice things that we got from mom and a lot of other nice things that Filipinas do...”

In Bella’s case, her children seemed to be able to understand both sides. They have formed ‘hybrid’ identities (Marotta, 2011; Turmen, 1999). Globalization and the constant movement of people across national borders in the 20th century have resulted in countries becoming more multicultural, their citizens having multicultural identities, and mixed or multicultural marriages becoming almost the norm. As a result, it is difficult to categorize people as having homogenous identities today. This should be seen as a positive because multiple identities contribute positively to the enrichment of a society’s culture and more diversity. It is a complicated topic, the scope of which cannot be comprehensively discussed in this study, but other researches have presented the positive and negative effects of this phenomenon (Marotta, 2011; Turmen, 1999). Bella’s mother-in-law evidently saw the negative side by believing her grandchildren would grow up confused. I believe that we all have hybrid identities. Migrants, likewise, have assumed hybrid identities as they navigate between two cultures – their native culture and the host culture.

Listening to her stories of childhood, I could tell Bella is a fiercely independent, confident, and outspoken woman. She herself admits that she is not the ‘typical quiet, conservative’ Filipina. Bella shared that she had a

non-traditional upbringing as a child. She was encouraged by her parents to speak her mind and not conform to the gender role distinctions in Filipino society. This was well suited to the New Zealand culture:

“I’m opinionated... I’m very honest to the point that I can be blunt sometimes. I think to be honest life here in New Zealand actually suited my personality.”

She thrived in New Zealand society where gender roles are not as strongly delineated. Furthermore, her job as a crisis nurse required her to be decisive and she said, *“you need to be quite headstrong,”* which one of her colleagues apparently did not like and so *“he made my life quite difficult. I think he didn’t like it that I’m very, very independent.”* He was Filipino as well. This early tension between them can be attributed to the gender distinctions in Philippine society. Like many Asian societies, in Philippine society, men are placed higher on the social hierarchy than women. Particularly for men holding higher positions at work, it was expected that women accord them the respect and deference they were due. Bella’s behavior, being a female and her fierce independence and outspokenness, did not sit well with her male Filipino colleague. She did not conform to this expectation of deference. Her colleague, being her supervisor, might have felt he should have been treated with more subservience, which she was not in the habit of doing, hence, the conflict. Despite them both being in New Zealand, the dynamics from Filipino culture was still there, at least for her colleague. This was the only time she felt any form of ‘discrimination’.

“Definitely he discriminated on me here...he did make my life difficult. There were two other Filipinas who were working here as well and I think I stood out because I was so different from them. Cause my personality was really different.”

Unfortunately, as her supervisor, he reorganized her working schedule so that she could not work certain days, resulting in lesser wages. Over time, though, the situation improved between them, and relations are more pleasant now. However, I am not surprised by this treatment. Inwardly I questioned whether this was yet another example of the ‘crab mentality’ that Filipinos are known for. The crab mentality is similar to the New Zealand tall poppy syndrome. When crabs are placed in a bucket, basket or pot, they climb over each other trying to get to the top. Hence, whoever is on top is pushed to the bottom by the others who are also crawling to get to the peak, and none manage to really reach the top. . A phrase associated with this action is “if I can’t get to the top, then neither can you.” It is very well known amongst Filipinos.

Bella has lived in the country a long time and I discovered in my conversations with her many new insights and impressions of Filipinas in the country, some of which I’m familiar with and can relate to, while others are new information for me. I learned much about myself and other Filipinas from my dialogue with her. Like the other women in this study, Bella worked hard to succeed and adjust to her new home. She is unlike most Filipinas as she is outspoken, not exactly ‘docile’, and independent. To some extent, her stories of the other Filipinas she met and knew over the years of living here confirmed many of the stereotypes outsiders had regarding Filipinas.

I particularly admired how she defended the Filipinas from their own children and husbands who demeaned them when they could not speak English.

Bella's I Poem

Following on from the plot, I present excerpts from Bella's "I Poem," which reveals a strong and confident woman. In fact, it runs for 7 pages. As mentioned earlier, during her early years in New Zealand, she explored Auckland quite extensively on her own:

I always want to go places

I always like doing things

I'm quite adventurous

She is action-oriented and is willing to push the boundaries. She is always eager to be adventurous. It is evident here that her natural curiosity for learning new things allowed her to travel around her new home. In fact, it was on one of these early trips that she discovered a place that reminded her of the poor areas in the Philippines, South Auckland:

I went to Grey Lynn

I honestly thought I was in the Philippines

I know now that that street is mainly housing New Zealand houses, it's quite a poor area

I was really shocked.

I've never been back

My first experience like, 'oh, there's a place like this in New Zealand?'"

It was a surprise for her to discover there were also 'poorer' areas in New Zealand. She was under the impression that there was no poverty in the country and that society was more equitable in terms of social and financial standing. Many new Filipino migrants may have the same impression. Bella's experience, however, as early as 1987, revealed this was not the case. I myself only realized there was poverty in New Zealand after living here a number of years. The subtle distinctions in the social differences of the citizens are not immediately evident. I might even go as far as stating that there are social class divisions, albeit not as clearly distinguishable as in the Philippines.

When asked about her impressions of New Zealand, she likes the fact that anyone can be what they want here, particularly women: "I really like it, like it's nothing to think that a woman is gonna be a pilot." New Zealand, for Bella, provides freedom for women to be what they want to be and not be confined to traditional gender roles. She also likes being able to speak her mind when she wants, without worry of being censored:

I open up my mouth

I have an opinion

I was encouraged to have an opinion
My aunties actually didn't like it that I was too forward
I was coming across as arrogant

When Bella used the “I Voice”, she sounded very sure of herself and firm. When she spoke of her job as a crisis nurse, this confidence was also quite evident as she always got the job done and was reliable:

I'm the one coordinating the crisis team
Can rely on me
I probably won't ask for help
I'm very organized
I want everything done
I'm opinionated
I'm very honest
I can be blunt sometimes

Thus, living here was a very welcome change for her when one considers how conservative Philippine society is, particularly with regard to gender roles, the distinction between social classes, and speaking out of turn. She admitted “*I think to be honest, I think the life here in New Zealand actually suited my personality.*” She recalled that she was always challenging the status quo: “*who says I'm not allowed to do that?*” hinting at a rebellious streak in her. Despite having grown up in a non-traditional Filipino family, though, she still had to deal with the wider society and conforming to traditional norms was still necessary to some extent. This was why Bella thrived in New Zealand. She was able to express her views freely and she deeply appreciated that women had the freedom to be whatever they wanted.

Catherine: “*I thought it was a sign*”

From Catherine’s story three key themes emerged: the importance being prepared spirituality, the difficulty of living alone for the first time and doing everything by herself, and being proactive with assimilating into her new home. Catherine is one of the ‘newer’ migrants to New Zealand, having lived here just a little over 9 years. She worked in the Information Technology industry in Manila as an application support analyst and was fortunate to have found employment in the same industry here.

Catherine’s choice of New Zealand as a place to emigrate was due to her ex-boyfriend who had plans of coming here as well. Despite the relationship not working out in the end, she pursued her own dreams of migrating after she saw a billboard in Manila advertising an immigration expo on New Zealand. She felt it was a ‘sign’ for her to continue. We Filipinos can be fatalistic, reading messages in apparently innocuous things, events, or

circumstances, particularly when there is something important we wish to achieve or accomplish. Hence, acting on that 'sign', she went to the expo to obtain more information and assistance with coming here. She had also heard of other friends, acquaintances, and officemates who had left, confirming the culture of migration discussed earlier in the literature.

When Catherine arrived in New Zealand, it took 3 months before she found employment. Before she found work she had already resigned from her job in the Philippines. For her, this decision was a gamble because she did not know how soon she could find work, but she recounted that she prayed hard. Praying is a common practice amongst Filipinos. This religiosity assumes a particular importance for many Filipinos who go overseas (Magat, 2007; Sills & Chowthi, 2008; Van der Ham, Ujano-Batanga, Ignacio, & Wolffers, 2015) because aside from helping us maintain our cultural identity, the belief and faith in God helps us through all adversity. It is the source of most Filipino migrants' strength and perseverance. In fact, Catherine constantly mentioned praying for guidance throughout her story. Before she left the Philippines, she attended a Christian Life Seminar to prepare herself spiritually for the new challenge she was facing. She said that it's "*one thing to have support but one thing to have strong hold of your faith.*" A deep faith in God's help and mercy is the Filipino's rock and comfort.

The Philippines is the largest Roman Catholic country in Asia, with deep roots in Catholic tradition. Filipinos always pray and turn to the Church for guidance and spiritual and mental support. In fact, one of the first places that new Filipino migrants look for upon arriving in New Zealand is the Church and to attend mass services as soon as possible. It is almost as if there is the need to continue somehow familiar rituals that link them to home. The Church is also their first point of contact with other Filipinos and provides a sense of belonging (Magat, 2007; Sills & Chowthi, 2008; Van der Ham, Ujano-Batanga, Ignacio, & Wolffers, 2015). As Filipino migrants settle in, their social network is mostly established through the Church.

Unlike some of the women in this study who had friends or family already here to meet and assist them, Catherine knew no one. She knew of acquaintances or friends of friends who had moved here, but never actually made contact with them. I found this very admirable for a young woman to do: to migrate to a new country and have no social connections whatsoever. It shows an independence and courageousness that is becoming typical of many of our young Filipinas migrating alone. When one considers that Philippine culture is one where women are sheltered and live in collective groups with much support from families and extended families, it seems that going overseas alone is a sudden leap into the unknown. I myself had a similar experience to her: I knew no one when I first arrived here and was met at the airport by a friend of a friend. I did not even know what she looked like so encountering her at the waiting area of arrivals was a complete coincidence. However, this experience that Catherine and I had, I believe, strengthens a person's mental and emotional resilience to life's challenges. There is, of course, the opposite effect when too many challenges or

life changes can debilitate a person mentally, physically, and emotionally. But many migrants are able to rise above the challenges and succeed. Catherine was one such person. Her age may also have contributed to this as she was only 26 when she migrated. Younger people, it seems to me, are more willing to face uncertainty and conceptualize challenges as adventures.

Her travelling here alone and not knowing anyone is something she considers an achievement which she is quite proud of: *“I did it by myself. So I did everything by myself and it’s a really good achievement on my end.”*

Despite doing well in the Philippines, career-wise, she wanted to have no regrets about the ‘what-ifs’; there was a strong need to see for herself if New Zealand was the place for her.

“I guess it’s more of a challenge on my part, I have to try it and say ‘no, I don’t like it’ or not try at all so I’m in that position of I don’t want to have any regrets in my life. Maybe it’s not him and me in the end but then it may be a way for me to get out.”

Catherine by that time had no communication with her then boyfriend. Leaving may have been one way for her to start fresh and forget about the disappointment of a failed relationship. In this regard, her situation may be similar to other Filipinas reported on in the literature who leave to forget a failed relationship (Asis, 2002; del Rosario, 2005; Lauser, 2008; Saroca, 2006; Yea, 2008). Or, like me, she may have simply wanted to go overseas like many others did.

A major challenge for Catherine, once she arrived in New Zealand, was doing things for herself. Finding work that matched her qualifications was initially difficult but she was able to get some help from Auckland Chamber which assisted new migrants through career seminars. Her flat mate also helped her with leads on how to find work. For many new migrants, a support system is essential to succeeding with finding work, particularly for those who have no immediate contacts like family or friends. This support should also extend to advising new migrants about living in New Zealand, cooking, shopping, opening a bank account, or applying for a tax account number. I encountered a similar situation, where my flat mates gave suggestions about how to start looking for employment by applying through job ads in the local papers or the New Zealand Herald, or going through a recruitment agency. For the most part, though, the researching is done alone. For Catherine, although the career seminar and her flat mate’s advice were helpful, she still had to do things herself:

At the end of the day, of course you’re alone. I was used to a sheltered life where someone was around to support and help you. So first time, I mean to be honest, first time you had to cook for yourself. I mean, I do cook in the Philippines but there were helpers.”

Like most Filipinos from the middle- and upper-classes, live-in maids are a part of the household. They do all the household chores such as washing clothes, cooking, and cleaning. Catherine highlighted an important fact about the life of Filipino middle-class migrants and this is that they must do things alone, particularly in the home:

“It doesn’t matter if you’re in New Zealand, the United States, other countries...they don’t see the hardship that you have, like you’re by yourself.”

This fact, I think, only dawned on her after she arrived in the new country. For many middle-class Filipino women, the absence of a maid becomes a sacrifice or trade-off for living and working here. When one has grown up surrounded by helpers, the sudden change of doing everything alone can be a shock. Many of us, in the excitement and thrill of leaving, forget that in many countries there is no domestic labor available; or if there is, it is very expensive, unlike in the Philippines. New Zealand is one such country that does not import domestic labor. Cleaners can be hired for a short period, but they are never live-in help, which we are used to. We either forget or are unaware that migrant life can be difficult and challenging. For Catherine, her life in the Philippines was not a highly independent upbringing. Growing up, aside from having helpers, she shared that even extended family lived in the same house so it was quite a drastic change for her to suddenly be on her own, with no support whatsoever. It can be lonely and I sensed this in her. She admitted that she did cry a little bit about her new lifestyle.

In order to adjust to her new life as quickly as possible, Catherine was very proactive with establishing her professional networking when she arrived. She sent out her curriculum vitae and went to interviews in order to get a feel for the New Zealand system of hiring. She also joined groups and societies in the IT industry to establish her network of acquaintances and keep updated on the current developments in the industry, which could not be obtained from just Googling or online researching she said. This provided her with crucial insider information that facilitated her finding work. Anecdotal evidence suggests there are a large number of Filipinos working in the IT industry because she was made aware of a Filipino Society for IT professionals. This professional organization facilitated in her assimilating and finding work quickly.

Aside from professional networking, Catherine, through her flat mate and work colleagues, met other people and began to build her social network. Both at and outside work, she met and befriended people from different ethnicities and made the effort to reach out to more people by joining social events organized at work and opportunities where she was invited. Initially, when she arrived during the first few years, she attended Filipino social gatherings so she could feel at home. But after that, *“I joined, I tried to reach out to meet other people...tramping, I’ll go out with my workmates, events here and there.”* In this manner, she consciously made the effort to assimilate into the wider society, which facilitated her adjustment in New Zealand. Hence, she did not confine herself to just the Filipino community but widened her social circle of friends. In the process, she learned more about Auckland’s multicultural society: *“you get to learn from different cultures... you strip away the race, the ethnicity, it’s all the same.”* This realization made it easier for her to adapt, integrate, and assimilate. We are all the same; we are all migrants with the same goals of succeeding and being happy in our

chosen new home. Today, she cannot imagine living in the Philippines as she has made a good life for herself here, and is successfully employed and happily living with her Kiwi partner.

What I particularly appreciated about Catherine's story was the fact that she migrated at an early age and made a conscious effort to integrate and assimilate to society. Rather than confining herself to the Filipino community, as many migrants are wont to do, she reached out and in the process developed herself further into a confident young woman. For someone young and living alone, her success in migrating is quite an achievement. I cannot help thinking that so many other Filipinas are doing this: coming on their own and making it work, despite the challenges and initial difficulties.

Catherine's I Poem

In Catherine's poem, the excerpts revealed a woman who took the initiative when she decided on a course of action. For instance, when she was deciding about moving to New Zealand, she knew what she needed to do and planned accordingly:

I started looking at how to go to New Zealand

I decided

I'll do my own research

I got funds put aside if I need to migrate

I thought it was a sign

I saw this billboard

I went to the expo

I saw this agency

I went there

I might as well avail

I went there for an overview

Her I voice is sure and confident. She knew the steps she needed to take in attaining her goal of migrating. She had funds set aside, she did the research, she contacted an agency to assist, and find out all she needed to know to make the final decision. In addition to the physical preparation, she also prepared herself in another sense, spiritually. In parts of her story, she constantly referred to praying for guidance and help, whether it was for finding work or being led to the right people:

Before I left

I went to this Christian Life Seminar Series

To prepare me spiritually

I got my first job

I really prayed hard

I was praying

I did pray whoever offered me a job, I would accept

I'd been praying like "lead me to the right people"

Praying for her ensured that the right choices were made, whether it was finding work, meeting people, or making any important decisions in life. Prayer, for Catherine, provided her a clearer way forward and strengthened her both spiritually and mentally for any challenges.

Considering that she grew up surrounded by family and helpers, she admitted her upbringing did not exactly encourage her to be highly independent. Being able to migrate on her own, find work, make new friends, establish her new home in New Zealand, take special significance knowing her background in the Philippines. Her pride in her successful migration showed when she said:

I did it by myself

I did everything by myself and it's a really good achievement on my end

I guess it's more of a challenge on my part

I have to try it

I don't want to have any regrets in my life

Towards the end of our conversation, it was evident she had no regrets about leaving the Philippines. When I asked what her parting message for me was she said that we just need to be true to ourselves and stick to the principles we have. I find it so admirable that someone so young has succeeded here in New Zealand. She may have been young when she arrived but she was definitely brave; she is, to me, the new breed of Filipinas who are willing to live overseas, far from family, but forging their own ways and creating their own destinies.

Clary: "It's easier to live in Auckland now"

The main message in Clary's was the initial challenges she faced when she first arrived, challenges which can be attributed to the culture shock that all migrants experience. Her story exemplified the changes migrants face when living in a new country. For her, they were mainly regarding: job requirements, the Kiwi accent, difference in meanings ascribed to certain job roles, and overall cultural differences. Towards the end of her story, though, there was a sense of her successful adjustment and assimilation to her new home, particularly when most of her family followed afterwards.

In Manila, Clary worked as an Executive Assistant to high-ranking executives in various multinational companies and had extensive experience in high-level administrative work over the years. She was very well

placed in her last job as the Commercial Officer for a European diplomatic mission but she was becoming exhausted by the city traffic and the rat race and was seeking a more laid back lifestyle. So, 15 years ago, she decided to migrate to New Zealand because her impression was that it was a modern country with a more sedate lifestyle. Having a family member already living here facilitated her decision-making. Also, she wanted a place where there were not too many Filipinos yet. The United States, Canada, and Australia were favorite destinations for Filipino migrants but she felt these countries were saturated with too many of them already. It took longer for her to find work because she arrived in October, which she realized much later was the period when most companies were winding down for the long Christmas holiday break. Thus, it was 5 months before she received any feedback from the recruitment agencies to which she sent her curriculum vitae. She was, admittedly, feeling quite disheartened and worried, and at one point was planning on returning to the Philippines. However, she persisted until the new year came around and she began hearing from the job recruiters.

A major stumbling block for Clary when she was looking for employment was the ‘Kiwi experience’ required of applicants: “*they were asking for a lot of ridiculous requirements like ‘Kiwi experience’*”. Having no basis for comparison, as she had not lived anywhere else outside the Philippines, Clary was unsure if this was a similar requirement for other countries. It was certainly never the case in the Philippines. I identified closely with this experience because I encountered the same obstacle when I was seeking employment after I first arrived. What exactly constitutes ‘Kiwi experience’? The very phrase suggests that a prospective employee should have lived and worked in New Zealand for a quite a time. However, this constitutes a form of employee discrimination because it effectively prevents new migrants from seeking work in New Zealand. How could we gain ‘Kiwi experience’ if we were not given the opportunity to work here? And how could we work if we did not have ‘Kiwi experience’? It truly was a ridiculous requirement, a classic example of a catch-22, included in most job applications around the early 2000s. A quick look at the job advertisements today revealed that this requirement has been dropped, at least visibly.

Another challenge for Clary, and many Filipinos, was the Kiwi accent: it was difficult to understand. This is because Filipinos are used to hearing the American accent. There was anecdotal evidence that many new Filipino migrants were initially unwilling to answer the phone because they were worried about not understanding the person on the other end. Even conversing face-to-face with the locals was stressful. Migrants worry about being seen as stupid for not understanding what is being said. I could certainly empathize with this as I felt the same when I first arrived. Despite being able to speak English, the different accent and pronunciation prevented me, initially, from understanding what was spoken. Clary and other migrants have, I’m sure, over time, realized that there are different English accents. It was our first exposure to Kiwi English. The

experience was one example of how adjusting to a new country permeates even the most simple things like understanding how the locals speak and eventually attuning one's ears to the differentness of the sound. Differences begin to surface and are easily recognizable when a migrant immerses herself in the new culture. At her first job, Clary discovered that the responsibilities of an administrator or secretary were very different from the Philippines. For instance, she observed that in smaller and medium-sized companies in New Zealand, work duties included collecting dirty cups, putting the dishes in the dishwasher at the end of the day, running errands, and doing the shopping. In the Philippines, an administrator/secretary only did office work. There was a janitor who did the more menial tasks. In New Zealand, these responsibilities were combined because there were no janitors: *"So their concept of an admin person is you need to do the dishes and run errands that you would normally ask an errand boy to do back home."* This very simple storyline revealed how even in the work environment cultural differences exist. Small adjustments like this are necessary for a migrant to make and which are a part of the larger transitions migrants encounter.

I experienced a similar situation in my first job in New Zealand; I was able to initially find work as a receptionist at a small company in Glenfield. I was dismayed to find that one of my duties beyond answering front desk queries and phone calls was to collect the staff's coffee cups at the end of the day, shop for supplies for the week, order alcohol for the Friday afternoon social drinking, and order the staff's lunch. To some extent, reflecting on Clary's and my experiences, it felt demeaning. However, as members of the minority group and being migrants, the adjustments were necessary. Clary confirmed this when at different points in her narration she said: *"you adjust,"* her tone suggesting that was the end of that. She observed, however, that over the years of living here that Auckland's diversity was growing. The influx of more immigrants, bringing with them new ideas, have made jobs across all sectors, she believed, *"more professional."* When I prompted her to explain what she meant, she felt there was less and less of the menial jobs required of administrators with more focus on office work.

Another significant challenge for Clary initially was that she found the sense of humor hard to understand: *"I couldn't understand their sense of humor so it was hard to integrate."* It was important for her to grasp what locals thought was funny because it enabled her to be part of the group. Like being able to speak the language, understanding the humor of locals provides a migrant a better chance of assimilation into that culture and interact socially. Clary knew this.

She also found that providing feedback when asked and then not appreciating it was strange:

"It's also hard to understand exactly what it is they mean because they're not straightforward in what they think. So, like even at work when they say 'we would like your feedback,' you're asked the question so what do you do? You give them feedback only to find out that they don't really want both negative,

they don't want the negative feedback so now I've learned when they ask for your feedback you don't tell them the negative stuff, you just tell them the positive stuff."

Clary was used to providing honest feedback when asked for it, possibly due to the strong American culture in which she was steeped in growing up. Hence, when she is asked for an opinion, she gives it. So she brought this belief to her new home, only to learn that it was different here. The experience has taught her to now proceed more cautiously when asked for 'feedback.' This incident exemplified how outsiders to a culture learn very quickly that perceptions and definitions of certain concepts or words can and do carry different meanings. It links to multicultural communication, whereby misunderstandings and misconceptions arise because different things have different meanings for different cultures.

The culture shock did not stop there. She found doing things for herself, like packing the grocery bags and filling the car with gas, difficult and demeaning. She recounted how she used to cry the first few times while loading the grocery bags into the car:

"So packing your own groceries in the supermarket and then loading your own gas in the gasoline station, so you have someone to do that for you in the Philippines. When you come here you have to do it yourself. It's something that you're not used to so you get shock, it's culture shock but you have to get used to it."

From the experiences she shared above, it was obvious that in all aspects of her early life in New Zealand, small and large adjustments needed to be made. These are all part of assimilating and acculturating to a new home, a different culture. It was apparent, though, that the differences were markedly contrasting, making it truly challenging for Clary in many ways, from work to simple things outside work like shopping.

The main lesson from her story is that migration requires all kinds of adjustments, in all aspects of the new life. For migrants like Clary and the other Filipinas in this study who decided that New Zealand is going to be 'home', I sensed a mental shift within that allowed each one to adapt successfully. So, despite the initial 'shock', Clary took a pragmatic view and adjusted to each situation, when she emphasized that *"you have to get used to it."* As a newcomer to a new country and home, it was natural to compare and contrast ways in which certain things were done. However, rather than complaining too much about it, Clary decided that the only way to address this was to get used to it. And she did.

One other significant adjustment for her was the food, *"food's different."* She was used to having a huge breakfast and meals in the Philippines:

"Well, at that time, the only thing you want to do is eat Filipino food, you're not used to it, like for breakfast, what do you want for breakfast? You want tapsilog (a common breakfast fare of thinly sliced pan-fried beef, egg, and fried rice), or you want sinangag (fried rice), whereas now I can't even eat breakfast anymore, I'm quite happy with fruit and yoghurt and that was never me."

This change in eating habits, I believe showed how much Clary had adjusted to life in New Zealand. Where she was used to having a full breakfast in the mornings, the fact that she had to do it herself meant there was no time to cook and she had gotten used to eating lightly. When I asked her why it changed, she said that there was a maid who prepared breakfast every morning; when she came down, the table was set, the food was ready. In New Zealand, there was no one and not much time in the morning to prepare such a hearty fare. Like the experiences of the other Filipinas discussed earlier, Clary had to trade-off this comfort for her new life. To some extent, it could be said that this switch was out of necessity, and not by choice. However, this particular adjustment did take a while for her get used to:

“And that’s only in the last how many years when I’ve become like that and like even for lunch and dinners, I’m OK with a salad and a sandwich whereas back in the Philippines I couldn’t do that and it took me a while to get over that.”

Clary believed that the reason there were more challenges for her at the beginning was because everything was different from what she expected. But, after many years of living here, she found that Auckland had changed – for the better:

“It’s easier to live in Auckland now but it’s probably harder to find a job cos there’s a lot of people, whereas before it was easier to find a job even though they were asking for a lot of ridiculous requirements like ‘Kiwi experience’ ... There were lots of jobs cos there were less people but now there’s more people so the competition for work is more.”

Auckland, due to migration, continues to grow and become densely populated. This results in more people competing for limited jobs, according to Clary. Despite that, she still finds that Auckland is a better city to live in due to the growing diversity of its population and that *“there are more lifestyle options for people compared to before.”*

I identified closely with many of the experiences that Clary shared in her story. What I learned from her is that the virtues of perseverance and patience are values that help migrants succeed, as well as the willingness to start from the bottom, which she mentioned in passing. By successfully assimilating, our new home indeed becomes a better and easier place to live in.

Clary’s I Poem

Listening for the ‘I’ allows us to hear how the narrator speaks of herself. But another feature of this stage allows us to discern the patterns in the way the ‘I’ moves (Gilligan, 2015), where we can “pick up an associative stream” (p. 72) flowing through the narrative. The tone of the stanza below, for instance, revealed a confident woman who knew what she wanted and what to do:

I left the Philippines

I wanted a change of lifestyle

I arrived in New Zealand

The same pattern of identifying what the issue was and dealing with it surfaced in the following stanzas:

I couldn't understand the way they talk

I can understand them well

I think I've fully integrated into the culture

I couldn't understand their sense of humor

I've learned

Initially, she could not understand how local talked but she gradually understood them, with time and perhaps some effort of listening closely to acclimatize her ears to their accent. In the process, she was able to integrate. It was similar to learning to understand their sense of humor. She made the effort to learn because only by doing so could she integrate into the society and culture. This integration extended to even her eating habit:

I can't even eat breakfast anymore

I'm quite happy with fruit and yoghurt

That was never me

I'm ok with a salad and a sandwich

I couldn't do that.

I can say it's a better city now

I like it better now

The purposeful tone to adjust to the changes in her life also indicated a confidence and self-affirmation in the choices she made. The shift from some aspects of life being difficult to one she overcame was very evident throughout her I-poem. In the end, she attained happiness and contentment, and now finds Auckland an easier place to live in.

Darna: "It made me a better me"

Four important lessons emerged from Darna's narrative. Firstly, migrating helped establish closer relationships within her family. Then, her faith in God deepened, which in turn changed her personal outlook on life. And finally, living in a country where she is a member of a minority group strengthened her appreciation for and pride in her cultural heritage. This last point supports one of the four strategies of the acculturation process, namely, integration (Maydell-Stevens, Masgoret, & Ward, 2007), which preserves the heritage while acquiring some characteristics of the host culture. Thus, Darna's ethnic loyalty remains high despite her living in New

Zealand for many years. Migration studies conducted by Keefe and Padilla (1987) and Padilla (1980) showed that ethnic loyalty remains high from the first to fourth generation migrants. This suggests that migrants come to appreciate cultural aspects which were taken for granted in the country of origin when they move elsewhere. Darna's story had a very strong sense of 'we', where the decision to come to New Zealand was a choice made jointly with her husband, Danny. Despite being financially comfortable and having very good positions in Manila, their reasons for leaving the Philippines were due to the instability of their social standing and the rat race. Both had worked many years in the Information Technology industry, with Darna holding the position of Country Head for the marketing division of a large multinational company. Despite this, they felt that their situation was tenuous and they were unhappy with the rampant corruption in society. She admitted there was always a fear of nothing being permanent. This confirmed Barber's (2008) study of middle-class Filipino migrants to Canada who mostly complained about the Philippines' political corruption and economic instability as their main reason for migrating, claiming "they desire class mobility and the status that goes with this, if not for themselves, certainly for their children" (Barber, 2008, p. 1281). Darna and Danny wanted their children to have better opportunities for their future.

"It was a realization that things will be very different... We were quite comfortable in the Philippines and both Danny and I hold good positions. However, for how long will we be struggling in the rat race? There's always this fear of nothing is permanent and the traffic situation and the cost of living, the schools, the education, would there be equal opportunities for the children?"

Like many Filipinos, Darna and Danny had family already living overseas, mostly in the United States. After speaking with friends and other people, they thought they would "give it a go", too. This confirms that culture of migration pervading the national psyche. It may be safe to say that every Filipino will know of someone who is living or working overseas. Their choices were the United States, Canada, and Australia. However, after visiting family in the US, they realized the lifestyle did not suit them. The couple wanted a laid back country on a first world level and decided on New Zealand. Their impression of New Zealand was that life here was simple, "no traffic, simple things...there's no crime." The notion that everything was safe was very attractive to them.

One of the difficulties that Darna encountered when she arrived was having to do things on their own – the laundry, cooking, and cleaning. As is already evident in the earlier stories, it is the absence of helpers that most Filipino middle-class migrants miss about living here. For Darna, doing things herself was very humbling. She considered it a "renewed kind of life."

"It's like having a renewed kind of life for me which I never thought I would be able to do. So waking up in the morning, cooking breakfast, preparing the kids, bringing the kids to school, the kind of life that I

never experienced when I was in the Philippines is the life that is exactly presented to me – to take care of my family.”

In many middle-class households in the Philippines, both parents usually work and the running of the household is left to the maids. Even the children are taken care of by the maids, while the parents go to work. For Darna, the change in lifestyle when they arrived in New Zealand meant she had closer interactions with her family. Initially, only her husband found employment, and it was a one-income household. She had no choice but to do the household work by herself thereby focusing on her responsibilities as a wife and mother. But this made them a family in the true sense of the word:

“We became a family – here – because we do things as a family. We go to the parks, and I can’t leave the children on their own. In the Philippines, you do things because the yayas (Tagalog word for nannies) will be there to handle them, you leave them behind. But here you have to tag them along otherwise you’re not doing it right. So every inch of the way the children will be with you.”

That closeness, of course, developed an awareness and deeper appreciation of each family member as a person, strengthening the bonds and interconnectedness within the group. As a consequence, Darna also gained a better understanding of herself as a woman, mother, and wife. This change was very important to Darna because she now had the time and opportunity to devote time and attention to her children and husband. This brought them closer as a family because they were always together and did things together. Their stronger bond as a family is something that Darna values very highly. In the Philippines, husband and wife would have gone about their jobs and arrived home late, with the children usually in bed. A system is established whereby non-family members, other people, take care of the family. Family interactions would have been minimal, if almost absent.

Consequently, this situation would have made the children closer to their *yaya* rather than to their own parents as she was the person they saw first thing in the morning and last at night. Strangely, this situation is echoed in hundreds of households around the world that import our women for domestic labor. It is the maid whom the children develop an emotional bond with. In turn, the mothers who work overseas also leave their children behind with others to care for them. It is a very sad state of affairs.

Many upper- and middle-class households in the Philippines rely heavily on the live-in help for the smooth running of the household. In what is becoming more the norm, both parents work and leave the caring of the children to the maid/s, resulting in a closer bond developing between child and maid. There are some factors that contribute to this: firstly, the need to provide financially for the family has become the responsibility of both parents. Like many families in New Zealand, a single-income household will not suffice to meet daily expenses like food, transport, school expenses, and so on. Hence, many Filipino households in Manila have two-income providers. Another factor is that more Filipinas have been working even after marriage and pursuing careers. What facilitates this is the availability of recruiting live-in help. A resulting consequence of

this is that parents are also able to pursue other social activities outside the work, secure in the knowledge that there is someone at home with the kids. Darna stated that she could leave her children behind with the maids. However, in New Zealand, the children cannot be left alone at home; nor is it the practice to have maids. This was a challenge for her at the beginning, however, she saw it as a blessing because it drew her closer to her husband and children. She thus found fulfillment being a stay-at-home mother and wife.

A second theme evident throughout her story was her deep faith and unwavering trust in God. The changes and challenges she faced were surmountable because of this faith, and this deepened after they moved here. Darna is a very religious person, and is active in her church. Many Filipinos are like her. In fact, one of the first places that new Filipino migrants seek upon arriving is the Church. This is where their social networks are established because the Church and its traditions are their link to home. By being involved, it not only allows them to continue the religious practices they grew up with, but it also allows them to connect with other Filipinos. The familiar cultural practices of attending mass service are a way of connecting to home and provides a sense of community life (Bonifacio, 2009). Darna attributes her coming here and being able to adjust to God:

“I am not really very sad that I couldn’t work (referring to the single-income household initially) because I know God has a purpose for me to be able to experience being a homemaker and be able to depend only on my husband’s income. Because both of us were working, he has his salary, I have my salary and then here, we’re only having one take home income.”

Darna was convinced it was God’s will to change their lives so that she could become a better wife and mother. Attributing success and failure to a higher being or power enables many Filipinos to face the trials and challenges of life. There is also the belief that these difficulties are temporary and that there is a higher, and better, purpose for such challenges. This coping mechanism is what allows many Filipinos to have a longer perseverance and tolerance for the difficulties they face. When I asked Darna about the challenges and whether she still considered them positive, she confirmed:

“Maybe my coping mechanism is different. Maybe...it’s different when you believe in God. You believe in the Lord that after this storm it will be sunshine again. Maybe it’s my faith, my faithfulness to my family and to the Lord.”

Therefore, she drew courage and strength from God and her family to adjust to her life as a migrant. The challenges and changes in her character, outlook, and her family dynamics were very important to Darna. She believed it made her a better person.

“It’s so gratifying to know that I can do so much that I thought I can never do because of the situation. Pretty much God has given me the opportunity to be able to know that I will be able to work within the limits of my income or the family’s income. I would be able to work around creatively on coming up with something out of nothing.”

Migration allowed her to dig deep within herself and discover how much more she could cope with the new life in a new country. She became more creative about budgeting and living within their financial means, which she admitted was quite tight initially.

Darna eventually found part-time work to augment the family finances. She realized that they were never conscious of their spending or the real value of money while living in the Philippines. This debunks the stereotype in the literature that Filipino women leave due to poverty or financial hardship. Coming here has taught her to be more frugal with her spending. For instance, she now does not mind buying second-hand clothes from the op shop: *“there is no shame in op shop.”* However, she admitted that when she first arrived, using second-hand things was difficult: *“I cried, when I first arrived and that was my first experience with second-hand things.”* In fact, the first second-hand item she bought was a noodle scooper. She considered it a prize possession because it kept her humble:

“I got it from a second-hand shop and that’s 50 cents. I cried that I couldn’t afford a brand new uniform for my children. In the Philippines, their uniform 5 days they have 5 uniforms. And then here I can’t even afford because it’s \$50 at that time, expensive. So I was really crying to my sister in the Philippines.”

She also learned where to buy reduce-priced goods. Her cost-consciousness is now something she is proud of and is a habit she and her family adopt to this day. It was through cost-saving, she said with pride, that they were able to buy a house:

“There is no shame in second hand goods, there’s no shame in buying reduced.”

She actually alerted me to the fact that supermarkets, at the end of the day, reduce the prices of many of their freshly baked goods. From 5.30 pm, the supermarkets like Countdown and New World drop the prices of their fresh bakes. This was news for me as I never was aware of this sale towards the end of a day. She also said that Filipinos know where the cheap deals are and again reiterated *“there is no shame. That’s your money.”* She constantly repeated that phrase as if to reassure herself that this was all right, which it was. But it seemed important to her to stress this for my benefit as well. Seemingly this reinforced for Darna that she was happy with the changes in her outlook and her life in New Zealand. She recalled that when she was in the Philippines, she was very brand-conscious:

“Everything has to be always new. When shopping, the items must be branded. I used to travel a lot and then there is the mentality that one must have branded items. Here there is none of that. My Ferragamo bags are still packed away. I’m very proud my children are not brand conscious.”

This indicates a major shift in thinking. From a middle-class, financially stable home to living on a one-income household not only forced her to be frugal and smart with spending her money, but her whole outlook about

material possessions underwent a 360-degree change. Buying second-hand items and reduce-priced items symbolizes a form of assimilation into the Kiwi culture and she embraced it wholeheartedly.

Despite her obvious assimilation, living here has made Darna and her family appreciate better their Filipino culture and heritage. This was most evident in their desire to continue to speak in Tagalog, particularly with the children.

“We encourage them to speak the language, their native tongue, because we don’t want them to lose their identity. And we never really let them really lose speaking in Tagalog. We encourage them to speak Tagalog at home, no English. When they forget, we remind them”

It is said that one of the markers of cultural identity is the ability to speak one’s native language and Darna maintained her children’s cultural heritage this way. In this regard, they integrated the old and new cultures. There was a sense of pride and identity when they spoke the language. From my own experience, when I meet other Filipinos, I feel a sense of belonging and connection to ‘home’ when we speak Filipino/Tagalog with each other. Even amongst ourselves within the family, we now speak more Tagalog here than we did when we were living in Manila. I believe that, somehow, by speaking our language, we maintain the links to ‘home’ and we reinforce our identity as Filipino.

For Darna, New Zealand is a place that provides many opportunities to migrants, albeit in varying degrees:

“Sometimes some people find that having an opportunity to get out from the country [referring to the Philippines or country of origin] gives them more opportunities to discover themselves just like how I did, just in varying degrees.”

Migration, thus, is an opportunity to find oneself, based on Darna’s story. Darna considered the challenges and changes that accompany migration in a positive light because it pushes a person to discover her potentials. To emphasize her point, she cited the mail order brides she knew who made the most of the opportunities they had. She admired them because, despite the limited education of some, coming to New Zealand afforded them with *“a chance to be on their own and be able to shine brightly.”* She likened them to herself: realizing their other talents in the face of adversity and discovering that they can succeed. This is a very enlightening and refreshing attitude towards mail order brides because many Filipina professionals avoid associating with them due to a sense of shame about their status. Darna did not ‘other’ them but saw beyond that. She enthused:

“I should say that New Zealand has given us so much opportunities, infinite possibilities to be able to achieve your dreams. It is up to you if you do not achieve your dreams or you do not discover yourself, it’s up to you.”

This is significant. In this new home, Darna believed that migrants have all the opportunities to succeed and realize their dreams and there is no stopping an individual at all. All that is needed is the determination and the heart to make the most of what is at hand. Determination and a deep faith that God has a purpose for each

individual are the ingredients for success for Darna. If one does not succeed or under-achieves, it is no one's fault but the self because "*there are infinite possibilities.*"

What impressed me most about Darna's story was her strong and unwavering faith in God and belief that all things that happened were for the good. I used to be like her myself, but not having been a practicing Catholic for many years, I envy her faith. Sometimes I miss that fervency. Many Filipinos have a very deep well of faith that stands them in good stead with life's challenges. She speaks with confidence and conviction about her faith. Her humility over the challenges she faced and how her perspective on life has changed is very inspirational.

Darna's I Poem

The huge changes in Darna's life since migrating and the significant changes in her as a person are very evident in her I voice. In the stanza below, she traced her change from being a full-time professional busy with her career, to becoming a full time mother after the move to New Zealand. It was only after she left that she realized she could do many things which she previously never did or thought about, particularly caring for her children. Migration changed the focus of her daily life to her family rather than her profession. Where she apparently earned much more in her old life, living here taught her to appreciate having so much less.

I was the country head for integrated marketing communications

I was really a person who had been in the industry and being a professional for a long time

It stopped because I came to New Zealand

I am a stay at home mom,

I was really in the corporate world

I never thought

I would be able to do

I never experienced when I was in the Philippines

To take care of my family

I can't leave the children on their own

I started with volunteer job

I was very happy earning \$40 a week

I can have extras!

The tone in the last stanza above showed the contentment and happiness Darna felt with having less. As with most migrants, she started at the bottom and having a volunteer job seemed fulfilling. Despite only earning very minimally, the joy in being able to have some extra cash is obvious. The different perspective and attitude she adapted after moving helped in adjusting to her new lifestyle and this is clearly voiced below:

I see it as a different way for me

I came at peace and into terms of what I can do not being in the profession

I can still do and be

I would always look at it from the point of view that my children

I would be there for them

With my husband as well I will always be able to cook something

I would always say I took care of my family

Darna said that only by accepting her new situation could she be at peace with herself. And the reward for that is knowing that her children appreciated her efforts and sacrifice. Her greatest achievement, and which she constantly mentioned throughout her narrative, was being there for her family and fulfilling her responsibilities as a wife and mother. Furthermore, although she was aware of being a minority in New Zealand and that she may have had to start from the bottom, she kept in mind that there was much she could contribute to the society and be a valuable citizen. She valued herself as a person and in the valuing, she felt good about herself and her new life.

I believed in what I can do

I said “reverse psychology”

I am not going to feel that I’m a second class citizen here

I’m not

My coming here has contributed and will contribute good.

It made me a better me

I can do so much

I never thought I can the hike in Rangitoto

God has given me the opportunity

I will be able to work within the limits of my income or the family’s income

I would be able to work creatively on coming up with something out of nothing

Darna’s migrant experience was one she treasured deeply because it made her a better person in so many ways. she saw the challenges as positive experiences because they allowed her to push her boundaries and to do things that she would never have even considered in her old life. It had also made her more creative.

Dr E: “I felt more normal here than back home”

Dr E’s own story highlighted and confirmed three common experiences that often surface in the larger migration narrative: the escape from poverty, the non-recognition of professional qualifications of new

migrants, and leading often to professional deskilling in the new country. A fourth theme is Dr E's 'othering' of Filipina mail order brides she met during her early years living here, which I found insightful.

Although Dr E trained as a doctor in Manila, her parents were not well to do but managed to scrape enough to be able to send her through medical school. This is a common scenario amongst many lower class Filipino families: doing everything possible to provide a good education for their children because it is the one pathway that will provide them a better future. A good education leads to a better job and a better life for the individual as well as the whole family. There is a saying in Filipino '*igagapang natin*'. Literally translated it means 'we will crawl' but the essence is that we will do everything within our power and capabilities, even if it means huge personal sacrifices, just to send you to a good school so that you can succeed in life.' It is this mentality that many overseas Filipino workers hold on to when they leave their children behind.

For Dr E, leaving the Philippines was her escape from what she considered an inevitable hard life. Even if she had a medical degree, she would have been competing with other new doctors who had more financial resources than she did. These doctors would have been able to set up their own private practice or work in private hospitals. Poorer doctors like herself would work in public hospitals or in the provinces where wages were lower. This is one reason why many doctors in the Philippines leave for overseas and retrain as nurses instead (Brush & Sochalski, 2007). She knew that, career-wise, there was not much of a future for her and left the Philippines 27 years ago. She candidly explained:

"I couldn't go side-by-side with my classmates who were children of consultants already who has clinics and hospitals to inherit or children of diplomats who I know will always have money to set up their own practice. I've got nothing like that...I'm the poorest in the class, I couldn't go to buy the expensive branded clothes that my classmates would all wear. And of course those classmates of mine because they're in the same socio-economic strata, they go to the same places, they go to parties, you're kinda left alone with a group of friends of mine who are in the same boat as me. When there's reunions, I see these pictures of them partying, I've never been there cause I was never invited."

As a poorer student, Dr E provided an important glimpse into the social stratification prevalent in Manila. A medical degree does not necessarily assure a financially stable or rewarding career. Rather, it is a matter of who you know in society and whether you have the financial resources. Her wealthier classmates moved in the same circles and out-group members would find it difficult to be accepted or belong for many reasons. Dr E admitted she was one of the poorer students and could not keep up with their social activities. Philippine society is highly stratified, particularly in the big cities, and it is very difficult to become part of the 'club.' Family background, education, and occupation of parents are social markers for social class acceptance. But this is a very complex situation, one which is beyond the scope of this research. It is sufficient to know that for many Filipinos, unless

their family is very rich and owns properties and businesses, belonging to the middle class does not ensure a stable future.

“I will not survive back home. My parents are not that well off. To be posted in a hospital you have to have a bond. We don't have money. Couldn't afford it so the only way out I can see is go overseas.”

Of all the women in this study, she was the only one who confirmed that her reason for migrating was to escape poverty. So, when a friend of her mother's visited the Philippines and invited her to holiday in New Zealand, she took up the offer at the first available chance she had. She visited for 3 weeks and liked what she saw.

Within the two weeks of her stay, she lodged her application for residency before returning home.

Her application, of course, was approved because she was a professional. However, it was not immediately easy starting here either. A common hurdle faced by many migrants is that the profession they qualified for in their home countries is not immediately recognized in New Zealand and often additional training or studying is required. When Dr E arrived in 1989, she was one of five hundred Filipino doctors with residency permits.

However, due to the number of points they had, they could not practice. They were prepared to file a group lawsuit against the government for loss of income. As a compromise, the government instead offered each of them a grant of \$40,000 to study in a bridging course. This course enabled each migrant doctor to attend medical school for 6 months, pass an exam for 5th year medical students, and attend a crash course in internship. Of course, all of them already had the work experience and qualification but this was not enough to be provided registration by New Zealand standards. Hence, the bridging course. Naturally, all five hundred Filipino doctors had to start from the bottom. Dr E herself did not mind this because she was able to go around New Zealand.

She said she was assigned to places that the locals did not want to go – another feature of being a migrant – taking on the jobs and roles that locals turned down. For her internship training Dr E travelled to Hamilton and Rotorua, as well as being stationed in Auckland.

This state of affairs sometimes leads to migrants being unable to practice in the field for which they qualified. Dr E confirmed this. Thus, in order *“to survive”* initially, she took on different roles. Aside from starting out as a teacher assistant in a school for the disabled, she also did computer website design and worked as a healthcare assistant in a nursing home. Many migrants will attest to this deskilling of profession. Some, who have to start from the bottom, are fortunate to find their way back to the profession they trained in, while others never do. Dr E, the other women in this study, and I were among those fortunate ones. In the interim, she studied through the bridging course mentioned earlier.

After the initial challenging part of her narrative, things began to improve in her life. She got registration to practice medicine and began specializing in internal medicine. Dr E also met her Kiwi husband and started her family. However, her work took her away from home most of the time. She realized she needed to spend more time with her growing daughter. So she took a sabbatical leave from the hospital where she was working. But

she also got a job as a general practitioner (GP) and enjoyed the fixed hours so she shifted her focus to train as a fellow/general practitioner.

Over time, Dr E managed to buy the practice where she worked and she also bought a clinic in Australia. She shuttles between the two clinics these days. When I asked her if she found the management and running of two clinics in different countries difficult, she said it was more a relief. She admitted that life in the Philippines was more difficult for her: *“My life here is better. I felt normal here than back home.”* Migration allowed her to break free of the financial and social difficulties that plagued her in Manila. Although she did not explicitly state it, I noted a similarity to Darna’s narrative that being here provides an individual with infinite possibilities to succeed. Dr E has certainly succeeded very well and I am very proud of her achievements.

One incident in her story which I found particularly interesting was her avoidance of other Filipinos during her early years, particularly the mail order brides:

“In the first ten years of my life [in New Zealand] I’ve stayed away from Filipinos all together. Because what happened was I was eventually meeting the mail order bride Filipinas who drive expensive cars married to old guys and we get invited to parties and I find it quite superficial. And I felt like I don’t have time for this, and it’s different now where the migrants are intellectuals. It’s quite different then. So, now there is more class. And it sounds crass, but yeah.”

This revelation contradicts previous literature, particularly the study on Filipino nurses in Singapore who avoided associating with the domestic helpers there because of the shame and humiliation they felt about the ethno-racial stereotyping by Singaporeans of Filipinas (Amrith, 2010). Her choice of avoiding the other women was not so much because of what they were but because of the pretentiousness they exhibited at social functions. She considered them superficial and ostentatious. I think this reaction of Dr E’s may be attributed to a Filipino cultural value that discourages showing off: humility is a trait valued by most Asian cultures.

Furthermore, she did not perceive them as ‘classy’ because of their behavior. This would be around the time of the first wave of Filipino migrants who came as mail order brides. Today’s migrants, she believed, are ‘intellectuals’ and had ‘more class’. She was aware that she was judgmental – ‘crass’ on her part, but she was honest. I could not help wondering later on, however, if the social class mentality had seeped into her own subconscious when she ‘othered’ the Filipina brides.

Of all the women’s stories, it was Dr E’s story that touched me deeply. In fact, I felt overwhelmed with emotion that by the end of her story I cried a bit after I switched off the recording. Here was a woman who came from humble backgrounds to rise and become successful. Despite her achievements and triumph, however, she remains humble and willing to help others. Her clinic in Auckland provides charity to non-residents, particularly students on student visas who are not entitled to medical services. She provides them funded treatment by charging them the same price as residents for consultation. It was her way, she said, of repaying

New Zealand back for providing her with an education in order to practice here and establish her career. She claimed it was her form of public service to the community. I am proud of all the Filipinas in this group who shared their stories generously but this particular story made me more proud of her being a Filipina. I am heartened by the certainty that there are many more like her and us who have succeeded in our life in New Zealand.

Dr E's I Poem

Dr E's I poem revealed the initial challenges she encountered because she did not plan ahead or confirm what the policies were for working in New Zealand. From the stanza below, she presumed that having residency automatically meant she could practice medicine. Bureaucracy and red tape interfered:

*I didn't have the foresight to check medical council whether I'd be allowed to work here,
Little did I know that they don't talk,
I got my residency
I could only work in the profession
I got points system for*

It was not until she arrived in New Zealand that she realized her points were not enough to allow her to work as a doctor. Apparently, the Medical Council and Immigration Department did not work closely together to ensure a smooth transition for professional migrants like her. As a result, a rude surprise lay in wait for her.

*I ended up working as a teacher.
I carried on studying to get the registration.
I worked in a school
I worked there initially as a teacher assistant.
I did a lot of roles including computer website design
I survived that way while
I was studying...*

Despite being unable to practice, her I voice revealed a woman who knew what she wanted and worked hard to realize her dreams, despite obstacles and challenges that blocked her path. She found work while studying to gain registration. We see in the roles she outlined above that she used other skills she had to find jobs that could sustain her until her registration was completed. However, anyone who has studied and worked at the same time knows that sometimes the situation can become overwhelming and one part suffers. Sometimes, it was her studies that she had to sacrifice in order to make ends meet, as she shared below:

*I didn't have time to study,
I was working in the school from 8 o'clock till 2,*

I was in the nursing home as a healthcare assistant.

I did that for nearly 3 years

I had to save money and then send money back home.

I'm still in the nursing home working from 7 till 3

I study in between those times.

Earning a living seemed to take priority. It was important not only for herself but also because she was sending some of the money home to help her family. This supports the literature about Filipinos working overseas remitting money back to the Philippines. This is why our human capital is a very crucial factor to the Philippine economy (Browne & Braun, 2008; Brush & Sochalski, 2007). Finally, however, the tide began to turn and Dr E's hard work began to pay off and there was a shift in her career focus:

I took the sabbatical

I got a job as a GP.

I worked from 9 till 5.

I'm free and I've got weekends.

I thought that was great.

I enjoyed

I said instead of finishing my internal medicine, why don't I just do this specialty?

It will only require me 2 years

I took the specialty

I became a fellow

I did my fellowship in Australia

I'm now a specialist in general practice for both countries.

The early years of hard work were beginning to see fruition and she began to slow down her pace. She was able to have weekend and work only until 5. She enjoyed the new lifestyle that she specialized as a fellow instead. She was, thus, able to train and be registered in both New Zealand and Australia. I think the most significant lesson I learned from her narrative was that hard work entails a lot of sacrifice but if one perseveres, success is attainable. For migrants, the perseverance and sacrifice become badges of honor that result in contentment at the end of the journey. Dr E confirmed as much when she ended her narrative: "*There's nothing I could ask for anymore.*" I also think that the sense of belonging that Dr E felt in this country was due to the fact that her she could see how her hard work paid off for her. Unlike in the Philippines, where one could work so much and not see much benefit, here the dreams she had were realized.

Elena: “I really got what I wanted and more”

Like the women with families, Elena’s main reason for leaving the Philippines was to provide a better future for her children. Despite having sent them to the best schools in Manila, she and her husband felt that the political and economic situation was not improving and were concerned that their children would subsequently not have good jobs. She attributed this to the widespread corruption prevalent throughout all sectors of Philippine society: “*Unless you join the bandwagon of corruption, you will not survive and we were thinking of the children.*” Furthermore, corruption was rife in all sectors of the society and they felt it was a hopeless situation. Their only option at the time was to leave. They became aware of New Zealand after watching a documentary about it on TV. It also happened that her husband, Pedro, already had a cousin residing here so they gathered more information from that cousin and read up about the country. What they heard and read appealed to them: New Zealand did not have a ‘big city’ feel or impression. It seemed very similar to the small town environment which they were used to in the Philippines. This impression was further confirmed when Elena arrived first in 1997 and discovered that the malls and most shops were closed on the weekends, and also closed down early during the week. “*It was so quiet!*” she laughingly recounted. She knew then that it would appeal to Pedro. Elena shared three messages in her narrative: the extreme good fortune that a migrant can sometimes encounter, the difficulty of a mother separated from her children, and the struggle of having no help at home. This third point is a recurring theme in the other women’s stories but is more evident here because it had a profound change on Elena’s outlook on maids.

Sometimes, the migrant experience of finding work can be so easy. Elena’s case was one example. Within 2 weeks of her arrival in Auckland, she was able to find work as a music teacher in a music school. It was, she said, a case of being “*at the right place, at the right time.*” The school required an immediate start because one of its regular teachers was going into surgery. During her interview, Elena also discovered that the incumbent Education Manager was resigning at the end of the school term. Elena quickly indicated her interest in the position once it became vacant. Subsequently, she also became the school’s Education Manager. In this regard, Elena was luckier than most migrants because she was able to find work along the lines of her training, and quite quickly: “*I consider myself luckier than all the rest who have to take jobs that is way below their qualification. I really got what I wanted and even more.*” Many migrants usually start from the bottom, as some of the women’s stories previously revealed.

However, despite the relatively easy start, the main sacrifice for her was her separation from her children. “*The sad part of being a migrant is like, in my case, is when I had to leave my children. That was the saddest part.*” Most Filipino families are closely-knit because of the culture’s collectivist nature. Special occasions are always celebrated with family. Elena’s was no exception. Listening to her story, it was evident that she ensured her family did things together. This was a bit of a contrast from Darna’s story. Whereas Darna only enjoyed being a

family when they arrived here, Elena had already established a close family unit before she and her husband left the Philippines. It may have to do with the fact that Elena taught as a music teacher and her hours were not as long as if she had worked in the office. Thus, she had more time to devote to her children and husband. Her very first Christmas away from her children was unforgettable for her and Pedro:

“I will never forget that Christmas that Pedro and I...it was good that he was here...that Pedro and I had, just the two of us and it was the first time that we didn’t have our children around... And then knowing that it’s only our children who are celebrating it back home and you know we’re such a close-knit family...they were always with us.”

As she reminisced on this, I could sense how emotional the memory was still for her. For a mother, especially, being separated from her children is particularly painful. This scenario has been and continues to be re-enacted in many Filipino families. Many of our OFWs (Overseas Filipino Workers) are mothers who have had to leave young children behind. Some work as nannies or housemaids, caring for other women’s children but not theirs. They develop a close relationship with their wards which they are prevented from doing with their children. It is a very heartbreaking situation but it is the dream of providing financial security and being able to send the children to school that pushes many of our Filipinas abroad. The children, thus, grow up without having their mothers around (Asis, 2002; Cohen, 2000; Fresnoza-Flot, 2009; Parreñas, 2001; Van der Ham, Ujano-Batanga, Ignacio & Wolffers, 2015). My own mother needed to leave us behind initially in order to establish herself in Vietnam. It was the same for Elena; the separation was temporary and she was able to bring her children to New Zealand almost a year after she arrived. The objective of gaining residency was the motivation that kept her going and kept her from dwelling too much on the children she left behind: *“Having to work, having to work hard and having to make sure that you get your residency just kept me busy the whole time.”*

Another challenge for Elena as a migrant was not having help at home. Like many middle-class Filipinos, Elena was used to having live-in help at home. Of the women interviewed, it seemed that this was particularly difficult for Elena. In fact, she revealed, *“I grew up with help, you had cook...so I arrived here not knowing how to cook.”* From her youth until she married, Elena was surrounded by maids. The changed lifestyle, therefore, was a real struggle for her in the beginning:

“The thing that I had difficulty adjusting at first was cleaning the house, cleaning the toilet. Back home when you wake up your house is clean already because somebody’s cleaning it. And because they lived with you, the helpers lived with you, even if there’s dust in the afternoon, everyday somebody cleans so your house is always clean. But over here you have work, you do everything.”

For Filipina migrants who are used to having help, suddenly doing everything alone can be truly overwhelming, particularly when they have to work and then come home to do household chores. Many couples learn to share the work. In Philippine society, men usually do not do household chores, while the women delegate the

responsibilities to the maids. When Elena and Pedro first arrived, they had an arrangement where Elena would cook the food before leaving for work and when Pedro arrived home, he would pick up the children from school (who had already arrived by then). The children also learned to help with the chores. But this sharing of housework was something that the family had never really done in the Philippines. During the course of this part of her narrative, Elena's belief in distinct gender roles and responsibilities are revealed: "*He did the maintaining of the house and lawn mowing, but the cooking is ours.*" She assigned the 'ours' collectively to all women: it is a woman's responsibility to do the cooking. And this was one chore that she was in charge of, regardless of whether she was working and arrived home late. In fact, she prepared the evening meal before she left for work; she ensured that food would be ready for her family when they arrived from work and school: "*So they have the food already for dinner.*" Since Elena saw this as her duty as a woman, wife, and mother, she learned to cook quite quickly: "*I learned to cook, I had to learn to cook right away! Would you believe I didn't even know how to cook rice?*" A tip she learned from someone who knew how to cook was to stir fry and just put sauce in. But, the experience taught her to appreciate food that was prepared at restaurants when they ate out. She would look more closely at the food served and tried to understand out how to cook it and what its ingredients were. Where she took things for granted, she now saw the value in its preparation.

This particular experience considerably changed her attitudes towards maids. Where she used to take them and their help/services for granted, she developed a respect for and better understanding of the hard work they did. She learned to value them as people, so much so that when she visited the Philippines some years back, she felt uncomfortable about her ex-maid carrying her things for her when she went shopping:

"One of the helpers offered to be with us the whole time we were there and so because she knew, she remembers still where I wanted my stuff placed, and every time we go out she would always offer to carry the bags but I felt so... I didn't feel well letting somebody else carry my stuff. It's so different."

"It's so different." These words revealed the complete change in Elena. I asked her if she did so before – let the maids carry her stuff. Her response was "*I think so. Yeah. I would think so,*" implying that she never gave it a second thought, precisely because their assistance was taken for granted and perhaps Elena felt entitled to it. Living in New Zealand changed them all, she admitted. Every one of her family members realized how they treated their maids in the past; now she cannot imagine ever being like that again. Another incident that confirmed this change was when she and Pedro visited her brother-in-law. She heard him ask the maid for a glass of water: "*I said, 'oh my gosh, were we like that?' You know? Were we like that?*" Her tone, as she recounted the incident was one of horror and disbelief. A realization of how spoiled they were finally dawned with that innocuous episode. She sounded quite shocked that they behaved that way. That change also triggered a different behavior: they automatically stood from the table and brought their own dishes to the kitchen, rather than standing from the table and letting the maids clear it for them: "*you feel different, it's different.*" This

difference is the unease of having someone else do work that one can easily do. New Zealand culture has taught her to be more independent around the house. For this she was deeply thankful. She ended her narrative by confirming that she and Pedro made the right choice: “*we made a really good decision in coming here. I’m so glad we chose this, we chose to come here.*”

I believe that it was not only the fact that New Zealand provided the family with security and safety, but that it also changed them as people who appreciated the value of others’ hard work. They have become, I believe, better individuals for that. I believe that in order to see how the rest of the world lives, there is a need to leave one’s own backyard to appreciate others’ values as well as one’s own. In the process also, we see what is wrong or lacking in our old ways and change accordingly. Admittedly, there are challenges, but the wealth of knowledge and understanding that accompany it make the changes worthwhile, as I learned from Elena’s story. But the part of Elena’s story that resonated most with me was when she left her children behind while she paved the way for them to live in New Zealand. I was reminded of my mother’s own sacrifices of leaving me and my sister with our grandmother as she also forged a better life for her children. For many Filipinas with families, it is always about the children. Time and again, this sacrifice is echoed in thousands of Filipina mothers’ lives.

Elena’s I poem

Elena’s I voice revealed a woman who was confident and matter-of-fact about her plans of gaining work and achieving her goal of gaining residency. She left because of her children and once in New Zealand, her attention was focused on finding work.

*It was more for my children, the future of my children
I went around and only to realize that everything here is so different
I didn’t give up.
I tried to apply for a job and one of those that I called
I experienced also application letters being returned,
But then I was just lucky,
I would consider myself really lucky and God has been good
I arrived here around towards the end of September
I applied before the start of term 4 and in one of those schools that I called
I just happened to be right time, right place,
They called me back for interview.
I went there for the interview
I was going to teach Monday the following day*

The common experience that migrants share is finding that the host country has many differences from the home country. Elena discovered this for herself in the opening line of the stanza above but she was focused on making it work so she applied for jobs and, despite having applications turned down, she persisted. And the persistence paid off when she was called for interview and the job that she has held on to all these years. That first job resulted in her eventually buying the music school. The good luck she had was attributed to the typically Filipino faith in God. She traced how quickly she found herself working almost immediately after the interview. The almost staccato rhythm of the last three lines above reinforced the swiftness of how events developed. Elena was also quick to grab at the opportunity of extending her work. Below, when told during her interview that the school would soon need an Education Manager, she had no hesitation in expressing interest in the role:

I said “you might want to consider me for the position”

I was honest to her

I told her “Look this is my situation.

I’m a tourist here,

I have plans of staying and applying for residency if you can help me and get me a job offer,

I would be happy to stay.”

Her voice was confident and she was honest about why she needed the job. There is an old saying about striking while the iron is hot. Elena knew that was one of those moments and made it work for her advantage. Her whole family is now living with her here and she is very happy and contented. As she said, she got all she wanted and more. She closed her story by stating that *“It’s never perfect, as a whole, but I’m so glad we chose this, we chose to come here.”*

Mary: “I can start from scratch...because no one knows me”

Mary’s migrant story focused on three key themes: the deep satisfaction derived from starting at the bottom, the absence of social class distinctions in New Zealand, and deskilling professionally. *“I’m thinking of my kids,”* Mary responded when I asked her reasons for leaving the Philippines. In the early part of her narrative, there was a strong sense of ‘we’ because it was a joint decision between her and her husband to leave for the sake of the children. They both felt that the Philippines was saturated – it was overpopulated in Manila, it was getting more competitive, and the quality of life was worsening due to the extreme traffic:

“If it was only me and Benny, we’re happy but I’m thinking of my kids. It’s getting more and more competitive in a way that you have to study until PhD to be able to go somewhere... Everything is getting expensive, if they don’t graduate from a good school, they have nowhere to go and I don’t like that.”

As is typical of many parents, Mary wanted a good future for her children and to be able to compete in Philippine society, one must have graduated from a ‘good school’, otherwise there was no chance of moving up in the world. The worsening traffic also affected their quality of life. Mary revealed that she and Benny would leave home at 5 o’clock in the morning to avoid the morning traffic, park at work, and then sleep in the car until it was time to go in. Arriving early at work also ensured they could secure a parking space. Returning home after work in the traffic meant they seldom saw the children who were in bed by then. It was all these factors that finally pushed them to leave. Fortunately, they had good friends and relatives living in New Zealand to assist their adjustment. Mary also said it was easier to come to New Zealand because no ‘show money’ was needed, as compared to Australia. Canada was another option but Mary felt it was too far away from the Philippines if they wanted to visit family. Another pull factor was the fact that, at the time, there were not too many Filipinos yet in New Zealand, unlike Canada, the United States, and Australia. Mary felt a need to be away from that: *“I can start from scratch and I can be anyone I want to be because no one knows me.”* I found this quite an intriguing statement. Mary’s main concern was apparently being socially judged by the Filipino community. In countries like the United States or Canada, with huge numbers of Filipinos, somebody is bound to know someone and gossip and stories quickly spread. Mary felt that by being a stranger in her new home, it was easy to begin from scratch and form her own new identity and life. There was a strong sense of a fiercely independent spirit underlying her narrative. Starting with a new slate, starting from zero, making new friends, meeting new people who did not know her, was highly appealing. Where other migrants might balk at having to start over, Mary seemed to relish the opportunity. Also, by starting from scratch, it tested her and Benny’s ability to succeed without help from parents, friends, or relatives:

“The feeling of success was different because we had no help from our parents. So, we really had nothing, we didn’t have money to start big. I was so proud of that.”

In fact, she revealed that Benny arrived with only US\$1000 *“to start from scratch.”* She repeated that phrase throughout her narrative. In a sense it echoed Darna’s mantra that *“there is no shame in second hand goods.”* A new, humble and modest lifestyle was valued highly by both women. It seems that by repeating this in their stories, the women reinforced for themselves and the listener the most significant change they made in their lives. Darna learned to appreciate non-branded, second-hand, cheap items, while Mary appreciated starting a new life from zero. In the process, both women succeeded and look back to that time as a triumph against the odds. For Mary, starting from zero gave her an immense sense of fulfillment. That attitude allowed her to face the challenges with more mental fortitude.

Another reason she liked New Zealand was because of the seemingly lack of social class distinctions. She referred particularly to her experience of having maids in the Philippines to explain this. Unlike Elena, Mary saw early on the excesses of those who had maids in the Philippines and she never liked it. Living here

confirmed for her that Philippine society does not see maids as equals. The clear social stratification in Philippine society reinforced the distinct social hierarchy in many sectors. New Zealand culture does not have that and this appealed to her. She emphasized that maids should also be considered like any regular employee who works from 9 to 5. For her, maids helped to lighten the workload at home but she felt that employers must also do their share of the chores rather than relying completely on them to do everything. She recounted that although everything was prepared by her maids – food cooked, house cleaned – she took care of her children when she returned home from work. She was more hands on with the caring of her children, rather than leaving them to the nannies as is the practice of many Filipino working mothers, and took her role as mother seriously. An ironic element here, however, is that because she did have help she admitted to not knowing much about housekeeping and left the management of the household, including grocery-shopping, to her most senior maid. She gave her the money and trusted her to buy what was needed. So, coming to New Zealand, it was difficult at the start because she had the double obligation of working outside the home and coming to prepare the meals for her family, doing the cleaning, washing the clothes, and so on. This was very similar to Elena's experience. She admitted she cried about it, but only because of the amount of work that needed to be done and not the absence of help.

Mary was a secondary school teacher in the Philippines but did not plan on teaching again in New Zealand because the workload for teachers was heavy, as she knew from experience. She was willing to just be a teacher aide. She eventually realized that the workload here was easier than teachers' workload in the Philippines, so she enrolled in a one-year course to qualify to teach again and eventually found her way back to the profession she trained for back home.

Initially, however, she took on jobs that helped augment Benny's income, hence, the experience of professional deskilling. Her first job within a week of arriving was as a caregiver at a rest home. She only lasted two days. She realized that she could not do the work. Firstly, it was just too difficult and secondly, she felt guilty about caring for other people's elderly relatives when she did not provide the same care for her grandparents. After this, she found work as a telephone researcher. This job allowed her to work from home and she worked with the company for quite a number of years, while working part time as a teacher aide in one of the schools near her home. It was then that she discovered she could do the job of a teacher in New Zealand; in fact, she realized that preparations here were so much lighter than back in the Philippines:

"I saw that I could the job. It was easy. The workload of a teacher here, it's nothing compared to our workload (in the Philippines). Everything is already planned for them (NZ teachers). You don't have to submit any lesson plan every day because everything has been planned for them."

Mary currently teaches in a low decile school where the students come from tough and challenging family backgrounds. Some students are problem students, she admits, getting into trouble with the law. I asked her if

she had plans of moving to a higher decile school closer to home. She said she was comfortable in the school where she has taught for a number of years now. Initially, she admitted that managing the students was quite difficult and some of the male students were even taller and bigger than her. But, she learned to be more assertive and authoritative and, in fact, broke up a few near-fights. She also prefers to stay where she is because she feels she can make a difference in the students' lives and hopes to guide them in the right direction. I respect and admire this because it would be so easy to move on to a better environment but Mary wants to help the students in her charge because she sees potential in them. By remaining she is contributing to improving the future of the next generation, hopefully. Such an attitude from one migrant, possibly replicated in many more, can help with making the future generation of young Kiwis better. What inspired me about Mary's story and attitude was that she wanted to make a difference in her new home by working with problem students. It would be so easy to walk away to a less stressful, less challenging school environment but it was her choice to remain. Like many Filipino migrants who are happy and doing well within their jobs, her initial challenges were something she was very proud of overcoming.

Mary's I Poem

When using her I voice, I could hear Mary's pride and sense of fulfillment:

*What I have accomplished back home
Was nothing compared to what I accomplished here
I brag about that
I found it hard because I had no help
I can do it
I cried sometimes from the sheer amount of work
I did not cry because I regretted it
I cried from the work*

The apparently Herculean tasks she faced here – not having help and doing all the work herself – were accomplishments that had no comparison to anything she had done previously. And she showed no shame or embarrassment about bragging about it. She admitted it was hard but she succeeded in meeting the challenges. She cried as a result of being overwhelmed by what she was faced with, but she had no regrets. Below, she recounted her experience of being a caregiver for the briefest of times and realized the difficulty of the role:

*My first job here?
Caregiver.
Two days, two nights
I couldn't do it,*

*It's not for me,
It's not me
I remembered my grandparents
I didn't take care of them
I felt guilty
I cared for others' grandparents but
I didn't take care of them
I didn't want to do it
I loved my grandmother but
It's not my personality*

She was adamant and definite that she could not do the work of caring for others. If she did never care for her own grandparents that way, why should she do it for others'? She felt guilty and this could have been another reason for not continuing with the job. She confessed it was also not in her character (or personality) to take on a caregiver role. Although she knew she was deskilling her profession, this first job was not one she could really stomach or pursue. But the teacher aide job was closer to what she was used to doing. Admittedly, it was a much lower position than a teacher, but she found it easier:

*I was just a teacher aide
I don't have any lesson plan to plan
I just went to the school
I was just in the classroom
I didn't teach
I just assisted
I was so happy
I then realized
I could do it
I could teach
I said to myself I could do it.*

Here I could hear how happy Mary was being a teacher aide. She had fewer responsibilities, the workload was easy. It seemed more in line with what she was used to doing. As a teacher aide, she saw how the system of teaching was conducted in New Zealand, and she felt confident about teaching again. Her confidence and certainty was evident in this stanza. She affirmed three times that she knew she could the job. It was this confidence that propelled her to re-train to be a teacher again.

By presenting each woman's narrative separately in this chapter, I showed the diversity across their migrant experiences. I also created a space for each woman's voice in order to foreground migrant identity, in the process providing the reader an insight into her world, and knowing her as an individual. In the next chapter, I synthesize and discuss the commonality across their experiences, presenting the final layer of analysis through an examination of the contrapuntal voices that surfaced as I listened a third and fourth time.

Chapter 4: Summary Analysis – Contrapuntal Voices and Transition Themes

In this chapter, I present the final layers of analysis by focusing, firstly, on the additional voices that emerged from a third listening. In this third cycle of the Listening Guide, I identified the relational or contrapuntal voices (Brown & Gilligan, 1992) that indicated the shifts from the I voice to the “We” or “They/Them” voices. By listening to one voice at a time, I could discover how a statement could contain multiple meanings of voices, or additional nuances (Gilligan, 2015; Harel-Shalev & Daphna-Tekoah, 2016), as well as revealing how the voices harmonized with one another or opposed and silenced each other. It also allowed me to hear the different voices that speak to my research question of what their migrant experience was like. In doing so, I could “hear complexity rather than flatten the data” (Gilligan, 2015, p. 72).

For the fourth and final listening, I re-visited my research questions and composed the final layer of analysis by interpreting the transcript and synthesizing what I have learned from the narratives. I constructed a summary analysis by discussing the overarching themes or similarities that emerged from the individual narratives. I, therefore, present a collective narrative of the Filipina professional’s migration experience to New Zealand. I first present the “We voice” followed by the “They/Them voice.” I close the chapter with a discussion of the main transition themes.

Contrapuntal Voices

“We voice”

It was very interesting to discover that the women who migrated with husbands and children, namely Darna, Elena, and Mary, had as clear a “We voice” as their “I voice,” when compared to single women (Catherine, Clary, Dr E) or a newly-wed bride (Bella). I attributed this to the fact that the decisions they made were in conjunction with their husbands. The decision to move was predominantly about the children. For instance, Mary said: *“If it were only me and Benny, we’re happy.”* She was referring to their being contented to remain in Manila if they had no children. But because their major concern was their children’s future and they needed to find a better place to raise them, *“we did the research,”* implying that both of them shared the responsibility of investigating about New Zealand. Elena had a similar narrative:

We were concerned about their future as to their jobs. Although we sent them to a good school, probably one of the best schools we can think of...we thought it was time for us to move out and we were not also happy with the political situation. We were thinking of the children, we just have to go.

We said, ‘OK, why don’t we have a look?’ We read a lot about New Zealand. We already read what were the requirements for residency. We were so determined to leave.”

Darna confirmed the same:

“We’re very comfortable with our lives. However, we don’t see it was always that way. We saw the opportunity: laid back country in a first world country, it’s going to be New Zealand, so that’s the kind of life we want.”

When the women used their “We voice” there was a strong sense of team work, joint decision-making in important matters, and an equality in the relationship. Furthermore, a collective identity was evident when they shifted to the “We voice.” Darna, for instance, recalled the early years when they first arrived and were learning about their new home:

When we first came here we knew nothing about flatting, we never knew how life is. We were humbled because life was so different, we have to do things on our own. We never knew anyone.”

The adjustment and learning was a collective experience that all members of the family faced. However, when challenges are shared with someone, the burden becomes easier to shoulder. Consequently, any resulting successes or triumphs are celebrated and shared by everyone. This is what enables Filipino migrant families who arrive in New Zealand to adjust. The family members are able to draw inspiration and strength from within the group, without necessarily having to rely on anyone from outside. For Darna, particularly, that strong sense of “We” enabled them to draw even closer as a family.

The “We voice,” though, was not exclusive for the married Filipina migrants. It also surfaced for some of the other women, particularly Catherine and Dr E. In Catherine’s case, when her “We voice” emerged, it represented identification with the Filipinos who were looking for work as she was: *“we were all looking for work.”* This indicated a sense of belonging with a group, the members of which were in the same situation of first trying to find employment. When Catherine had adjusted and assimilated, her sense of belonging with her growing social network was also expressed in the “We voice”: *“we get together and then we go out. We just drive around.”* She had become a member of an in-group, in this case her workmates, and they shared activities outside of work. The initial signs of assimilation were evident when she referred to herself as being a part of the social activities.

For Dr E, the “We voice,” was used to identify with other Filipino migrants: *“We were very popular as migrants, I think. We were never wanting for a job. We accept lower rate, we do a better job.”* This also revealed an insight into the perception that locals had of Filipino workers as well as the job search experience of the latter. If one is not particular about job roles, there is never a shortage of it. Dr E shared that Filipinos were willing to accept a lower rate but also did the job better. However, this is not unique to Filipino migrants; it is a common scenario for many migrants. As already mentioned previously by most of the women and as confirmed by the literature (Brush & Sochalski, 2007), migrants experience deskilling professionally just so they can find

employment immediately. Filipinos were popular as migrants because they were willing to accept jobs which locals would not take. Dr E's own narrative of accepting assignments out of town confirmed this.

Hence, the "We voice" used by the women indicated solidarity and identity with other Filipinos, and expressed a sense of belonging and shared experience with the in-group that is the immediate family and a growing social network.

"Them/They voice"

When describing their adjustment to New Zealand life, the women used "Them/They" to refer to the Kiwis and their initial exposure to the employment system and social life. It identified them as migrants and new to the country. By doing so, I gained a more insightful understanding of their migrant experience and revealed further nuances which were noticeable in the following quotes:

- Clary: *"**Their** concept of an admin person is you need to do the dishes and run errands."
"Hard to understand exactly what it is **they** mean because **they're** not straightforward in what **they** think."
"**They** were asking for a lot of ridiculous requirements like Kiwi experience."*
- Elena: *"**Their** system and all that was different. "NZQA, **they** acknowledged my piano performance but not my music education."
"**They** were all so nice and **they** were all so friendly. **They** were just like always sort of in awe knowing that I have 6 children."*
- Mary: *"Everything is already planned for **them**." (referring to the teachers' lesson plans already written up for them by a department head)*
- Bella: *"**Their** laundry was like hanging out some of the porches and people were sitting outside."
"**They** had different requirements as well. **They** record you, video you while you're treating patients."
"**They** say, 'Oh, it doesn't look like there's any age gap between the two of you.' Then when **they** see **they're** really surprised. **They** always expected that."*
- Dr E: *"Once **they** get to know you **they** love you and **they'll** protect you. When **they** realize you're not like that **they** treat you like family."*

A close reading of this voice revealed the novelty of the new environment which the women encountered. The differences that the women remarked on revealed a variety of reactions from frustration for Clary to surprise for

Elena, Mary, and Bella. Clary was frustrated with: the different expectations ascribed to what an administrator's role required, the 'Kiwi experience' mentality of employers, and how Kiwis did not seem to mean what they said. For Elena, it was also frustration mingled with surprise that both her degrees were not recognized by the NZQA. Mary also realized that New Zealand teachers did not need to prepare their own lesson plans. The most surprised was Bella who discovered there was a 'poorer' community in Auckland when she saw people's washing hanging outside their homes. For her, this was an indication of a lower status neighborhood. She, as well, experienced the different requirements expected when training for a health practitioner certification, emphasizing the notion of 'different-ness'. It was apparent that the women were comparing their old life to the new ways of doing things. In this regard, their being outsiders was evident because they were trying to understand the new cultural 'systems'. Despite this, their social encounters with the locals were, for the most part, positive. Both Elena and Dr E shared that their colleagues were very nice to them. This signaled their acceptance into the group and facilitated their adjustment to their new home and jobs. Hence, the "Them/They" voices were focused on the initial adjustments and learning that the women needed to make and the positive reception by their workmates.

Summary Analysis

At the core of the narratives, three themes emerged: the physical transition, the social transition, and the professional transition. Transition in this context is defined as "a passage from one state, stage, subject, or place to another" (Transition, 2017). I used this, therefore, as the overarching concept to organize and link the stories into a coherent, collective narrative as the migrant experience was closely linked to the changes each woman faced by coming to New Zealand.

Physical transition

The physical transition was the physical movement from the Philippines to New Zealand. Most of the women lived in Manila, considered one of the world's most densely populated cities, with a population currently estimated at 13,322,000 (World Population Review, 2017). As a result of this, overpopulation, crime, and pollution have been its constant problems since its founding as a city in 1571. This is compounded by deeply ingrained graft and corruption in the political and economic sectors. It is these 'push' factors that encouraged many Filipinos to leave and has been confirmed as the main reasons as well for the participants in this study to migrate. It must be emphasized that all the women held good jobs in the Philippines, and all of them were relatively well-placed both financially and career-wise. Five of the women left because they sought a more laid back lifestyle. Particularly for 3 of the women with families, the main concern was for the future of their children. The women felt that there was not much of a good future for their children. Although they sent them to some of the best schools in Manila, they felt that by the time the children completed their schooling, the

opportunities for jobs and job security would be very minimal. All disliked the rat race and the instability of one's social standing. Despite almost all of them coming from the middle class, all felt that nothing was permanent or assured. Two were tired of the corruption that pervaded society. Elena, who lived outside Manila, left because she did not want to be part of the bandwagon of corruption pervasive in all areas of society. All agreed that the quality of life and traffic was worsening.

A significant pull factor for migrating was having family and friends already living overseas. Except for one participant, the others had a friend or relative already living in New Zealand and this connection encouraged them to find out more about the country. New Zealand was never the first choice, mainly because it was not until recently that Filipinos were aware of it. The United States, Canada, and Australia were favorite destinations for permanent migration, but the saturation of Filipinos in these places made them less appealing and after considering and weighing the alternatives, and from the feedback received from those already living here, New Zealand became the final choice. The main pull of New Zealand is its 'clean and green image', the impression that it is a first world country but with a laid back lifestyle, and its image of safety and security. It was also closer to the Philippines for quick visits home.

A significant part to the physical transition theme was the adjustment to having no household help and doing things alone. Most of the women grew up with maids and had live-in maids. This is a common arrangement as the majority of maids usually come from distant provinces. Some households have at least two maids. Elena, for instance, aside from having at least a couple of maids, also had a cook.

Despite the appeal of a laid back lifestyle image, the women discovered quite early that they had to do many things by themselves. Ironically, this has meant more work. For most, it was the first time they encountered the double burden of working both outside and inside the home. This was a huge culture shock and most of them struggled with the sudden change of altering a comfortable lifestyle they had previously. Hence, cleaning the house, cleaning the toilet, cooking, caring for the children – all were challenges that they consequently adapted to and overcame. There really was not much of a choice.

For those with husbands, the domestic chores were still predominantly borne by the wives, as evidenced by Elena's statement:

“So, what was the problem? I think it's more for us, you know, the wife because, let's face it, wherever you are, whether you're in the Philippines or what, or wherever you are, we have our role, so you've got a job at the same time you look after managing of the house and the children.”

She also added that *'the cooking is ours'* referring to this being a woman's duty. When I asked her to clarify what her husband's share was, it was a vague response of *'maintaining the house'* although a specific job was lawn mowing. But she pointed out that their 'arrangement' was for him to pick up the children from school but by the time they arrived home, the food was ready.

Bella, as a young bride and being away from her family for the first time, narrated how she used to cry on the phone to her mother saying “*Mom, I have to clean the toilet!*” Like Elena, she also only learned to cook when she arrived here: “*I actually didn’t know how to cook. Because when I came here I was a student. I never did anything!*”

Mary also took up most of the household duties when she arrived home from work. She complained that her husband just went to work and came home to rest. Her responsibilities included taking the children to school before proceeding to her own workplace, organizing their after-school care, fetching them after she was done with work for the day, before doing her part-time job with a research company. Reading between the lines, it seemed she also did all the cooking for the family’s meals. She was, however, quite proud of this, considering herself quite a superwoman: “*I accomplished something without family, without someone to help you at home.*” In Clary’s case, it was the simple tasks outside the home which she found difficult like packing her own groceries, filling up the car with petrol by herself, and doing more menial tasks as an office administrator. Another feature of the physical transition theme was the physical separation from family, particularly for Catherine and Elena. For Catherine, aside from learning to do things for herself at home, the physical separation from her family was difficult and lonely for her. Although she had quickly established a social network here, she still wished her family was here. She said “*My next goal is for my family to vacation here.*” In Elena’s case, the physical separation from her children was painful, particularly when she remembered the first Christmas that they were not together. Even Mary, who travelled here with her nuclear family, managed to sponsor her parents to become permanent residents as well. This desire to have family around confirms the collectivistic nature of the Filipino.

In summary, the ability to undertake the double shift of working outside and inside the home was an important achievement considered by the women. Migrating allowed them to develop their full potential as individuals, doing things which they otherwise would not have done previously. The experience also allowed them to dig deep in themselves and develop into stronger women, not just mentally, but emotionally and spiritually. In addition, by learning to do the second shift of working at home, the women learned to appreciate the hard work that their maids did for them.

Social transition

The social transition is linked to the women’s experiences of adapting to New Zealand life and culture. It relates to the period of discovery where previously held assumptions about the country needed to be changed and personal adjustments made in order to adapt. Thus, the main challenges included building new social networks and adjusting to a different way of living and doing things.

As skilled professionals, the women were highly educated and all had university degrees. Conversing and communicating with others was not a problem because the medium of instruction in most Philippine schools and universities was English. Hence, they spoke the language fluently and competently. This ability facilitated into an easier transition into the society. It also allowed them to interact almost immediately with the locals and to carry on daily social encounters in all aspects of life in the wider social milieu. As professionals who had vast experience dealing with people in the Philippines from all walks of life and with all nationalities, it was not difficult in that sense for the Filipina professionals to integrate and assimilate into New Zealand society.

What the women found difficult to understand initially was the Kiwi accent because they were used to hearing the American accent. Even in speaking, many of the women adapted the American accent and thus were usually mistaken for Americans. Clary shared that, *“when I speak, they usually ask if I’m American or Canadian,”* while Bella said, *“everyone would say ‘you’re American!’”* Darna encountered the same response: *“they would say I’m American because my accent is so American.”*

On the whole racist encounters were minimal because they did not meet the stereotype of the mail order bride. They attributed it to the fact that their papers were in order when they arrived, they could speak English, and they dressed in a professional manner. They all had mostly positive feedback and were contented with living in New Zealand. They accepted and appreciated that the initial challenges were part of the migration experience and adapted the mentality that it was part of the learning experience. This outlook enabled them to assimilate more quickly and all of the women now consider New Zealand their permanent home.

Professional transition

The professional transition describes their experience of finding work, and initially needing to deskill in order to ‘get their foot in the door.’ Once they found employment, it was a matter of time before many of them found their way back to similar jobs for which they trained or worked in back in the Philippines.

The women’s job search experiences were similar in that they had to start from the bottom. However, they did not mind this because it was a new country, a new life, so beginning from scratch was a fact they accepted. For instance, Bella studied and trained to be a medical doctor in the Philippines but her career took a slight turn when she arrived here and she became a nurse instead. Dr E, although already practicing as a GP in the Philippines, had to retrain and start over as an intern when she arrived. Mary as well had to start again as a teacher aide, despite the fact that she was already a registered teacher in the Philippines. Elena had two degrees but only one was accredited by the NZQA. Her degree in music education was not recognized and hence, she could not teach just music. Clary was an executive/personal assistant to senior officials in the Manila companies she worked for, but had to work initially as a receptionist/administrator in her first few jobs in Auckland that included menial tasks.

Their professional deskilling is not uncommon. It is a familiar scenario that many professional migrants encounter. Their stories confirmed that the New Zealand system for recognizing overseas qualifications was the main factor that forced them to deskill. Catherine, in the desire to find immediate employment, despite being a highly qualified IT Application Support Analyst, trimmed her CV down to try and find work at supermarkets. Clary and I resorted to the same tactic.

Darna was the only one of the women who completely changed career paths. From a high-level managerial role in the Philippines in the IT industry, she became an insurance advisor. However, this was not an issue for her because Darna's priorities since coming to New Zealand have changed. She now places more importance and attention to caring for and being with her family, rather than focusing on building her career.

To summarize, I presented the additional voices that emerged in the stories. In this way, I was able to show the similarities in the women's migrant experiences. The married women had a stronger "We" voice because the decisions they made were equally decided and agreed on with their husbands. For the unmarried women, the "We" voice indicated association with a group, whether it was with compatriots or new social groups. This revealed a sense of belonging. A second voice that emerged was the "They/Them" voice and was used when the women differentiated themselves from others, mostly the new environment. Sometimes the voices seemed in disharmony with the wider community because of the differences and difficulties they encountered. This was particularly evident when the women spoke of finding work and the difficulty in having their qualifications recognized. At times, there was harmony when the women began to feel more assimilated into the society. In terms of transition, the three most common types were the physical, social and professional transitions. At the macro-level, these transitions are also shared by other migrants and not distinct to Filipinos.

Chapter 5

Final Reflections and Conclusion

Migration can be an exciting episode in life, fraught with challenges, sacrifices, and triumphs. Each of the seven women in this study shared, through their stories, how they successfully overcame the initial difficulties of migration. Each shared her own means of ‘coping’ in order to adjust and assimilate. Although I could relate with many of the incidents shared in their stories, having encountered them myself, I also learned immensely from the women who very candidly, honestly, and generously shared their time and innermost thoughts and feelings with me. Through every one of the interviews I had with them, I left the sessions feeling awed, humbled, and proud of what they had achieved.

It was my aim with this thesis to provide a space for the migrant stories of Filipina skilled professionals in New Zealand. I wanted to contribute to the larger narrative that so far has only stereotyped us as predominantly maids or mail order brides. I wished to change the knowledge that the world has of us so far. As a migrant Filipina myself, I also wanted to learn from the other Filipina skilled migrants how they made sense of their experience of permanently living in another country and how they navigated their identities as Filipina migrants. Doing so allowed me, in turn, to understand my own migration experience.

By using a narrative approach, guided by feminist research principles and indigenous psychology, the *Sikolohiyang Pilipino*, I was able to privilege their experience by giving primacy to their perspectives and experiences. At the same time, the stories that emerged revealed insights into Filipino life and culture. The Listening Guide (Brown & Gilligan, 1992), a voice-centered relational method, complemented my narrative research because it placed the voices of the women at the center and allowed them to be heard more clearly. Furthermore, the Listening Guide uncovered multiple layers of meanings in their stories because of the series of cycles that allowed me to focus separately on significant voices in each woman’s narrative.

The women’s length of stay in New Zealand ranged from 8 to 29 years. When asked what they found most difficult about the early months or years here, the recurring theme was the lack of having household help and doing things by themselves. They realized and appreciated the difficulty of the work involved and developed a new respect for the women who worked in these jobs. Where they used to take their maids for granted, there was a deep respect for them. Living in New Zealand opened their eyes to the sheltered life they had in the Philippines

This realization led to another significant lesson for the women and that was the feeling of achievement for being able to manage the double load of working outside and inside the home. They were very proud of this achievement. All the women realized the change in them, in terms of outlook and attitude towards life. One woman, in particular, learned to value money and lost the mentality of being materialistic and brand-conscious. For another woman, migrating here was more of a relief. Of all the women, she felt most at home, normal, and

accepted in New Zealand than in the Philippines. Her coming here was a pleasurable experience and any difficulties she encountered here were less than in the Philippines.

Despite the challenges the women embraced them because they knew these were commonly what new migrants faced. The range of emotions varied from initially feeling humiliated to humbled, to feeling proud of their stoicism. Many relied on their faith in God to get them through, a common coping mechanism amongst Filipinos. All the women have successfully adjusted to their new life and home in New Zealand.

The main lesson I took with me at the end of this was how each woman changed in her outlook and perspective on life. As they adjusted to life in this new country, they all reached important realizations about themselves, their family, and their capability to adjust. In the process they appreciated themselves better as well as their new home. They became stronger and more confident women because they were able to do things which they never had to do in the Philippines. Collectively, all the women had no regrets for choosing to migrate to New Zealand. Our new home has been good to us and we have been treated well and welcomed by its people. We have adapted the best parts of the new culture while maintaining the best parts of our old life and culture.

I began this thesis with my migrant story and am ending it with another story of my life in New Zealand. I am happy to have made the decision to come here. I successfully assimilated into the culture, like my compatriots. There have been challenges, very similar to what the women faced, but I have overcome them and am very grateful for them because it has made me a stronger, and hopefully wiser, woman as well. This thesis is not merely a final requirement for my degree now but it has become very significant for me because I learned many valuable lessons from the women's stories and I learned to appreciate my own migrant experience more. The research into other Filipinas' experiences around the world have given me a deeper appreciation and respect for them. Rather than feeling shame for my compatriots who are mail order brides, domestic workers, caregivers, or entertainers, I feel more a sense of pride for their sacrifices and what they are doing because like anyone else they only desire a better life. Like me. In the final analysis, our different pathways led to this same dream. The knowledge I gained from this project has made me more socially conscious of the difficulties and sacrifices migrant women of all nationalities make in their quest for happiness and peace.

Recommendations for future research

The narratives contained in this thesis are the stories of seven Filipina professionals. This is only a small sample of the Filipinas living in New Zealand. I have focused my research on those living in Auckland to facilitate access to information. However, their stories highlighted the diversity in the migration stories of just one ethnic. I am confident the same diversity will surface in other migration stories of women from other ethnicities. My study focused on Filipina professionals but there are other groups that could be explored, such as the Filipina

caregivers or nurses. There is a growing number of them in the health care services and this deserves examination.

In the literature surveyed, the personal stories of Filipinas, whether working temporarily overseas or living permanently abroad, are minimal. There have been a few studies that closely investigated the lived experiences of Filipina women living overseas (Bonifacio, 2009; del Rosario, 2005; Doar, 2011; Kelaher, Potts, & Manderson, 2001; McKay, 2007; Saroca, 2006), however, these have been the stories of mail order brides or domestic workers. The concentration of Filipinas in these groups continues to reinforce the stereotypes developed in the first place; there is a need to change this. “The Filipino diaspora is, above all, characterized by its incredible occupational diversity, going from maids to senior executives, laborers to nurses, and entertainers to academics” (Camroux, 2008, p. 12). This statement emphasizes the need to look beyond the commonalities of the migratory experience and the theories of migration that universalize women’s migratory experiences because there is astonishing diversity in their stories (Calavita, 2006). Asis (2002) reported that there has been a substantial body of literature about Filipinas in international migration but these have focused on the level, volume and direction of their migration, the occupational sectors they worked in, working and living conditions, earning and remittances, rather than on their personal experiences as migrants and as women.

Through the documentation of their life stories we can gain a glimpse into the internal changes that women attribute to their migrant experiences (Asis, 2002). They are also powerful tools that provide a voice to the individual as well as allowing others to appreciate their experiences from their standpoint (Asis, 2002). By documenting the life stories of migrant women, we are can better comprehend the strategies women used to adapt and cope.

For the wider community, however, life stories are also important. Immigration agencies, for instance, can be made aware of the challenges migrant women face and can thus provide better services to help them assimilate and integrate. Health care agencies can use the information to provide better services, particularly in the area of mental health. The women in this study seemed to have coped well with their adjustments but that was an area that I did not investigate. Migration can have a huge impact not only on the physical and financial resources of an individual but, more importantly, on their mental well-being. A substantial amount of studies has confirmed this (Abu-Rayya & Abu-Rayya, 2009; Almeida, Costa-Santos, Caldas, Dias, & Ayres-de-Campos, 2016; Close, Kouvonen, Bosqui, Patel, O’Reilly, Donnelly, 2016; Delara, 2016). Through further investigation, we can provide the assistance and support the women need thereby addressing both the feminist and *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* agendas of empowering the women thereby consequently effecting social change.

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Appendix 1



From the Margins: Filipina Skilled Migrants tell their Stories INFORMATION SHEET

Researcher Introduction

Mabuhay! My name is Lilia Sevillano and I am a Filipina professional who migrated to New Zealand in 2001. I was born and raised in Manila and before moving, I taught with the Literature Department of De La Salle University for 15 years. I am currently a postgraduate student at Massey University, completing this project for the thesis component of my Master of Arts degree in Psychology. I will be supervised by Dr. Leigh Coombes and Dr. Darrin Hodgetts.

Project Description and Invitation

For my research, I am interested in the migrant experiences of skilled Filipinas living in New Zealand. I would like to understand how Filipina professionals make sense of their migration experiences and negotiate their identities as women. I am interested in knowing the challenges women face, or may still be facing, as migrants and Filipinas. The diverse experiences of migrant Filipina professionals are poorly researched and represented in psychological study and there is a need for your stories to be heard. *I would like to invite you to take part in this project by sharing your story and experiences with me.*

Participant Identification and Recruitment

You have been invited because of your ethnicity, gender, location, occupation, and because you have indicated an interest and willingness to participate in this study. Rest assured that you will never be required to do anything you do not want to do, and you will not be required to give more time than you are willing to give.

Project Procedures

If you agree to participate, I would like to have a few *kwentuhan* sessions with you so that you can share your stories of your migration experiences to New Zealand. We may need 1-2 sessions for this purpose, each lasting from one to two hours. The date, time, and location for our *kwentuhan* will be arranged between us beforehand. Please consider this before deciding to take part.

We can meet at your home, but if you prefer somewhere else, I will refund (reasonable) travel expenses or provide petrol vouchers (if you drive), and provide a small token of appreciation for your time and effort.

I would like to audio record our *kwentuhan* so that I can transcribe them into a written document later on. I may also take notes as we talk. If at any point during any of one our sessions, you do not wish to answer or feel uncomfortable, you may ask for the recorder to be turned off. You are very welcome to ask any questions and/or clarifications you may have with the project or interview at any time. You can also withdraw your decision to participate at any time or until one week after the completion of our last *kwentuhan*, without needing to provide any explanation.

If you agree to participate, I will ask you to sign a consent form. This document states that the study has been explained to you and that you voluntarily participate in it.

Protection of your Information

I will personally transcribe the recordings to ensure the confidentiality of your information. You will retain full ownership of your contribution but in participating you will be making those contributions available for interpretation by me and for use in any future publication. All participants' details, audio recordings, written transcripts, and researcher's notes will be stored in a secure location at Massey University. All names and identifying features of people and places within those

stories will be changed. Pseudonyms for the participants will be used in the transcripts, research report, and any subsequent publications.

The audio recordings and transcripts will be used for the sole purpose of this project and kept only for its duration (no more than 2 years), at the end of which I will dispose of the recordings and transcripts.

Once my results are available, we can meet for another *kwentuhan* so that I can share these with you and you can review them prior to print. Should you desire a complimentary copy of the final publication, this can be arranged. If you wish it, I can provide you with an electronic or hard copy of the data you have given me for your own personal file.

I will make every effort to ensure your privacy and confidentiality. However, there is a very small chance that someone could identify you. This is a remote possibility, but *absolute* confidentiality cannot be guaranteed for this study.

Participant's Rights

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- decline to answer any particular question;
- withdraw from the study at any time;
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher;
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.

Project Contacts

Thank you for your time. I look forward to meeting with you and hearing your stories. Please do not hesitate to contact me, or my supervisors, Leigh Coombes and Darrin Hodgetts, at any time if you have any further questions or concerns:

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Please note:

This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named in this document are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you want to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Dr Brian Finch, Director - Ethics, telephone: 06 3569099 ext 86015, email: humanethics@massey.ac.nz.

Appendix 2



From the Margins: Filipina Skilled Migrants tell their Stories

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

This consent form will be held for a period of five (5) years

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me.

My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time. I also understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time and to refuse to answer any particular questions.

I agree to provide information to the researcher on the understanding that it is completely confidential and will not be used for any purpose other than this research. I also understand that in all reports (published or unpublished) or presentations, a pseudonym will be used to help protect my identity.

I agree/do not agree to the interview being sound recorded. I know that I have the right to ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview.

I wish/do not wish to have my transcript returned to me.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signature: **Date:**

Full Name:
(printed)

This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named in this document are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you want to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Dr Brian Finch, Director - Ethics, telephone: 06 3569099 ext 86015, email: humanethics@massey.ac.nz.

Appendix 3



From the Margins: Filipina Skilled Migrants tell their Stories

AUTHORITY FOR THE RELEASE OF TRANSCRIPTS

I confirm that I have had the opportunity to read and amend the transcript of the interview(s) conducted with me.

I agree that the edited transcript and extracts from this may be used in reports and publications arising from the research.

Signature: **Date:**

Full Name:
(printed)