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ACCULTURATION AND NEGOTIATION OF IDENTITY: THE CASE OF FIVE ADULT FILIPINA MIGRANTS IN NEW ZEALAND

A thesis completed in

part-fulfilment of the requirements

for the Degree of Master of Philosophy

in Second Language Teaching

at Massey University

Palmerston North

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2007

Abstract

This investigation is based on a qualitative study of five Filipina[1] migrants in New Zealand. Using open-ended interviews as the primary source of data, the study examines the women's personal experiences and subjective understandings of migration and acculturation. Its focus is on the ways in which Filipina migrants negotiate the social constraints they encounter during settlement, and how they construct social identities within these constraints.

The questions that this study seeks to answer concern the understanding of the participants' motivations and personal investment in migrating to New Zealand; the stages that they go through while adjusting to a new environment; the factors that influence their negotiation of identity and competence; and the relationships between power relations and language socialization.

The investigation reveals that the positive factors in New Zealand, such as better standard of living and better educational system, and the negative factors in the Philippines, such as unstable economic, political, and social conditions, were stronger than the positive pull factors in their home country, such as strong family ties, thus influencing the participants' decision to leave the comforts of a familiar culture, and migrate to New Zealand. The participants reported that the difference between Philippines and New Zealand in terms of food, weather, language, beliefs, values, and general standard of living have affected their adaptation processes in different ways and in varying degrees. They also claimed that their positive and

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[1] For the purposes of clarity and simplicity, the following terms are used in this study:

Filipino (sing.)/*Filipinos* (pl.) - somebody who comes from the Philippines, either masculine or neutral form

Filipino - the official language of the Philippines

Filipina (sing.)/*Filipinas* (pl.) - feminine form of *Filipino/Filipinos*

negative experiences, especially with the issues of legitimacy and acceptance have influenced their perceptions of New Zealand, as well as the degree of their frustration and contentment, hence, affecting their personal "investment" in their host country. Their stories also indicated that negotiating roles and identities was an important factor in their adaptation process, and that their identities and membership in New Zealand society determined and were determined by power struggles and by their participation in their new environment.

Acknowledgements

I owe a special debt of gratitude to my supervisor, Gillian Skyrme, for her guidance, support, patience, and encouragement during the course of the research. I would also like to thank Professor Cynthia White for her professional input and advice.

I would like to thank my friend Recy Pavlov for assisting me in finding willing participants for this study, and Mr. C. J. McKenzie, former Secretary of Labour (1986- 1994) for his comments and suggestions regarding the immigration issues of this research.

I am also deeply grateful to my husband, Frank, and my two children, Fredrick and Izla, for their patience and understanding during those hectic days at home, especially during public and school holidays.

Finally, I would like to express my deepest thanks to the five Filipina migrants who were prepared to share their personal experiences, without whom, this project would not have been possible.

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