

**Being and Belonging:
The Construction of Filipino Spaces in Newfoundland**

by

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Abstract

Filipinos have a six decade-long history in Newfoundland. However, since their arrival and gradual settlement on the island from the early 1960s onwards, only one survey has been carried out in 1982 that provides a brief glimpse into this community's life and activities. No ethnographic research has ever been conducted about this population. However, Filipinos are the third biggest ethnic minority group on the island. Despite a pattern of low immigrant retention rates in Newfoundland, the number of Filipinos has steadily increased, revealing visible growth throughout the years. This ethnographic study is the first one of its kind that examines the Filipino population in St. John's, Newfoundland. The setting of this study is considered through the lens of "host-region" (Lesiv 2022; Lesiv and Shibley 2024). The enquiries in this research have been designed to primarily investigate how this community has historically created a sense of place and belonging in the context of the culturally distinct host-region of Newfoundland. In order to achieve this goal, thirty community members of different generations, occupations, and socioeconomic statuses have been interviewed. Through the study of three folklore genres (material culture, foodways, and community gatherings and events), the collective placemaking efforts of Filipinos in St. John's, Newfoundland, have been examined, specifically taking into consideration emic perspectives that reveal the important role of cultural psychology and worldviews with regards to building a community life. Furthermore, the findings of this research have been analysed with regards to sociologist Peggy Levitt and social anthropologist Nina Glick-Schiller's "ways of being" and the "ways of belonging" (2004), further expanded in the work of ethnologist Maja Povrzanović Frykman (2019). This ethnographic study documents, analyses, and provides previously untapped data about Filipino-Newfoundlanders and their history in Canada's most easterly location.

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CHAPTER 1: Introduction

From One Island to Another: My Story

On August 28th 2014, on a most foggy and frigid summer day, my partner and I arrived in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, for the first time. I had opted to come to Newfoundland instead of British Columbia in order to pursue another graduate degree. I remember the day vividly. Our first step out of the airport was accompanied by an unwelcome cold rain and unexpected nip in the air. Ill-prepared for such weather in August and miserable from the long tiring journey from the Philippines and my rapidly dampening clothes, a slight dread started taking over in my mind, which my partner, as if telepathically, quietly voiced, "Where on earth have we come to?!" As the friendly cab-driver drove us to our temporary abode, the thick curtains of fog did not let up. We could not make out much of the place. Perhaps reading the unsettled notes on our faces, our cab-driver sweetly and almost apologetically assured us (rather unsuccessfully, I might add) that this is not what this place usually looks like. "It's the best place in the world. You'll see!" A sentence, I kept on hearing from different people afterwards. The cab-driver and all those others did not initially succeed in alleviating my doubts. Now over ten years have passed, however, and I find myself reciting the same sentence to newcomers.

My view of Newfoundland is not a romanticised one. I have lived here long enough to know about the various problems (be they economic or social) with which this island struggles. However, there is something about this place that is distinctive. A unique sense of place, if you will: a place that can lend itself in interesting ways to the concept of making a home. I never left. This is my home now. And speaking to my *kababayan* (compatriots), I realised that this is perhaps a shared sentiment for many of us who have immigrated here throughout the decades since the late 1950s.

During the process of writing my master's thesis in the Department of Gender Studies at Memorial University, where I familiarised myself with a tremendously valuable area of study, my research interest initially drew me to the analysis of popular culture with a focus on changing narratives in contemporary fairy tale retellings. Then, thanks to courses at the Department of Gender Studies that were well-designed and eye-opening, I became fascinated with the crucial knowledge that is produced when one listens to alternative narratives that are often generally dismissed and casually overlooked. These thoughts lingered for a long while in the back of my mind. During the two years that I dedicated myself to finishing my degree's requirements, I serendipitously started learning about and befriending Filipinos in St. John's. My casual encounters with my *kababayan* and their fascinating stories compelled me! "Why does no one write about this?! I can write about this!" I thought to myself numerous times. Eventually, an intriguing conversation with a friend about the said topic led to a suggestion by her, "Talk to someone in the Folklore Department! They're all about people's stories!" Asking around and speaking to peers and professors, I learned that I could in fact get trained to professionally listen to and write folks' stories and relay their experiences, using them as sources for important research. I applied for a PhD admission in the Department of Folklore while finishing my Gender Studies' degree. I got accepted into the program and four days after I submitted and received my letter of completion, I started my field school training in folklore. After three years of taking courses, passing my comprehensive exams, and obtaining my proposal and ethics approval, I was ready to formally gather my data. By then, I had already established a rapport with community members by going to various events and get-togethers. Now, all I had to do was to formally interview and record the things that fascinated me about these individuals and their community. Their six-decade-long history in Newfoundland was barely touched: they carried on with their lives, thriving quietly under the radar for the most part. They often got mistaken for other minorities. Their presence was hypervisible in certain

job sectors and went unnoticed in others. They were dynamic in their own community and took part in a range of interesting activities within it. They had subtly asserted their presence for the benefit of their community members by setting up small businesses, shops, restaurants, eateries, hair salons, garages, and creating music bands, choirs, and local sports teams. They were present and contributed meaningfully to this province and its history. They had created a strong sense of place and community here. Yet, no research had been fully dedicated to shedding light on this ethnic group within the province since the early 1980s. In other words, one of the biggest ethnic minority groups in the province (Statistics Canada 2021) was, in fact, largely neglected in academic studies about Newfoundland.

Eager to put my folkloristic knowledge to use in order to write about this community, I mapped out a plan, with my training in ethnography shaping the way I designed my research questions and my approach. I wanted to know why, despite extremely low immigrant retention rates in Newfoundland, the Filipino population seemed to grow. This line of thought led me to forming questions about the community. This minority group and the island that homed it were my subjects of interest, and with a folkloristic approach, I could demonstrate the ways in which the concepts of “place” and “placemaking” connected them meaningfully. Therefore, I started shaping my guiding inquiries: what would a study of their history on the island reveal about the way they shape their community and establish a sense of place and belonging? Through what folkloric aspects of community members’ lives could I uncover the ways in which a sense of place is created within this specific context for this minority group? And what would the ethnographic study of the folklore of this group disclose about immigrant communities’ efforts in placemaking? All my questions tended to go back to the folklore of this group within this specific spatial context that allowed for effective placemaking. Therefore, it is perhaps necessary here to shed some light on what I mean when I use the terms *place* and *placemaking*.

“This is where we came. This is where we’ll stay”: Understanding Sense of Place

In order to gain an understanding of the concept of place and its indispensability in the study of folklore, a good place to start is the works of acclaimed humanist geographer Yi-Fu Tuan, who has written extensively on the ideas of space, the sense of place, the relation between environment and world perception and values, and cultural landscapes. Tuan’s seminal book *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (1977), served as an initial point of enquiry into the study of locale. Although he draws frequently on settings in fiction to elaborate on the affective bonds between humans and the places they inhabit, Tuan’s main purpose is to comprehend the ways in which “people attach meaning to and organize space and place” (Tuan 1977, 5). Although the boundaries between the two concepts become blurred and unfocused at times in his work, elaborations on them abound. As a physical location with potential and openness, space is demarcated as undifferentiated, abstract, intangible, and void of social connections for humans. Space is any given area to which human meaning has not yet been assigned, or in Tuan’s words “a blank sheet on which meaning can be imposed” (Ibid., 54). The attachment of meaning and value to such spaces, turns them into places. Thus, when space is transformed through the acquisition of “definition and meaning” into place (Ibid., 136), it becomes a concrete locale that contains sentiments, familiarity, stability and emotive responses. At the heart of this kind of human endeavour that transforms a space into something more solid, is the experiential process. “Place is a centre of meaning constructed by experience”, Tuan explains in an earlier work (Tuan 1975, 152), and “at all scales from the armchair to the nation” (Ibid., 165). Whether the experiential process is achieved through the direct involvement of the senses such as vision, smell, and hearing (and I would like to add tasting), or through the use of the conceptual and symbolic, it plays the main role in creating place. In other words, through experience, space converts into place: a view encapsulated in the works of various scholars who embrace phenomenology in their approach (Allen and

Schlereth 1990; Donohoe 2014; Hiss 1991; Seamon and Mugerauer 1985; Seamon 2018, 2020).

Tuan's views are an excellent starting point for the examination of other scholars' views on place. In his work *Placeways: A Theory of the Human Environment* (1988) for example, sociologist E. V. Walter regards place as "a location of experience; the container of shapes, powers, feelings, and meanings" (Walter 1988, 215). Coining the term *topistics*, which he defines as a holistic way of looking at place and the human experience in it, Walter explains that it is through experience that place "evokes and organises memories, images, feelings, sentiments, meanings, and the work of imagination" (Ibid., 21). Walter's term in his own explanation is a neologism that encourages theoretical frameworks that help understand "the whole experience of space and place" (Ibid., 18).

Thus, experience defines place. One of the most prominent scholars who focuses heavily on an experientially-based understanding of a locale, is geographer Edward Relph. With a sharp focus on "a phenomenology of place" (Relph 1976, 4), in his work *Place and Placelessness* (1976), Relph views places as "significant centres of our immediate experiences of the world" (Ibid., 141), that engage senses, sentiments, and thoughts. Such involvement with a given space creates meaning and organises human activity. In Relph's words,

those aspects of the lived-world that we distinguish as places are differentiated because they involve a concentration of our intentions, our attitudes, purposes and experience. Because of this focusing they are set apart from the surrounding space while remaining a part of it. Places are thus basic elements in the ordering of our experiences of the world. (Ibid., 43)

In a similar vein, Kent Ryden's *Mapping the Invisible Landscape* (1993) examines the multi-layered relationship between place and folklore. His approach is interdisciplinary and offers a folkloristic view of a sense of place. Experience again is taken into consideration as an undeniable part of the creation of place; for sentiments, memory and intimate interactions in

the mundane and everyday help construct narratives that turn undistinguished spaces into meaningful places. These narratives in fact reveal,

...the depth and range of meaning that a place holds for those who are familiar with it, who have had enough experience of and in a place to enable them to transcend the cartographic imagination. (Ryden 1993, 42)

This transcendence, Ryden contends, lies in the folkloristic study of place. What forms the crux of Ryden's argument (and many scholars before him), is the fact that although spaces are mappable and important in the understanding of larger geographic areas, a truly profound awareness of a locale is best surveyed through the exploration of the ways in which individuals and their communities incorporate the particularities of these places in their quotidian lives: an often dismissed yet highly valuable approach at the very heart of folkloristics. Therefore, if we consider that creating a sense of place is a deliberate, ongoing and affective practice for community members, we can make use of a range of profoundly valuable prisms provided by folklore to look at this intriguing process.

As I will demonstrate in this thesis, the study of the Filipino diasporic community's expressive culture can offer much significant insight into the concept of place as discussed by the abovementioned scholars.

In order to narrow the massive scope of such enquiry and turn it into a manageable project, three genres of folklore proved to be most productive: material culture, foodways, and gatherings and events. Thus, this thesis is dedicated to the explication of the ways in which a sense of place is created by Filipinos in Newfoundland through the use of material objects, food, and community gatherings by referring to relevant concepts of place, identity, and community in Philippine culture.

As Virgilio Enriquez, widely considered the father of Philippine psychology, suggests, "the domain of interpersonal relations is theoretically fertile and lexically elaborate in Filipino," and when analysing Filipino traits and behaviour, where possible they should be

utilised instead of Western worldviews and categories of analysis (Enriquez 1986, 11). Strongly encouraging the use of deeply meaningful Filipino words in academic studies of Philippine culture and psychology, Enriquez writes that, “Instead of lifting a Filipino concept from the network of concepts to which it belongs, it is far preferable to make full use of the language as the main resource” (Ibid., 9).

As I discovered in this study, such concepts for which an English equivalent does not necessarily exist, were most helpful in examining my community. Therefore, an introduction to these recurring culturally-embedded notions is necessary in the following pages.

Tambayan

The term *tambayan* literally translates to “a meeting spot” or “a place to hang-out”. The word is derived from the root “magtambay” which means “to hang out” or “to relax and do nothing,” more specifically in the presence of company. *Tambayan*, in other words, refers to a spot where informal socialising in a relaxing, unpretentious environment is possible. The purpose of such a place is to be at ease, feel no pressure to perform or impress, and embrace a homey attitude towards space and company. When talking to my participants about the meanings associated with such places, the words, “just chilling”, “relaxing”, “passing time with no agenda and no task”, “de-stressing”, “mingling”, “comfort”, and “familiar” came up several times. My research has revealed that for the population I studied, creating such places has been immensely important.

Because the term *tambayan* is always viewed in an informal capacity, academic research about this concept in Philippine culture has been scarce. As I will demonstrate in this thesis, however, *tambayan* is an effective and affective means of creating a strong sense of place in diaspora for immigrants, who may see it as a life-affirming anchor when experiencing displacement. *Tambayan* has been briefly studied with regards to Filipinos in a foreign context

by occupational scientist Terry Peralta-Catipon. In her short yet rich article entitled “Statue Square as a Liminal Sphere” (2009), Peralta-Catipon makes use of ethnography to reveal the ways in which Filipino domestic workers in Hong Kong, who experience feelings of loneliness and being out of place, assemble weekly in Statue Square. For these folk, this space away from home becomes a place with “shared experiences, shared meanings, and shared identities” and enables them to better tackle issues regarding “displacement, disempowerment, and discrimination” (Peralta-Catipon 2009, 32). Referring to Statue Square in Hong Kong as a *tambayan* and a “territorial refuge” that is dependable (Ibid., 34), Peralta-Catipon examines the collective nature of the things Filipino workers do there (for example, speaking their own language, using insider codes and terms to refer to different spots around the square, eating Filipino food, gossiping and sharing their stories, attending Catholic masses, etc.). This space thus bridges interruptions to Filipino workers’ sense of identity caused by homesickness and feelings of disenfranchisement and instead stimulates feelings of belonging, wellbeing, and camaraderie. Peralta-Catipon analyses her data through the use of folklorist Arnold Van Gennep’s concept of *liminality* (1960) and anthropologist Victor Turner’s notion of *communitas* (1969, 1974, 1982, 1985). Liminality in Van Gennep’s *The Rites of Passage* (1960), refers to an in-between or limbo stage before a full transition to the next. The first stage denotes a temporary separation from quotidian life where one possesses a certain role. The liminal state is the next stage where a full transition has not yet taken place. The last stage is a ceremonial passage that reintegrates the individual with a newly assigned title back into their society or community. The concept of a liminal space has been widely used by various scholars in different disciplines to reveal the in-between status that individuals possess when they enter or re-enter a given space where they hold different roles or perform different identities (Andrews and Roberts 2012; Eaton and Smelt 2007; Lehmkuhl et al. 2015; Piazza 2019). Van Gennep’s theory, initially proposed in 1909, was applied to what he considered traditional non-

Western societies. Victor Turner in turn furthered Van Gennep's theory, which was applied to initiation rites, by looking at various occurrences in traditional as well as modern societies in the same light. The concept of a liminal state (or later in a more contemporary sense liminoid), which denotes an in-betweenness or temporary suspension, was thus applied to a wide range of social phenomena. In *The Ritual Process* (1969), Turner uses the term "limen" to describe a threshold divorcing one space from another, where individuals are removed from day to day routine experiences to ultimately reach a kind of integration. Turner explicates the ways in which liminal spaces can create stronger communities by generating opportunities for transformative unifying experiences, where, with detachment from everyday life and departure from regular activities or social conditions, a strong social bond based on a sense of equality and uniformity, which he names "*communitas*", can be engendered.

When talking about Filipino workers' use of Statue Square in Hong Kong as a *tambayan*, Peralta-Catipon considers liminality and *communitas* to explain how such a space creates a temporary separation from everyday reality for Filipinos as they strengthen their bonds and engage in communal activities every Sunday.

In this thesis, as I will delve into an examination of how Filipinos establish a sense of place in Newfoundland, I will come back to and expand the ways in which *tambayan* in diaspora is a vital liminal space that results in *communitas*.

Salu-salo

Salu-salo (sometimes spelled *salo-salo*) in Philippine culture refers to the practice of gathering together specifically to eat. The word can be translated in English as banquet, feast, or dining party. However, regardless of the occasion (or lack thereof), *salu-salo* brings with it the notion of communal eating and sharing food with family, friends, and acquaintances. As it will be discussed in a later chapter, food plays a central role in Philippine culture and thus *salu-salo* can be considered a "permanent feature in every Filipino gathering" as no assembly is

thought of as complete “unless a meal, no matter how simple it is, is shared by everyone.” (Rebustillo 2023, 40). As this practice is “vital in forging relationships and cementing friendships” among Filipinos (Ibid., 41), this type of communal eating has been and still is significant for this diasporic population in Newfoundland in creating a sense of place and negotiating belonging. The presence of Filipino food is a vital element in the creation of *tambayan* and a liminal space where *communitas* is achieved. Therefore, an examination of intimate community spaces throughout the decades as well as Filipino eateries and restaurants, will provide a fruitful study of how inclusive spaces are created through the making and sharing of Filipino food that help build a strong sense of place for old and new diasporans and immigrants.

Kapwa, Pakikisama, and Bayanihan

When doing research about a sense of place and community members’ experiences in Newfoundland, my observation and participants’ narratives revealed to me that certain values deeply rooted in Philippine worldview and culture could be effectively used to explain the community’s efforts in placemaking. One such concept that is “the most important core value that Filipinos must understand, have, and display, as it is what makes a Filipino a Filipino, and a human, a human” is *kapwa* (Enriquez 1994, 63). Viewed as “an ideal of collectivism and group welfare” (Francisco-Menchavez et al., 2018, 413), a direct satisfactory translation of this complicated concept does not exist in English as “it is embedded in an entirely different worldview and web of meanings unique to Philippine culture and history—namely, a Southeast Asian tribal and animist culture mixed with Spanish Catholicism” (Reyes 2015, 149). However, some translations include “shared self, shared identity, or self-in-the-other” (Ibid., 149). Using Virgilio Enriquez views on *kapwa*, behavioural health scholar Jessica Dionela Petalio writes,

Kapwa is the unity of the self and others, a recognition of a shared identity, an inner self that makes one connected with and equal to others... *Kapwa* is referred to as a core

value as well as an essence of the Filipino value system because it is the sole value that drives Filipina/x/o culture that emphasises relatedness, social belonging, and harmony. (Petalio 2022, 577)

If a person possesses *kapwa* they recognise and are profoundly perceptive of shared identity. In other words, a person who has *kapwa* acknowledges, understands, accepts, and treats others as equals. Although the concept is complex, one of the examples Enriquez uses to shed more light on this notion is simple,

The company president and the clerk in an office may not have an equivalent role, status, or income but the Filipino way demands and implements the idea that they treat one another as fellow human beings. (Enriquez 1986, 16)

Thus, a sense of shared identity and respect for the equality of human value sits at the heart of *kapwa*. In academic studies, although *kapwa* has been theorised, concrete or ethnographic studies about the embodiment of the concept are scarce. This folkloristic study will therefore be among the few works that seek to examine a more tangible embodiment of this notion.

One of the few scholars who has looked at a more embodied example of *kapwa* is psychologist Katrin De Guia who writes,

The core of Filipino personhood is *kapwa*. This notion of a “shared Self” extends the I to include the Other. It bridges the deepest individual recess of a person with anyone outside him or herself, even total strangers. (De Guia 2005, 28)

De Guia’s study considers *kapwa* among Filipino culture-bearers who are rooted and active in their respective communities and embrace inclusivity and connectedness in spite of differences in status or background.

Although not precisely the same, semantically similar concepts to *kapwa* exist in some other cultures. For example, when viewed in relation to the interconnectedness of human life and nature, *kapwa* can be compared to the indigenous concept of *iwígara* in Rarámuri language which considers the interdependence of human relations with the natural world and the need for mutual harmony and respect. And when contemplated in the framework of relational

philosophy, it is comparable to the African concept of *ubuntu* in Zulu/Xhosa language, which is often articulated as “I am because we are” and denotes the importance of “collaboration, cooperation and community” and “espouses an ethos of care and respect for others” (Bolden 2014, 800). As I elaborate on the process of placemaking for Filipinos in Newfoundland, I will make use of this culturally significant notion to reveal the ways in which creating a strong sense of place depends on *kapwa* and how, in turn, embracing *kapwa* mutually helps build a sense of place and belonging for the community.

A concept viewed as profoundly entrenched in and closely related to *kapwa* is *pakikisama*. Considered as part of the ethos of Philippine culture (Miranda 1993, 156), *pakikisama* derives its meaning from the root words *paki* meaning *please* (used when politely requesting something), and *sama*, which means to accompany, be in agreement or get along with each other (Lynch 1970, 10). *Pakikisama*, often considered a positive surface value in Filipino cultural practices and psyche, “holds multiple levels of interconnectedness to oneself, others, and the community” (Africa 2022, 724), and thus has been connected to various relational traits and concepts. For example, intercultural communication scholar Tomas Andres regards *pakikisama* as “the ability to get along with others to avoid outside signs of conflict” (Andres 1996, 148); theologian Vitaliano Gorospe considers it the “Filipino value of belongingness” (Gorospe 1988, 32); anthropologist Frank Lynch refers to it as the builder of smooth interpersonal relationships (Lynch 1970, 10); and historians Teodoro Agoncillo and Milagros Guerrero define it as “the intensive signification of camaraderie or the spirit of comradeship” (Agoncillo and Guerrero 1970, 13). As it can be gathered, although various definitions are assigned to the concept, *pakikisama* at its core denotes wanting to do good by going along and getting along with others in order to blend and create group harmony. Therefore, in order to understand the connection between *kapwa* and *pakikisama* (the former

considered a core Filipino value and the latter a surface one), we can refer to psychologist Jei Africa's deliberation as he writes,

Kapwa is rooted in the ability to see oneself in others and an underlying belief that everyone has the same humanity. It is this sense of connection that allows one to see others as familial, whether or not any conventional family relationship exists. *Pakikisama* stems from this deep understanding that we are all related. (Africa 2022, 723)

It is important to briefly note here that as many scholars have demonstrated, *pakikisama* can also have negative results: peer pressure, silencing of individual voice, and coercion to conform are some of the adverse impacts that have been examined in relation to *pakikisama* (Africa 2022; Leoncini 2005; Saito 2010). Possessing an understanding of *pakikisama* is important in this thesis, because this trait affects the process of creating places of comfort and belonging specifically with regards to building *tambayan*.

The last term that needs to be examined is the concept of *bayanihan*. An indigenous trait in Philippine culture, *bayanihan* has been viewed by anthropologists and social scientists as “an ancient Filipino custom, symbolic of the Filipino way of group work” and a “practical response to both individual and community needs” (Ang 1979, 91). Often translated as “community spirit”, the term is derived from the root word *bayan* which means “town”, “fatherland”, or “nation”, connoting a group or community to which someone belongs (the word *kababayan* meaning “compatriot”, which is the most common way for Filipinos to refer to each other in diaspora derives from the same root). Various scholars studying *bayanihan* in Philippine culture and among different communities in diaspora have offered a range of elaborations for this term. For example, “working together as a community to achieve a common goal” (Javier and Jayme 2022, 202); “collective effort toward a common goal” (Celestial 2022, 979); “helping others altruistically” (Tabag 2022, 879); “togetherness in common effort” (Enriquez 1986, 8); or the “cultural value of service and support of one’s

community” (Presa 2022, 957). Possessing a sense of community spirit in diaspora, as will be demonstrated in this thesis, can help create a sense of place and belonging.

As the three Filipino cultural values introduced in this section suggest, aligning oneself with one’s group and embracing a sense of community based on an understanding of a shared identity can be examined as deeply helpful cognitive and affective tools that assist members in bonding, bridging and alleviating displacement in diaspora, by creating a feeling of kinship and acceptance in a place. The three concepts of *kapwa* (or *pakikipagkapwa*, derived from the same root with the prefix “*pakiki*” which denotes a request for an action), *pakikisama* and *bayanihan* are relevant concepts that dovetail together in meaningful ways in Philippine culture. In other words,

Pakikipagkapwa, pakikisama, and bayanihan are sacred values that define who Filipinos are. They are important features of the Filipino culture, which has been described as collectivist and interdependent. Pakikipagkapwa is to respect someone as a fellow human being. Pakikisama is a companionship that allows Filipinos to be adaptable and easygoing. Bayanihan is also a type of communal solidarity that entails assisting one another in times of need. (Adlit and Martinez 2023, 787)

These concepts will be frequently revisited with tangible examples in order to demonstrate how they help build a sense of place for the community under study. By introducing them, my aim is to look beyond studies that predominantly examine expressive culture to understand diasporic survival in terms of adaptation and reconstruction, and continuity and change. Comprehension of the intricacies of a people’s psyche, mentality, and worldviews ingrained in their ethos, helps form a more profound understanding of the workings of folklore and culture in diasporic communities. Thus, connecting the fields of folkloristics and cultural psychology in this dissertation, I will elaborate on the fact that diasporic experiences can be nuanced and seen in a different light when we look beneath the surface of the metaphorical cultural iceberg.

“Fluid Like Water”: Methodology and Fieldwork

Throughout the course of my ethnographic research, the unexpected and unpredictable torrent of unwished-for affairs posed many a burdensome difficulty. When I look back at where I started and how far (in spite of a relentless multitude of daunting challenges) I came, I remember a long walk I took with a community member one chilly afternoon. Trudging through the snow with some exertion, we carried out an interesting conversation that day and even managed to enjoy the gentle fleeting touch of a winter sun. My companion—a self-confessed fan of Bruce Lee in his childhood—relayed amusing stories of his home back in the Philippines, his immigration with its manifold barriers, and the life he loves in Newfoundland. After using humour to talk about a particularly trying time during his early years in Canada, he reassuringly turned to me and said, “But you know, it’s like something Bruce Lee said about being like water. We’ll be fine regardless. We’ll find a way. We’re fluid like water!” Those words stayed with me throughout the years. And as challenges ceaselessly came my way, I reminded myself of that afternoon and the quiet dignity of my companion and his peers who became “fluid like water” to remind themselves that human nature in the end is inspiringly tough. My questions, methods, and framework of analysis changed multiple times due to various reasons while carrying out this research. Therefore, in order to familiarise the reader with the changing paths on which I trod, the following section will be dedicated to discussing the background and structure of this study.

i. Questions

As it has been demonstrated thus far, the main goal of this thesis is to look at the ways in which a sense of place (as scholars like Yi-Fu Tuan, Edward Relph, and E. V. Walter define it) is created by the Filipino community in Newfoundland. Since this line of inquiry necessitates a phenomenological approach, my guiding questions will focus on the prisms

through which a tangible sense of place is created for this specific folk group through the study of its material culture, foodways, and community gatherings and events. Thus, my three key lines of inquiry that will be developed and addressed, will be the focus of the three main chapters. However, the central question that this study will seek to answer is: how and why have Filipinos created a strong sense of place in Newfoundland?

In what follows, after providing a summary of necessary background information in chapter two, in chapter three, which is dedicated to Filipino material culture in Newfoundland, I will examine Filipinos' objects. By looking closely at a myriad of things in the domestic sphere, as well as those subtly visible in public spaces, I will pose and answer the following questions: what role does material culture that is used or displayed at home, or noticeable in public, play in placemaking for Filipino immigrants and diasporans in Newfoundland? And how do objects work as ethnic markers for the community in a way that creates a sense of place? Thus, as I examine culturally important objects, I will elaborate on the ways in which they provide a sense of familiarity and comfort, turning space into place for the community.

In the following chapter devoted to studying Filipino foodways in the province, I will examine oral narratives gathered from different generations in the community. During this process, while providing some insight into what food from home has meant to Filipinos residing here, I will engage with the following inquiries: what role has Filipino food played in creating a sense of safety and belonging for Filipinos and their community? In what ways does the important cultural practice of *sahu-salo* help facilitate gatherings and create *tambayan* in diaspora? And what role do Filipino food establishments on the island play in helping build a sense of place for the community?

In my final chapter, I will look at Filipino gatherings on a small, more informal scale, as well as organised bigger events. Using elaborations on Filipino material culture and foodways

provided in the previous two chapters, gathering spaces and community events (most importantly, Filipino Nights) will then be subjected to scrutiny. Therefore, the following questions will be addressed: what does an examination of Filipino gatherings and events reveal about how meaningful places are created for Filipinos? And, what important function does the coming together of the community during such get-togethers serve for Filipinos who want to find a place of comfort and familiarity in diaspora?

The questions posed in each of the chapters will help form a conclusion about the community's efforts, ways, and manners of building a strong sense of wellbeing and *bayanihan*, by turning space into place.

ii. Methods

My interest in the Filipino community in Newfoundland preceded my research. Although before entering my PhD program, I had come to learn and be fascinated by this community, I had not planned to re-enter Filipino spaces and re-engage with members as an academic, with the aim to examine the places that they built. Throughout the course of my study, I had to learn much about ethnographic methods and discover ways to appropriately re-insert and position myself within a community I felt I was a part of and I knew relatively well. While learning extensively about different kinds of ethnographic fieldwork, I became more aware of the researcher's positionality, and the advice of geographer Steve Herbert stayed with me. Herbert strongly encourages all ethnographers to embrace "forthrightness, reflexivity, and modesty" (Herbert 2000, 562). What is meant by forthrightness is that community members as well as readers should be provided with a clear outline of the goals of the project, the way it has been conducted and developed and the partiality of the knowledge that is ultimately produced. Reflexivity in this context refers to the acute awareness of the situatedness of academic scholarship and an acknowledgment of the fact that one's position can undeniably affect one's

way of knowing. And finally embracing a stance of modesty in ethnographic research according to Herbert means cognizance of the complexity and nuances of human behaviour and the limitations of our study's achievements. The need for modesty is emphasised as Herbert writes,

The best ethnography improves our understanding of a specific group and enhances our ability to think with concepts, but it always reflects a particular perspective and a particular historical moment. Ethnographers, like other social scientists, can only hope to add constructively to ongoing conversations about the dynamics of social life, hopefully in the most critical and incisive way possible. But even the best of such efforts are partial accounts and thus explanatory claims are best kept modest. (Ibid., 563)

Keen to adhere to these instructions, while carrying out my study throughout the years I learned more about the process of knowledge production in the field. Fascinated by the turnout of pleasantly unpredictable events, the approach of folklorist Elaine Lawless became immensely valuable to me. In her work *Reciprocal Ethnography and the Power of Women's Narratives* (2019), Lawless brings our attention to the fact that ethnographic knowledge production that is "reciprocal, multilayered, and polyvocal" (Lawless 2019, 118), is "based on dialogue and shared/examined/re-examined knowledge" (Ibid., 100). Thus, while continuously striving to reflect on my positionality while doing my fieldwork, I also sought to engage in dialogue that would help establish a better understanding of how we/Filipinos saw ourselves/themselves in the places we/they create in Newfoundland.

My initial line of enquiry reads very similarly to anthropologist James P. Spradley's approach. Sometimes, I even summarised the following words for my participants during interviews,

I want to understand the world from your point of view. I want to know what you know in the way you know it. I want to understand the meaning of your experience, to walk in your shoes, to feel things as you feel them, to explain things as you explain them. Will you become my teacher and help me understand? (Spradley 1979, 34)

Therefore, suspending and setting aside my assumptions of what I thought I knew about the community and the Filipino way of life, I considered bracketing or epoche, terms that are often used interchangeably (Gearing 2004; Beech 1999). Bracketing, simply put, can be defined as a suspension of beliefs and presumptions so that they do not impact or interfere with interpretation of participants' experiences (Parahoo 2014, 61). Therefore, I engaged in continuous dialogue, kept comprehensive journals, and strived to remain transparent in this study. This helped me ensure that I viewed things with fresh eyes and engaged in constructive dialogue.

The data for this thesis was gathered by utilising ethnographic methods and the examination of findings followed an interpretive phenomenological analysis—a method of interpretation that implements “the fundamental principles of phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiography”(Pietkiewicz and Smith 2014, 8). In other words, discoveries from detailed interviews and careful observations focusing on individual perspectives were used in a descriptive study that centres such experiences with a good grasp of the nuances of the community's language and culture.

Coupling in-depth, one-on-one interviews and participant observation during informal as well as formal meetings, I collected the information I needed over four years. Although I had familiarised myself with the community before I entered my PhD program, my research and interviews formally began in mid-2019 after I obtained my ethics approval. I began my fieldwork by speaking to Filipinos during informal gatherings and paid close attention to community members, the spaces they occupied, the objects they used and displayed, the food they consumed and shared, the activities in which they engaged, the events they organised, the places they made, the atmosphere they created, the stories they relayed, and the feelings they expressed. I then conducted thirty audio-recorded interviews with participants by slowly

recruiting them through a “snowball sampling” method, from 2019 to 2023. My interviews were conducted in relaxed environments such as the participants’ homes, in cafés and restaurants, or in quiet settings on the university campus, and during the lockdown caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, via online platforms such as Zoom and Skype. Instead of having a set of structured questions, I prepared a list of themes that allowed me to ask open-ended queries depending on what participants were eager to share with me. My participants were aged between 19 and 93, and had varying socio-economic statuses, occupations, and immigration experiences. Some of them considered themselves among first, second, or third generation of Filipino-Newfoundlanders, some were born here and many had arrived in the 60s, 70s, 80s, 90s, 2000s, 2010s, or more recently in 2020s. Many had come as medical professionals, several had come as domestic workers, some were academics, some were students, several were business-owners, and many had changed career paths in Canada.

Each interview lasted between 30 to 60 minutes and depending on the content, I talked to several participants more than once. In addition to audio-recording oral narratives during such interviews, I also took pictures of various Filipino foods shared with me and objects shown to me. I also viewed personal as well as group photographs and watched recorded films of various events throughout the years. These rich audiovisual aids offered a wealth of information that helped me grasp a deeper understanding of the Filipino community and the places they constructed throughout the years, and made many shared narratives more tangible.

After the interviews, I transcribed (and at times translated) audio-recordings. Then, I assigned pseudonyms to each participant in order to protect their identity. My interviewees’ awareness of their anonymity allowed them to speak with more ease and share intimate details of their experiences. Afterwards, I subjected the texts to scrutiny, paying close attention to individual as well as shared meanings and recurring patterns. Methods of handling data were

based on grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967), as the cycle of data collection and analysis happened iteratively and over a prolonged period of time, while comparisons and connections were interpreted simultaneously through open and then axial coding.

Furthermore, during the course of my research, as I developed a better grasp of how I was studying my own folk group, I sought for ways to balance my insider understanding of the community and my outsider analysis of the data I gathered as an academic. Therefore, I frequently situated myself in accordance with what different stages of my study required, striving to balance emic and etic positionalities.

I concluded my fieldwork in 2023, having assembled a rich repository of untapped data that became the building material of this thesis.

Challenges and Reflections

No PhD researcher that I have ever met (and I have met many!), has ever talked about the smooth sailing path toward the completion of a doctorate degree. With challenges aplenty and obstacles galore, even in the most ideal of situations when one expects to function optimally, a tremendous amount of mental stamina is required to complete the daunting task and to finally see the light at the end of the tunnel. Aside from copious amounts of stress and isolation, anxiety over mounting work, dwindling research funding, lack of institutional support, and balancing life and study, which are the usual concerns of PhD students, I and many others like me, had the misfortune of having to carry out ethnographic fieldwork during a global pandemic. My original plans of spending more focused time at gatherings with community members and carefully recording bigger events came to a complete halt due to Covid a few months after I obtained my ethics approval. With much confusion, a great need for adjustment to new regulations, and growing restrictions, spending time with participants

properly was not possible over a prolonged period of time. Since amendments had to be made to the terms of my ethics approval, I had to begin recruiting participants online. Not being able to adhere to the “gold standard” of face-to-face communication for my interviews (McCoyd and Kerson 2006, 390), posed a bigger challenge than I expected. Community members who were kind, obliging, and warm when we met in person during get-togethers, seemed not to respond (or not to respond promptly, perhaps) to my appointment enquiries. With shifting preoccupations, changing regulations, and screen fatigue, many of my emails and messages remained unanswered and several of my arranged appointments online were unattended. The ease and comfort with which I spoke to community members while going out for a cup of coffee or stopping by for a chat at their homes, seemed to slowly fade away; and instead an unwelcome sense of foreboding seemed to creep in my mind, trampling every pretty hope I had nursed for a long time for this study. Many peers who were also in the process of writing their theses in various fields, shared their frustrations with regards to the complete loss of daily routine, struggling with mental health, difficulty of access to libraries and archives, and loss of community and research space. The majority of them, however, did not have to carry out ethnographic participant-focused fieldwork, or research that relies so heavily on the benevolence and cooperation of individuals in a community. Adapting to the situation and remembering to be “fluid like water”, I carried on and collected as much information and interviewed as many people as I could online. One problem that I frequently encountered was that many people who preferred to talk to me in person postponed being interviewed online or on the phone; some such interviews never happened as some people moved away, some passed away, and one community member’s dementia had progressed to the extent that the interview I had with them was unusable. Another issue was that the busy schedule of some community members meant that I could not easily get hold of them and finally had to give up in some instances so as not to create any nuisance for them.

When many restrictions started lifting in 2022, with a certain degree of hesitation, I approached the community in-person again, worrying that my concerns or my study might be viewed with cold disinterest now that we had not met for a while. However, I was immensely grateful to see that I was treated with the same warmth and kindness as before among my *kababayan*. This alleviated my mounting doubts and provided a great degree of relief.

Pondering the process of my fieldwork, research, and writing I learned that possessing flexibility of mind, framework, approach, and plans is a significant virtue for a folklorist. This also applies to one's positionality within a folk group. Being acutely aware of the fact that despite being homogenously labelled as Filipino (or often even just "Asian" by outsiders), the community is diverse in terms of time of immigration, age, gender, socio-economic status, regional language, and religion (or religious denomination), I often found myself reflecting my own position within the group. I—a Filipino-Iranian researcher, who spoke Tagalog with a "sweet accent" and English like "British people" and came regularly to gatherings but suddenly wanted to record everything; who was raised in a Muslim-Catholic context and did not share a similar path of immigration to most people in the community—was simultaneously an insider embraced with open arms and an outsider who looked at things too closely at times. My presence and my encounters for the most part was received with normalcy. However, there were times when I realised that community members felt a degree of self-consciousness when I jotted down something or took pictures of things that looked too banal to be recorded. During such occasions, I became more aware of the natural reactivity of human behaviour explained best through the Hawthorne effect (French 1953), where individuals who are aware of being observed behave differently. Navigating my position as an obliging community member and a keen researcher, I adhered to proper Filipino decorum of respect and humility expected culturally, to ensure mutual understanding and respect.

My efforts bore fruit. Looking back at all the hard work, sleepless nights, ever-present anxiety, endless editing, pandemic-imposed obstacles, long waits for interviews, cancelled appointments, as well as heartwarming community events, generous community members, and memorable treasured moments, it has been worthwhile since this research is the very first one of its kind closely looking at the Filipino community in Newfoundland through the lens of folklore.

A Historical Overview of Filipino Migration to North America

The community in this study is a dynamic one. When opting for apt words to describe this group, I pondered over the terms “immigrant” and “diasporic.” “Immigrant” by the very definition of the term refers to an individual who has come to another country (whether temporarily or permanently) to live there. The term “diasporic”, however, defines members of a diaspora who maintain varying degrees of connection to an original homeland but have generationally lived in a different context. Looking at Filipinos as a folk group in Newfoundland, I realised that both terms apply to this community, as there are new immigrants who find a sense of home and place amongst diasporic members who have been here for three generations. Speaking with individuals, I learned that whether they are recent immigrants, older immigrants, or diasporans, a feeling of belonging to and association with the community as a whole bonds members. As I elaborate on this folk group’s history, this line of reasoning will become clearer.

When I initially began talking to friends and peers about a potential PhD research about Filipino immigrants, I was deeply surprised about the general lack of knowledge about my people, our culture, and our history. Very little seemed to be known about why most of us have Spanish names, why we speak English fluently, and why the majority of us are Christians. Therefore, I deem it necessary to provide a historical background about Philippine history and

Filipino arrival in North America. This will provide an essential understanding of the context of immigration.

In order to understand the patterns of emigration from the Philippines throughout the decades, it is important to briefly look at the country's history of colonial occupation and social unrest. The Spanish occupied the islands for 333 years (1565-1898), and were succeeded by the Americans, who took charge for over half a century after defeating them in the Spanish-American war. Furthermore, the disastrous state of the country following the Japanese occupation during the Second World War (1942-1945), in addition to a ruinous period of constitutional authoritarianism under the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos (1965-1986), resulted in chronic economic underdevelopment that has been a major factor in outmigration.

Starting in the late sixteenth century, for over 250 years, Filipino sailors referred to as *Manilamen* were arriving in North America in Spanish galleon ships set off to trade various goods in trans-Pacific routes (Sterngass 2007, 40). This, in fact, reveals that Filipinos were the first Asians to arrive in North America (Lee 2015, 4). As Filipino American folklore and recorded oral history reveals, Saint Malo, the first permanent Filipino settlement in North America was established in Louisiana in the 1760s by such sailors (Railton 2019, 93). This pattern of migration to North America was ongoing during the Spanish colonial rule. However, when the Philippines was ceded by the Spanish to the Americans for \$20 million under the Treaty of Paris in 1898, the Americans took control of the archipelago turning it into a US colony. When the Philippines became a US territory, Filipinos' status changed to American colonial subjects, which meant that they were now considered US nationals. After the American occupation, the history and patterns of migration from the Philippines to North America was heavily influenced by various laws during different periods of time. In order to understand Filipino migration patterns and routes to North America, it is important to elaborate

on some key historical policies in the Philippines, the United States and Canada that have played a major role in the shaping of the diaspora.

According to historian Jim Corrigan, migration from the Philippines to the United States can be divided into these three periods: pre-World War II, post-World War II, and 1965-present (Corrigan 2004, 39). Prior to the Second World War, with their status as US nationals, many Filipinos immigrated to the United States to fill in labour shortages in plantations in Hawaii and canneries in Alaska. These immigrants, mostly younger men, settled mainly in the West Coast and took jobs that were unfavourable with the local white population. After the Second World War, because of the American imperial entanglement with the island nation that surpassed well beyond Philippine Independence in 1946, a wave of Filipino war brides arrived in the US with American servicemen (Zhao and Park 2013, 375). In addition to that, with the collapse of the infrastructure and the economy in the Philippines in the aftermath of the Second World War, surplus labour willing to find jobs overseas had dramatically increased. The third wave of immigration from 1965 onwards has been subject to various changes resulting from modifications to different Immigration Acts that have allowed skilled professionals and their families to arrive in small or large numbers throughout the years. Corrigan's broad categorization serves as a helpful overview on which I will elaborate in detail in the following pages.

Less than a year after the conquest of the Philippines, a three-year period of insurgency by Filipinos who did not find their new American colonialists any more self-abnegating or benevolent than their Spanish rulers, caused the Philippine-American war (Silbey 2008, xv). Even during this period of unrest the first Filipinos were being recruited to serve in the United States army as early as 1901. After the end of the Philippine-American war, one of the most successful programs designed by Americans to better integrate their new colonial subjects was the Pensionado Act of 1903. With the goal of "benevolent assimilation" (Miller 1982, 52), the

Pensionado Program initially recruited the brightest children of the Filipino elite to pursue their studies in the United States encouraging them to get an American education with scholarships provided by the US government in order to make use of such tutelage when they came back to the Philippines. As universities all across the US took part in this government-sponsored program, many Filipinos went to cities all over the country. Several of these student scholars, in fact, settled in cities outside of the West Coast. Records reveal that Pensionado students who arrived and remained in cities such as Chicago (Posadas and Guyotte 1990) and New York (Nadal 2015) were among the earliest Filipino immigrants in these cities. Aside from providing an American education for them through such programs, many indigenous Filipino groups came to the United States and found exposure to American culture through programs designed to introduce the American public to “exotic” cultures in the early 1900s. World fairs and expositions such as the one held in St. Louis, Missouri in 1904, brought over a thousand indigenous Filipinos such as the Igorot, Negritos, and Moros to the United States in order to perform their “exotic identities in artificial settings” (Marshall 2018, 61). The large number of Filipinos brought to the States for the Philippines exhibit made the display of a people of whom very little was known “the largest and finest colonial exhibit.” (Morra and Smith 2006, 383). However, by 1914 the display of Filipinos in such fairs stopped and consequently this route of migration for them closed (Afable 2004, 467). Starting in 1906, shortages in the workforce initiated the importing of Filipinos as cheap labourers to various states. With this immigration route, large numbers of Filipinos entered the United States to work in plantations, farms, fisheries and canneries. The nativist US Immigration Act of 1917—known as the Asiatic Barred Zone which prevented the entry of Asians from countries like China, Japan, or Korea—did not apply to Filipinos who were US nationals, even though they were subject to the same racist and xenophobic treatment as people from other Asian nations. This exemption in fact dramatically increased the number of Filipinos who settled in the United States. When other

Asians were barred from entrance, with less competition, labour shortages were filled by Filipinos. In the span of a decade from 1920 to 1930, the number of Filipino immigrants in the US had increased from less than six thousand to over forty-five thousand (Marshall 2018, 57). During this period of time, the growing number of this racial minority raised the hostility and mistrust of settlers of European origin especially in the wake of the Great Depression that made previously undesirable jobs done by recent immigrants, once again attractive. Viewing Filipinos as a threat to white women and their jobs, nativist organizations and various union officials called for changes in the immigration policies to prevent Filipinos from entering the United States (Baldoz 2006, 972). As tensions and anti-Filipino sentiments grew, Filipinos were the target of numerous violent hate crimes from destruction of property and various forms of assault and battery, to murder. The events that occurred during and after Yakima Valley and Watsonville riots in the late 1920s and early 1930s reveal the depth of xenophobia and anti-miscegenation present among the white majority. With further pressure from anti-immigrant and anti-Filipino groups, the United States government came up with a calculated, self-serving solution that would put a stop to Filipino immigration but would greatly benefit the Americans. The Tydings-McDuffie Act was introduced in 1934 to lay out a decade-long plan that would serve as a period of transition for the Philippines to gain its independence. The signing and approval of this act by President Franklin D. Roosevelt meant that Filipinos lost their status as US nationals in 1934. Under the guise of altruistic wishes for the archipelago to gain independence by being set on a path of self-determination, the Act prevented Filipino migration, placed substantial trade tariffs for Filipino export to the US with no limitations for US import to the Philippines. In essence, Philippine authorities largely failed in their negotiations to secure better benefits for the Filipino population as the Tydings-McDuffie Act allowed the United States government to retain much political, economic and military power in the Philippines without having to deal with its ex-colony's population, who were greatly in

need of jobs and financial security (Arnold 2011, 473). In addition to the various benefits the Act allotted the Americans, the US military was still freely recruiting Filipinos to serve in US Armed Forces. With the exception of some army recruits that were granted US citizenship in 1942, the Philippine Independence four years later prompted the Rescission Act of 1946. The Rescission Act denied Filipino veterans of all the benefits and rights that they were promised during their recruitment, making them the only people that were stripped of US army benefits among the sixty-six nations that served in the American armed forces (Zhao and Park 2013, 430).

The fear of mass migration that had led to the creation of various tightly restrictive immigration policies in the US, curbed the number of migrants from the Philippines until the passing of the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act. Emerging in the wake of the Civil Rights Movement that swept the nation, the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 profoundly changed the flow of immigration, bringing the nation in compliance with its professed ideals of inclusiveness and egalitarianism. Prior to the passing of this bill, the US immigration functioned with a quota system that was based on race and national origin. The quota system that was in place since the 1920s heavily favoured people of Northern and Western Europe. However, after 1965, newcomers were categorised into family members of American citizens, skilled professional and labourers, and political refugees irrespective of their nationality or race. The establishment of this Act created new routes of migration for Filipinos.

During the US colonial period, many nursing and medical schools in the Philippines were established based on an approved American model. These programs trained and recruited healthcare professionals in the Philippines to fill in any necessary shortages. One of the most successful programs created in 1948 and developed in the 1950s was the Exchange Visitor Program (EVP) that brought over eleven thousand Filipino nurses who trained and stayed in the US during the span of two decades (Nomura and Hune 2003, 336). Coinciding with dire

nursing and healthcare professional shortages in the US, the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act opened the gates for a great number of Filipinos in these professions to take up positions in various states (Chin and Cuison-Villazor 2015, 240). EVP nurses and doctors that landed in the United States periodically faced visa expiration issues that was sorted out by intended short stays in Canada. Because for many of these healthcare professionals Canada was not the ultimate destination, such immigrants would arrive in a “springboard” or “trampoline” pattern, with the intention of going back to the US (Marshall 2018, 59). It was during this period of time that some Filipino healthcare professionals started viewing Canada as an alternative destination for immigration. However, scant as it was, Filipino immigration to Canada had an earlier history.

With the discovery of new records and sources, knowledge about Filipino migration history to Canada is “ever evolving” (Ibid.). Information obtained from Canada census reveals that as early as the late 1800s, a number of Filipino sailors found their way to Canada on the West Coast, in addition to a small numbers of individuals scattered in the prairies. Moreover, in 1880s, a small community of Filipinos consisting of fishermen and beachcombers were residing in Bowen Island, BC (Howard 1973, 36). The sparsity of Filipino population in Canada before the 1950s and the ambiguity with which this Asian minority was racially categorised, leave a faint mark in Canadian ethnic historiography during this period of time. Although prior to Philippine Independence in 1946, Canada only dealt with the Philippines as a colony of the United States, various socio-economic and political factors led to the development of policies in both countries throughout the decades that initially hindered but ultimately facilitated the flow of emigration from the Philippines.

The beginnings of Canadian relationship with the Philippines in the 1950s was heavily influenced by Canada's various discriminatory policies that had long been established in the country. In spite of Canada's “avoidance syndrome” (Price 2011, 4), when dealing with its dark

history of racism and xenophobia, various policies and laws reveal the depth of systematic intolerance. The Exclusion Era in Canada (encompassing the Chinese Head Tax of 1885, the Continuous Journey Clause of 1908, the Immigration Act of 1910, and the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1923) is a good example of how government-implemented policies attempted to stop Asian immigration. Defending such policies and the country's right for practices that kept Canada decisively white, Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King stated in his 1947 speech in the House of Commons that,

The people of Canada do not wish as a result of mass immigration to make a fundamental alteration in the character of our population. Large scale immigration from the Orient would change the fundamental composition of the Canadian population. (Documents of Canadian History 2021)

These sentiments were well-reflected in the Canadian Immigration Act of 1952 whereby an immense amount of power was put in the hands of the governor-in-council who could then sanction regulations that could deny entry to immigrants on the basis of “nationality, ethnicity, occupation, peculiar customs, unsuitability to the Canadian climate and probable inability to assimilate” (Canadian Museum of Immigration 2021). In this political climate, many Filipinos wanting to come or stay in Canada were denied entry. The mounting reports of discriminatory mistreatment of Filipinos by Canadian migration officials provoked the Philippine government to retaliate with a Reciprocity Bill, which was devised to heavily restrict Canadian admission to the Philippines. Canada's economic interest in the Philippines as a rising Southeast Asian ally, the anxiety over the denial of Canadian businessmen and missionaries to the archipelago, and the country's economic demand for more labour force not met by the domestic supply, prompted the easing up of some restrictions on Filipino immigration (Malek 2019). However, it was only in the 1960s that serious Filipino immigration to Canada commenced. Canada's need to import foreign labour because of its booming economy and its involvement in the international scene resulted in drastic changes in the liberalization of immigration laws. Thus in 1967, the Points systems was introduced.

Changes made to Canadian immigration in 1967 created a system based on immigrants' merits for admission to Canada regardless of their ethnic, racial, or national background. Categories such as education, professional skills, pre-arranged employment, competence in English or French, and the presence of family members or relatives in Canada became the basis on which people were admitted to take up residency in the country. With the reinforcement of this policy, migration from Asia and other non-Western nations notably increased (Whitaker 1991, 19).

Significant Filipino immigration that began in the 1960s and 1970s was closely related to domestic labour shortages in the Canadian healthcare system. As it was mentioned earlier, during the American colonial period, Filipinos had started to forge their reputation as a trained workforce ready to be exported. Starting in the 1960s, several factors contributed to the export of healthcare professionals from the Philippines. After WWII, unbalanced policies favouring economic benefits for the US were established. Since then, the Philippines has dealt with chronic fiscal problems that have been ceaselessly exacerbated by corrupt politicians' ill-management of the nation's wealth. The accumulating debt to the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank that was substantially worsened with the extravagant spending of dictator President Ferdinand Marcos and his wife Imelda Marcos, speak of the degenerating economy that made out-migration not only desirable but a necessity for survival in many cases. In fact, during the presidency of Ferdinand Marcos, which lasted over twenty years, remittances sent by immigrants abroad turned into a saving grace to aid the collapsing economy. Seeing the benefits of such remittances, Marcos placed heavy emphasis on revising the workforce system to formalize labour export (Gamlen 2019, 107). As a result of deliberate governmental strategy, various administrative sectors have been established that vigorously engage in labour brokerage in the international scene. Thus, labour migration in the Philippines has become institutionalized, with the state taking an active role in manufacturing an ideal image of a

foreign workforce ready for export (Guevarra 2009, 4). Consequently, the Philippine government's global reach and dedication to market research for labour export has been defined by Asian American Studies scholar Robyn Magalit Rodriguez as "immigration intelligence" (Rodriguez 2010, 22).

The result of the Philippine government's immigration intelligence both locally and globally can be better viewed in the context of the receiving country's ever-changing immigration policies. Thus, understanding the development of simultaneously hyper-visible and yet unseen narratives of Filipino immigrants since the late 1980s necessitates the scrutiny of the FDM or Foreign Domestic Movement (later revised as LCP or the Live-In Caregiver Program), a prevalent Canadian federal immigration program.

With the rise of industrialism, similar to many other countries, women in Canada joined the workforce. The presence of women in the workforce created a gap in Canadian households that resulted in the state initiating programs to recruit domestic workers from overseas. Prior to WWI, immigration policies in Canada reflected a long-established preference for "white British ideals" based on a notion of the "superiority of the Anglo-Saxon race" (Bakan and Stasiulis 1994, 11). During this time, with a commitment to stay in Canada for six months, women recruited from the United Kingdom were given a landed immigrant status (Harzig 2003). Throughout WWII, the Canadian government started recruiting refugees from Eastern Europe who were considered generally less suitable than their British counterparts to fill the ever-increasing domestic labour shortage (Bakan and Stasiulis 1994, 12). After WWII, recruitment efforts were extended to women coming from Southern European countries such as Italy and Greece. All these European women who entered Canada to work as domestic labourers were given landed immigrant status (Daenzer 1991, 127). Since the labour void or in other words Canada's "servant problem" (Macklin 1992, 686) was still present in the 1950s the Canadian government came up with the Caribbean Domestic Scheme. Female domestic

workers from the Caribbean then entered Canada with the promise of becoming landed immigrants if they adhered to the terms of live-in service for at least a year. Unlike European women, these black women were subjected to further physical and gynaecological probing based on myths of promiscuity (Macklin 1992, 689; Bakan and Stasiulis 1994, 13). The Caribbean Domestic Scheme continued until the 1970s. However, with the introduction of further policies, conditions of residency for domestic labourer became more restrictive after that. In 1973, the federal government of Canada introduced the Temporary Employment Authorization Program (TEAP) sometimes referred to as Non-immigrant Employment Authorization Program (NEAP). In order to curb the number of women of colour entering the country with a landed immigrant status, this program granted temporary visas to domestic workers with no designated route to or promise of receiving a permanent residency status, rendering these caregivers “cheap, exploitable and expendable”, or in other words “disposable migrant labourers” (Macklin 1992, 691). This “indentured or captive labour force” (Bakan and Stasiulis 1994, 14) helped in increasing state control and drastically reducing newcomers’ rights. This program opened temporary workers to much abuse and mounting reports led to the federal government’s change in tactics. In 1981, the Foreign Domestic Movement program (FDM) was thus introduced. While maintaining much of the exploitative characteristics of previous policies, the FDM offered the promise of permanent residency for domestic workers if they met specific conditions after three assessments. These requirements included the successful completion of two full years of live-in service for an employer authorised by a federal immigration officer, in addition to gaining financial security by showing proof of sufficient savings; social and cultural adaptation in Canadian society by engaging in volunteer work; and upgrading professional and language skills. It is interesting to note here that these conditions were not required of any other immigrant group. Often operating to “facilitate the exploitation of domestic workers” the FDM has been described to create “a racially stratified

labour market with a legacy of slavery and colonisation” (Macklin 1992, 681), that in fact proposed “a trade-off of two years of semi-indentured labour in the exchange for a shot at the prize of landed immigrant status” (Ibid., 685).

According to Canada’s *Immigration Act*, people who enter Canadian borders are divided into immigrant and visitor categories. Immigrants must meet certain higher requirements to be given their status but enjoy greater benefits, rights and occupational mobility. Visitors, on the other hand, can enter Canada more easily but are not entitled to the same privileges that immigrants are. Individuals who came to Canada through the FDM were given the newly invented in-between status of “visiting immigrant”, which subjected them to the hardships of the fulfillment of immigration requirements while simultaneously minimising their entitlements and prerogatives. In other words, these “temporary visitors on work visas” (Bakan and Stasiulis 1997, 9) bore the encumbrance of both and the advantages of neither immigrants or visitors (Macklin 1992, 698). Their institutionally-sanctioned defencelessness is thus manufactured as it “undermines their civil liberties and heightens their vulnerability to every form of abuse” (Bakan and Stasiulis 1997, 7). And abused, they were. Overworked, undervalued, underpaid, subjected to a myriad of indignities be they emotional, physical or sexual, foreign domestic workers’ structural abuse has been well-documented (Bakan and Stasiulis 1997, 2003; Chang 2016; Choudry and Smith 2016; Fudge 2011; Grandea and Kerr 1998; Lenard and Straehle 2012). It is important to note here that I do not wish to make a sweeping remark and dismiss those individuals who were fortunate enough to have truly positive experiences with their employers (I am pleased to say that I have spoken to such individuals during the course of my fieldwork). However, the federally-endorsed power dynamics involving the Canadian middle/upper-class family and the foreign help, did inherently create an imbalance in the relation. In other words, as political theorist Michael Walzer eloquently writes in his *Spheres of Justice* (1983),

Why are [guest workers] admitted? To free the citizens of hard and unpleasant work. Then the state is like family with live-in servants. That is not an attractive image, for a family with live-in servants is—inevitably, I think—a little tyranny. (Walzer 1983, 52)

In April 1992, Bernard Valcourt, the minister of the Canadian Employment and Immigration sector, made some adjustments to the FDM and rebranded it as the “Live-in Caregiver Program” (LCP). The LCP required applicants to meet certain education and training requirements: a minimum of an equivalent to a Canadian Grade 12 and six months of full-time formal training (later revised to twelve months of practical experience in 1993). In addition, these individuals no longer had to provide proof of savings, upgrading of professional skills, and community involvement to apply for their permanent residency status after two years. With the LCP, domestic helpers were also entitled to receive counselling information to learn about the terms and conditions that outlined their rights and responsibilities. However, their tenuous immigration status with the perpetual threat of deportation and the live-in condition that placed them in an ambiguous social space, remained unchanged. This is because most Canadians working in this sector would not agree to live with their employers: a fact that was readily recognised by Immigration officials,

The Live-in Caregiver program is a special program whose objective is to bring workers to Canada to do live-in work as caregivers when there are not enough Canadians available to fill the available positions... The Live-in Caregiver Program exists only because there is a shortage of Canadians to fill the need for live-in care work. There is no shortage of Canadian workers available for caregiving positions where there is no live-in requirement. (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 1999)

The majority of applicants for the LCP were Filipino women in their thirties and forties, who were, in fact, university-educated (although they most often were faced with deskilling predicaments). Many of these women borrowed money to pay for their training, assessment, recruiting agencies, visa, plane fare and other inevitable expenses to get to Canada (some of them incurred hefty debts before they even left their home country). Meanwhile the Labour Export Policy in the Philippines, which relies heavily on remittances, continually normalises

migration as a means for survival, because if the labour migration in the country ceases, unemployment rates would increase swiftly and drastically (Pratt 2004, 40). Thus, both national economies profited from programs such as the LCP, regardless of the migrant workers' welfare.

Analytic literature and grassroots activism that address and tackle the numerous issues that arose from the LCP have been well-documented (Bonifacio 2008; Brickner and Straehle 2010; Canay 2014; Gilliland 2012; Goli 2009; Hodge 2006; Tungohan et al. 2015; Vahabi and Wong 2017). By the end of November 2014, the LCP program was revamped as the "In-Home Caregiver Program" and underwent more changes. Bowing to years of public pressure and awareness-raising about caregivers' conditions of abuse and unpaid overtime at their employers' abodes, the revised policy made the live-in condition optional. New language and education requirements were then introduced and two new categories of caregiving work were proposed to individuals with temporary work permits, namely: "Caring for Children Class" and "Caring for People with High Medical Needs" (later modified in 2019 as "Home Child Care Provider Pilot" and "Home Support Worker Pilot"). Currently, the caregiving programs established in 2019 offer a clearer path to permanent residency for caregivers and allow them more flexibility to switch employers if necessary. In addition, the revisions now also allow the children of caregivers to obtain study permits and their spouses to request open-work permits. As discussed earlier, the last few decades have seen different waves of immigration from the Philippines to Canada. In the early half of the twentieth century, Filipino immigration paths were not concentrated in one route and immigrants were for the most part scattered. Throughout the 1950s to the 1970s, a wave of doctors, nurses, and teachers made their way to Canada and made this country their home. From the 1980s onward the FDM, LCP, and the subsequent programs offering temporary employment visas attracted more Filipino immigrants to come to Canada. Moreover, taking advantage of the Provincial Nominee Program (a

program whereby the provincial government cooperates with Citizenship and Immigration Canada to determine and fulfill employment needs), more Filipinos settle in Canada.

Despite a variety of problems Filipinos have faced historically in order to come and build a life in Canada, the number of immigrants from this country has steadily increased. Statistics Canada reports have in fact revealed that Filipinos make up one of the largest groups of newcomers to Canada, continuously remaining in the top ten list of countries immigrants come from (Statistics Canada 2021).

Immigrants to Canada settle in different provinces where job vacancies are available and their skills are needed. However, for a wide variety of reasons some provinces are more popular destinations for newcomers than others. The Atlantic provinces do not fall under this category. A 2017 government report on Atlantic Growth Strategy in fact stated “slow economic growth, an aging work force, low levels of business research and development, and difficulty retaining immigrants” as some of the reasons for the need for improving strategies to reduce outmigration (Atlantic Growth Strategy 2017). As the people and the place in focus in this research are Filipinos in Newfoundland, a look at the history of their presence in this province is necessary.

Filipino Immigration to Newfoundland

The one and only academic research carried out about Filipinos in Newfoundland was published in 1982. *Tropical Islanders in the Atlantic: A Study of Filipino Experiences in Newfoundland* written by Romulo Magsino remains to this day the sole study about this group on the island. Working as a faculty member and researcher at the Department of Educational Foundations at Memorial University at the time, Magsino was heavily involved with the Filipino community in Newfoundland and conducted the only study to date about the community based on surveys, participant observation, and a handful of interviews. Since until

1967 a separate category for Filipino immigrants to Canada was not established by Statistics Canada and the heading used prior to this date was Asia N.E.S (Asia, not elsewhere specified), Magsino describes the minority group under study at the time as small and “widely-scattered” across the country (Magsino 1982, 1). He elaborates on statistical figures that show that although Filipino immigration to Atlantic provinces has been insignificant in comparison to bigger provinces like Ontario, British Columbia and Manitoba, Newfoundland held the highest number in this region. Magsino declares July 1958 to be the “ascertained earliest Filipino presence” on the island (Ibid., 2). According to him, at this time a Filipino man named Nick Garcia arrived in Twillingate and shortly after him, his brother Roberto Garcia joined him in November of the same year. While the former left for the United States after a while, the latter, who came to serve as a doctor on the island, remained and raised a family in Newfoundland. Then, in 1961 the first Filipino couple (both doctors hired to work at the General Hospital) came to the island. In the following two years, Newfoundland received a couple each year. In 1962, another doctor and his wife arrived and settled, and in 1963, the next couple who were both medics joined them. Magsino describes the growth of the Filipino community on the island after that as “slow but steady” (Ibid., 3). In the early 1960s, as the island was in need of doctors, more Filipino professionals were hired to work in Newfoundland. Then in the late 1960s, with “expanding educational systems in the province” Filipino teachers were invited to immigrate to Newfoundland (Ibid., 3). Filipino immigration in the 1970s, according to Magsino, was characterized by a substantial arrival of nurses hired to work in various hospitals. Magsino’s research reveals that at the time in spite of considerable departures, nurses made up “a substantial portion of the Filipino population in the province” (Ibid., 4). In the 1960s and 70s, Filipinos in the province “kept a low profile” (Ibid., 4) but had their first public cultural program, named “Filipinescas”, on June 12, 1966 (the 20th anniversary of Philippine Independence from the U.S.) at Central Newfoundland Hospital in Grand Falls. This event,

which included folk dances and performances was “an initial attempt to foster wholesome relationships between host Newfoundlanders and Filipino newcomers through an understanding of the latter’s cultural background” (Ibid., 4-5). Many interviews I conducted with older community members revealed to me that knowledge about Filipino culture among the general populace in Newfoundland at the time was truly scarce, and such events were therefore considered necessary among community members for forging stronger relationships with the host society.

In 1967, the first formal association for Filipinos in the province was founded. The Filipino Association of Newfoundland (FILAN) was established that year because according to Magsino, while Filipinos “found Newfoundland a friendly and supportive environment, they missed the kind of companionship and cultural expression that could only find release among themselves” (Ibid., 5). As will be demonstrated throughout this thesis, various findings in my research reveal that this feeling of companionship among *kababayan*, which Magsino refers to is realised when a sense of place, be it formal or informal, is established for minorities in diaspora.

Once FILAN was established, the Filipino Annual Affair (later called “Filipino Nights”) was held in May or June for fifty consecutive years until 2016 in various locations in Newfoundland, under the supervision of different appointed association presidents. Aside from these cultural nights, the association was formed to pursue the four following objectives: “To serve the welfare of Filipinos in the province, to disseminate information among them, to cultivate closer relationships between Filipinos and other members of Newfoundland society, and to preserve and promote Filipino culture” (Ibid., 7). These goals remain relevant for the association to this day.

Magsino explains that his main goal in conducting this study was to provide “an adequate and accurate account” of Filipino lives in the province and to itemise their struggles as well as

their satisfactions in order to help eliminate problems that “hinder the harmonious integration of Filipinos into their host localities” (Ibid., 8). Therefore in 1981, the first set of questionnaires were sent to 205 Filipinos in the province. With postal workers on strike during that time and the slow nature of such enquiries, long waiting periods were allotted and follow-up letters were sent when no responses were received. Almost half the people who were contacted, sent their surveys back and “an extremely small number” volunteered to be interviewed by phone (Ibid., 9). The second generation of Filipino-Newfoundlanders who were born or raised here or who were half-Filipino were not considered in this study to avoid findings that were “unduly complicated” (Ibid., 10).

After receiving 105 surveys back, Magsino used them as his main source of information and subjected them to statistical scrutiny. The long survey enquired about participants’ personal profile (e.g. status in Canada, age, sex, level of education, occupation, etc.), and included Yes/No, Likert scale and multiple choice questions with regards to informants’ job and life satisfaction, opportunities and amenities, experiences of settlement, Newfoundland society, the Filipino community on the island, etc. The information from these surveys were then presented in detail as percentual facts. With the aim to offer an objective study that sketched “a comprehensive panorama depicting Filipino experiences” in the province (Ibid., 54), Magsino’s primarily quantitative data gathered in 1981 and published in 1982, provides an overall sweeping analysis of Filipino lives in Newfoundland in the 1960s and 70s.

It is important to note here that the period of time when Magsino’s research took place marks the beginnings of a significant age in Newfoundland history. Taking this era (1960s-1990s) into consideration where socio-economic and political changes led to the circumstances that readied the atmosphere for Newfoundlanders to re-evaluate a sense of pride and ownership of regional and cultural identity, interesting observations can be made about the ways in which a minority group understood and positioned itself according to the political climate of the time.

This was particularly experienced differently for children of the first generation of migrants who were born and/or raised here and had exposure to the Newfoundland cultural renaissance that occurred during the years that they were growing up on the island. These circumstances and changes that for some created hyphenated identities, will be discussed in detail in special relation to material culture and food in chapters three and four.

Research Significance: Why Study Filipinos in Newfoundland

Today the rapidly growing Filipino population stands at over 957,000 strong in Canada (Statistics Canada 2021). As a friend of mine jokingly yet accurately noted, “there are more Filipinos in Canada than there are Newfoundlanders!” This population is diverse. The individuals who identify as members of this ethnic group have migrated in different periods, but some have been born in Canada in different provinces. While some identify as second or third generation Filipinos, others consider themselves new immigrants or new Canadians/Newfoundlanders. Many have hyphenated identities. Some are hardly in touch with their Filipino side, while others fully embrace it. Some espouse a strong Philippine regional identity, others add a sense of Canadian regionalism to the mix. Some have internalised cultural values from their ethnic background, others are new to negotiating and adapting them in their daily lives. Some come up with immensely intriguing ways to marry different aspects of their cultures, languages, and ethnic/national identities in vernacular and individual settings with considerable ease and grace. For some, understanding their ethnic sense of self is an arduous life-long process. This population is wonderfully complex. It is by no means an easy task to unravel this compelling web of tangled identities because there are countless prisms through which this group can be examined. However, undertaking some aspects of this task has proven to be fruitful. In order to gain some initial insight into this large folk group’s identity and sense of self in the specific context of a Canadian province, it is important to first look at scholarly

works that have been dedicated to uncovering different facets of Filipino cultural, social, and ethnic lives or in other words the area of scholarly enquiry entitled Filipino studies, which remains largely understudied. Ethnic scholars, however, have drawn attention to the reasons behind the importance of such academic undertakings. As Rick Bonus, an American ethnic studies scholar, explained in an interview about this subject,

The study of Filipinos and Filipinas tells us a wide variety of stories to theorise about so many important issues and conversations that are immensely significant to fields such as ethnic studies, American studies, women's studies, area studies, and the disciplines... it is a field that attracts scrutiny precisely because it draws attention to questions such as those that involve identity, situated knowledges, relevance, and interested positions... It is about American empire, about wars and colonization, about popular culture and representation, about global capitalism and the recruitment of particularized labour, the processes and consequences of racialization, the productions and use of gendered and sexualized subjects, the formations of collectives and solidarities, the building and maintenance of communities of resistance—all using the complexities and specificities of Filipino/Filipina experience as both products and productive of uneven relationships of power. (Tiongson 2006, 167)

Pondering upon the historical roots of such uneven relationships with regards to Filipino immigrants, the highly influential semi-autobiographical work of Carlos Bulosan comes to mind. Published in 1946, *America Is in the Heart* is one of the earliest Asian American books to have been written and sold as a best-selling novel that brought to light the situation endured by migrant workers in the early half of the twentieth century. As a scholar activist and labour organiser, Bulosan dedicated this and many other of his literary works to Filipino migrants' lasting struggle for basic rights. As one of countless *manongs* (a term used for one of the first waves of Filipino immigrant labourers who came to the United States), Bulosan eloquently wrote about the oppressive conditions, abject exploitation, systematic disempowerment, and widespread violence endured by this immigrant population, before being beaten almost to death under rapidly worsening health conditions. As an essential read in many ethnic studies curricula, *America Is in the Heart* draws on themes of race, ethnicity, identity and the enduring fight for acceptance and belonging in the places we choose to call home, because these places are “not merely a land or an institution”, they are also in the vision of those who “are building

a new world.” (Bulosan et al. 2019, 191). Such themes remain relevant and at the crux of the research carried out about individuals and communities in diaspora. Thus, the examination of the growing population of Filipinos in Canada remains an important topic that Filipino-Canadian studies undertakes, helping nuance various areas of knowledge in relation to immigrant lives. As Coloma et al. explicate as a relatively new academic field, Filipino-Canadian studies “reveals more about the rationalities, operations, and effects of mainstream intellectual and institutional discourses and structures in Canada” (Coloma et al. 2012, 24).

Research about this folk group in the country has been slowly increasing. However, an urban bias (as will be later demonstrated) dominates such works, as scholars are often drawn to large cities that have significant diasporic presence. In addition, sociologists, anthropologists, historians, and other social scientists, whose influential voices lead the discourse in ethnic and diaspora studies, tend to look at broader patterns of migration and settlement, rather than ethnographic perspectives rooted in the nuances of everyday life. As folkloristics is an immensely useful yet massively underused discipline in immigration and diaspora studies, as of yet no scholar has delved into a folkloristic exploration of the Filipino community’s placemaking efforts in Canada, and specifically, its unique regional context on the island of Newfoundland that, in turn, is not a big diasporic centre. It is, thus, my hope that my long and arduous efforts contribute to this important area of study from a folkloristic standpoint, which invites a bottom up approach and embraces humble theory (Noyes 2016), recognising the complexity of community narratives and lived experiences, in order to shed light onto an unstudied community in an understudied region.

In the upcoming chapters, a range of discussions contributing to the topic of diasporic placemaking in small locales will be presented. In Chapter 2, a large body of literature will offer some essential historical background, theories of place, and foundational research about material culture, foodways, and community gatherings all in relation to placemaking. Here,

relevant terms in anthropology and cultural psychology will also be explained in detail. This chapter will provide readers with important information that will help understand central arguments in this thesis. In the following chapter, the role of material culture both in the domestic sphere and in public spaces will be discussed. Chapter 3 is, thus, dedicated to the examination of Filipino material culture in Newfoundland in order to understand the ways in which they meaningfully contribute to the creation of a sense of place, passing values and tradition, as well as coding and creative behaviour. As objects are categorised and inspected in detail, their function and meaning for different generations of community members will be analysed. Chapter 4 is dedicated to the examination of the role of food in Filipino placemaking endeavours. Looking at both public and private spaces, a survey of the Filipino kitchen in Newfoundland will be provided to help understand what procuring and sharing ethnic food has meant to Filipinos in Newfoundland throughout the decades, and what generational attitude toward Filipino food tell us about place and belonging. The final chapter embraces discussions from the previous three in order to look at Filipino places that have been crafted in the context of the island both in a formal and an informal capacity. Crucially, laying emphasis on informal gatherings (that have generally been ignored in academic studies of diasporic community spaces), details of meaningful acts of placemaking during such get-togethers will be discussed in order to highlight their significance for diasporic folk groups in a small host region. Furthering the discussion, bigger or formal Filipino events that have been organised and held by the Filipino Association of Newfoundland since the mid-1960s will be explained and examined to offer a comparison of the ways in which different types of community gatherings contribute to this diasporic group's sense of place and belonging. Chapter 6 will present the conclusions of this study to reveal how meaningful places are made for diasporic folk groups that reside outside of large metropolitan centres, and how the marrying of disciplines such as

folkloristics and cultural psychology greatly contribute to profound insights into diasporic experiences.

As the areas of study in this dissertation dictate a degree of familiarity with relevant history, theory, and pertinent literature, in the following chapter these areas are divided into clusters that ease the path on which the reader will tread.

CHAPTER 2: A Review of Literature

Introduction

My aim is to look at the ways in which Filipinos in the particular context of Newfoundland create a strong sense of place, by looking at this community's use of material culture, foodways, and group activities/festivities. Therefore, in selecting and analysing important literature, scope creep had to be diligently managed and regularly kept in check.

As a food enthusiast, I often find myself using culinary metaphors to get a point across. My experience with the material I collected, read, and examined throughout the years, is similar to the efforts of that of an eager cook who gathers all the ingredients ready for a feast. However, both this keen cook and I might spend a colossal amount of time gathering what we deem necessary, only to end up staring in mild terror at this titanic mountain of ingredients that have to be put together with care, comprehension, skill and knowledge. The metaphorical ingredients that make up this chapter have been scrupulously compiled. Therefore, what I present here are relevant clusters of literature that have been organised in a logical manner, in order to familiarise the reader with important pertinent scholarly works that inform this thesis. These clusters of literature include: a summary of the research done about the Filipino diaspora in North America; a review of theories of place and placemaking; an examination of studies concerning the role of material culture in the creation of a sense of place; a look at the interconnectedness of food, place, and identity; and a perusal of the of studies that focus on the ways in which events and gatherings contribute to a sense of place and belonging for a community in diaspora.

It is important to note here that while in the subsequent chapters I engage only with a select number of sources, I deem it necessary to review the large number of scholarly works that have shaped my approaches and interpretations as they are thematically, methodologically, and theoretically relevant.

Early Filipinos in Canada and the United States

Although there is evidence of Filipino presence in Canada as early as the late nineteenth century, the number of Filipino immigrants was extremely small and scattered until the 1960s (Laquian and Laquian 2008). More precisely, “the first Filipino migrated to British Columbia in 1861, six years before the Canadian federation in 1867 and a century earlier before the first wave of Filipino migration to the country started cautiously in the 1960s” (Laquian 2023, 2). Therefore, research on this growing minority community (especially in comparison to studies about Filipinos in the United States) is not as comprehensive as one might desire. As it was discussed in the introductory chapter, the United States and the Philippines have a long history of relations that resulted in different kinds of Filipino migration and settlement. Filipinos are in fact the very first documented Asian presence in the United States (Borah 1995). Therefore, accordingly, the scope of Filipino-American studies is wide. Scholars interested in the study of Filipinos in the United States have looked at various aspects of Filipino American history (Bacho 1997; Bautista 2002; Campomanes 1999; Capozzola 2020; Choy 2003; Cordova et al. 1983; Espiritu 2008; Fujita-Rony 2003; Ignacio 2004; McCann and Lovell 2020; Miller 1982; Pobleto 2014; Posadas 1999; Rafael 2000; Rodriguez 2010; Silbey 2008; Stern 1989; Tan 2008), different facets of Filipino immigration to the United States (Baldoz 2011; Cariño 1990; Choy 2003; Corrigan 2004; Espiritu 2003; Espiritu and Wolf 2001; Lasker 1969; Liu et al. 1991; Mangiafico 1988; Medina 1984; Melendy 1974; Pido 1997; Posadas 1999; San Juan 2000; Scharlin and Villanueva 2000; Stern 1989; Tyner 1999), as well as the complexities of Filipino American identity (Besnard 2003; Bischoff 2012; Carnero 2014; David 2013; De Dios 2015; De Leon 2004; Flores and Resus 2008; Jamero 2011; La Rosa 2022; Mendoza 2015; Nadal 2004; Okamura 2011; Osbaldo 2011; Pisares 1999; Rodriguez 2020; Root 1997; Tuason et al. 2007). Several studies have also been dedicated to understanding Filipino American communities and families in various contexts and settings (Cherry 2014; Espiritu 2003; Flores

and Resus 2008; Galura and Lawsin 2002; Lott 1997; Mabalon 2013; Okamura 2011; Pisares 1999; Teodoro 1981; Tiongson et al. 2006; Vergara 2009). In fact, cooperating with the Filipino American Historical Society, many scholars have assembled pictorial histories of the Filipino communities' activities and livelihood in a range of places and regions such as Carson and a number of other cities in California's South Bay (Ibanez and Ibanez 2009), Chicago, Illinois (Alamar and Buhay 2001), Houston, Texas (Poisot and Maravilla 2018), New York (Nadal 2015), Los Angeles (Koerner 2007), San Diego (Patacsil et al. 2010), Stockton, California (Mabalon and Reyes 2008), Washington, D.C. (Cacas and Lott 2009), and Willamette Valley, Oregon (Lim and Pangan-Specht 2010). Understandably, cities where the Filipino community is larger become grounds for more prolific scholarly enquiries. One such place is Daly City in California that has the biggest number of Filipinos in North America. Various research has been conducted about Filipinos in this area. For example, in *Pinoy Capital* (2009), anthropologist Benito Vergara, Jr. conducts an in-depth ethnographic study in Daly City. Viewing findings through the lens of transnationalism, Vergara offers insightful observations about the complexities of feelings and experiences of place, belonging, and community. Earlier works such as "From Manila Bay to Daly City" (Sobredo 1998), and "Daly City Is My Nation" (Pisares 1999), also focus on Filipino life, community, and history in this context. Similar scholarly observations about this city exist and the literature about Filipino American communities in various other cities abound.

The specific context of each place and region leads to the nuances in community formation and development despite larger sweeping factors that affect migration and settlement patterns. In comparison to the rich body of literature about Filipinos in the United States, Filipino Canadian studies, as Coloma et al. repeatedly emphasise, is a "nascent field" as they explain that it "is decidedly more recent and more limited in scope" because "a shorter immigration history has meant a shorter incubation period for both cultural and academic

production” (Coloma et al. 2012, 12). However, the field is slowly but surely developing. In fact, there is growing interest among young scholars as in the past two decades alone many doctoral and masters theses in Canada have been dedicated to the subject. For example, John F. Tolentino (2023) focuses on the Filipino identity formation in diaspora in the context of Vancouver, BC; Josephine Eric (2011) takes a close look at the religious experiences of this community in Southern Ontario; Isabel Carlin (2022) conducts semi-structured interviews in order to look at the power dynamics at play in archival records; Gazelle Manuel (2017) examines the cultural politics surrounding Filipino foodways in the context of Ottawa and Winnipeg; Ilyan Ferrer (2018) carries out a critical ethnography of the aging Filipino Canadian citizens living in diaspora in Montreal; Janette Brual (2014) similarly casts light on the experiences of aging and health care availability to senior members of the Filipino community in the Greater Toronto Area; Valerie Damasco (2019) provides a history of Filipino health care professionals in Canada over the span of fifty years; Jon Malek (2019) offers a rich historical investigation of the Filipino community in Winnipeg; Shannon Kiely (2011) takes a close look at the stereotypes and challenges faced by LCP workers in Montreal; and Winny Ang Chiu Li (2006) studies Filipino-Canadian youth in Montreal in order to explain the ways in which organised social support and networks help better negotiate spaces of belonging and a stronger sense of self and place.

Research about Filipino-Canadians

In addition to a growing number of theses and dissertations, comprehensive studies have also been dedicated to examining Filipinos in various contexts in Canada. Many earlier studies about Filipino Canadians focused primarily on this community’s demographic profile that presented overall data about Filipinos’ age and sex composition, occupational distribution, and settlement patterns. One of the earliest of such works is Asian studies scholar Eleanor Laquian’s *A Study of Filipino Immigration to Canada, 1962-1972* (1973). As a study based on

surveys and contact with Filipino associations, this work offers some insight into the lives of Filipinos who immigrated to Canada as professionals whose skills were highly in demand at the time of migration and who enjoyed a higher socio-economic status upon arrival. In this report, Laquian surveys active community members in Filipino associations and ultimately makes suggestions about the things policymakers and authorities in the Philippines could do to speed and ease transnational activities. Thirty-five years after this publication, Eleanor Laquian and her husband Aprodicio Laquian published *Seeking a Better Life Abroad: A Study of Filipinos in Canada, 1957-2007* (2008) in order to update early research and look at the Filipino community's history and profile within Canada over the span of five decades. In this updated report, the Laquians look at changing patterns of migration, the growing community of Filipino Canadians, their ease of integration and their scale of socioeconomic contributions to Canada. However, this study is similar to the earlier reports; although the updated version is a helpful overview, it is not critical in nature.

Another similar work published in the late nineties is sociologist Anita Beltran Chen's *From Sunbelt to Snowbelt: Filipinos in Canada* (1998). Heavily relying on "secondary sources from published immigration statistics" and surveys (Chen 1998, iii), this scholar divides her volume into two parts. In the first section, she focuses primarily on Filipino-Canadians by examining migration patterns and trends as a result of the Canadian state's changing immigration policies: a factor that has played a great role in the history of the community's settlement in this country. Stating that policies are always "adjusted to meet the manpower needs of the Canadian economy" (Ibid., 14), Chen looks at Filipino migrants' demographic profile through the 1960s with the arrival of nurses, the 1970s with the coming of factory workers, and in the 1980s and 1990s with the influx of domestic workers from the Philippines. In addition to that a study of elderly Filipinos in Canada is also offered in this section, which demonstrates the impact of the presence of the Filipino elderly under the Family Reunification

Act and the resulting changes in statistical constructions of family, ethnic and social life. Then, through the close examination of Filipino social demography Chen offers valuable comparisons in the second section where other Asian minorities are taken into consideration as well.

The most recent volume that offers an updated profile of Filipino Canadians is Eleanor Laquian's *The Indomitable Canadian Filipinos* (2023). A deeply celebratory account of Filipino Canadian lives, the volume provides a historical overview of Filipino Canadian migration and community, family dynamics, cultural heritage, maintenance of traditions, identity formation, views on citizenship and belonging, Covid-responses of the community during the pandemic, issues of underrepresentation, and profiles of influential Filipino Canadian figures. The overall aim seems to be to bring attention to the important roles and contributions of this community to Canada's rich Asian heritage. It is interesting to note that while tackling a range of subjects about the dynamics of the community, the specificities of place are not the main focus, although various settings such as Vancouver, Toronto, and Winnipeg are considered by different contributors to this volume.

Some more recent studies, however, do take into account the importance of place and context in the shaping of the Filipino diaspora. Glenda Tibe Bonifacio's *Pinay on the Prairies* (2013) is one such work. As a gender studies scholar, Bonifacio primarily focuses on Filipina migrants and makes use of critical race theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw's concept of intersectionality and *Pinayism* or *Pinay peminism* (a feminist theory introduced by Asian American studies scholar Allyson Tintiangco-Cubales in 2005 that goes beyond white liberal feminism to understand the Filipina experience). Lamenting the general scarcity of research outside of MTV (Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver) on one of Canada's largest minority groups, Bonifacio focuses on Filipino women in Canada's Prairie provinces and explores Filipina community building and identity construction in Alberta, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan. The

author looks at these women's diverse migration trajectories, lived experiences within their respective cities and communities, transnational identity construction, and activism and personal politics to offer an elaborate account of their lives in Western Canada. Bonifacio recognises the importance of location in shaping lived experiences and views ways of engagement in home and host communities as particular and context-specific. Viewing Canada as "a nation imagined with spatial particularities from coast to coast" she explicates how "the Prairies in the west evoke a different meaning from the Maritimes in the east" and that although landscapes may demarcate a place, they "represent only a spectre of place making" (Bonifacio 2013, 72). Considering the Filipina subjective construction of Canada as a host society, the concept and practice of place making become important themes in *Pinay on the Prairies* that help understand multicultural spaces, networks that assist in seeking jobs and housing, social interaction, volunteerism, and activism. Bonifacio also makes use of some Filipino cultural concepts such as *pakikisama*, *pakikipagkapwa*, and *bayanihan* in order to analyse the inner workings of the communities where these Filipino women are involved.

Looking at the Filipino community through different prisms and geographical contexts within Canada is a fruitful endeavour. As religion plays an important role in the lives of many Filipinos (Cornelio 2016; Cruz 2023; Gonzalez 2009; Johnson et al. 2010), ethnographic studies that focus on this aspect of Filipino identity can be rich scholarly undertakings. An excellent example of such work is Alison Marshall's *Bayanihan and Belonging: Filipinos and Religion in Canada* (2018). As a religious studies scholar, Marshall who finds the documentation of the Filipino community's religious life lacking in Canada, turns to ethnographic and archival research and focuses on narrative and observational strategies that result in a deeply insightful study. Marshall turns to the large community of Filipinos in Winnipeg and beyond to elaborate on devotional customs that reveal much about Filipinos' rituals, domestic practices and routines, their ethnically religious material culture, and

community spirit and life in diaspora. Her study incorporates exceptional knowledge of Filipino migration history to Canada, religious expression, spiritual life, and institutional, as well as vernacular and communal practices of faith in order to portray an important depiction of “the religious underside of everyday Filipino life” in Canada (Marshall 2018, 201). In this study, community and place once again become important trajectories through which Filipino Canadian lives can be better understood.

Focusing on Filipinos in a place or region in Canada, does not necessarily result in in-depth engagement with the particularities of that space and its impact on community building. Some studies survey the Filipino community in a city or region without prioritising the meanings embedded in place but rather the community’s civic and social engagements and activities. One such example is scholar-activists Ruben J. Cusipag and Maria Corazon Buenafe’s *Portrait of Filipino Canadians in Ontario, 1960-1990* (1993). Primarily making use of community media such as newspapers and radio programs, the authors look at Filipino organisations, political and economic activities, civic activism, and community-building in major cities in Ontario such as Windsor, Toronto, and Ottawa. The sharp political focus in this volume is on professional Filipino immigrants and their activities in this province, and not community placemaking or building a sense of belonging in Ontario.

Filipino Canadian comprehensive scholarly monographs like the ones mentioned above are dedicated to examining particular themes within specific regions. Several other works, however, endeavour to portray an overall profile of Filipinos in Canada or gather articles that analyse and critique a myriad of issues faced by this large minority group within the country. One such important compilation of perceptive essays is *Filipinos in Canada: Disturbing Invisibility* (2012). In this twenty chapter volume, which is in fact that first edited volume on the subject, Coloma et al. gather studies and a variety of literary works that address a range of significant themes. The articles subject to scrutiny the racial construction of Filipino Canadians

and the factors that mark them as hyper-visible only in certain sectors and invisible in others. The experiences of racialisation are viewed alongside a critique of the limitations of Canadian liberal multiculturalism. The contributors to this volume expertly tackle the exclusion of Filipinos from Canadian historical narratives, the remiss conflation of this group with other minorities, affect-related and emotionally taxing jobs predominantly taken on by Filipino women, the history and personal narratives of recruited Filipina healthcare workers, the LCP program and the resulting deprofessionalisation, racialisation, alienation, and nonbelonging in Canada. In addition to that, ethnic identity construction as well as place making and creating space are addressed with regards to Filipino businesses, youth spaces, intragroup hierarchies and class and skin colour connotations for Filipinos, all within the regional context of Greater Toronto Area. For example, in the chapter written by geographer Cesar Polvorosa, Jr., the concept of place making in diaspora and ethnic identity construction is viewed through an analysis of the culture and environment surrounding Toronto-based Filipino-owned businesses. Thus, the way people carry out business, how they commence the workday, the culturally expected honorifics they use, and even the foodways they maintain closely follow common workplace practices in the Philippines. The author explicates how “Filipino place making in a major cosmopolitan space of North America is socially constructed and invested with human meaning” (Polvorosa Jr., 2012, 189), and adds that practices from back home that are familiar and predictable preserve a transnational bond that is deeply important for diasporic communities. Filipino business establishments in Toronto create a “venue for social interaction” (Ibid., 194), that can serve as homelike comfort zones for community members. This, of course, as Polvorosa Jr. explains can have negative effects as well for immigrants living in diaspora in terms of ingroup power relations and problems with integration.

Another chapter in this volume that looks closely at place and identity formation is sociologist Conely De Leon’s article on the spatial politics of intragroup belonging among

Filipino youth in the Greater Toronto Area (De Leon 2012). De Leon considers skin colour and the creation of class and space in order to examine how colourism creates hierarchies within the younger members of the Filipino community. She explains how this colonial mentality creates a different sense of identity and belonging in space for those who differentiate themselves from others within a larger community. Thus, Filipino youth with light skin colour from Mississauga who come from more affluent families distinguish themselves from members with darker skin tones in Scarborough who take pride in their working-class background and ghettoised identity. Spatial connotations thus become strong markers of identity, place, and belonging in focus groups with whom De Leon engages.

As it can be gathered so far, few comprehensive volumes about Filipino Canadians have been assembled since the 1960s when significant Filipino migration to this country began. Certain themes arising from prevalent problems have become recurring subjects of investigation. For example, many scholars have published articles about the difficulties faced by Filipino LCP (Bakan and Stasiulis 1997; Bonifacio 2008; Eric 2007; Fudge and Parrott 2014; Tungohan et al. 2015; McKay 2003; Oxman-Martinez et al. 2004; Pratt et al. 2017), while others have looked into the situation of Filipino Canadian youth (Aguinaldo 2012; Caparas 2019; Catungal 2012; Farrales 2011, 2016; Kelly 2014; Largo 2012; Ogaya 2015; Ortiz and Costigan 2021; Pratt 2003; Ticar and Edwards 2022).

The concept of place and placemaking has not been a major focus in a majority of the literature available. When place is considered, there is an urban bias (Lusis 2005), with scholars primarily focusing on bigger diasporic centres such as Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver, and Winnipeg. Literature pertaining to the Filipino Canadian community with regards to the particularities of place and placemaking especially in the Atlantic provinces and specifically Newfoundland is virtually non-existent. Furthermore, when relevant research is carried out, the everyday is often dismissed as trivial and not worthy of scholarly attention, when in fact it is

in the mundane and the quotidian that “the essence of human existence can be discerned” (Holloway and Hubbard 2013, 35). Here, the musings of French philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre’s come to mind, “Why wouldn’t the concept of everydayness reveal the extraordinary in the ordinary?” (Lefebvre 1991, 7). Following such line of reasoning with feet firmly grounded in the field of folkloristics, the findings of this thesis will therefore be important in addressing this bias and bringing attention to an understudied community in a generally overlooked region of Canada. An important aim of this thesis is therefore to subject to scrutiny the nuances of everyday practices of placemaking and community-building for a specific Asian minority group in a highly particular host region.

Theories of Place and Placemaking

i. Understanding Space and Place

The concepts of space and place were briefly discussed in the introductory chapter. Referring to Yi-Fu Tuan’s *Space and Place* (1977), I summarised his views on the emotional bonds between humans and spaces they infuse with feelings and experiences in order to turn them into places. In this work, the experiential process that Tuan focuses on evokes the involvement of the senses as well as the attachment of the symbolic and conceptual to create meaningful places. These views are also in alignment with E.V. Walter’s *Placeways* (1988) and his notion of *topistics* as a comprehensive manner of viewing place as a location of experience and feelings. In addition to that, Edward Relph’s *Place and Placelessness* (1976) was examined to demonstrate the significance of experience in the creation and intimate comprehension of place as a phenomenon that holds the essence of our intentions and encounters. Alongside the work of these geographers, I also considered cultural geographer Kent Ryden’s *Mapping the Invisible Landscape* (1993), whose approach reveals the importance of experience, memory, and intimate interactions in constructing everyday

narratives that transform spaces into places and create affective bonds that surpass cartographic imaginings.

Similar to Kent Ryden, the making of place and the multi-layered meanings it contains has been the focus of many studies carried out by folklorists. The community organisation of space (and consequently much of members' experience in it), reveals a lot about the ways in which places are "produced" and "consumed", in the words of folklorist Gerald Pocius. *A Place to Belong: Community Order and Everyday Space in Calvert, Newfoundland* (1991) is the fruit of fifteen years of ethnographic research in a small fishing community in Newfoundland. In this work, Pocius examines the everyday life of Calvert residents in order to shed light on the cultural construction of space that turns it into a place where one feels a sense of belonging. A careful look at the manners in which space is designated and used in Calvert, reveals the network of interpersonal relationships that create a shared understanding of a sense of place for its members. The concept of belonging to a place lies at the heart of Pocius's study as he writes, "where one belongs to, the place of home, is fundamentally a series of emotionally based meaningful spaces" (Pocius 1991, 7). Space is shared and thus made meaningful and "in this sharing rests the essence of everyday life" where one achieves a feeling of belonging (Ibid., 299). Thus, with the aim of offering a method that aids the investigation of "vernacular landscapes" (Ibid., xv), Pocius looks at material culture and the space in which it can be examined. His research reveals the ways in which community enquiries require the understanding of the sense of place created by its residents. Implicit in the work of Pocius is the concept of the experience and meaning of a place based on interrelationships.

The centrality of experience in the understanding of place and its formation, has been the focus of folklorist Michael Ann Williams as well. In *Homeplace: The Social Use and Meaning of Folk Dwelling in Southwestern North Carolina* (1991), Williams takes a meticulous look at individuals' narratives in order to understand built environments. Although

her primary focus is material culture and vernacular architecture, Williams contends that place can be best understood through the collection and examination of personal experience narratives. Williams's research that was primarily meant to focus on the evidential and physical took a different turn when she learned during her interviews that meanings and memories attached to places gave her a more profound insight into such locales, as she wrote, "the entrance to the homeplace, I found, was through these oral narratives" (Williams 1985, 136).

Narratives as a part of folk expression, play an essential role in the development of a sense of place, and this is aptly demonstrated in Mary Hufford's *One Space, Many Places: Folklife and Land Use in New Jersey's Pinelands National Reserve* (1986). The establishment of Pineland National Reserve in New Jersey in 1978 was meant for the protection of the land and its many natural resources and cultural heritage. The diversity and richness of both the environment and the people who resided in it warranted a careful study of folklife expression expertly carried out by Mary Hufford through interviews and fieldwork among different communities. Hufford details community members' experiences articulated through various means of cultural expressions such as food, music, rituals, dance, festivals, etc. to reveal how a sense of place is created in the same space that embraces diverse groups of people. "Each space", she writes, "is potentially many places depending upon the point of view of its users"(Hufford 1986, 13), an important observation to which I will return when elaborating on the Filipino-Newfoundlander experience in this province.

So far, this summary of some important scholarly enquiries into the concept of space and the creation of place point primarily to the notion of subjective as well as communal experience in creating a sense of place. Yi-Fu Tuan draws a distinction between the notions of space and place, and the involvement of active engagement and a process of meaning-making in the latter; E. V. Walter views place as a location of experience; Edward Relph insists on a phenomenological understanding of place; Kent Ryden turns to a folkloristic discovery of place

in the everyday; Gerald Pocius brings to the equation the notion of interrelationships and belonging in understanding place; Michael Ann Williams focuses on the indispensable role of personal experience narratives in the search for meaning in vernacular structures that embrace a sense of place; and Mary Hufford prioritises the examination of folklife expressions that create diverse places in a given space for various communities.

ii. Definitions of Sense of Place

As it can be gathered, place, it seems, is created within space through intentional processes that give meaning to and shape individuals' experiences. This phenomenon has been given a diverse range of names and scrutinized by scholars in various disciplines in numerous ways. The most common labels for this sort of communally-crafted experientially-produced awareness of place are "sense of place", "place-attachment", and "topophilia": similar concepts developed by scholars in different disciplines that have been used to express the range of nuanced meanings that people attach to places they inhabit (Allen and Schlereth 1990; Altman and Low 1992; Bliss and Kopec 2020; Casey 1993, 1997; Chen et al. 2021; Feld and Basso 1996; Glassie 1982; Hiss 1991; Manzo and Devine-Wright 2020; Smith 2018; Wilson 1997).

In their seminal work *Senses of Place* (1996), ethnomusicologist Steven Feld and anthropologist Keith Basso, engage with the notions put forward by Edward C. Casey—a philosopher who is primarily concerned with the phenomenological study of place. In this volume, they gather ethnographic essays that look at the living construction of place through experience. In their effort to shed light on how a place is felt and experienced, contributors to this volume look at individuals' everyday interactions and commit to an understanding of place-centred narratives. Their aim is "to describe and interpret some of the ways in which people encounter places, perceive them, and invest them with significance," in order to explore "how specific expressive practices and performances, imbued acts, events, and objects with significance" illuminate the diverse range of ways in which "place is voiced and experienced"

(Feld and Basso 1996, 8). Thus, their conception of a sense of place is through the meticulous utilisation of that which is communicative and experiential, as they explain that sense of place,

...includes the relation of sensation to emplacement; the experiential and expressive ways places are known, imagined, yearned for, held, remembered, voiced, lived, contested and struggled over; and the multiple ways places are metonymically and metaphorically tied to identities...[therefore it is essential to ask] how people are dwelling and how ethnographic accounts of their modes of dwelling might enrich our sense of why places, however vague, are lived out in deeply meaningful ways. (Ibid., 11)

The sense of place, thus, in essence embraces the “experiential and expressive”, concepts that can be easily linked to affect. And affect sits at the very heart of the notion of “place attachment.” Yi-Fu Tuan’s definition of topophilia in his homonymous book published in 1974, defines the term as “the affective bond between people and place or setting” (Tuan 1974, 4). Elaborating on such “affective ties with the material environment” (Ibid., 93), Tuan lays much emphasis on “feelings that one has towards a place” because they are “the locus of memories and the means of gaining livelihood” (Ibid.). Considering five groups in north-western New Mexico (Navajo, Texan, Zuni, Spanish-American, and Mormon) in *Topophilia*, Tuan takes a close look at the complex relationship between environment, culture, experience, and affect to discover how various factors impact perceptions of place.

As social and environmental psychologists Irwin Altman and Setha Low write in their comprehensive work *Place Attachment* (1992), “affect, emotion and feeling are central to the concept” (Altman and Low 1992, 4). With a sharp focus on the role of emotions in creating a sense of place, a variety of terminology is used by different contributors to this work, some of which are: “fondness for places”, “emotional embeddedness”, “feelings of security, esteem, and belonging associated with places”, and “emotional investments in places” (Ibid. 4). It is important to note here that although the general emphasis in this work’s study of place seem to be on positive affective involvement, negative feelings toward a place have also been considered in some of the chapters. Defining place as “space that has been given meaning

through personal, group, and cultural processes” to which “people are emotionally and culturally attached” (Ibid., 5), place attachment in fact serves certain collective functions, as it “fosters and sustains group, community and cultural identity” (Ibid., 10). Enumerating such functions, Altman and Low write,

At one level of analysis, place attachment may provide a sense of daily and ongoing security and stimulation, with places and objects offering predictable facilities, opportunities to relax from formal roles, the chance to be creative and to control aspects of one’s life. At another level, place attachment may link people with friends, partners, children, and kin in an overt or visible fashion. (Ibid., 10)

These functions are key to understanding how Filipinos in Newfoundland create a place for themselves. A feeling of “daily and ongoing security and stimulation” stems from the steady cultivation of a sense of familiarity. As cultural and historical geographer Patrick Duffy explains in his study of locality in Ireland, “high levels of familiarity with topographies of both places and people” is achieved when they are both “known intimately” and thus create a place where social interactions help “acquire a depth of social meaning, helping to embed it into the community’s consciousness and memory” (Duffy 2003, 16-17). Familiarity is established with time. Thus, as Kent Ryden explains, “a sense of place results gradually and unconsciously from inhabiting a landscape over time, becoming familiar with its physical properties, accruing history within its confines” (Ryden 1993, 38). This statement is in alignment with cultural geographer John Brinckerhoff Jackson’s definition of a sense of place as “something that we ourselves create in the course of time. It is the result of habit or custom” (Jackson 1994, 151), associated with “a lively awareness of the familiar environment, a ritual repetition, a sense of fellowship based on shared experience” (Ibid., 159).

The community under observation in this thesis has over sixty years of history that has remained unstudied. As I will gradually shed light on this history, the process of such meaningful place-making practices will be examined and informed by the above mentioned literature.

iii. Place and Region in Folklore Studies

The arguments so far reveal the depth and interconnectedness of people's relationship with their environment. Place and folklore are intrinsically connected. Folklorist Lucy M. Long, in fact, defines "folklore as the processes and products by which individuals construct, negotiate, and maintain meaningful connections with past, place, and people" (Long 2004, 47). History, place, and community, therefore, play an indispensable role in our discipline. In folkloristics, the human dimension of such environments that contain cultural and expressive practices, hold a primary place, and the study of space and place is principally "grounded in regional studies" that typically define "particular geographic regions" that are "already-loosely-defined-or-subjectively-felt" with an emphasis on the "characteristics that make regions unique"(Gabbert and Jordan-Smith 2007, 218). Theories and ethnographic studies of regions and regionalism abound in our discipline (Allen et al. 1998; Allen and Schlereth 1990; Dorson 1959, 1964; Green 1982; Hufford 1986, 2002; Jones 1976; Lightfoot 1983; Odum and Moore 1966; Vitale 2003).

The concepts of "region", "regionalism", and "regionalisation" have been widely used by various scholars. In his article "A Theory for American Folklore" (1959), folklorist Richard Dorson cites "regionalism" as one of the seven most significant forces that have formed American folklore. Dorson lays emphasis on the dynamism of regions to both recognise the important work of regional collectors and to encourage further folkloristic enquiries. Therefore, in *Buying the Wind: Regional Folklore in the United States* (1964), he uses the same approach in collecting a rich variety of lore from what he considers seven very distinct regions in America, thus arguing that a keen focus on diverse conditions in various locations show regional differences in the practice of folklore. And throughout the years, such focus on regional collection has contributed to a rich body of regional studies.

Carefully characterising the concept of region and tracing the development of regional studies in folklore, in their substantial anthology entitled *Sense of Place: American Regional Cultures* (1990) folklorists Barbara Allen and Thomas Schlereth identify the main components of regionalism as place, people, history, time, and a quality of distinctiveness. The articles in this volume mainly look at the ways in which folklore can summon a sense of place and serve as a tool with which expressive regional identities can be examined. Stating that “consciousness of place has often been identified in regions...within which distinctive cultures have developed,” the authors contend that “people in a neighbourhood, a community, a city, a region possess a collective awareness of place and express it in their cultural forms” (Allen and Schlereth 1990, 1). At the core of many of the essays in the volume rests that fact that regional consciousness and building a sense of place can be viewed through the study of cultural expressions (Ibid., 12). Although Allen and Schlereth’s comprehensive collection adds much value to the body of knowledge surrounding regional studies in our discipline, similar to folklorists such as Richard Dorson in *American Folklore* (1959) and Jan Brundvand in *The Study of American Folklore* (1968), their work occasionally falls in the trap of romanticising both the folk and their folk regions. The subject of sentimentalisation and geographical isolation to which many earlier works of folklore gravitated, has been aptly critiqued by Suzi Jones in her influential article “Regionalization: A Rhetorical Strategy” (1976). Warning against “pastoral bias” that “distorts, oversimplifies, and patronizes” (Jones 1976, 106), Jones encourages a more nuanced approach to studying regional folk groups. This nuanced approach also urges the consideration of the folk culture of a people inhabiting a region not primarily and strictly on the basis of their geographic location but most importantly based on factors that define a shared identity. In this case, one of the examples she uses is Mormons in Utah, who would first identify themselves with their beliefs rather than the region in which they live. Jones elaborates on a host of complex factors that defines membership in various folk groups which

are not mutually exclusive and asks to reserve “the term ‘regional folk group’ for a group whose basic sense of shared identity is regional rather than ethnic or occupational”, as she explains,

There are instances where people share a body of folklore because they live in a certain geographical area; their geographical location is the primary basis for a shared identity that is expressed in their lore and they themselves are conscious of their regional identity. (Ibid., 107)

This argument will be useful in my analysis of the Filipino community in Newfoundland. As will be demonstrated, Newfoundland embraces its own specific regional identity associated with a strong sense of historical pride and a unique brand of regional culture that regularly dissociates itself from the mainland of Canada. Alongside this dominant identity narrative, a growing number of minorities in this province shape their own sense of identity that factors in elements from multiple lore including ethnic as well as regional. In other words, my approach seeks to discover the process of place-making for a minority group whose primary identification is ethnic in a region of Canada that champions and celebrates its very own distinctive regional culture. And throughout this thesis, I will present some of the reasons why hyphenated identities that carry as their second component “-Newfoundlander” are a common way to identify oneself.

In order to elaborate on the interconnected study of folklore and region, some definition of common terms in such enquiries would be helpful. Since the term regionalism means “different things to different people in different contexts and time-periods” (Söderbaum 2015, 5), it helps to have a working definition of it as every discipline takes its own approach. In political science the term generally refers to “loyalty to a distinct geographic region with a largely ideologically and culturally homogeneous population” (Longley, 2021). However, in folkloristics the main significance lies in the very notion of understanding vernacular cultural practices in their specific location. One of the most helpful definitions, was thus offered by sociologist Harry Estill Moore as he wrote,

Whatever else regionalism may or may not be, its first essence is to be found in the geographic factor. The mudsill of the idea of regionalism is that social phenomena may best be understood when considered in relation to the area in which they occur as a cultural frame of reference. (Moore 1938, 463)

Regions matter to folklorists as vernacular culture develops with variations contextually. That is why folklorists have urged for the development of a regional theory and analytical method (Jones 1976; Lightfoot 1983). In his article "Regional Folkloristics" (1983), William Lightfoot explains that there exists a "reflexive relationship" between folklore and the region where it is considered and thus defines "regional folkloristics" as "the process of studying folklore that displays regional integrity, or 'regionalisation' by identifying and assembling it and then analysing it in terms of the sociocultural context that produces and encloses it" (Lightfoot 1983, 185). Thus, while commending scholars' efforts in collecting valuable lore regionally, he brings our attention to the general lack of a solid methodology and devises a five-step approach which simply requires: the selection of a region; the demarcation of regional boundaries and the establishment of familiarity with it; a meticulous assortment and organisation of the collected folklore of the area; a contextual interpretation of the material; and a productive comparison of the gathered lore with those of other regions (Ibid., 186).

Thus, Lightfoot encourages regional folklorists to pay close attention to the cultural practices of a people who "have acquired self-perceived notions of location, identity, differentiation, and homogeneity, and who share common sets of experiences, attitudes, and values that give them a distinct regional character" (Ibid., 187). Therefore, examining the "collective history, experiences, thoughts, feelings, attitudes, and values" of residents of a given region is necessary in understanding it, because ultimately "in order to understand regional folklore one must understand the region and in order to understand the region one must understand its regional folklore" (Ibid., 188).

iv. *Sense of Place in Newfoundland*

The reason for engaging with the concept of regionalism in this review of literature is to initially look at the context of Newfoundland, where the folk group in this study resides.

Newfoundland has often been regarded as “a distinctive homogenous cultural entity” (Peacock 1965, xix). In his essay entitled “Sense of Place: Loss and the Newfoundland and Labrador Spirit” (2003), which is infused with romantic and patriotic emotions toward this province, author C. G. Blackmore lays emphasis on residents’ “fierce spirit of attachment” (Blackmore 2003, 341) to this place and its history, tradition, and culture. In order to elucidate the complexities of this kind of attachment, Blackmore initially elaborates on what he means by a “sense of place” as he writes,

When we speak of a people’s *sense of place*, we begin by describing how people respond to the community or place where they live, or once lived, and which they call “home.” That *sense of place* includes what people know and understand about their community, how they respond emotionally to it, and how “the place where they live” helps determine their view of themselves as individuals or as a community. That sense empowers them to act...The place we hold dear provides for us an *emotional comfort* and puts us at ease. (Ibid., 345)

Further connecting this concept to history, identity, and culture, Blackmore enumerates the reasons behind Newfoundlanders and Labradorians rootedness and their distinct sense of place, as follows,

Physical Tenure of the Place: to be born in the same place as your forebears for several generations and to have parents and grandparents reinforce in you their own sense of belonging in that landscape and community, with shared family names and familiar townspeople – a network that is strong enough to give each person in the community a sense of having a “right” to be there because they have earned that right through tenure.

The Length of time: you spend in a place as an integrated member of its social fabric is an integral part of one’s sense of belonging; in Newfoundland and Labrador, many people can still trace relatives through two-and-three hundred years of settlement on this same land.

Psychological/Spiritual/Social Belonging: growing up with stories of ancestors who have fought the on-going harsh climate and historically limited options (compared to gentler parts with more economic opportunity) instils a kind of loyalty toward those

who have gone before. Many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians feel that leaving this physical space is a kind of betrayal: we should stay and fight for this place. (Ibid. 347)

Accordingly, explicating his point about tenure, endurance and a sense of belonging, Blackmore regards this strong feeling of connection to place as an inherent part of Newfoundland and Labrador identity as a heritage “bred in the bone” and part of the “collective DNA” (Ibid., 369). Thus, Newfoundland as a place embraces its own distinctive identity: a point often examined by various authors studying this specific context (Cadigan 2009; Crummey 2004, 2014; Johnston 1998; Macfarlane 2000; O’Flaherty 2005; Webb 2016). Regional attachment to local culture, history, and interest has been historically studied more often in the context of a province like Quebec that embraces a strong sense of Quebecois nationalism and makes a point of standing apart from the perceived homogeneity of the rest of the country or even continent. Drawing on this kind of regional patriotism, which he considers a natural expression of loyalty and attachment to one’s local setting and way of life, political scientist Arthur Kroker encourages this manner of regionalist thinking in his article “The Cultural Imagination and the National Questions” (1982). His arguments thus suggest that since various regions of Canada possess their own unique cultures and histories, regional interests should be taken into account more seriously. Using Kroker’s arguments, sociologist James Overton takes a close look at the “place of culture in regionalist thinking in Newfoundland” (Overton 1988, 6). In his article “A Newfoundland Culture?” (1988) Overton details various approaches and views to what Newfoundland culture means to scholars and laypersons and how a range of arguments about this phenomenon politically and popularly dominate the rhetoric. Tracing back Newfoundland’s deeply romanticised cultural revival to the sixties, seventies, and eighties, Overton elaborates on the institutional commitment to raising awareness about the distinctiveness of this regional culture by explicating the role of the Memorial University of Newfoundland and the establishment of the Department of Folklore with their sharp focus on the “anthropology of locality” (Ibid., 8). Overton writes,

This cultural revival rests on certain essential ideological foundations. The key assumptions of the revival is that there exists a distinctive Newfoundland culture, way of life, ethos, character, soul or ethnic identity...This unique culture, centred on the outports has been undermined by industrialisation, the welfare state, urbanisation, and the introduction of North American values in the period since the Second World War. (Ibid., 8-9)

This mode of romanticisation is evident in the writings of many scholars who emphasise the uniqueness of Newfoundland culture, language, character, and mannerism (Jackson 1978; Needham 1964; Peacock 1965; Ryan and Rossiter 1987). This has of course led to stereotypes as well, that have been criticised by Overton and others (Delisle 2013; Everett 2009; Lefcourt 2001).

As confederation with Canada in 1949 simultaneously brought about rapid changes geared toward modernising the new province, premier Joseph Smallwood's administration expressed a keen awareness of and deep desire for the preservation of Newfoundland's cultural heritage. Emphasising the importance of an institution established to promote and preserve said culture, Smallwood stated,

We have our own traditions. We have our own folklore... We have our own folk music... We have got a distinctive culture all our own, and yet we have nothing...nor have we had anything to foster and encourage the development and growth and recognition of a distinctly Newfoundland culture. And one of the most attractive possibilities of the Memorial University, if it became a university, would be that of having a dynamo, a power-house, in the inculcation and dissemination and encouragement of a distinctly Newfoundland culture. (Smallwood 1947, cited in Higgins 2012)

These sentiments were shared by a host of scholars in a wide range of disciplines, such as linguistics, history, folklore, and anthropology, who started their academic endeavours at Memorial University by collecting, studying, and archiving various aspects of Newfoundland culture, such as oral literature, beliefs, customs, and crafts. This increased focus on the uniqueness of Newfoundland regional culture and identity led to the establishment of the Department of Folklore in 1968. Emphasising the distinctiveness of Newfoundland heritage

and the need for an academic department dedicated to its collection and preservation, Herbert Halpert, the founder of the Department of Folklore, remarked,

The people of Newfoundland have been settled in a comparatively isolated area for a long period of time and have developed a unique cultural response to their environment... We have in this province one of the last areas in the English-speaking world where customs and practices survived long after they died out elsewhere. The folklorist can still learn from people who observed these customs, how they were performed and what they meant. (Halpert 1987, 15)

This political climate led to the search for a regional identity that encouraged a wide range of artistic and academic activity to promote Newfoundland culture and foster and validate a sense of pride and selfhood in a traditionally stigmatised region.

Thus, a sense of regional pride and love for the island's history and culture has been generationally instilled in residents. However, a myriad of post-confederation issues and failures have also historically fuelled unflattering stereotypes about Newfoundland that are ethnic rather than class-based (Delisle 2013, 173). As David Macfarlane notes in his novel *The Danger Tree* (2000), in the wake of Newfoundlanders' expatriation caused by unfortunate conditions of poverty and unemployment, to the rest of Canada, "Newfoundlanders became Newfies" since "Canadians needed a homebred bumpkin to emphasise their own prosperity and sophistication" (Macfarlane 2000, 159). If these negative stereotypes are carefully considered, what would the study of a heavily racialised minority group in a highly stigmatised region of Canada reveal about the concept of placemaking and belonging in a nation that prides itself as a forerunning beacon of opportunity and progress? What would the examination of the place of the marginalised in the margins far from privileged metropolitan/cosmopolitan contexts uncover about immigrant settlement and belonging in Canada? The findings in this thesis will provide some answers to these complex questions.

Going back to what has been discussed so far, the reason for briefly engaging with this literature was to look at the diasporic community in question in this specific context with its specific regional characteristics and identity. Newfoundland is not a large diasporic centre and

has not historically been a popular destination for immigrants. In fact, similar to other Atlantic provinces, Newfoundland faces the issue of high proportions of outmigration and low rates of immigrant retention (Statistics Canada 2021). Newcomers tend to gravitate toward regions where a diasporic community has already been well-established, where more opportunities might present themselves and helpful connections can be made more easily. In comparison to larger diasporic centres like Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, and Winnipeg that house tens of thousands and at times hundreds of thousands of Filipino-Canadians, Newfoundland and Labrador houses 2,265 Filipinos in total according to the most recent census, and at this number, they are the third biggest minority group in the province (Statistic Canada 2021). The comparative small size of this group in a province with a relatively small population makes this research all the more intriguing especially since, in general, urban bias dominates the field of immigration studies (Collins et al. 2020; Lejeune et al. 2021).

v. *Liminality and Communitas*

As it was discussed in the introductory chapter, the concepts of *liminality* and *communitas* become important lenses through which Filipinos' activities and engagements on a personal and vernacular level could be better viewed in terms of placemaking. Hence, in the chapters that follow I will look at the significance of Filipino-made places in Newfoundland considering migrant liminal spaces and *communitas* (which I will argue dovetails neatly with the Filipino notion of *bayanihan*). As Victor Turner explicates in *The Ritual Process* (1969), a group that experiences liminality together cultivates a strong sense of intimacy and intensified unanimity as a result of the absence of structuredness that leads to/allows for egalitarian relationships between community members. The places the group under study creates within the context of Newfoundland can be viewed as liminal spaces, where a temporary suspension of one's status as a newcomer/immigrant/outsider is possible, and a sense of belonging and solidarity is achievable. In other words, the private Filipino spaces that community members

craft in Newfoundland generate a distinctive and much desired liminal space. In such spaces, regardless of individuals' social status or background, a sense of equality and closeness is engendered. The workings of *communitas* are well-described in Judaic studies scholar Jeffrey Rubenstein's exploration of the Jewish festival of Purim, as he writes,

The most common modality of social organization that takes place within liminality is *communitas*. As opposed to *societas*, or structure, *communitas* is characterized by equality, immediacy, and the lack of social ranks and roles. A leveling process brings about the dissolution of structure, the absence of social distinctions, a homogenisation of roles, the disappearance of political allegiance, the breakdown of regular borders and barriers. With the suspension of status distinctions, human beings recognize the core humanity they share. Relationships are immediate and spontaneous... *Communitas* strives for release from daily obligations and requirements, and seeks universalism and openness. Where *societas* functions to define the differences between individuals, limit their interaction, and pull them apart, *communitas* serves to unify, bond, and transcend structural relationships. By doing so, *communitas* reminds society that at a deeper level all of its members are human and equal, despite the accepted social and hierarchical differences. (Rubenstein 1992, 251)

Along the same lines, as will be demonstrated, the Filipino community's practices of place making through the creation of *tambayan*, the custom of *salu-salu*, and the formation of Filipino liminal spaces allow for the realisation of *pakikisama*, *pakikipapwa*, and *bayanihan*, which can be fruitfully compared to *communitas*.

As it was mentioned in the introductory chapter, occupational therapist Terry Peralta-Catipon delves into such placemaking practices among Filipina domestic workers in Hong Kong who view Statue Square on Sundays as a temporary place of comfort and relief, where familiar practices take place. In Peralta-Catipon's words, the collective efforts of Filipino workers turns Statue Square in Hong Kong into a "territorial refuge, a provisional society, and a home away from home" (Peralta-Catipon 2009, 32). Such spaces create "a free zone, bewixt and between social codes" (Shields 1991, 108) as Canadian cultural theorist Rob Shields (who embraces Bakhtinian theories of carnivalesque in his analysis of liminal space) suggests.

As the material gathered in this subsection reveals, crafting meaningful places within a space as a collective effort carries at the heart of it the notions of emotion and experience that

serve to create zones of comfort and intimacy that lead to a sense of belonging and emplacement for the community.

Various factors that will be discussed in the following pages contribute to the creation of a sense of familiarity, meaning, and comfort within a given space for a diasporic community.

Material Culture and Placemaking

i. Understanding Material Culture

During the course of this research, the salience of the materiality of ethnic identity within created places solidified as an important subject. Things were everywhere: they were used, they were kept, they were displayed, and they meant something. Therefore, in order to make sense of the sheer volume of the stuff I was presented with, I looked at scholarly contributions to material culture studies across various disciplines such as folklore (Ames and Schlereth 2003; Glassie 1999; Pocius 1991; Riedl 1966), anthropology (Buchli 2004; Cieraad 1999; Henare 2003; Miller 1998, 2001, 2009; Reynolds and Stott 1987), archaeology (Card 2013; Gould and Schiffer 1981; Heath et al. 2017; Hodder 1989; Tilley et al. 2006), history (Gaskell and Carter 2020; Hannan and Longair 2017; Harvey 2018; Lubar and Kingery 1993; Pounds 1989), sociology (Dant 1999; I. Woodward 2007; S. Woodward 2020), psychology (Dittmar 1992; Gonzáles-Ruibal 2012), art and design (Attfield 2000; Kirkham and Weber 2013; Prown 1982), and consumption (Daunton and Hilton 2001; Douglas and Isherwood 2021; Fine 2002; McCracken 1990; Miller 1987). Since “social worlds” are “constituted by materiality” the approaches to understanding material culture are immensely diverse (Miller 1998, 3). In fact, various definitions of the studies of material culture reveal the depth of the entanglement of human life with objects. Thus, familiarity with some of the formative scholarly works that help grasp a deeper understanding of this enormously fertile area of the study of place and culture, is necessary.

Scholars have argued that the complexity of studying material culture can call for transdisciplinary (Carp 2011; Cochran and Beaudry 2006; Glassie 1999), multidisciplinary (Berger 1992; Mannion 1979; Roberts and Vander Linden 2011), interdisciplinary (Hicks and Beaudry 2010; Knappett 2010; Woodward 2007), and cross-disciplinary (Newby and Toulson 2019; Nicolini et al. 2012; Wilson 2011) approaches. Just as the concept of culture has countless potential descriptions, so does its material component (Tilley et al. 2006, 4). Thus, the term material culture “has hundreds of definitions” (Berger 2009, 16).

As archaeologist James Deetz explains, the phenomenon refers to “that segment of man’s physical environment which is purposely shaped by him according to a culturally dictated plan” (Deetz 1977, 7). This statement highlights the interconnectedness of things we possess with our culture. Among folklorists, Henry Glassie offers one of the most widely-referenced definitions: “Material culture is culture made material” (Glassie 1999, 3). Researchers in diverse fields have offered variations of this comprehensive definition. For example, years before Glassie, art historian Jules David Prown expanded the definition of this nomenclature by stating that material culture is: “the study through artefacts of the beliefs—values, ideas, attitudes, and assumptions—of a particular community or society at a given time” (Prown 1982, 1). Therefore, “materiality is an integral dimension of culture” (Tilley et al. 2006, 1). In other words, “the whole of cultural expression, one way or another, falls within the realm of material culture” (Pearce 1994, 9) and can thus serve as remarkably important tools to understand the intricacies of placemaking.

ii. Things and Placemaking: How Objects Create Place

Considering that a sense of place “refers to the emotive bonds and attachments people develop or experience” toward spaces they infuse with meaning, research that reflects on the “perceptual worlds of individuals,” has for the most part focused on “the positive bonds of comfort, safety, and wellbeing” with regards to the notion (Foote and Azayahu 2009, 96).

Objects serve as strong symbolic, visual and functional reminders of culture, traditions, values, experience and sense of self and identity on both individual and collective levels. Discussions connecting the concepts of identity and material culture abound (Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton 1999; Dittmar 1992; Miller 1987, 1998, 2016; Sofaer 2007; Woodward 2007). As Yi-Fu Tuan writes in his article entitled “Significance of the Artifact” (1980), “Our fragile sense of self needs support, and this we get by having and possessing things because, to a large degree, we are what we have and possess” (Tuan 1980, 472). As human reality is to a great extent a material one (Miller 1998, 111), there exists a number of arguments about how humans can be perceived, at least in a way, as the sum of their possessions (Ahuvia 2005, Belk 1988, Dittmar 1989, Feirstein 1986, Tian and Belk 2005, Van Esterick 1986, Wheeler and Bechler 2021).

Since material culture serves both practical and symbolic purposes in human lives (analysed as objects of “being” and “belonging” later in this thesis), they are persistently present in the everyday. As material symbols, objects possess “communicative powers” that have “identity-creating and identity-enhancing features” (Dittmar 1992, 101); and as practical items, engaging with and utilising objects helps the accomplishment of simple or complicated tasks. The two functions are of course not mutually exclusive and many things serve both purposes. If we consider the fact that objects can be viewed as extensions of the self (Belk 1988) that have “the function of stabilising human life” (Arendt 1958, 139), we can draw some preliminary conclusions about how living in a surrounding that carries such things creates a sense of place for individuals. As psychologist Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi and sociologist Eugene Rochberg-Halton argue “physical environment” (space) turns into a cultural or affective one (place) with “continual personalisation and humanisation” (Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton 1999, 122). And the most primary phenomena that personalise and humanise a given space in order to turn it into a meaningful place are material objects. This observation

has been the subject of analysis in consumer culture studies scholars Raj Mehta and Russell Belk's research. Mehta and Belk's study on the belongings of Indian immigrants in the United States, explicates the elusiveness of various aspects of identity and belonging to place without "tangible manifestations" of possessions that connect them to their place and community (Mehta and Belk 1991, 408). Similarly, cultural studies scholar Özlem Savaş's article "Taste Diaspora" (2014) also explicates how the Turkish community in Vienna finds and creates a sense of place and belonging through the use of physical things that are both practically used in everyday life and symbolic of a specific taste that connects them to places and people. Comparably, migration studies scholar Laura Osorio Iregui (2020) offers an ethnographic study of the Wounaan (a displaced Colombian indigenous group in Bogotá) and the ways that they reconstruct a sense of place through the materiality of basket weaving that revives sensory experiences of place and a sense of continuity in displacement. These and many other examples (Bliss 2014; Burrell 2008a, 2008b; Chevalier 1996; Coleman and Wiles 2020; Dudley 2010; Gosling et al. 2005; Ho and Hatfield 2011; Pels et al. 2002) divulge that objects play a crucial role in "actively cultivating a world of meaning" (Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton 1999, xi), because they allow us to communicate various aspects of our identity to others, anchor and remind us of our selfhood, enhance our feelings of self-esteem and security, support our self-perception, and ultimately help us be in control of the environment around us (Csikszentmihalyi 1982). Considering these important characteristics, it is not difficult to imagine the ways material culture produces and often contributes to a sense of place.

i. Material Culture in the Domestic Space

In her study of the materiality of creating place in the context of migration, social anthropologist Andrea Lauser explains that,

[An] important strand in research into place-making is the study of home and home-making. This focus shifts attention to the numerous habitual and routine practices involving place, people and things and the way in which everyday activities shape place and places shape these activities. (Lauser 2022, 276)

Thus, the study of an important place like a home requires an examination of its materiality. The study of material objects and their significance in the domestic sphere has captured the attention of many researchers who consider the examination of home an important scholarly endeavour. Elaborating on some of these key observations would help better understand my ethnographic findings about the Filipino home and the type of place it creates in the context of Newfoundland.

In *The Meaning of Things: Domestic Symbols and the Self* (1999), Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Eugene Rochberg-Halton look at the domestic space with keen eyes in order to explicate the ways in which the home is “a shelter for those things that make life meaningful” (Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton 1999, 139) and thus, this space can convert into “the most powerful sign of the self of the inhabitant who dwells within” (Ibid., 123). The emphasis here is on the symbolic value of objects even when they are primarily practical as the authors explain that “even purely functional things serve to socialise a person to a certain habit or way of life and are representative signs of that way of life” (Ibid., 21). Thus, in this rich study, objects within the household are taken into careful consideration because they carry and convey meaning and their presence is deliberate and purposeful. These material things serve the purpose of turning the given space of a house into the carefully crafted place of a home. As Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton demonstrate through the use of a wide range of examples and theories, the examination of household objects reveals “their ability to provide tangible, enduring, and vitalised signs that can communicate the continuity of one’s experiences, relationships, and values” (Ibid., 224). These scholars also draw attention to the role of objects in representing people’s identities and the spaces they occupy, explaining that “people are what they attend to, what they cherish and use” (Ibid., 16). Emphasizing especially the “symbolic ecology of the household” (Ibid., 165), they write,

...the home contains the most special objects: those that were selected by the person to attend to regularly or to have close at hand, that create permanence in the intimate life of a person, and therefore are most involved in making up his or her identity. The objects of the household, represent at least potentially, the endogenous being of the owner. (Ibid., 17)

As they lay special emphasis on the domestic space as “an indispensable symbolic environment,” (Ibid., 144) they liken the home setting to a shelter or a “church” where “a person can create a material environment that embodies...the most powerful signs of the self” (Ibid., 123). With this mindset, they carry out over three hundred interviews with participants in Chicago in order to understand why certain objects are “special” or “cherished”. They take into account various factors such as age, gender, and social class in order to shed light on people-object relations within the household. Through the use of various theories of semiology (such as those offered by Clifford Geertz and Claude Levi-Strauss), the authors explain how objects help form and maintain group and individual identity by becoming vehicles that facilitate action, contemplation, continuity, differentiation, and integration. At the crux of their argument lies the knowledge that people give meaning to things with “enormous flexibility” (Ibid., 87), an important observation that I also witnessed during my interviews and will further discuss in later chapters.

Objects within the household offer a rich area of study for scholars in various disciplines. Anthropologist Daniel Miller who has written extensively about human relationships to things also looks at this interesting subfield within the study of material culture. In *Home Possessions: Material Culture Behind Closed Doors* (2001), Miller collects insightful essays from various scholars that demonstrate the importance of domestic objects in creating meaning for dwellers. Objects within the household help maintain “an ongoing process of self-definition” through their capacity to “keep a particular narrative going” (Garvey 2001, 56), and this helps cultivate “a sense of domestic empowerment” (Ibid., 65). In the context of migration, rebuilding a sense of place is in fact more dependent on certain objects that turn into a “metonymy” that contains

the familiar. Thus, such objects become “the heart of the creation of place and its recreation” (Marcoux 2001b, 74). *Home Possessions* is a volume that primarily looks at the centrality of the role of objects in the domestic sphere and the processes of meaning making through them. As feeling at home and at ease is “strongly linked with being surrounded” by one’s favoured possessions (Hecht 2001, 141), it is easy to gather that the creation of a sense of place is also largely dependent on chosen objects in the home. As anthropologist Anat Hecht explains in a chapter in this volume regarding cherished items in the household, such objects are,

... more than mere ‘things.’ They are a collection of appropriated materials invested with meaning and memory, a material testament of who we are, where we have been and perhaps even where we are heading. They are what transforms a house into a home, a private cosmos that houses our memories of bygone time, as well as our hopes for what is yet to come. They bind our past with our present and our possible futures, thereby framing and reflecting a sense of self. (Hecht 2001, 123)

As it can be gathered, material things feature strongly in the creation of a sense of place that generates a feeling of at-homeness for residents. Psychologists, anthropologists and other social scientists who have contributed to the discussions in *Home Possessions*, recognise the role of materiality in what turns a house into a home. As environment studies scholar Paul J. J. Pennartz explains, “place is an amalgam of related activities, conceptions and material attributes” and much of all of this needs the involvement of objects (Pennartz 1999, 96).

Given the centrality of tangible things in understanding culture, researchers studying various communities have made use of ethnographic and folkloristic approaches to offer insight into the concept of cultural and ethnic identity through the study of objects (Bronner 2006; Eglinton 2013; Hulsbosch et al. 2009; Kollar 2021; Koltun-Fromm 2010; Pechurina 2016; Sheumaker and Wajda 2008; Sofaer 2007). Although for the most part the everyday and mundane in the domestic sphere have remained largely understudied (Cieraad 1999, 96; Money 2007, 359), there are some scholars who have insisted on the immense value of studying things

that people possess at home. A review of some of these seminal works here, would be beneficial.

With a similar emphasis on the domestic realm, anthropologist Daniel Miller's *Home Possessions* (2001) also looks at the daily intimate interactions between individuals and their home environment. As the contributors to the volume embrace an anthropological approach to observing the domestic space, they meticulously study its symbolic qualities in the context of home decoration and homemaking. As such, this collection of ethnographic essays considers the negotiations and transformations that help (re)produce a sense of home by taking a close look at people-object relations. At the centre of many of the articles in Miller's collection lies the notion of identity representation through the material culture of home, as its making and decoration becomes "a long-term narrative through which residents find self-expression... cultivating a sense of domestic empowerment" (Miller 2001, 65). As one of the contributors to this work Elia Petridou elaborates, the notion of self-creation through interaction with domestic objects can be closely linked to what Miller himself in an earlier work calls the process of *objectification*. In essence, the concept suggest that individuals use "a process of externalization" where material culture is utilised as a "potential vehicle or medium" for meaning (Miller 1987, 85), because the human subject is constructed within and through the material world (Ibid., 86).

The domestic space provides individuals with a malleable place that they can infuse with meanings that reveal aspects of their identity. As architectural psychologist Clare Cooper Marcus explains, some aspects of the self are extended to the domestic space, because "as we become accustomed to and lay claim to this little niche in the world, we project something of ourselves onto its physical fabric" (Marcus 1974, 131). In a similar fashion, folklorist Gerald Pocius observes that this kind of practice is visible in the permanent display of "socially appropriate objects and decorations" (Pocius 1991, 228) that are "special, unique or fancy"

(Ibid., 239) in the living room, which he likens to a museum for members of the household and those they choose to receive within its boundaries. Comparable to Cooper Marcus and Pocius's inquiries is an apt study of the material culture in the living room carried out by scholar Annemarie Money. Money talks about the ways objects used in the domestic space are "appropriated into everyday life" (Money 2007, 355) and function as signifiers that represent "familial obligations," become "markers of memory," and are used for "commemorative appropriation" (Ibid., 362). Thus, things that people pick and choose to display in the household often "operate to maintain a connection between people, and on occasions, connection to places" (Ibid., 367). This point has also been made in Rachel Hurdley's ethnographic study of the living room and specifically mantel pieces, as she explains how the "mundane practices of the social accomplishment of identity" are met within the "continuities of domestic space and everyday objects" (Hurdley 2006, 719) as "private experiences of the self are manifested by means of display objects and domestic artifacts" (Ibid., 717). Comparably, in the article "Objects of Memory: Material Culture as Life Review" (1989), folklorist Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett also contends that since the domestic space is filled with important things that age with their possessors, they can serve as encoders of memories and as tools that help review life events. These kept items become "stimuli for reminiscence" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1989, 331), and allow for the "social construction of the self through time," while lending themselves to "the transformation of experience" within the household (Ibid., 336).

The materiality of the domestic realm may be imbued with the meanings that the members of the household give to it. Along the same lines, focusing on what she calls the "anthropology of the domestic space" (Cieraad 1999, 12), in her work entitled *At Home* (1999), cultural anthropologist Irene Cieraad views the home space as "the focal point of most people's lives" and examines the "emotionalisation of the domestic space" (Ibid., 11). Through the use of various case studies contributors to this edition illustrate the ways in which the home

provides a place where heritage and family identities become anchored (Ibid., 83), ideology becomes materialised (Ibid., 107) and individuals display a sense of self-identity through the appropriation of this space (Ibid., 108). This work thus demonstrates how the home as “the most culturally significant spatial demarcation” becomes “a prime excavated site for an archaeology of sociability” (Ibid., 144). Similar to Cieraad, sociologist Ian Woodward also highlights the importance of the home as a material space invested with sentimental and subjective meaning. Thus, he writes that the home is,

A focal point of most people’s lives—both physically and emotionally, where they interact with the most important others in their lives; it is the most substantial monetary investment the majority of people will make and an important signifier of achievement and success, as well as personal values; and finally it embodies elements of being both highly personal and strongly social such that it encompasses private and public meanings. (Woodward 2007, 155)

As these scholars argue, the home becomes a space imbued with meanings for members of the household. These meanings are facilitated through material things that one can select and control. Thus, it can be understood that the home is crafted through and in a material environment that can be moulded and organised in alignment with one’s choices and preferences. In fact, it is this sense of control over the materiality of the domestic space that turns it into a place where one can practice different aspects of one’s identity (Baudrillard 1996; Csikzentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton 1999; Dittmar 1992; Douglas 1991; Furby 1978; Heath et al. 2017).

ii. Material Culture in the Context of Migration

Given the importance of the domestic space in nurturing different aspects of one’s identity, what happens when displacement occurs? How can a sense of home be achieved in a new space if, under different circumstances and for any given reason, individuals leave a place that is cultivated to be comforting, familiar, and arranged to represent ideals, heritage, beliefs, and culture? And what is the role of material culture in recreating a sense of home and

belonging across borders? To answer these questions, it is essential to look at the literature on the role of objects in the context of migration.

As Maja Povrzanović Frykman notes in her work on the importance of the quotidian materiality of transnational dwelling, “feeling at home” (Povrzanović Frykman 2019, 36) requires the reproduction of a sense of normalcy, which is primarily facilitated through material things. In order to understand their meaning and importance to individuals, Povrzanović Frykman’s study meticulously observes various belongings that refugees and immigrants opt to take with them across borders with limited space in their suitcases and backpacks. While conducting interviews, she focuses on the notion of everyday habits in transnational lives, to reveal the ways in which objects “facilitate familiar material practices that, in their turn, help migrants to feel at home in different locations” (Ibid., 28). Thus, as Povrzanović Frykman’s research shows, the importance of material belongings in the study of migrants’ lives is undisputable, as she divides them into both objects of “being” (practical everyday things) and objects of “belonging” (things that symbolise belonging to a group).

With a wide range of enquiries, scholars in various disciplines have looked at the role of material culture in the context of migration (Boccagni 2016; Burrell 2008a, 2008b; Dudley 2010, 2011; Povrzanović Frykman 2019; Ho and Hatfield 2011; Januarius 2009; Mehta and Belk 1991; Nititham and Boyd 2014; Olesen 2010; Pechurina 2015; Rabiowska and Burrell 2009; Ruberto and Sciorra 2018; Savaş 2014; Svasek 2012; Trabert 2020; Thur 2006; Werbner 2000; Yi-Neumann et al. 2022). Since the scale of many of these enquiries is far beyond the scope of this chapter, I will primarily engage with scholarly works that look at immigrant material culture within the context of the domestic space in order to utilise the findings of such studies in my own analysis.

There exists a range of interesting research carried out about the ways in which immigrants create a sense of home within the interiors of a household in a new context

(Agrawal 2006; Beeckmans et al. 2022; Boym 1998; Dibbits 2009; Greenbaum and Greenbaum 1981; McMillan 2009; Mehta and Belk 1991; Sahney 2012; Savaş 2010; Stock 2017; Van der Horst 2008). One of the most helpful resources that I came across during my research was sociologist Anna Pechurina's work on Russian migrants' homes (Pechurina 2015). Throughout her book, Pechurina looks at various objects in the homes of her Russian participants in the UK in order to understand how the construction of a sense of self and a connection to one's imagined community (Anderson 1983), as well as the preservation of memories and relationships to the country of origin, are dependent on the possession of certain objects. Espousing "sensory home ethnography" (Pink 2009) as a method that makes "intangible experiences visible and reveals both personal and cultural dimensions of identity" (Pechurina 2015, 2), Pechurina examines the material culture of Russian immigrants to decipher significant signifiers of belonging. Thus, with an interdisciplinary approach (combining migration studies, domestic anthropology, and material culture studies), an extensive knowledge of diasporic community construction (Boym 1998; Clifford 1994; Savaş 2010, 2014), and transnational practices (Bryceson and Vuorela 2002; Glick Schiller et al. 1995; Remennick 2002), she looks at the material world of everyday life which includes quotidian activities such as homemaking and decorating, dressing, and cooking. As she focuses on the materiality of such behaviours she writes,

...a reconstruction of home(lands) in migrant communities occurs through the materiality of things, which often help to transform a 'house' into a 'home' in a new country and affects the broader relationship with the host society and culture...By looking at the individual meaning of home and the way they are actually lived and practised by people, researchers are also able to grasp how broader cultural norms, practices, and stereotypes can be represented in a domestic space. (Pechurina 2015, 30)

As she demonstrates through the use of various ethnographic examples and interesting narratives from her participants, all of these activities are facilitated through the materiality of the home space and therefore the possessions immigrants opt to keep in it. And these material practices reveal much about both individual and community identities. Thus, through a nuanced

and in-depth analysis, Pechurina demonstrates the ways in which practices of place making, maintaining cultural identity and a sense of belonging to an imagined community can be understood by a careful examination of immigrant possessions at home and their interpretation of them.

The role of objects in securing and reconstructing identity is “powerful and pervasive” (Mehta and Belk 1991, 398). And in their compelling study of the favourite possessions of Indian immigrants to the United States, Belk and Mehta convincingly put forward arguments and examples that illustrates this point. Focusing on the use of possessions particularly for those experiencing identity transitions in the context of immigration, the authors argue that such material things allow migrants to “transport part of their former identities to a new place” (Ibid., 399). In a new home in a foreign land, these objects help “anchor identity” (Ibid., 400) and materialise memory and attachments. In essence,

Such objects are meaningful because they remind people of their pasts—travel experiences, achievements, close relatives and friends—or because the objects are symbols of religious or ethnic identities. Treasured objects also may be used to silently convey and express self to others. (Ibid., 399)

As it can be gathered the role of possessions in constructing and maintaining different aspects of identity is undeniable and this ethnographic and comparative study of the belongings of Indians in India and Indian immigrants to the United States reveals that “psychological commitment” to one’s ethnic background would be “elusive without the tangible manifestations that possessions help provide” (Ibid., 408).

As it has been argued so far, the domestic interiors of migrants’ homes, can reveal aspects of their ethnic and cultural identities. However, it is important to note here that the specific circumstances of immigration and the context of the host society that receives migrants has an immense impact on the particular ways that the home in a new setting is reconstructed. This argument is exemplified in cultural studies scholar Özlem Savaş’s extensive research on the Turkish community in Vienna. Examining the development of diasporic taste in a society that

hosts a significant number of Turkish immigrants, Savaş looks at individuals' choices that are in alignment with a certain culturally-dictated style that has been established over time by a shared experience of diaspora for this particular community in this particular context. Adapting a Turkish taste in the use of everyday objects is a result of "specific experiences of displacement and dwelling" as it "serves as a significant aesthetic and social medium for building a collective sense of belonging" (Savaş 2014, 186). Because of their ability to stand for ideas, objects can indeed be symbols of belonging to a group. However, Savaş also explains that in addition to their symbolic value, objects help recreate habits and norms that are an integral part of the everyday culture of a people. Without such belongings that facilitate daily ethnic and cultural practices, a sense of loss can occur. In connection to this idea, Savaş uses Turkish tea glasses as an example. Having these tea glasses that are used on a daily basis, enables Turkish immigrants in Vienna to maintain a routine that connects them to habitual practices that are part of their cultural identities. Savaş writes,

Deprivation of objects central to the material habits and visual grammar of everyday life contributed to the feelings of foreignness, rupture, and alienation. Yet the value of objects cannot be reduced to their capacity to symbolize and recall past places, lives, and relations. Rather than objects embedded with personal meanings and memories, Turkish migrants transported objects needed to reconstitute domestic habits of cleaning, eating and caring for children. A key object of a collective cultural memory and of the visual culture of the everyday, tea glasses surely recall Turkey and represent a sort of Turkishness. However, more significantly, they are incorporated into bodily actions and feelings of the everyday, through their materiality. Their lack causes the loss of physical habits of living the everyday. (Ibid., 189)

Therefore, maintaining a sense of normalcy when displacement happens is enabled through the use of familiar objects that remind one of home and help rebuild the feeling of comfort associated with it.

Whether purely aesthetic or functional, the objects that individuals choose to display or use within the household especially in the context of migration are closely tied to the concept of memory (Bahloul 1996; Brettell 2018; Chevalier 1996; Marschall 2018, 2019; Parkin 1999; Pechurina 2015; Rowlands 1993; Wilson and Radstone 2020). Possessions have a vital role in

“securing memory in motion” (Miller 2001, 69), they are at the “heart of the constitution of memory that resists displacements” (Ibid., 70). Objects “stimulate and channel remembrance” to the point that at times, “there is no memory without objects” (Bahloul 1996, 135). Possessions that we choose to keep serve as “aide-mémoires” (Rowlands 1993) that allow us to foster a sense of stability and thus their “continuous and quotidian presence” turns them into “material companions” to our lives (Kirschenblatt-Gimblett 1989, 330). Objects can therefore cultivate nostalgia and create an emotional connection to home for migrants. Memory objects, therefore, have an important role in “precipitating memories, and emotional attachment through routine usage and performative action” (Marschall 2019, 253). As cultural heritage specialist Sabine Marschall elaborates in her ethnographic study of material culture and memory in the context of intra-African mobility,

Artefacts, mementoes, souvenirs, heirlooms, personal keepsakes, or special functional objects and material culture in domestic spaces can play an important role in remembrance, emotional dynamics and processes of identity formation for individuals, families, and communities. In contexts of mobility, relocation, migration and forcible displacement, such objects can represent links with home, loved ones and the autobiographical past, providing a sense of identity continuity. (Ibid., 253)

Memories that are evoked through possessions in this sense can be attached to both personal and cultural experiences that form individual as well as community consciousness and identity.

The literature provided so far reveals the depth of the interconnectedness of material culture with regards to the experience of migration, the preservation of memory, the (re)construction of a sense of home, and the continuity of identity in placemaking efforts. These arguments will be put to use in the third chapter, where the role of objects in the placemaking endeavours of the Filipino community in Newfoundland will be examined.

Food and Place

i. Understanding Foodways

In order to comprehend the complex interconnections between food and placemaking, it is initially important to provide some insight into the concept of foodways in the study of folklore.

Coined in the 1950s by folklorists Alfred Shoemaker and Don Yoder in Pennsylvania, simply put, foodways is the “intersection of food and culture” (Brunvand 1996, 622). A more comprehensive definition of the term offered by Yoder in his article entitled “Folk Cookery” proposes that foodways is in fact “the total cookery complex, including attitudes, taboos, and meal systems—the whole range of cookery and food habits in a society” (1972, 325). A recent definition of the term provided by folklorist Lucy M. Long defines it as “the total system of practices and concepts surrounding food and eating” (2015, 14). As the term has become widely accepted and used in folklore studies, the centrality of food and all the culture surrounding its production, preparation, presentation, and consumption have also come to be appreciated in understanding communities (Camp 1989).

In her article entitled “American Food, Foodways and Eating” (2019) published in a volume about folklore and folklife edited by Simon J. Bronner, Lucy M. Long offers much insight into the origins, position, methods, theory and importance of food studies in our discipline. Long identifies the personal, the aesthetic, and the meaningful as three areas of emphasis in folklore’s approach to food and recognises the significance of the vernacular and everyday in folklorists’ method, who seek to uncover the ways in which “food is used to construct, affirm, or negotiate meaningful connections between individuals and past, place, and other people” (Ibid., 472). Arguing for the use of an “ethnography of eating” based on linguist/folklorist Dell Hymes’s model of an ethnography of speaking (1964), Long lays emphasis on a person or group’s “food activities as performances of identity” (Ibid., 475) and

views foodways as a tool that offers “people a voice through which they can present their own experiences, interpretations of events, and sense of self” (Ibid., 485). Long thus argues that since food is “a central aspect of human lives” it is used in our discipline “to query the formation of folk groups and their identities, ethnicity, regionalism, ethnic expression and power hierarchies” (Ibid., 470). In other words, as “food functions within a web of human behaviour, relationships, and communal identities” the study of the culture surrounding it can reveal how “food and meals communicate values, connections, and symbolic meanings” (Watts and Clark-Mahoney 2022, 241).

Interest in the complexities of this rich area of study has thus resulted in the production of deeply enlightening research about the important role of food cultures carried out by various folklorists. In her book entitled *Foodways and Folklore* (2008), for example, folklorist Jacqueline Thursby looks at the myriad of ways that the study of foodways and folklore are intertwined as she offers a historical overview of food cultures in Europe and the States. Emphasising that “the folklore of foods can be found in the verbal, material, customary, and belief systems of people all over the world” (Thursby 2008, 5), Thursby views the act of dining as not just eating for sustenance but for “taste, identity, focused and deliberate nourishment, and pleasure” and thus argues that “foods carry elements of meaning, including memories and nostalgia” and are “laden with significance [and] can even provide a sense of psychological well-being and harmony” (Ibid., 1).

In an earlier work, primarily focused on the role of foodways in performing group identity, American studies scholars Linda Keller Brown and Kay Mussell gather twelve essays by scholars from a range of academic backgrounds to review foodways as a significant system of communication. *Ethnic and Regional Foodways in the United States: The Performance of Group Identity* (1984) contains helpful discussions about food-related activities and the case studies that reveal the ways in which various identities be they ethnic, regional, or religious are

performed through foodways by groups. The overarching theme communicated by the editors and contributors in this volume is that food is an immensely important tool in understanding culture and its intricate inner workings. As it is elegantly put by the editors, the importance of this area of study is better understood when we consider the fact that,

Foodways bind individuals together, define the limits of the group's outreach and identity, distinguish in-group from out-group, serve as a medium of inter-group communication, celebrate cultural cohesion, and provide a context for performance of group rituals (Brown and Mussell 1984, 5).

This statement nicely summarises the essence of foodways and how it serves to offer much insight into the ways that food and identity are connected.

In addition to Brown and Mussell's compendium, Lucy M. Long's comprehensive volume *The Food and Folklore Reader* (2015) provides much insight. As a food scholar who has dedicated decades of her life to studying foodways, Long acknowledges food as a form of cultural and social phenomenon that helps individuals and their communities negotiate their identities, histories, and the places they inhabit or create, as she writes that "food connects us all. It connects individuals to their pasts, places, and other people as well as to the larger culture and society surrounding them. It connects us in satisfying a universal biological need, but its forms, meanings and functions are specific to each culture," and thus folklorists who recognise the importance of this connectedness take into careful consideration "the experiences, memories, and events surrounding food and eating" (Long 2015, 1). In folkloristics, foodways is thus recognised as "a domain of cultural and social activity in which groups and individuals interactively and creatively construct, maintain, and negotiate meaningful connections to their pasts, places, and other people" (Ibid.).

Theorising the field, therefore, requires a profound understanding of the range of activities centring the cultivation, distribution, preparation, and consumption of foodstuff, alongside the meanings, methods, and symbols behind such activities. Collecting the most relevant works of a bevy of experts, Long outlines the important place of foodways in the study

of communities and folkloristic contributions that have shed light on the topic. Hence, public and private meanings of food cultures are taken into consideration in the study of both the mundane and everyday, and the ritualistic and ceremonial. Examining the intersection of food and culture in folklore studies, Long recognises and thusly categorises into sections the role of food in: the formation of identity and community; the creation of symbols and performance of rituals; communication of a wide range of meanings; and applied and public folklore. Throughout the various sections of this compendium, as will be demonstrated in more detail in the following pages, contributors look at the role that food plays in the foundation of social groups, cultivation of a sense of belonging, the maintenance of cultural identities, hedonistic and celebratory aspects of dining together, the festivalisation of food traditions, and culinary nostalgia and sentimental consumption.

As various folklorists demonstrate in this volume, food plays an essential role in the construction of community and a sense of shared identity. For example, in her article entitled “‘It’s All from One Big Pot’: Booya as an Expression of Community”, Anne Kaplan looks at a specific dish as a “powerful expression of community on several levels” as a tradition is claimed and constructed around it that “helps focus and express those salient values and facets of identity...that the group uses to define itself” (Kaplan 2015, 60). Revealing how communal involvement for the preparation of an elaborate dish shared by a group leads to relationship affirmation for members, Kaplan dubs the dish a “badge of identity” for the community and its members, since it “intensifies their commitment to the group and their ties to its past” (Ibid., 69). In the following chapter written by William and Yvonne Lockwood, the authors focus primarily on ethnic foodways. Thus, “Continuity and Adaptation in Arab American Foodways,” looks at how an ethnic identity is formed for an immigrant group in a new context through food. Speaking of the creolisation of ethnic culture that is most vividly seen in the

foodways of a community the Lockwoods carefully examine the processes of continuity and adaptation as they write,

...cooking and eating are expressive behaviour, relatively easy to observe, and heavily laden with symbolic meaning. Because cuisine is especially responsive to new environments, where some ingredients are unavailable, and because new social settings bring new ways of eating and cooking, foodways are especially quick to adapt and change. At the same time, however, perhaps no aspect of culture is so resistant to change, so tenaciously held. Generations after the loss of their mother tongue, ethnic Americans are still likely to be cooking and eating some version of the family's "mother cuisine" (Lockwood and Lockwood 2015, 73).

Thus, William and Yvonne Lockwood aptly discuss ethnic cultural processes among Arab Americans in both public and private settings. These important observations about ethnic community adaptations, symbolic values of food, and generational claim to ethnic identity through food will be immensely valuable in the foodways chapter of this thesis.

Within the same section in the volume, Holly Everett elaborates on choices made by residents of a place with regards to food presentations to visitors to highlight and negotiate different aspects of local identity. Taking into consideration two bed and breakfast inns in Newfoundland and Labrador as her case studies, Everett demonstrates the ways in which food establishment owners in the province as "members of unique regional cultures" present public identities through foodways in order to "perform their culture as they wish it to be perceived" (Everett 2015, 110).

In the following two chapters entitled "Balut: Fertilised Duck Eggs and Their Role in Filipino Culture" and "Feeding the Jewish Soul in the Delta Diaspora", Margaret Magat and Marcie Cohen Ferris respectively, elaborate on other aspects of the processes of group identity building through food. Magat looks at the history of balut (embryonic duck eggs) consumption in the Philippines and among Filipino immigrants in the US to shed light on the reasons why it holds symbolic meanings and how it is consumed for its nutritional values according to common folk belief. Through the study of this particular type of food, Magat takes a careful look at "the interplay between food, beliefs, culture and history" in order to consider an aspect

of Philippine identity (Magat 2015, 122). In the following chapter, Ferris considers diasporic culinary practices of a small Jewish community in the Mississippi and Arkansas Delta. Elaborating on “the power of food in ethnic and regional communities” for the group under study, Ferris explains that,

Anthropologists, folklorists, and food historians agree that food is invested with symbolic meaning and that any food-related activity—from a simple meal at home to the most elaborate public celebration—is an act of communication (Ferris 2015, 136).

In other chapters, the folklore of food is extended to commercially produced items as well, as memory, nostalgia, emotional attachment, and identity of people and place are studied with regards to edibles that come to represent and carry affective meanings for a community. Defining “foodways ethos” as “moral and social values attached to food and eating” (Long 2015, 192), in her article entitled “Green Beans Casserole and Midwestern Identity”, Lucy Long looks at the “folklorisation, traditionalisation, and ritualisation” of commercial food items (Ibid., 200). In this article, foodways ethos becomes an important frame of reference for the study of food (be it commercial or not) and identity. Foodways ethos, as will be demonstrated, plays a significant role in the folkloristic examination of food behaviour and community-building for Filipino-Newfoundlanders.

As it can be gathered, the concept of identity sits at the very core of the study of foodways in folklore. My goal in elaborating on several articles in this important volume was to show the ways in which folklorists embrace the meticulous study of food to understand individual and group identity. As folklorist Michael Owen Jones writes in an article in the final section of this compendium,

...Not only foodstuffs but also the procuring, preparing, and consuming of provisions figure largely in symbolic discourse regarding identity, values, and attitudes...people have multiple identities—ethnic, regional, gendered, or classed, which have dominated inquiry, but also many others that rarely have been examined—and these identities are dynamic, subject to challenge and change through the life course... eating practices reproduce as well as construct identity; in addition, both identity and alimentary symbolism, not just taste or availability or cost, significantly affect food choice (Jones 2015, 431).

As the scholarly works that I have summarised in this section reveal, the study of foodways in our discipline helps in understanding various aspects of the profoundly complex relations between food, place, history, heritage and identity. Since the notion of identity construction and maintenance can be viewed through the study of food, in the following section, I will provide a summary of essential studies in various disciplines that utilise food in understanding identity and the processes of place making.

ii. Food, Identity, and Placemaking

Various scholars in a wide range of disciplines have examined the role of food in the construction, preservation and continuance of identity (Ayora-Diaz 2021; Belasco 2008; Brulotte and Di Giovine 2014; Chou and Kerner 2021; Fischer 1999; Fischler 1988; Garth 2013; Guptill et al. 2013; Klein and Watson 2019; Montanari 2013; Murcott 1996; Parasecoli 2014; Ranta and Ichijo 2022; Sebastia 2016; Timothy 2016; Vester 2015; Wilson 2006). Food has in fact been connected to several aspects of identity such as culture (Anderson 2014; Ashkenazi and Jacob 2003; Ashley et al. 2004; Counihan and Van Esterik 2013; Dusselier 2009; McCarthy and Tulk 2021; Medina 2005; Meigs 1987; Monatari 2006); memory (Abarca and Colby 2016; Allen 2012; Holtzman 2006; Jones and Long 2017; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004; Lin and Mao 2015; Lupton 1994; Sutton 2001; Swislocki 2009; Vignolles and Pichon 2014; Walker 2001) and heritage (Almansouri et al. 2021; Brulotte and Di Giovine 2014; Csergo 2018; Laing and Frost 2013; Low 2015; Porciani 2021; Ramshaw 2015; Timothy 2016).

The three interrelated concepts of culture, memory, and heritage in the study of identity feature in my discussion of placemaking through the use of food. As “a primary marker of individual and group identity” (Di Giovine and Brulotte 2014, 1) and “the most accessible threshold of culture” (Porciani 2019, 3), food permeates multiple facets of human life. If we consider that heritage is “what we as humans inherit from the past and use it in the present”

(Timothy 2016, 2), the role of food in creating a sense of place after migration becomes even more evident. Re-establishing culture and maintaining heritage requires the involvement of memory, be it personal or collective, and food as an “extremely affective” (Di Giovine and Brulotte 2014, 1) vehicle of meaning, plays an indispensable role for migrants who wish to create and preserve a sense of cultural identity and belonging in a new setting. As anthropologist Kevin E. Y. Low writes,

Identities of self, families, and social groups are contingent on and expressed through memories and embodied recollections of the past. Remembering the past through food experiences imply that food serves as an intermediary that reproduces the social ties which anchor individual and collective membership. (Low 2015, 61)

The fundamental power of food in establishing various aspects of individual and group identity through space and time has been a subject of interest to scholars (Barndt et al. 2022; De Silva 2006; Freedman et al. 2014; Lugo-Morin 2022; Liddil 1987; Marte 2008). In fact, with the capacity “to hold time, place, and memory” food has been considered an “edible chronotope” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004, xiii), that “incites strong emotions” and “binds people together” (Di Giovine and Brulotte 2014, 1). These important characteristics of food that help build and maintain identity, also play an important role in creating a sense of place, especially for immigrants in a new context.

In the context of movement and displacement, food plays a vital role for immigrant emplacement. In fact, in the restorative efforts to rebuild fragmented worlds on the move, the significance of food cannot be denied. Since a sense of place and belonging is often negotiated around food, the concepts are entangled, as the authors of *Food Identities at Home and on the Move* (2020) suggest. In this volume, food is viewed primarily as a tool that gives immigrants “a degree of agency in defining the places they are constantly re-creating as home” (Aberca 2020, xii). Emphasising “a relational and phenomenological approach” in understanding a sense of place, the editors of this volume use food in order to “evoke home, belonging, and

cultural identity” (Matta et al. 2020, 3). In fact, contributors highlight “immigrants’ quest for food from home” in order to reveal “the centrality of culinary practices in their lives and the strong relationship between food and a sense of belonging to a place” (Ibid., 9). The wealth of information provided in this work reveals the ways in which food functions in complex manners as a primary tool that helps people negotiate a sense of place and belonging in contexts of “uncertainty, mobility, and displacement” (Ibid., 11). As several authors in this work explicate through the use of ethnographic data, food becomes not only a collective anchor but also an essential means of establishing a sense of place and identity in a new context. For example, Rebecca Haboucha’s research about the reimagined Afghan community in London portrays how the workings of cultural memory and nostalgia “come to be imbued in food practices in the process of constructing identities in places of settlement” even with context-specific modifications in the course of re-rooting oneself in a new space (Haboucha 2020, 28).

Along the same lines, geographers Pascale Joassart-Marcelli and Fernando J. Bosco look at the significant role of food in the “dynamic process of place-making” (Joassart-Marcelli and Bosco 2017, 3). *Food and Place: A Critical Exploration* (2017), takes Yi-Fu Tuan’s definition of place as a space that has been humanised, to look at how food offers “some of our deepest and most multifaceted connections to place and to each other” (Ibid., 3). Laying emphasis on the fact that “food and place are so intimately related” (Ibid., 14), the volume looks at the complex connections by considering place as a geographical location, a locale that “represents the settings of everyday activities” (Ibid., 15), and a sense of place that holds feelings and experiences of individuals and their communities. As the authors elucidate, food as a medium laden with sensory and emotional intimacies is deeply intertwined with various aspects of culture and identity and thus features strongly in spatial practices that contribute greatly to the creation of a meaningful place for a community.

Similarly, the ethnographic works of several other scholars marry the ideas of food, identity, and the cultivation of a sense of place and community by demonstrating their profound interconnectedness (Bailey 2017; Brightwell 2012; Pechurina 2015; Petridou 2001; Rabikowska 2010; Sen 2016). While elaborating on my findings in the fourth chapter of this thesis, which is about the vital role that food plays in the creation of a sense of place for the Filipino community, I will make use of these scholarly observations to elaborate on the intricacies of this process. Thus, the analysis of the Filipino community's various food-related activities and practices both in the private and public sphere, will reveal the ways in which sharing and consuming food among different generations of Filipino-Newfoundlanders speaks volumes about place-making, community-building, communion, and communication.

The Significance of Community Social Gatherings in Diaspora

The final chapter of this thesis will be dedicated to discovering community gatherings that help craft Filipino places, where members surrounded by all things familiar in designated spaces feel a sense of belonging in Newfoundland. Making use of arguments made in the previous chapters about the role of material culture and foodways, this final chapter will look at the reasons why ethnic community gatherings (both formal and informal) help create a meaningful sense of place for Filipinos in Newfoundland.

Delving into the subject of such assemblies, initially requires some preliminary understanding of the meaning of community events. *Exploring Community Festivals and Events* (2014), edited by interdisciplinary scholars Allan Jepson and Alan Clarke provides much insight into the topic. Viewing events as “deeply embedded within society and culture”, Jepson and Clarke examine the ways in which such organised gatherings “celebrate community values, ideologies, identity and continuity” (Jepson and Clarke 2014, 1). In addition to that, such events’ ability to “entertain, educate, hold aesthetic value and provide a platform for

escapism” is also explored (Ibid., 3). The authors declare that “community events are often based on traditions and on the social need to be interconnected with each other, creating and maintaining the sense of ownership of a community or a place,” thus revealing the significance of social bonds in a locale (Ibid., 5). This seminal comprehensive study investigates the dynamics and importance of events held in various communities paying close attention to and nuancing patterns and themes such as: the fostering of social cohesion and strengthening of communal bonds; promoting cultural and regional identity and pride; creating memorable community experiences; collaborating with members, volunteers, and authorities; and generating economic benefits. Contributors to this volume each provide specific case studies in a wide range of global contexts in order to enrich and exemplify the aforementioned themes. These themes focus on definition and context in the first part of the book, and in the second part, they merge with analyses that embrace “the role of diaspora, imagined communities, pride and identity, history, producing and consuming space and place, [and] authenticity” to mention a few (Ibid., 6). For example, in the chapter written by community studies scholars Jenny Flinn and Daniel Turner entitled “‘Wha’s like us?’ Scottish Highland Games in America and the Identity of the Scots Diaspora”, the authors explicate how members of the Scottish diaspora in Rhode Island and New York make use of traditional Scottish Highland games to create events that help them carve and articulate a community identity. Such game events underline the intricacies of lived identities in diaspora that nurture a connection to Scottish heritage and the place of community members within the larger society, as they “offer a multitude of opportunities to create identities of both difference and acceptance simultaneously” (Flinn and Turner 2014, 104).

In another chapter entitled, “Football on the Weekend: Rural Events and the Haitian Imagined Community in the Dominican Republic” geographer Nicholas Wise looks at how gatherings focused on football help the transient Haitian community in a northern province in

the Dominican Republic “create a sense of place abroad” and establish “social cohesion” (Wise 2014, 106). Making use of Benedict Anderson’s arguments made about “horizontal comradeship” in his *Imagined Communities* (Anderson 1983), Wise studies the Haitians’ development of “a collective sense of togetherness/belonging” (Wise 2014, 107) through sports. A feeling of belonging, Wise explains, “relates not only to issues of community, but to performances of cultural identity and how people share common beliefs and social values in their everyday life through recreational activities” (Ibid., 107). The nurturing of “common social practices” (Ibid., 108) in groups whose sense of self and belonging is “constructed through common associations” (Ibid., 110), is achieved through community organised events revolving around football on the weekends. During such bonding get-togethers that lead to the promotion and cultivation of social capital “the cultural atmosphere becomes inherently and distinctly Haitian” (Ibid., 114). As there are similarities between Wise’s research and mine, his arguments will be helpful in analysing similar Filipino gatherings.

Formal community events and festivals are not always uncontested sites as some scholars in this volume reveal. For instance, in their chapter “Festivals and a Sense of Community in Places of Transition” (2014), sociologist Michelle Duffy and community studies scholar Judith Mair focus on Yakkerboo Festival held annually in Pakenham, a community located about an hour outside of Melbourne, Australia. Duffy and Mair initially look at the “community-building” nature of events such as festivals where participation creates “an interactive process that produces a sense of social reality for a ‘located’ group identity” (Duffy and Mair 2014, 54). The authors explicate celebratory scholarship that focus on the ways in which a shared sense of identity and belonging are generated through such events. However, while elaborating on community dynamics and a changing population in their case study, they also qualify that with shifting demographics, unchanging approaches can also lead to exclusionary practices. In other words, the heavy emphasis generally laid on the study of positive aspects or outcomes of

such organised events, does not mean that they are always unproblematic (Holmes et al. 2015; Richards et al. 2013; Sharpley and Stone 2012; Wise et al. 2022; Yeoman et al. 2004).

Since many organised community gatherings revolve around shared values and beliefs “the typology of community events and festivals would be incomplete without some reference to the role religion plays” during such assemblies (Jepson and Clarke 2014, 9). Therefore, the chapter entitled “Religion, Community and Events” by Reverend Ruth Dowson in this volume is dedicated to the examination of community-building actions through the study of three different Anglican Church congregations in Yorkshire, United Kingdom. In this study, Rev. Dowson regards church events as organised activities “in which people celebrate with each other, doing life together as a group, [and] forming community” (Dowson 2014, 171). A close look at the nature of religiously-motivated communally organised gatherings through various examples in her analysis shows that “events can and do offer opportunities to build new relationships and strengthen existing ones” (Ibid., 184).

The literature discussed so far reveals that a range of scholars in different disciplines have examined various forms of community gatherings, viewing them through a number of prisms. As Dowson’s example mentioned above shows, ethnographic attention should be paid to the study of religious assemblies. In diaspora, such faith-motivated get-togethers become even more worthy of close attention because as religion scholar Raymond Brady Williams explains,

[Many] immigrants are religious—by all accounts more religious than they were before they left home—because religion is one of the important identity markers that help them preserve individual self-awareness and cohesion in group (Williams 1988, 11).

In fact, various studies have confirmed that one of the first things that new migrants do is to seek places of worship (Bauder 2019; Cherry 2014; Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000; Hirschman 2004). Thus, religious gatherings in diaspora can become “worlds unto themselves” (Warner and Wittner 1998, 3). Community building and placemaking through religious practices in

diaspora has been the focus of several researchers (Bankston and Zhou 1995; Diamond 2000; Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000; Marshall 2018; Mazumdar and Mazumdar 2009; Warner and Wittner 1998). In *Bayanihan and Belonging* (2018), for example, religious studies scholar Alison Marshall who examines Filipino religious life in Canada and more specifically in Manitoba, provides ethnographic evidence in order to reveal the importance of religious gatherings and activities to this diasporic community as she explains,

Throughout the year various Filipino services and events are used to maintain horizontal bonds of faith and family. Religious and familial ties shape the contours of life in the Philippines and also in diaspora landscapes, providing hope, optimism, and the belief in better things to come. (Marshall 2018, 20)

Marshall's detailed account of why religiously motivated events matter to Filipinos in diaspora depicts a vivid portrayal of how belonging and ultimately *communitas* is achieved when a folk group comes together with common belief and purpose. Considering the role of religion in the Filipino American community, other scholars have also looked at the meanings behind as well as the importance of Filipino gatherings that revolve around faith and religious practices. Political scientist Joaquin Jay Gonzalez's *Filipino American Faith in Action* (2009) and sociologist Stephen M. Cherry's *Faith, Family, and Filipino American Community Life* (2014), serve as two other good examples that look at Filipino religious gatherings and events in diaspora that create a sense of place and belonging for the community.

In addition to religious events, various festivals and cultural affairs organised in diaspora, centre around festivities celebrated in homelands. Documenting and analysing such diasporic community activities has offered insight into the meaning behind and the importance of such assemblies with regards to a sense of place, identity, and group belonging and wellbeing (Booth 2015, 2016; Derrett 2003; Gedecho et al. 2023; Laing and Frost 2013; Mackellar and Derrett 2015; Duffy and Mair 2014; McClinchey 2014; Tao et al. 2020; Wood and Homolja 2021; Yu et al. 2022). Such organised events in diaspora help express "a distinct community identity through the creation of social interaction and memorable experiences" (Yu et al. 2022, 932).

Thus, the social aspect of events is a core concept in the study of community gatherings. Considering this, scholars Greg Richards, Marisa De Brito, and Linda Wilks edit a compendium entitled *Exploring the Social Impacts of Events* (2013). Viewing the “social or inter-relational” impacts of community organised events, these editors study “the development of social networks, community pride, feelings of inclusion or exclusion, social integration, increased mutual understanding, changes in perception of attitudes, and the development or preservation of traditions” within folk groups who assemble to organise or join events (Wilks 2013, 1). Contributors to this volume make use of various theories of social capital to explain such impacts. Although a universal definition of social capital remains elusive, sociologist Alejandro Portes offers a helpful explanation,

Whereas economic capital is in people’s bank accounts and human capital is inside their heads, social capital inheres in the structure of their relationships. To possess social capital, a person must be related to others, and it is others, not himself, who are the actual source of his or her advantage (Portes 1998, 7).

As such, far from being mere vessels for banal social interaction, community events play an important part in expanding social capital “whether by increasing interaction (and therefore stimulating feelings of cohesion, exchange of ideas, etc.), stimulating greater levels of identification (with a specific group or place) or in terms of supporting social networks and structures” (Richards et al. 2013, 224). Taking into account such arguments about social capital while examining events held by the Filipino community, I will connect the notion to the concepts of *bayanihan*, *pakikipawa*, and *pakikisama* that result in the Filipino creation of a sense of place in Newfoundland that contributes greatly to diasporic growth and survival.

In addition to bigger community organised events, the role of smaller informal get-togethers that happen on a regular basis and contribute greatly to a feeling of security, belonging, and social well-being cannot be dismissed. As I will elaborate further on the notion of *tambayan* and contribute to the understanding of this compelling yet understudied phenomena, I will examine such casual social gatherings as well.

In comparison to bigger events and festivals, much less attention has generally been paid to the informal aspects of social life in diaspora. However, some helpful research has been conducted. For example, the article entitled “Food, Faith, and Community: The Social Well-Being of Ghanaian Migrants in the Netherlands” (Visser et al. 2014), offers an examination of Ghanaian immigrants’ place-based lived experiences in order to reveal how socialising that revolves around eating and religious practices helps achieve feelings of recognition, belonging, and social well-being in a foreign host society for a small community.

Such gatherings accompanied by engaging activities can lead to a variety of benefits. As cultural psychologist Maria-Irini Avgoulas and public health scholar Rebecca Fanany explain in their article “The Symbolic Meaning of Greek Dancing in Diaspora” (2019), not only does such a physical activity serve as a cultural practice that preserves heritage, it also promotes physical and emotional wellbeing through social interaction with fellow community members. In other words, dancing during such get-togethers provides “the opportunity to socialise and separate oneself from problems and concerns that derive from other domains of life” (Avgoulas and Fanany 2019, 107). Furthermore, as the research carried out by cultural sociologist Diane Nititham about the Filipino community in Dublin reveals, such manner of socialising aids in the creation of safe and familiar places of belonging, because such get-togethers make “visible everyday moments that would otherwise remain unseen” and “dialogue and social interaction” play an important role in the preservation of identity and sense of belongingness in place and within group (Nititham 2017, 104).

It is evident that for many communities in diaspora, the deliberate act of coming together to celebrate an occasion, observe a ritual, or simply socialise within one’s folk group frequently leads to the strengthening of social ties and capital that contribute to feelings of community well-being and belonging in places that are communally crafted in this way.

Summary

In this chapter, the following were introduced: the history of Filipino migration to North America detailing factual information that helps gain a better understanding of the Filipino diaspora in Canada; a range of relevant and important theories about the notions of place and placemaking detailing the nuances of definitions given to a sense of place by considering the role of memory, experience, intimate interactions and the specificities of locality; literature that reveals the indispensable role of materiality in shaping our realities of self, group, and place especially in the context of migration and diaspora; scholarly works that explore the interconnectedness of food to the concepts of placemaking and identity; and the role that community events and gatherings play in creating a sense of place and belonging for diasporans.

In what follows, I will engage with the above mentioned folkloric genres by utilising ethnographic findings that reveal how their embracement contributes to diasporic emplacement in a small host region. Taking into consideration especially Povrzanović Frykman's usage of the concepts of being and belonging, I will extend her interpretation to other areas to demonstrate shifting meanings in changing historical contexts.

To begin this ethnographic enquiry, the following chapter will be dedicated to the study of material culture in the lives of the Filipinos in Newfoundland.

CHAPTER 3: Filipino Houses Were Full of Filipino Stuff

Introduction

In the search for understanding how Filipinos create a sense of place within the context of Newfoundland, I came across a bounty of things: a plethora of objects big and small, old and new, utilitarian and purely decorative, sentimental and practical, elegant and kitschy, high-priced and cheap, religious and secular, hand-crafted and mass-produced, inherited and newly acquired. Some of the things had travelled all the way back from the Philippines with my participants, some of them had been brought by family and friends throughout the years, while others were purchased in local stores or online. The sheer number of objects I came across during my fieldwork stirred my imagination: if a giant were to pick up and shake Newfoundland, there would be no dearth of Filipino objects that would land in his palm.

During the course of my fieldwork both in person and online, participants shared and showed me objects or images of objects that held varying degrees of significance for them because they were distinctly Filipino and helped them maintain a way of life and certain cultural ties with their community. In fact, this renewed exposure to all things Filipino helped me develop a keen eye to spot things even in public places in Newfoundland: an important topic that will be given a name and more weight later on in this chapter. Telltale bits and pieces of things that I encountered unexpectedly in public were only the tip of the iceberg of the things that had found their way from one island to another. Filipino households were full of Filipino stuff. The typical Filipino home in Newfoundland was an inviting smorgasbord of compellingly random yet evocative objects that could be used to understand the importance of things in the process of crafting the domestic space that became a place of comfort, familiarity, and continuity.

Since “contemporary social life under the conditions of global capitalism is fundamentally determined by things” (Yi-Neumann et al. 2022, 1), the focus of this chapter is

on material culture in order to illustrate the ways in which things become a vital component of creating and maintaining a sense of place for the Filipino community in the context of Newfoundland. This section will provide discussions about an array of Filipino objects important to participants for various reasons. Since my main argument in this chapter is that objects play an indispensable role in placemaking efforts in small diasporic settings, I will describe objects and use them as a means to understand the crafted domestic space and beyond, and their role in the retention of cultural memory and construction/preservation of identity in a new context. I will ask, what is the significance of the objects that Filipinos in Newfoundland use, keep, display, and cherish? What role do said objects play in the creation of a distinct sense of place for individuals and their community? In what ways does it matter to possess and conserve things when displacement occurs? How do such objects evoke memory and a sense of familiarity for the three generations that I have interviewed? And in what manner is the concept of placemaking intertwined with material things? Understanding how a meaningful sense of place is crafted lies at the core of each of these enquiries.

Objects in the House

Much of my cognitive activities, even in times of rest and leisure, circle back to my topic of research. At times when literary works provide a much-needed escape from the tedium of endless analytical reviews, I still often find myself seeking connections and similarities that serve as tangible examples of the theories with which I engage. One such literary work was a brilliant graphic memoir I read. *Arab of the Future* (Sattouf 2015), created by critically-acclaimed French-Syrian comic artist Riad Sattouf is an intriguing autobiographical account of the writer's childhood spent in Libya, Syria, and France. The father of the family, a Syrian pan-Arab idealist who is often disillusioned and defeated, possesses a compelling habit: as soon as he arrives at a new place of residence in a new city or country, he takes a black plastic bull out

of his bag and places it on a visible spot in his new dwelling. This action helps him instantly transform the unfamiliar environment of a new abode to a place that displays (at least partly) that which is familiar and comforting, as Sattouf writes, “For my father, that [displaying the bull] always meant he was home” (Sattouf 2015, 8). Taking into consideration similar attitudes toward the role of objects in one’s life, much can be discussed about the concept of making a meaningful place through the use of material culture, especially in the domestic realm.

Attention to the domestic sphere, especially in the lives of migrants, can offer a wealth of information with regards to place making efforts. The significance of this area of study becomes even more tangible when we take into consideration two important factors along with what has been discussed so far. First of all, the private (or as some might argue the semi-private) framework of a house allows for freedom of choice and thus control of space, especially in the context of migration and displacement where migrants/refugees can feel out of place and detached from the outside world. Agency becomes a key factor here. What material culture anthropologist Pauline Garvey names “domestic empowerment” is partly about the exercise of one’s agency in a corner of the world that we can claim as truly our own (Garvey 2001, 56). Having a sense of ownership and command of the environment helps “exert control” (Dittmar 1992, 57), and dominate and order the objects within it (Woodward 2007, 75). Possessing a sense of control over a given space of dwelling assists in turning it into a place of meaning that embodies the comfort and familiarity of home (Douglas 1991). As Özlem Savaş, whose compelling work on the Turkish community in Vienna was mentioned earlier, aptly explains the “visual and material culture of the everyday” in the domestic sphere helps create “distinctive and collective spaces that define an area of control” (Savaş 2014, 192).

Secondly, it is important to contemplate immigrants’ process of selection before moving into a new setting that is far away from home. Looking at the immigrant/diasporic home that has been cultivated in a new context, can in a way reveal more about the significance of the

objects that are chosen to be displayed and used within the household. Regardless of its scale, “any move entails a re-evaluation of one’s material belongings, a selection of what is discarded and what one carries along” (Marschall 2019, 255). The question of what is kept and what is rejected, or what is brought over and what is left behind has been posed in different ways. While talking to my peers in academia who were interested in similar enquiries, various scenarios were taken into account: “If there is a fire and you have the chance to take a few objects in the utmost rush, what will you save?” and “If you are an immigrant or refugee with very limited space in your bag(s), what belonging is it that will make the journey with you?” The latter question has been the subject of a rich study carried out by ethnologist Maja Povrzanović Frykman. Examining the contents of refugees’ bags, Povrzanović Frykman analyses everyday objects carried across borders that “facilitate familiar mundane practices” (Povrzanović Frykman 2017, 32) and are vital in establishing a “sense of normalcy” even when one is removed or expelled from one’s place (Ibid., 34). Such items “of being” (things that facilitate everyday practices), hold both “emotional and practical value”, help alleviate feelings of displacement and assure a sense of continuity regardless of one’s current circumstances (Ibid., 32). For example, interviewing an Iranian woman residing in Sweden, who brought her Iranian kettle from home, Povrzanović Frykman explains,

The possibility of keeping up a habitual practice is crucial to the experience of feeling at home and the presence of a specific kettle not only evokes but materialises, makes tangible, the continuity between the kitchens in the two countries. (Ibid., 36)

Keeping up with or re-establishing a habit allows for a comforting sense of continuity that helps create a meaningful place. In alignment with this observation is the concept of *casser maison* (a ritual of divestment where elderly people downsize when moving from their house to a retirement home). *Casser maison* suggests that “the reconstruction of self” in a new place is reliant on the remembrance and continuance of rituals that are facilitated by the use of “objects that are transacted” when a move occurs (Marcoux 2001a, 231).

It is important to note here that although Povrzanović Frykman's categorisation of objects of being and belonging (or simply put, practical and symbolic things) in diaspora and migration studies is very helpful, in this study, I will demonstrate that depending on context, circumstances, and availability such manner of grouping is not fixed and can shift. In other words, objects of belonging can turn into objects of being and vice versa.

Thus, the domestic sphere is an important place where agency can be exercised, a way of life continued, and identity anchored.

Filipino Homes in Newfoundland

Coming from the Philippines, I have always been aware of the aesthetic of excess that gives many Filipino houses their distinct character. In such homes, every nook and cranny is filled with objects that are or at some point in time have been endowed with memory and meaning. Photographs of family—especially in their shining moments such as graduations, weddings, etc.—stand proudly in elaborate frames; religious items purchased or gifted to individuals are carefully displayed on home altars or mounted shelves around the house; memorabilia collected from events, gatherings, fiestas, and trips find their permanent place on buffets, bookshelves and credenzas; souvenirs brought by relatives and family abroad are inserted wherever there is some free space; carefully maintained heirlooms and regional crafts cover walls and surfaces. In such cases, austerity of style does not define the home. The décor, in fact, finds its expression in maximalism. While visiting various houses of my *kababayan* during the course of my research, I observed such houses as well as those that were more moderately adorned. A striking observation that I made during such visits was the fact that regardless of the amount of stuff that was visible in the Filipino household in Newfoundland, the atmosphere crafted through the meagre or excessive use of objects created a place that was indisputably Filipino to the insider eyes.

For an ethnographer, stepping into some Filipino houses can be visually overwhelming and the discernible bounty of things generates a multisensory involvement. Visual, auditory, tactile, gustatory and olfactory (as it will be explained in the next chapter), the Filipino house creates an embodied experience for visitors. As soon as one steps inside, the eyes wander around eagerly. This is a space that provides a meaningful place for the intertwining of vernacular religion, national/ethnic/regional identity, and family history that culminate in a personal sense of *Pinoy pride*. And in the context of early migration in the 1960s and 70s to Newfoundland, these domestic endeavours were even more amplified for newcomers who found themselves in an entirely new setting.

My first visit to an elder community member's house was a memorable experience. Leaving a lecture about new Canadian immigration policies, I trudged through the snow and made my way to my host's place. Stepping inside the house felt like entering an entirely different world from the one outside. There was a moment of instant recognition, as if I was making my umpteenth visit there. It was as if the familiar scent of food, the warmth of the atmosphere and most perceptibly the objects that I immediately recognised, transported me to a different place. The pleasant familiarity of the atmosphere made me immediately adjust my behaviour. I politely took off my shoes and asked for a blessing by taking my host's hand and placing it on my forehead. My host in return, immediately asked me if I had eaten already and poured me a warm cup of *sopas*. As I sat on a sofa covered with a *sinaluan* throw, I started taking in the environment that was crafted in this house: mother of pearl coasters on the coffee table, traditional wooden figurines of carabao on the mantel, old black and white photographs of family members from the Philippines on the walls, a few picture frames portraying younger family members in their graduation gowns, a number of distinctly Filipino knickknacks like souvenir bottle-openers lying around the counter, a big decorative spoon and fork hanging on the wall in the dining area, a carved relief of The Last Supper, and in the corner an immaculate

altar with a few rosaries, candles, the Bible, and a small statuette of Santo Niño. All of these objects were easily and quickly recognisable to me and created an atmosphere that felt distinctly Filipino. As I sat there speaking in Tagalog to my host, enjoying that special brand of Filipino humour, eating my warm bowl of *sopas*, taking in the special aroma of cooked rice and soup, and glancing around at culturally familiar objects, I knew and felt that I was in a Filipino place.

In different Filipino homes in Newfoundland, I began noticing the same objects that I encountered in the household mentioned above. Some homes housed more things, some fewer, and some were practically a smorgasbord of all things Filipino. The patterns I began to notice with the style and amount of stuff varied generationally but the fact remains that they were ever present and they contributed immensely to the creation of a Filipino atmosphere.

In order to familiarise the reader with some of the most common things I beheld in Filipino households in Newfoundland, it helps to talk about them in more detail in the following pages. But the crucial question that has to be addressed before that is: what makes something Filipino?

Nuancing Filipinoness

These days everyone was insisting on their identity, coming out as a man, woman, gay, black, Jew—brandishing whichever feature they could claim, as if without a tag they wouldn't be human (Kureishi 1995, 102).

In his novel *The Black Album* (1995), author Hanif Kureishi portrays the troubles of a young man of Pakistani background living in a world of divides in London. Shahid, who wants to embrace his cultural identity as lived and prescribed by his people, struggles as he also leads a life that stands in stark contrast to its defined fundamentals. The issues of claiming an identity in the story—increasingly urgent as it has become to many nowadays—amidst discordant ideologies creates a myriad of complex problems. Considering such complexity, one is pressed

to ask: what exactly enables an individual to assuredly claim their identity as true and authentic? There are no uncontested answers to this question.

In the last few decades, the concept of authenticity often attached to the notion of identity has “steadily saturated various dimensions of everyday life” (Schwarz and Williams 2020, 1). Although the term is regularly (and I might add often ostentatiously) thrown around to prove one’s valid stance and the other’s erroneous claims of selfhood, multiple paradoxes and inconsistencies envelop the notion as it “suggests universality and timelessness due to its ubiquity” (Straub 2012, 12). Based on such declarations, casual dismissal and exclusion of individuals from groups to which they belong can occur. Thus, when considering authenticity as a prerequisite for a given cultural identity and group membership, the crucial role of essentialism cannot be overlooked. In fact,

The idea of authenticity gains its force from essentialism, for the possibility of ‘real’ or ‘genuine’ group members relies on the belief that... [these members] possess inherent and perhaps even inalienable characteristics critical of membership (Bucholtz 2003, 400).

As an easy tool for authentication, essentialism, problematic as it is, becomes an instrument for drawing divisive lines between insiders and outsiders, belonging and nonbelonging, and acceptance and rejection. However, as theorist Stuart Hall proposes in “Cultural Identity and Diaspora” (1996), both essentialism and post-structuralism play a role in the construction of cultural identity. Here, Hall explicates that communal identification can simultaneously be collective, consistent, and fixed, as well as continually imagined, shaped, and invented anew. Thus, it can be understood that “different parts and histories of ourselves” allow us to construct “points of identification” and “positionalities” that shape our cultural identities (Hall 1996, 120). In other words, cultural identity does not merely denote “an essence but a positioning” (Hall 1990, 226). In folkloristics, this process is acknowledged through the embracement of dynamism and conservatism of culture (Toelken 1996). Since “self and society are always in production [and] in process” (Bruner 1984, 3), offering an undisputed description of a folk

groups' cultural identity is an impossible task. Context, therefore, plays a vital role here. Accordingly, when reflecting upon notions of "Filipino identity", "Filipinoness" or "what makes someone or something Filipino", context has to be taken into consideration. As cultural studies and identity politics scholar Ien Ang explicates when discussing the notion of Chineseness, especially in the context of diaspora, a unified understanding of ethnic identity is a futile effort, as she explains,

Being Chinese outside China cannot possibly mean the same thing as inside. It varies from place to place, moulded by the local circumstances in different parts of the world where people of Chinese ancestry have settled and constructed new ways of living. There are, in this paradigm, many different Chinese identities, not one. This proposition entails a criticism of Chinese essentialism, a departure from the mode of demarcating Chineseness through an absolutist oppositioning of authentic and inauthentic, pure and impure, real and fake. (Ang 1998, 225)

Similarly, considering the long history of indigenous animism, trade and cultural exchange between Chinese and Muslims, and the processes of Hispanicisation, Christianisation, and Americanisation of Filipinos in the context of Asia as well as in their global dispersal, it is by no means an easy task "to affirm a Filipino identity" (Zialcita 2005, 6). Confusion and angst seem to follow the question "What is truly Filipino?" as "Filipinos love their way of life" but "problems appear when they reflect on their identity and try to explain these to themselves, to fellow Filipinos, or to outsiders" (Ibid., 11). Generally, the desire to package in singularity the notion of Filipinoness creates a "crisis of identification" (Aguila 2015, 77), especially since affiliation with the state or government by embracing a strong sense of national identity does not commonly invoke a sense of connection or belongingness for Filipinos (Bonifacio 2013; Constantino 1976; Mulder 2013). Instead, being Filipino encompasses "certain cultural narratives, myths of common origin, or other ethnocultural framing [that] exists in the imagined community of the Philippines" (Bonifacio 2013, 140). Viewing the culture that is understood and espoused in the "imagined community of the Philippines" requires considering it through its vernacular manifestations, especially when it comes to the visual and tangible aspects of

material culture. Anthropologist Niels Mulder calls for understanding Filipino cultural identity in its “little traditions” as he writes,

Filipinoness is expressed in its “little-traditional” forms in the home and local community. It is there that one finds the shared and distinctive representations of the Filipino ethos; the emblems of it – the diplomas and graduation pictures on the wall, the cute Santo Niño, the serene Lady of Lourdes or the Mother of Perpetual Help, the plaza with its diminutive Rizal statue, the town hall and church, the basketball court, the band, the bus shelter, the fiesta and processions – belong, in fact, to individual families and communities. None of these icons make reference to an overarching cultural centre; they refer to only themselves. Therefore, Filipino civilisation is expressed in a distinct lifestyle and in its characteristic ethos – rather than in abstract symbols that are meant to stand for collective history and the nation state (Mulder 2013, 59).

Considering the vernacular manner in which we are encouraged to understand Philippine culture, certain factors that affect everyday life both in the context of the country itself and abroad have to be taken into consideration. Migration that forms the lived experience of Filipinos is one such factor. A deeply embedded practice in Philippine society, migration (both temporary and permanent) impacts Filipinos. With millions of individuals leading transnational lives, the flow of ideas, images, and objects is particularly common between those in the homeland and those who live abroad. My conversations with family, Filipino friends in the Philippines as well as other countries, and participants about what makes objects particularly Filipino (at least from an insider’s point of view) were fascinating. After many compelling discussions, in one of my fieldnotes I wrote the following,

Everyone seems to come up with a list of what they consider Filipino and they all overlap. It seems to me that everyone points to everyday objects that are easily recognisable, easily identifiable, unpretentiously and routinely used by people coming from the same background, and distinguishably Filipino to insiders. A sense of welcome normalcy or nostalgia embroiders every statement. “Of course, that’s Filipino!”, “You know I don’t even use it, but it *is* Filipino!” Even those like Jay who were born and raised outside the Philippines, are familiar with the visual culture of everyday. It seems to have been instilled in Filipinos from childhood, from living in the Philippines, or in diaspora, perhaps by watching parents, grandparents, relatives and especially being exposed to media. Different things commonly used in everyday life by the people of the homeland become recognised as distinctly Filipino objects. Since migration marks the lived experience of many Filipinos (everyone I spoke to has a close family member, or kin abroad!), people within the country also seem to have an

understanding of what these everyday things represent to those who leave, why they are missed, and what they evoke. When family members go back to the Philippines for a visit, places they are taken to, food that is prepared or bought for them, and souvenirs that are packed for their return seem to affirm a collective awareness of the place and meaning of such conventional Filipino objects. Those who live outside prize such ordinary things and those who live in the country become more aware of such items' Filipinoness. (March 11, 2022)

Later, based on the lists that people made of such things, I drew the following picture that seemed to amuse the people I spoke to as they recognised all the items presented in my doodles as "truly Filipino things".



Figure 3.1 Things that are recognisably Filipino to insiders (drawing by author)

Thus, regarding what is Filipino, my ethnographic research has revealed that to many people of my background, it is not merely the highly symbolic and the officially representative things advertised by the state that people embrace in their lives as Filipino things. Such imagery (the flag, national symbols, clothes, the national flower, etc.) does represent the people of the archipelago in a formal capacity, as they are objects of belonging. However, it has become apparent that what invokes nostalgia and a sense of pride and awareness of a culture and way of life also lies comfortably in things that are used, displayed, and consumed in quotidian life in the Philippines and often refashioned abroad. This statement will be discussed in detail as I elaborate on the notion of objects of “being” and “belonging” further on in this chapter (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004; Povrzanović Frykman 2019).

In order to examine such items possessed by Filipinos in Newfoundland in a more systematic and organised manner, they have been categorised into thematic clusters.

Filipino Things

i. Religious Items

One of the most common type of things that many Filipinos display or keep at home are religious objects. The Philippines is one of the biggest Catholic nations of the world. However, specific historical settings contributed to the creation of a contextually distinctive version of this religious denomination, as “from the start Filipinos nurtured their own brand of Catholicism” and have thus “retained many pre-Christian beliefs including ancestor homage” (Flinn 2007, 69).

Displayed in the majority of Filipino households I visited, were religious items that revealed this particular brand of Catholicism. In defence of the display of religious items within the household, some scholars have argued that “the idea of religion itself is largely unintelligible outside its incarnation in material expressions”(Arweck and Keenan 2006, 2-3).

Although some houses store fewer Catholic objects than others, for the first generation of immigrants, abundance seemed to characteristically define their usage. Leah, one of my youngest participants and a third-generation Filipino-Newfoundlander offered a telling description of her Filipino grandmother's house, which serves as a noteworthy testimony to this aesthetic choice. Vividly remembering her grandparent's home during regular family gatherings, she explains,

Lola kept an insane amount of Catholic imagery. Everywhere you looked, there was one! On the walls, on the shelves, by the bed, umm... on the fridge! Crazy amount of stuff! Like Jesus was staring at you from every corner...My lola's house would put a Catholic Church to shame! (*laughs*)

Leah's memory of spending time with her grandparents is laced with religious images that predominantly defined the atmosphere and gave her a sense of familiarity with what she now considers "a Filipino thing" regardless of her lack of belief in the religion. Considering the visual culture of Catholicism common in the typical Philippine home aesthetic, understanding, accepting, or even at times including such religious imagery in a household might serve a different purpose than normally intended, for different generations of diasporans. Rather than an outward expression of faith, such religious images for individuals like Leah become a reminder of a person, a way of life, or fond memories with family and kin. In other words, visual associations and acquaintance with spiritual iconography, actual belief or practice notwithstanding, serves the purpose of bringing members of later generations of diasporans closer to the culture of parents or grandparents. In this sense, religious material culture becomes representative of the culture as a whole and not just the religion. Thus, irrespective of what the images may objectively symbolise, a subjective understanding of what they mean becomes more relevant.

Among various sacred objects, statues of holy figures hold a special place in the Filipino home. Figures of Jesus and Mary come in different sizes and forms, but there is something very ethnically particular about these objects. The history behind how Filipinos developed their

specific style of statue-making is an interesting folkloristic example of dynamism and conservatism (Toelken 1996). The tradition of making the Philippine Catholic statues dates back to the arrival of the Spanish on the islands and their mission of Christianising the indigenous pagan population. With the establishment of churches and the fierce encouragement of missionaries to convert the native people of the land to the new religion, folk artists were recruited to create Christian art. Unfamiliar with Western aesthetic ideals, early local folk artists discovered “a new substitute for their penchant for idol-carving in the art of Christian religious statuary” (Lopez 2006, 349). Regardless of facing criticism from Spanish missionaries who saw their art subpar to their European counterpart, these *santeros* (early folk artists who created Christian art) set a precedent for a style of statue-making that has come to be recognised on its own merit based on historically contextual sensibilities (Ibid., 350). As visual artist and painter Alfredo Roces notes, this style of creating Christian imagery influenced by pagan folk art became accepted as a regional expression of belief and as “typically Filipino creations” (Roces 1967, 171).

Most religious statues in Filipino homes are made of wood or chalkware. Among holy figures Santo Niño (the Infant Christ) holds a special place for Catholics from the Philippines. As the oldest Christian artifact brought to the island of Cebu by Ferdinand Magellan, the replica of the statue of the Christ Child is common in Filipino homes, as Santo Niño has become a figure that is much revered (Figure 3.2). The original statue which was gifted to Rajah Humabon is made of wood in baroque-style. The Christ Child is clad like Spanish royalty of the time, adorned with gilded brocade and maroon velvet and a bejewelled crown, bearing a golden globus cruciger and a rod. Veneration for this figure has pre-Christian roots, because as early as the mid-1500s,

...the Santo Niño was revered as a *likha* or *larawan*, which are wooden carvings or pictures of indigenous deities or *anitos* (ancestors). Like *likha*, the Santo Niño was used as centrepiece in various healing and agricultural rituals where it was invoked for abundant harvest, cure of the sick, and protection against enemies (Villero 2011, 406).

This practice lives on, as the place that the statue of Santo Niño holds in the house is usually at the centre of home altars, where daily prayers happen. One of my participants who had his relative bring the statue from Cebu, Philippines, explained that he has kept it on his home altar in Newfoundland for over forty years. The statue is well-maintained, dusted regularly, and kept out of the reach of small grandchildren who are taught to pay respect to it but not touch it carelessly or play with it.

Aside from Santo Niño, statues of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary are common in Filipino homes (Figure 3.3). Various images of these figures in draped garments revealing a bright red flaming heart on their chests can be seen in the Filipino household. Such statues around the house are met with a mixture of reverence but also affection and familiarity. Regularly referred to as “Papa Jesus” and “Mama Mary”, the images are viewed more like protective parental figures who inspire filial devotion rather than fear or awe in the Filipino household. During a few of my visits to different participants’ homes, I noticed that such statues on altars are in fact greeted daily and shown a similar respect Filipino culture expects younger individuals to pay to their elders. In one of my participants’ houses, “Good morning, Papa Jesus!” was followed by a gentle touch of the statue and a soft kiss on the fingers that had traced it and making the sign of the cross. This is reminiscent of the culturally significant honouring gesture of *mano* or *pagmamano*, whereby younger individuals are expected to show their respect for their elders by going to them and asking “*Mano po?*” or “*Pabless po?*”. When granted permission, the young person slightly bows, then takes the right hand of the elder and gently places it on their forehead, thus symbolically receiving their approval and blessing. This gesture of honour is expected of young people upon seeing their older relatives or acquaintances. Not initiating this gesture can be seen as a sign of bad manners and impertinence. In the Filipino home, a similar gesture of love and respect is extended to religious

symbols around the house. They need not be feared but they must be paid their due respect.

Contemplating on some of her childhood memories, Andy relayed the following story to me,

We came to Newfoundland when I was almost five. Like I started school here. Outside, in school, it was very different. I remember few formalities. Home was different. I was a happy child at home, but there were things you had to do. When I came home and ran to watch tv or something, mum asked, “Did you greet Mama Mary?! Did you bless your *Tita* [aunt?!]” If I hadn’t, I’d run back and do it and then I was free to watch tv again.

This account serves as a helpful example of how cultural expectations in the Filipino household in Newfoundland are preserved within the materiality of home. There are figures that individuals are expected to respect. In this instance, Andy’s mother asks her to show her respect for her aunt and her humility toward symbols of faith in the household in similar ways. This ethnically-specific practice of religious faith is a good example of how vernacular religion is “expressed in everyday life” (Primiano 1995, 39).

As it was discussed in the previous chapter, the domestic space is an area where agency and control could be exercised more freely. When raising children in an ethnic household, material culture can help communicate behavioural expectations. In Andy’s case, the presence of the statue works as a reminder of the high value of respect in Philippine culture. The usual habit of watching television after school—like most of her peers—is accepted only after certain appropriate manners have been displayed. Material culture in this sense serve as a cue or reminder of proper demeanour. In a visibly Filipino household such objects facilitate the internalisation of value orientations. Thus, regardless of the larger context, the design of the Filipino domestic space requires adherence to culturally dictated conventions. In other words, the teaching of cultural values is facilitated through the use and display of material culture in a space that is crafted to be a Filipino place.

In addition to statues displayed in various corners around the house, crucifixes, religious pictures, and rosaries are a common sight. Some of them rest on altars, others hang on the walls, some are put around statues and frames and others around car mirrors. They come in

different sizes and colours and are made of various materials such as bamboo, wood, pearl, plastic, and glass beads. Some have been blessed by religious leaders, some have been inherited from older family members, and others have been gifted to individuals. Nora, one of my participants who displays her rosary in her office space relayed the importance of this item to me. Her delicate rosary was a gift sent to Newfoundland by an aunt who is a nun in a small convent. Not primarily using the rosary for prayer, Nora explains how the display of this small item, makes her feel connected to both relatives that she has not seen in a long time and a place that she has not returned to since childhood. It is special because of the long journey it has made and the unbroken family ties it represents. Light, pocket-sized, symbolic, and endowed with expressions of faith and personal meaning, rosaries seem to have been a popular item to carry from one continent to the other. One of my participants who came here on her own in the late seventies shares a compelling story about her rosary. Leaving home for the first time in her early twenties, Linda recalls her excitement and nervousness:

I was the oldest child and the first one to immigrate. Before I left, we went shopping a bit. My mum bought some things for me. You know, some food and clothes. We were around Quiapo. Right before we got on the jeepney to go home, she saw this rosary vendor. She looked and just chose one. She put it in my pocket in the jeepney. I had it there on the way, all the way to Canada. I squeezed it in my pocket when I am nervous. On the way, in immigration, in the beginning when it was very very difficult. I squeezed and prayed and I remembered *nanay* [mum]. When I go to my first place in Newfoundland, I hang it around my mirror so I don't forget.

Aside from being an article that facilitates prayer, in Linda's narrative, the rosary becomes an object that connects her to her faith and her family while evoking an emotional memory and creating a sense of familiarity in a new space. In most homes I visited, statues and rosaries, along with pictures, prayers, Bibles and votive candles, find their permanent display on home altars. Thus, the home altar decorated in alignment with ethnic sensibilities as well as personal taste and memory, turns into an important corner in the Filipino household.

Home altars have been a fascinating point of enquiry in the study of material culture and religion (Cash and Lippard 1998; García 2010; Gutierrez et al. 1997; Turner 1999). When asked

about the altars they set up in their homes in Newfoundland, my participants gave me various answers. Saying prayers and confirming their faith was of course the primary obvious answer, but further enquiry revealed the multiple layers of meaning that creating such a place held for them. The home altar helped maintain familiar routines and consolidated ethnic group practices in many ways. Throughout various chats in informal settings, my participants spoke of daily practices of prayer and contemplation that were carried out by the altar. Starting the day with a small prayer, expressing gratitude when receiving good news, asking for help and guidance during challenging times, and remembering loved ones and departed family members (whose photographs were sometimes displayed around the altar) were all daily practices carried out around this space. Listening to my participants, I could gather that this small carefully crafted domestic platform became a sight of quotidian contemplation for individuals and family members. As Grace put it, “This is what we always did back home too with my family. It brings me peace... yeah, helps centre myself, the way I was taught.” As it can be seen, continuing traditions of faith, requires engagement with the materiality of imported objects.

In addition to helping uphold an everyday practice that many Filipinos are taught to adhere to from childhood, the altar provides a designated area for religious group activity, as saying group prayers is a common practice among Filipinos. The practice of saying the novena (a devotional recitation of prayers for nine days) with members of the community is a good example of how ethnic rituals from the Philippines continue to connect individuals to their homeland albeit in private spaces in Newfoundland.

Among Filipinos, novena processions are held for various reasons such as prayers for a deceased community member or other occasions such as *Simbang Gabi* (a nine-day series of masses or prayer sessions held before Christmas from the 16th to the 24th of December). During such occasions rosary recitations are carried out with joining members sitting around the home altar to engage in group prayer. Thus, this designated corner that is fashioned with ethnically-

conscious sensibilities and filled with items that have personal and cultural meaning, facilitates both the private and communal practice of vernacular religiosity. The materiality of a carefully assembled altar, in fact, creates a space for the congregation of diasporans to engage in the common practices of faith together in the private boundaries of home. This simple yet significant setting in the domestic space in diaspora, allows for communal practices typically held in public spaces in the Philippines to continue at home for this diasporic folk group in Newfoundland. Attending masses at Catholic churches in St. John's, especially those requested to be held in Tagalog, brings the community of faith together during various occasions throughout the year. However, the humble setting of a home altar gathers friends and family in the domestic space to recite familiar prayers, turning the atmosphere into a more intimate one where a sense of closeness and comfort can be organically cultivated.

The space that the altar provides for group prayers within the private boundaries of the household can also be understood in the light of what Émile Durkheim calls "collective effervescence" (Durkheim 2015[1912]). Such communal activities—albeit in a rather subtle manner—can be seen as ritualistic activities that stimulate a sense of belonging and community spirit. It is in such distinctly Filipino places where the culture's core values of *pakikipawa*, and *bayanihan* flourish. In other words, since their own specific brand of Catholicism is associated with many cultural practices, the presence of religious artefacts displayed around the house in alignment with ethnic taste is visually familiar, creates a place of contemplation, and facilitates cultural practices that bond families and group members together. As it can be gathered, such items play an important role in the cultivation of a place that allows for the continuation of vernacular traditions at whose core lies a sense of collective welfare.

Thus, within the private boundaries of the domestic sphere where a sense of agency and control can be freely practiced, the display of religious images and items commonly used in Filipino culture serves a few important purposes. First of all, the visual familiarity provided by

the presence of such objects assists in creating the everyday environment of a typical Filipino household, helping recreate a homey space in alignment with familiar ethnic aesthetics. Secondly, the home altar that contains a variety of images and objects not only helps maintain daily cultural and religious practices for members of the household, but also allows for the congregation of small groups to engage in devotional practices together without formal planning, contributing to an in-group feeling of closeness and cohesion. Thirdly, by facilitating the exercise of religion in a vernacular way, these items in the Filipino household help pass on expected cultural traditions and values, especially for younger members of the household. And lastly, for the second or third generation of diasporans, such objects go beyond simply symbolising institutional religion or personal devotion. They become objects that represent a sense of belonging to a culture in which Catholicism is deeply ingrained.

In the Filipino household, such religious objects that symbolise belonging to an ethnic community of faith are also used to carry out daily rituals and practices. Thus, the line between being and belonging blurs, revealing the nuances of overlapping categories.



Figure 3.2 A Santo Niño Statue on a home altar, along with a nativity statuette, candleholders and small figures of Jesus, and Madonna and Child (photo by participant)



Figure 3.3 Statue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus mounted on a wall over a small altar with two candleholders (photo by author)



Figure 3.4 A home altar with figures of the holy family, rosaries, a bejewelled crucifix and framed prayers (photo by author)



Figure 3.5 A closeup picture of the altar featured in Figure 3.4, portraying a carved woodwork of the holy family resting in praying hands (photo by author)



Figure 3.6 Home altar with a statue of Santo Niño as the Good Shepherd, a figure of Virgin Mary with a rosary, carved woodwork of the holy family resting in praying hands, and the poem “Footprints in the Sand” (photo by participant)



Figure 3.7 Home altar with a statue of Jesus as the Good Shepherd along with Bibles, a golden crucifix, glass candleholders, and a box of rosaries (photo by participant)



Figure 3.8 Magnets of the Holy Family and Santo Niño attached to a sitting room mirror (photo by author)



Figure 3.9 A consultant's elaborate home altar in the Philippines with a variety of decorative figures and frames of Our Lady of Fatima, Madonna and Child, Jesus, angels, crucifixes, Bibles and candles (photo by participant)



Figure 3.10 A chalkware relief sculpture frame of the Last Supper displayed in a sitting room (photo by author)



Figure 3.11 A plaster statue of the Last Supper displayed in the living room (photo by participant)



Figure 3.12 A bamboo frame of the Last Supper displayed in the dining room (photo by participant)



Figure 3.13 A consultant's garden altar in the Philippines featuring Our Lady of Fatima and a praying child (photo by participant)

ii. Decorative Objects

Along with religious items, household ornaments and decorative crafts have also found their way from the Philippines to Newfoundland. Fascinating things, big and small, have been painstakingly hauled across the ocean by diasporans or their relatives in some cases, or more recently, ordered online to be delivered directly to homes in Newfoundland. Visiting different households, I realised that this category of objects was vast and diverse and they ranged from family heirlooms and local crafts to commercial or even kitschy items.

Observing ornamental items displayed in Filipino homes in St. John's, I noticed that although some items were more common than others, the diversity of such objects was the result of the variety seen in different regional crafts in the Philippines. Some crafts are closely connected to certain regions and indigenous arts in the country (such as Igorot and Ifugao) and some are more universally common and simply considered generically Filipino crafts. Primarily made of natural resources such as wood, bamboo, clay, stone, seashells, capiz, pearls, piña fibre, abaca, and coconut shell, Filipino local art makes use of organic material, which is reminiscent of the islands' biodiversity and folk artists' resourcefulness and craftsmanship. As both of these are a point of pride for many Filipinos such items are commonly displayed in the household.

During various visits to my participants' dwellings and close examination of the pictures my interviewees sent me during the limitations imposed due to the Covid-19 pandemic, I eagerly feasted my eyes on such pleasing crafts. Among the things I observed, wooden or marble figures and reliefs of animals and people and objects seemed to be popular items to display at home (Figures 3.14-3.19). Handcrafted, smooth and glossy statuettes of *carabao/kalabaw* and other animals as well as tribal figures and reliefs depicting various things in nature and rustic life could be noticed in households. In this group of crafts, one type of item seemed to show up regularly: an oversized pair of spoon and fork (Figure 3.15). Stereotypically

considered as a “Filipino thing” the wooden spoon and fork find their way into many Filipino dining rooms or kitchens. Commonly believed to be a symbol of abundance and sharing, usually made with etched handles and sometimes crafted less elaborately, these purely decorative items are a popular aesthetic choice to hang on walls. When I asked my interviewees about these specific objects, I received interesting answers. The naturalness of the existence of this item in the Filipino domestic space seemed to be a given to the point that to one of my participants the question seemed rather unnecessary as she simply shrugged and said, “It’s just a Filipino thing, right? I always see it in Filipino homes.” The visual familiarity with this object resonated most tellingly especially with second-generation and third-generation participants as I listened to their explanations. Having always seen this item hanging on walls in the houses of grandparents, relatives and her own parents, Leah spoke to me about how she would make her space reflect her background by using these items in her home décor once she moves out of her parents’ home as she pondered, “My grandparents had it. My parents have it. Like I already thought about it. Whenever I move out, I am getting my own spoon and fork!”

To Leah, making a space Filipino and creating an association with her heritage is connected to the ownership and display of an object that to her is an essential part of a Filipino home décor.

The sense of domestic familiarity connected to this object was revealed in another enlightening personal narrative shared with me by Andy,

A few years ago I was invited to the house of a new colleague, a Newfoundlander. I didn’t know anyone well. I just started work there. There were a lot of people and we were socialising. When I went to the kitchen, you know what I saw? The fork and spoon on the wall! I saw it and I said to myself, “A Filipino lives here!” So I asked him. I was right! His girlfriend was also Filipino. Like half, but still! See?! The fork and spoon!

In this fascinating narrative, it can be seen that the display of a simple decorative item might be rendered as an unremarkable aesthetic choice. To other guests in the context of Newfoundland, this wall ornament might not be interesting or revealing of any important

information. However, to Andy, seeing it hung on the wall is a sure sign of the presence of a person of the same ethnic background. In this story, the wooden spoon and fork serve as an identity-marker that only those who are familiar or associated with the inside group can appreciate. This was not an isolated example, as various subtle public displays served a similar purpose. This phenomenon will be given a name and discussed in detail further on in this chapter.

Along the same lines, familiarity with an ethnic taste and visual culture in home décor can in fact help understand the subtlety needed to isolate items where a mixture of local influences and more modern choices appear. Acquaintance with the common natural resources with which Filipino decorative craft is made, patterns in fabric, themes and specific designs would be things that a cultural insider would notice and identify in the context of the Filipino home in Newfoundland. In a participant's home, that was more minimalistic than other homes I had visited in St. John's and had incorporated more nonspecific décor, I still noticed items that I knew were from the Philippines: a hand woven *sinahuan* sofa throw with its usual bright colours and parallel line design; an elaborate abaca table runner (Figure 3.23); capiz shell coasters and placemats (Figure 3.21); and paintings with sceneries of Philippine rustic life (Figure 3.24). These examples are subtle and might go unnoticed to visitors who have not been acquainted with Filipino aesthetic choices but to those who know, they are a confirmation of ethnic picks that make a place more Filipino.



Figure 3.14 Marble statuettes of dolphins and a shark from Romblon known as the Marble Country in the Philippines (photo by author)



Figure 3.15 A variety of big wooden spoons and forks hanging on dining or living room walls (photos by participants)



Figure 3.16 Wooden carved figures of native Philippine water buffaloes called carabao (photo by author)



Figure 3.17 Figures of a goose and a cat carved from monkeypod wood commonly used by Philippine local woodcarvers (photo by author)



Figure 3.18 A wooden figure of a native woman in the nude (photo by author)



Figure 3.19 A smiling sun hung at the entrance of the house carved from *kamagong*, a dark wood from a tree native to the Philippines (photo by author)



Figure 3.20 Mother of pearl tray (photo by author)



Figure 3.21 Mother of pearl placemats and coasters along with embroidered serviettes (photo by author)



Figure 3.22 A *tabungaw* hat handcrafted from gourd and laced with bamboo and rattan on the edges (photo by author)



Figure 3.23 A table runner made from piña fibre (photo by author)



Figure 3.24 A painting of rural Filipino life by artist Alejandro Elegino (photo by author)



Figure 3.25 A lithograph copy of artist Guillermo Tolentino's "Filipino Illustres" portraying Philippine national heroes—the illustration has become a household icon (photo by author)



Figure 3.26 A capiz chandelier in the living room hanging from the ceiling and almost reaching the floor (photo by participant)

iii. Souvenirs and Kitsch

While visiting various Filipino houses, I noticed that alongside displayed items that symbolise Philippine folk art and craftsmanship, it was compelling to see some objects that could be categorised as lower-priced souvenirs, trinkets and other such ornamental knickknacks. Keychains, fridge magnets, small figurines, stickers, assortments of charms, bottle openers, hand fans, caps, t-shirts, mugs, decorative boxes, and a variety of novelty items were common objects in such households. When I curiously enquired about such objects, I received an array of very interesting answers that made me rethink the value that is given to them in the context of immigration. My impression of my participants' explanations was that although the same level of value—be it artistic or monetary—is obviously not given to such cheap tourist souvenirs that are mass-produced, they serve a similar function to other more highly-priced Filipino crafts: they connect and remind people of things back in the Philippines. Consider the following story Abby shared with me,

When we moved to a new house, my husband said we have to downsize a bit. He wants to give away some statues and I said, "Don't! It's Filipino craft!" So he looks at other things. He took these *pamaypay* [hand fans]. We bought them when we visit Boracay before. I said to him again, "Don't! It's a Filipino thing!"

The reluctance to part with objects brought back from the Philippines is palpable in this narrative. The statues might be considered local handmade crafts that are finer, more valuable, and more representative of traditional Philippine art. However, when it comes to disposing of things, cheap hand fans that are commonly found in tourist shops are treated in a similar way. For Abby, getting rid of items that were brought to her Newfoundland home to make it more Filipino, is met with a certain unwillingness. In this specific scenario, this reluctance does not differentiate between common kitsch and artful craft, because to her they ultimately serve the same purpose in the household: they make a space more Filipino and remind the owner of things commonly seen back in the Philippines.

It is important to mention here that, although for a good number of community members the playful display of such items serves the purpose of making a space feel more Filipino, for some it does not translate into good taste. One interviewee actually used the Tagalog word *bakya*, to explain his dislike for the display of such kitschy items in his house in Newfoundland, and opted instead for traditional objects that revealed regional organic material and makers' craftsmanship. Literally, the term *bakya* refers to once common traditional wooden slippers in the Philippines. Figuratively, however, *bakya* denotes poor taste or the use of things that are "cheap, naïve, gauche, popular with the masses—in other words, lowbrow" (Lockard 1998, 132). Similar sentiments have been the subject of research for scholars such as Svetlana Boym (1994), who has studied Soviet kitsch in Russian home-decorating, which for some Russians in diaspora signifies bad taste or what is called *meshchanstvo* (philistinism).

The place and value of what is considered "kitsch" has been debated by various scholars. Traditionally and widely dismissed by academics as things that are "vulgar imitations of 'art', lacking any taste or value" (Atkinson 2007, 523), the term "kitsch" has its origins in the German verb *kitschen* which means sweeping dirt from the streets. The word kitsch, therefore, can be literally translated to "scraped-up rubbish from the streets" and is applied to items that are considered cheap, tasteless, tawdry, and all too common (Tedman 2010, 56). Originating in 19th century Germany, this derogatory term was applied to mass-produced, crudely-made objects that poorly imitated finer art and were geared toward lower-class common consumers (Binkley 2000). Social critic Roger Scruton describes kitsch as "fake art, expressing fake emotions" with the purpose of misleading "the consumer into thinking he feels something deep and serious" (Scruton 2016, 9). Likewise, literary critic Winfried Menninghaus construes that "kitsch offers instantaneous emotional gratification without intellectual effort" as it "presents no difficulty in interpretation" since it is a "simple invitation to wallow in sentiment" (Menninghaus 2009, 41). Adding nuance to the interpretation of kitsch, however, some

scholars have come to its defence: film studies scholar Angela Della Vacche, for example, explains how kitsch is art that is “lowered through serial production” (Della Vacche 1992, 24) but adds that it also combines what is inaccessible in culture “with what is common and consumable,” as nostalgic kitsch gives beauty and charm to the mundane and everyday (Ibid., 45); folklorist Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett reflects the value of kitsch as a source of comfort and reassurance in a world of change and uncertainty since it “requires the abdication of critical judgement because it tells us what to think and feel” (Kirschenblatt-Gimblett 1998, 278); geographer David Atkinson considers “the creative critical choices of consumers” who understand the “symbolism and irony they invest in the spaces around them” (Atkinson 2007, 524), in order to explicate the popularity of kitsch that invokes the “unchallenging” and “nostalgic” (Ibid., 525). Folklorists Cory Thorne and Kelley Totten, who look at kitsch in the context of the visual and everyday knowledge of Newfoundland identity, define it as “mass produced material culture that connotes a diminutive value” (Thorne and Totten 2021, 119), but emphasise the role of nostalgia in kitsch that “gives us comfort, shielding us from the complexities of life” (Ibid., 123). These views are in alignment with what anthropologist Galina Lindquist considers the function of kitsch, which is “to soothe, to give hope, to nourish sentiment, to naively beautify drab and brutal life” (Lindquist 2002, 341).

As Cory Thorne explicates in his article about the Newfoundland musical canon and the role that kitsch imagery plays in the construction of a sense of home for diasporic Newfoundlanders, the “uncritical acceptance” that goes along with the lack of “questioning other potential messages”, actually helps cultivate a feeling of nostalgia through kitsch (Thorne 2007, 57). Thorne explains,

The category of kitsch should not be seen as a negative in and of itself. Through its embracement of the everyday, privileging of tradition, and focus on localised cultural construction, kitsch supports the development of a strong sense of place and community. It helps establish the commons. (Ibid., 61)

Thus, considering kitsch's role in conjuring sentimentality or nostalgia, defence of kitsch is especially visible in various studies that focus on immigrant lives and their practices of home-making. In her research on immigrants from the Soviet Union to the US, cultural theorist Svetlana Boym elaborates on traditional souvenirs used to decorate the home after migration and explains that in the context of diaspora "nostalgia easily yields itself to kitsch" (Boym 1998, 517). In a study that considers the intersection of material culture and migration, heritage and tourism scholar Sabine Marschall examines migrants' memory objects in the context of mobility within the continent of Africa. One of her noteworthy observations in this study reveals that for many such migrants "tourist kitsch" comes to be valued and carried around to new homes as "touchstones of memory and symbols of identification" (Marschall 2019, 255). Similarly, the comprehensive research carried out by sociologist Anna Pechurina about Russian homes in the UK also reveals that such kitsch items and souvenirs in immigrant homes serve the purpose of creating familiar and comforting places as she writes,

Often, the categories of taste become secondary when it comes to the creation of homely atmosphere and comfort, qualities that become essential in migration. In this sense, cheap and kitschy souvenirs have an important and positive effect on their owners' social well-being, self-identification, and positionality within wider society (Pechurina 2015, 38)

Social context can dictate the value of objects and thus nostalgic kitschy souvenirs "can have as much aesthetic cachet" as other highly-priced items that travel with immigrants across borders (Woodward, 2007, 136).

Souvenirs from the Philippines seem to be regularly displayed in Filipino homes in Newfoundland. In the context of the domestic space, their display easily catches the attention and adds colour and brightness to the environment, making it reminiscent of typical households in the Philippines. The deliberate, playful, and at times ironic use of such objects within the household can remind one of camp aesthetics, which has been described as the intentionally self-conscious and sarcastic use of kitsch (Pechurina 2015, 99; Sabonis-Chafee 1999, 373;

Sontag 1964, 515). A judgment of taste can be suspended for most immigrants in such scenarios, where the creation of a nostalgic and familiar atmosphere takes precedence over what is considered aesthetically refined. In the Filipino household, many knickknacks come to represent the “visual grammar of the everyday” (Savaş 2014, 189), that brings a sense of homey familiarity and comfort to this immigrant group in the context of Newfoundland: a bottle opener in the shape of San Miguel beer (the most popular beer in the country), decorative replicas of jeepneys (the most common means of transport in the Philippines), ornamental miniature boxing gloves representing Manny Pacquiao (the most treasured athlete who is considered a national hero) are all items that Filipinos could very easily avail of in tourist shops (Figures 3.30-3.32). They are inexpensive, easy to pack and transport, and highly representative of quotidian life. They are items that characterise the everyday experience in the Philippines: thus, in a region of Canada that is predominantly white with the latest statistics revealing that over 85 percent of the province’s population is of white Canadian/European descent (Statistics Canada 2021), these items that would be otherwise considered dismissible or tawdry find significance in the domestic space as they contribute to the preservation of the cultural memory of the everyday in the country of origin, ultimately making the space feel more Filipino.

In general, Filipino diasporans living in bigger provinces in Canada, frequently establish highly active centres that represent and advocate a strong diasporic presence. Consider the city of Toronto alone, for example, where almost 170,000 Filipino-identifying diasporans reside (Statistics Canada 2021). Aside from numerous Filipino-run restaurants, eateries, cafés, stores, and businesses, the existence of a specific area of town called Little Manila, and the presence of several official organisations such as Filipino Centre Toronto, Kababayan Multicultural Centre, Kapisanan Philippine Centre for Arts and Culture, the Filipino-Canadian Community House, and the Silayan Community Centre, for instance, makes the availability and exposure to visual and cultural references more effortlessly attainable. In Newfoundland, where the

overall population of the province and the Filipinos who dwell within it is much smaller, the urge, desire or even burden of creating recognisable Filipino places falls onto the shoulders of individuals starting with easily accessible symbols at home. Thus, kitsch lends itself nicely to such placemaking efforts in the private space of a Filipino household in Newfoundland. Furthermore, comparing Newfoundland and a metropolitan city such as Toronto, another layer of analysis can be added here. Unlike Toronto that “has always had difficulty finding its identity” (Relph 2013, 166), Newfoundland boasts its very own distinct regional uniqueness with its rich culture and traditions. Therefore, it is understandable why private places that are under diasporans’ full control become even more important venues for ethnic and cultural expression.

Tourist souvenirs that make their way to Newfoundland households also create an easier and more uncomplicated bond with the country of origin that is more tangible and accessible to people of Filipino descent who were born and/or raised in Newfoundland. To one of my participants such objects aid in familiarising her children with Filipino things:

Tessa: I always buy some keychain, bracelet, magnet, things like that when I visit. I give them to friends and their kids when I come back, like souvenirs. I also keep some. I have stuff with “It’s more fun in the Philippines!”

Marissa: You mean the tourist slogan? The tourism slogan?

Tessa: Yes. My kids have caps, t-shirts, a towel with that. I don’t know, when I visit I buy things like that. I think when they’re here, they’re like Newfoundlander. They play hockey and like all the things here. This stuff is like reminder at home. *(laughs)* Like, “Hey, remember the Philippines, too!”

Marissa: Do they really help them learn about the Philippines?

Tessa: I think so, yeah. It’s like not very cultural. I mean, I want them to know about stuff there. Like who is Pacquiao, like what is life there, even Jollibee! When we went to Toronto, I took them to Jollibee for happy meals. They kept the toys. *I used to keep the toys!*

Marissa: *(laughs)* So it is like a tradition that is passed on!

Tessa: *(laughs)* Yeah, why not?

To Tessa, introducing a sense of Filipinoness in her children who have a white Canadian father and are born and raised in Newfoundland requires the use of certain objects in the household that are a direct reminder of their mother's country of origin. Acquainting her children with everyday culture in the Philippines (e.g. a well-loved athlete, the most popular Filipino fast-food chain, etc.) is facilitated through the use of simple, direct and accessible things that tourists regularly enjoy. My participant Nora jokingly described her mother as always bringing "all sorts of trinkets back." She explained that her initial reaction is usually one of annoyance, "Oh, no! Not another keychain!" However, she eventually ends up using or displaying the souvenirs. The relative ease of access and presence of such souvenirs helps establish a certain feel for and knowledge of some aspects of culture that might be otherwise unreachable.

Aesthetics theorist Gary Tedman explicates how the etymology of the word "souvenir" illustrates its mnemonic function, as it derives from *souvenir* in French and *subvenire* in Latin, which means "'to come to one's assistance' or to 'easily come to mind'" (Tedman 2010, 58). Souvenirs in the Filipino household in Newfoundland serve exactly this purpose.

Similar to tourist keepsakes everywhere, many Filipino souvenirs and hence objects displayed around the household in Newfoundland bear the Philippine flag or the symbols of the flag. Thus, the distinctive sun with eight rays and the three stars that form a triangle around it, can be found on a variety of objects. During my very first meeting with a community member at a café in St. John's, she reached into her bag and produced a miniature flag of the Philippines and asked me, "Do you have one at home?" When I answered that I did not, she handed it to me and said, "Okay, here's one for you. I kept them from the Independence Day celebration. You keep this one." Presented as a souvenir from an event held for Filipinos in Newfoundland, the gifting of the flag that was supposed to be displayed in my home, felt like a subtle way of connecting with another group member through the materiality of an object that symbolised our mutual roots.

As I delved into the topic of Filipino objects in Newfoundland, I began to view the world around me with fresh eyes and serendipitously spotted things even in the most unassuming of places. In busy supermarket parking lots, small car plaque or bumper stickers bearing the Philippine flag or a design with the colours and distinct sun and stars on said flag told me that there were Filipino people around. A miniature pair of beloved Filipino boxer Manny Pacquiao's gloves dangling from a schoolboy's backpack as he ran around in a crowd with his peers immediately caught my attention. A bright colourful *parol* (a Filipino Christmas ornament) hanging from a windowpane during the holiday season gave away the ethnicity of the members of the household. All of these silent subtle cues made by inanimate objects that were ostensibly unnoticeable by the general public worked almost as codes, perhaps only for those folks accustomed to appreciate the visual comforts of what is or what once was familiar.

As ethnochoreologist Andriy Nahachewsky explains in his study of symbols in the Ukrainian national dance, a process of standardization that is consistent helps signs or what he calls "logos", "serve as symbols" that can be easily recognised by all members of a folk group (Nahachewsky 2012, 104). Taking into consideration the Philippines' long struggle for independence, the current flag introduced in 1898 became a sign of national unity against foreign forces, with the three stars on the flag representing the three main island regions in the country and the eight rays of the sun each symbolising the first provinces that revolted against Spanish oppressive rule. Nevertheless, with constant disillusionments with a government that continues to fail citizens on a myriad of levels, especially economic, Filipino people are generally "anaesthetised against genuine nationalism and identification with the state" (Mulder 2013, 59). However, since over twelve million Filipino immigrants and diasporans live out of the country, for those outside, the flag has come to be associated not necessarily with the state or the government, but with a people who come from the archipelago, embrace its rich culture and have undergone common struggles. Thus, given the long history of Filipino struggle in

diaspora, regardless of ethnic background, the flag has come to stand for Philippine people. Therefore, elements taken from the Philippine flag combined with the main colours in a range of creative designs are easily identifiable to insiders who can quickly detect such symbols and know that people of the same background are in the vicinity.

Encounters with symbols of the Philippine flag in the context of Newfoundland was not limited to objects that I spotted in the domestic space. Observant eyes would see them outside, as well. And most of the time, these symbols were in plain view in public but would simply go unnoticed if one was not familiar with what they meant or represented. Stickers placed on vehicles and other objects such as laptops and water bottles, charms hanging from car mirrors or bags, and various logo designs on casual items of clothing such as hats and t-shirts, all serve as subtle ethnicity markers stretched beyond the domestic space that functioned similarly to codes that only insiders would respond to or appreciate.

Coding as defined by folklorist Joan Newlon Radner is “the expression or transmission of messages potentially accessible to a community under the very eyes of a dominant community for whom these messages are either inaccessible or inadmissible” (Radner 1993, 3). Historical examples of this type of coding through objects and symbols can be seen in underground railroad African quilt coding and the hanky code used by gay men in the 1970s and 1980s. Considering such examples with Radner’s definition of coding in mind, it can be understood that in such instances, carefully coded messages are created through symbolic objects by members of a subordinated group under the watchful eyes of a hegemonic dominant one. In these situations, coding is an essential practice for survival or out of fear for members’ safety, because decoding messages by outsiders can lead to serious harm or be life-threatening for insiders. What I have described about Filipino subtle displays in public does not fall under the same category in this sense. Symbols are indeed displayed in public for insiders to notice, however, there is no risk or harm associated with outsiders’ knowledge of or familiarity with

the “codes.” Such visual cues are a delicate way for a diasporic group to inform others that people of the same background or culture are also present in the society. Here, I would like to propose the concept of “emic signalling” in diaspora to explain such actions. An anthropological term, the word “emic” denotes understanding or describing aspects of culture using the internal viewpoints of insiders who are members of a particular group (Pike et al. 1990). Considering insider views and extending this to diasporic settings, I would like to coin the phrase “emic signals” to refer to this method used by diasporans who seek to gently assert their presence in a host society without resorting to ostentatious practices. Particularly useful to immigrant or diasporic group members who might feel isolated, alienated, or invisible in a host region that possesses its very own strong sense of identity and culture, emic signalling can offer a feeling of comfort, belonging, and empowerment. In other words, knowledge of the presence of one’s people, sporadic as it may be, still helps nurture a feeling of reassurance and security in a place. Thus, certain subtly displayed Filipino objects in public could be viewed as emic signals that remind insiders of the community’s presence without the need to be overtly conspicuous.

More than once, stories of recognising other Filipinos in public places such as parking lots or supermarkets were shared with me after seeing the telltale signs of the flag. Tessa explains, “Here, it’s like a way of finding your *kababayan*! Sometimes you don’t even talk to them but it is nice to know they are here.” These emic signals displayed on objects that can be viewed in public spaces are an extension of a sense of home and speak of a feeling of connection to others who share the same cultural background. Viewing them in public spaces in Newfoundland where people of Filipino origin are a small minority results in what can be described as psychological comfort in a host region, regardless of actual efforts to make connections with fellow compatriots. Aside from the stickers with various interesting designs that incorporated symbols of the Philippine flag in a range of ingenious illustrations, there were

also many that joined the maple leaf on the Canadian flag with that of the Philippine sun and stars. Displaying designs that married together Filipino and Canadian symbols, seem to indicate an acknowledgement and awareness of social, cultural, and geographical context of both places revealing a sense of multiple alliances (Figures 3.34 -3.36). When I enquired about this design choice, many of my participants' answers indicated that since both places were important to them, shaped their identities, and played a role in how they live their everyday lives, such options seemed appropriate. Some of the interesting answers I received when I enquired about these designs were: "I have two homes," "I am Filipino but also I am Canadian," "I'm a Filipino-Newfoundlander", "I am pinoy but I live here," "Both places are important to me." It is interesting to note how items as banal as stickers used by members of a minority diasporic group in a predominantly white region of Canada with a distinctive identity of its own, are used to subtly assert presence, belonging, and alliance.

In the context of immigration, tourist souvenirs and items that are generally considered kitschy, play a similar role to other objects that are more traditionally known as symbols of a region, faith, or ethnic background. Such objects convey an easy uncomplicated message in the household or even outside of the domestic sphere. Their presence and straightforward visual aid undoubtedly gives a Filipino feel to any given space.



Figure 3.27 A shell keychain from Coron island, in the Filipino province of Palawan, alongside a small glass bead rosary (photo by author)



Figure 3.28 Faux leather keychains and coin purse depicting a jeepney, the official Philippine tourism moto "It's More Fun in the Philippines", and a Filipino farmer and a carabao on his land (photo by author)



Figure 3.29 A variety of keychains made from shell, shell and resin, plaster, and nutshell depicting a *bahay kubo* (indigenous Philippine stilt house), marine life, siling labuyo (Philippine chili), and pili nut native to the country (photo by author)



Figure 3.30 A Jollibee happy meal toy along with miniature boxing gloves bearing the Philippine flag (photo by author)



Figure 3.31 Decorative toy jeepneys (photo by author)



Figure 3.32 A San Miguel Beer bottle opener (photo by author)



Figure 3.33 A variety of fridge magnets portraying a guitar, a flipflop, and marine life from Davao and Cebu, Philippines (photo by participant)



Figure 3.34 Stickers joining the Philippine sun and the Canadian maple leaf with different designs. The bottom right sticker depicts a beaver and a Philippine tarsier holding Canadian and Filipino flags (photo by author)



Figure 3.35 A sticker showing a Philippine tarsier holding the country's flag and carabao on a jeepney ride with a moose and a beaver that is holding a bottle of maple syrup, with the caption "Philippines loves Canada" (photo by author)



Figure 3.36 A sign outside of a grocery store in Little Manila in Toronto, where a range of different decals with various Filipino/Filipino-Canadian designs could be purchased (photo by author)



Figure 3.37 Philippine decals on various cars in Newfoundland (photo by author)

iv. Everyday Objects

In her deeply engaging study of the Turkish community's material practices in Vienna, Özlem Savaş examines "key objects of a collective memory and the visual culture of the everyday" (Savaş 2014, 189). Her study reveals that the lack of such objects "causes the loss of physical habits of living the everyday" and since it is to a certain extent "the absence or presence of the objects that shows people where they belong" their loss "is the loss of home" (Ibid., 189). During the course of my research, Savaş's observation became more tangible to me, as I began to recognise the value of the presence of such everyday objects in Filipino households in Newfoundland and their undeniable contribution to the construction of a Filipino place through their aid in maintaining as well as recreating ordinary habits.

In the context of migration the ability to maintain everyday ordinary routines (often facilitated by the presence or utilisation of objects) helps maintain a sense of comfort and continuity (Dudley 2011; Lauser 2022; Povrzanović Frykman 2016, 2019; Povrzanović Frykman and Humbracht 2013). In fact, for migrants such objects allow for "uninterrupted pleasure and smoothness of everyday practices" (Povrzanović Frykman and Humbracht 2013, 50). The endurance of such practices helps prevent a sense of rupture and permits a feeling of stability that contributes to the cultivation of meaning within a given space.

Considering Savaş's significant contributions, reviewing the arguments offered in two other important scholarly works would help better engage with the examples that are provided in the next few pages. As it was briefly discussed earlier in the chapter, in her article "Transnational Dwelling and Objects of Connection" (2019), Maja Povrzanović Frykman primarily argues that empirical consideration should be extended to "objects of everyday use" (Povrzanović Frykman 2019, 28). This is because of their significant role in facilitating ordinary material practices that help dispersed people feel at home while simultaneously allowing for a sense of connection between places migrants have left behind and locations

where they currently reside. Drawing on the critical analysis offered by sociologist Peggy Levitt and social anthropologist Nina Glick-Schiller (2004), the “ways of being” and the “ways of belonging” as two separate categories are brought to attention. “Ways of being” refer to everyday practices and social relationships that form the basis of quotidian life while “ways of belonging” denote the conscious enactment of one’s identity in order to express one’s connection to a particular group or community. Lamenting the fact that most migration studies scholars have a tendency to look at objects that concentrate on “ways of belonging,” Povrzanović Frykman primarily focuses on and also encourages future researchers to pay attention to “inconspicuous mundane objects” that are “related to practical engagement” and represent “crucial aspects of being” by facilitating “familiar senses and practices” (Povrzanović Frykman 2019, 31). To her, the important insights about migrants’ lives lie within that which is simply overlooked because it is all too common. Similarly, in her article written three decades prior to Povrzanović Frykman’s, folklorist Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett examines certain objects that are “incorporated into daily life” but “bring reverie to the most mundane tasks” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1989, 330). Thus, in “Objects of Memory” (1989), while explicating such things that age with those who own them, she also nuances how practical things become symbolic over time as she explains,

Whereas souvenirs are saved prospectively, with a sense of their future ability to call back memories, memory objects are produced retrospectively, long after the events they depict transpired. (Ibid., 331)

Povrzanović Frykman argues for the study of mundane objects that aid migrants’ sense of “being”, while Kirshenblatt-Gimblett shows how such ordinary stuff can become symbolic with the passing of time. In this study, I expand on these theoretical frameworks by adding more complexity and nuance to the notion that not only can objects of being and belonging overlap, but also their categorisation and usage can shift depending on availability and social/historical contexts.

To explicate this observation, having discussed some decorative objects displayed around the household in the previous section, in the following pages I will examine commonly used commercial things and objects utilised in daily routines that help continue a way of life in a different setting for the Filipinos in Newfoundland. As I discuss generational attitudes toward various objects, I will demonstrate how with the growth of the community, the establishment of businesses and the consequent ease of access, the categoric treatment of objects of being and belonging can shift.

During one of my early visits to the house of a friend who had also participated in my study, I enquired about the few subtly scattered Filipino objects around her living room that I had also observed in other community members' houses. However, what I did not expect to be intrigued by was what I observed in her bathroom. Stepping in, the first thing that instantly evoked a sense of familiarity was the clean scent of *Safeguard* soap, which is very commonly used in the Philippines. Then, I noticed bottles of calamansi and papaya *Eskinol* facial cleanser in front of the mirror next to a small tub of *Vicks VapoRub* (Figure 3.38), a *tabo* (Filipino dipper) by the bathtub (Figure 3.39), and most peculiarly a *panghilod* (a smooth rock traditionally used for scrubbing and exfoliation). The presence of the last item surprised me most since I had not seen one in ages as this little rock is most commonly used by members of the older generation or in more rural areas in the Philippines. What was most surprising to me during this visit was the fact that although my attention was primarily focused on what I could see around me in more obvious areas of the house such as the living room, kitchen, and dining area that traditionally lend themselves to important ethnographic enquiries, it was the seemingly unremarkable Filipino objects in the bathroom that momentarily transported me to everyday life in the Philippines. The lingering distinct cool and clean aroma of the soap in the bathroom, the sight of two particularly Filipino items used during daily bathing rituals, the presence of a skincare product commended by Filipino women, and the telltale container of

Vicks VapoRub, which is the traditional Filipino mother's cure-all solution to any bodily ailment: these items could be found in a majority of Filipino bathrooms both in the country and abroad. Upon returning to the living room, I commented on the fact that my friend's bathroom was "distinguishably Filipino". My remark was followed by a hearty laughter that led to an interesting conversation. Musing for a few seconds over the objects which I had mentioned, Annie told me that their presence in an intimate space like a bathroom was so natural to her that she did not think much of them when they were there. She added, however, that their absence would make her feel like she is missing things that are relevant or even necessary for daily rituals. These objects in other words played an important role in maintaining habits and a sense of normalcy. Such items in the bathroom were considered intimate objects that were used on the body on a daily basis, and thus their usage and presence as a form of learned and practiced self-care was reassuring and calming. Annie explained the significance of each item to me in this way,

Well, you know, what the *tabo* is to Filipinos. It doesn't matter if I have the best showerhead and the nicest bathtub, I need my *tabo*. I can rinse *everything* with *tabo*. Even when I am in a bubble bath the *tabo* helps rinse and clean my hair and my back. It helps clean in a way that a faucet just doesn't, right? Is that weird? (*laughs*) And the *panghilod*, I just like it because my *lola*—she raised me—washed us, scrubbed us with a *panghilod*. I have nice memories. You feel so clean after, right? And *lola* found the smooth stones and she had soft soft skin. So I still do it because she did. The other things like the Eskinol and Safeguard, I used all my life. All those ads on TV, right? (*laughs*) But they work! Calamansi is great for skin. Everyone knows that. What else? Oh, the Vicks! Have you ever been to a Filipino house that doesn't have one? It fixes everything!

Annie's clear reasoning and assessment of the items revealed a lot about the importance of the presence of these objects in a place where daily self-care rituals are practiced. By using the *tabo* and *panghilod*, she follows bathing traditions to which many people in the Philippines adhere. Their use is taught and in Annie's case passed on to her from a member of the older generation who has also used them during her lifetime. The *tabo* which was originally made out of coconut shells or bamboo in a pre-colonial Philippines, is a traditional object that has

not ceased to be useful to Filipinos who use plastic versions of it now. The *panghilod*, which is “a classic pan-Philippine example of a quotidian tool” (Zayas 2004, 66), is used mostly in rural areas but the memories of a way of life attached to the item now evoke sentiments that are comforting and helpful in feeling connected to a people, a place and a past that promises continuity rather than severance in the context of a foreign setting. Along the same lines, even the use of commercial products that embrace aspects of common folk beliefs and tradition (“Calamansi is great for skin. Everyone knows that!” and “[Vicks] fixes everything!”) helps maintain a sense of connection to beliefs and ideas common in one’s community. The internalised beliefs about the virtues of commonly used commercial products, encourage efforts to procure them and continue their use. As these are “key objects of a collective memory” (Savaş 2014, 189), their presence means the continuation of daily routines and rituals that are a key factor in effective placemaking efforts. In “Conceptualising Continuity”(2016), Povrzanović Frykman utilises ethnographic methods in order to study migrant lives through the prism of material culture and argues that one must pay heed to the “presence of objects in another location, the continuity of practices perceived as normal, and the practice-based feeling of emplacement” in order to gain in-depth knowledge about the immutable role of objects in migrants’ lives and placemaking endeavours (Povrzanović Frykman 2016, 53). Thus, such everyday ordinary things make up what is referred to as “objects of being”. As Annie’s narrative reveals, the continued use of objects of being with which everyday practices are carried out, can lead to a feeling of ease and stability in her home in Newfoundland. Considering the “nice memories” while relaying her experiences with the objects, the role of nostalgia can be taken into account here. In her study of the phenomenology of nostalgia, which she connects to displacement and loss, anthropologist Annika Lems lays emphasis on the concept’s “ambiguous temporality” that connects here and there, then and now, and that which is remembered and envisioned in order to highlight “nostalgia’s potential in re-creating

temporal continuity and stability” in order to “feel the past physically present” (Lems, 2016, 430). The tangible use of everyday objects that evoke memories of a place and time leads to a sense of connection that is physically materialised in this context: a daily ritual is continued, a cultural practice is recalled, a folk belief reinstated, and a family member remembered. Thus, these practical objects commercial or otherwise contribute to the process of placemaking as they help maintain activities that are deeply associated with a place, a culture, and a group.

My observation in Annie’s bathroom made me pay closer attention to such ordinary objects in the houses I visited and made me self-reflexively look at my own house in Newfoundland as well. I began to take stock of the things that had travelled with me or were brought to me from the Philippines. I too have a *tabo*, purchase a number of Filipino hygiene and beauty products, and use Filipino things whose presence and purpose is natural to me. One example of such regularly used items in the Philippines is the *walis tambo* and *walis tingting* (native Philippine brooms) brought to me by my mother from the Philippines. The story behind their presence in my house in Newfoundland is an amusing one. My mother, a worldly woman who has seen and done much in her life, came to visit me in Canada on a number of occasions. During an early visit, accustomed to having the environment around her spotless, she commented on the fact that I needed a proper broom to keep the floors clean. I did not pay much attention to her comment then. The next time she visited me, the very first thing she produced out of her suitcase were these brooms! Staring at her in disbelief, I asked her how and why she had brought them all the way here, wondering what the customs personnel who scanned her suitcase would have thought. She answered me very matter-of-factly: she placed them in her suitcase diagonally and fit them in easily as they are light; she wanted to bring them to me because no other broom could hold a candle to their quality (since they were purchased from Baguio City, traditionally known as the place that produces the best quality brooms), and that if someone at the airport customs enquired about them, she would happily

take them out and demonstrate to them what a great job these traditional brooms did. During the next few days, my mother made use of the brooms every day, perhaps to gently make a point. The almost imperceptible soft swishing sound of the *walis tambo* (the soft-bristled broom used indoors) evoked involuntary memories of our home in the Philippines. The rustling sound of the *walis tinting* (the hard-bristled broom used outdoors) on the paved garden path brought to mind vivid images of my grandmother's place in her small village in central Philippines. When my mother left, I did not make much use of the brooms initially, relying instead on my trusty Roomba. However, watching the poor machine repeatedly bang itself against walls when trapped in a corner one day, I decided to make use of my *walis tambo* more regularly. My partner who often shoulders the responsibility of cleaning the garden and outdoors area, became an instant fan of the *walis tinting*, commending its ease of use and aid in efficiency. I slowly came to the realisation that despite my initial mild resistance toward the use of these traditional brooms, my fondness for them grew, as their regular use made me feel a certain degree of comfort and prodded me to recall daily practices back in the Philippines. In other words, similar to some of the practical objects mentioned earlier, the *walis tambo* and *walis tinting* as commonly used household items in the country allowed for the continuation of a daily habit that made me feel connected to the familiar practices of my people. As Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton explain, "one of the important functions of cherished household objects is precisely their ability to provide tangible, enduring, and vitalised signs that can communicate the continuity of one's experiences, relationships, and values" (Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton 1999, 224); and these objects certainly contributed meaningfully to this sense of continuity and connection that turned houses in Newfoundland into Filipino places. Both Annie's and my experience with everyday objects of being reveal that they can turn into objects of belonging by connecting us to a community. Such experiences

demonstrate that objects of being and belonging are not fixed and stable categories as they can gain a different meaning with time depending on the context.



Figure 3.38 A bar of *Safeguard* soap, *Eskinol* papaya and calamansi face cleansers, and a small tub of *Vicks VapoRub* (photo by author)



Figure 3.39 Tabos (photo by participant)



Figure 3.40 Traditional *Sungka* gameboards (photos by participants)



Figure 3.41 Mother of pearl earrings portraying carabao (photo by author)



Figure 3.42 Pearl and mother of pearl earrings (photo by author)

Generational Attitudes toward Filipino Objects

As it has been discussed so far, the presence, display, and use of specific objects (of both being and belonging) in Filipino homes in Newfoundland contributes to the creation of a sense of place that makes the domestic sphere feel more comforting and familiar, facilitates cultural practices, functions as ethnicity markers, and helps foster a sense of connection to group. Additionally, fieldwork has revealed that Filipinos of various ages with different immigration backgrounds in Newfoundland engage with Filipino objects in varying degrees and in different ways. Thus, since my participants' ages ranged from nineteen to ninety-three, their attitudes towards and the ways they came to procure assorted Filipino objects to display or use at home varied.

First of all, many early Filipino immigrants packed their suitcases with items that they wanted to bring to their new homes in Newfoundland, because “portable objects of practical or sentimental import” can become “useful not only in early stages of establishing a household

and livelihood in a new country but also providing some—albeit minimal and largely symbolic—semblance of home” (Basu and Coleman 2008, 314). Considering various restrictions on the availability, obtainability, and accessibility of Filipino things in Newfoundland in the sixties, seventies and eighties, some individuals kept on adding to their collection with every trip back home, while others bought stuff during trips to some North American cities with a big Filipino population, that have a range of Filipino stores. The efforts put into procuring objects were more pronounced for this group of immigrants as things were hauled across the ocean with a clear purpose and much care. In addition, being amongst the first Filipinos to arrive in the province, shaping private places in a city where others of the same background had not yet arrived, required the assistance of tangible things. Many such individuals who have lived in the province for over six decades have maintained a range of Filipino objects of both being and belonging in their homes in permanent displays.

Then, members of the second generation of Filipino-Newfoundlanders who were born and/or raised in this province seem to have a different attitude toward Filipino things growing up in the eighties and nineties with a wish to assimilate in a predominantly Anglo-Irish Newfoundland. Although this generation was visually familiar with cultural objects, aware of their ethnic background, and engaged in home and community gatherings and activities, the desire to obtain, own, and display Filipino objects after moving out of their parents’ homes did not seem to be as strong as those of their parents’. Perhaps because of their ‘bifocality’ (Rouse 1991) or in other words ‘dual frame of reference’ (Guarnizo 1997), rather than displaying such objects around their house or making use of them in daily rituals to create a Filipino space, this second generation of Filipino-Newfoundlanders made use of them selectively when the occasion seemed appropriate. The most common examples being the use of traditional clothes during special events such as weddings or graduation ceremonies and the selection of items for display in various cultural fairs. However, these individuals’ level of engagement with Filipino

stuff has changed with the passing of time, the changing political climate, and various life events such as the birth of their children who make up the third generation of Filipino-Newfoundlanders.

Later, members of the third generation of Filipino-Newfoundlanders who might not have ever been to the Philippines, but are aware of their heritage, more fully embrace the presence of objects that are culturally familiar in order to visually incorporate that aspect of their identity in their lives and in the spaces they inhabit. The regular societal promotion of diversity and inclusion and awareness of identity politics facilitated by the internet and social media is a contributing factor here.

Lastly, as the majority of recent Filipino immigrants to Newfoundland are students or temporary foreign workers, they seem to surround themselves with fewer Filipino objects because of their temporary status in the country or on the island. It is interesting to note, however, that all of the individuals that I interviewed had at least one item that fit into one of the categories previously discussed in this chapter.

i. First Generation of Filipino Immigrants to Newfoundland

One of the biggest and most impressive items that was displayed in a participant's home was a capiz chandelier (Figure 3.26). Mentioned a few times by admiring community members who had visited Val's house, the chandelier often became a subject of enquiry for guests in this household. Hung from the ceiling and almost reaching the floor, this highly-priced item is delicate yet enormous and heavy. Its shimmering beauty in the living room immediately catches the attention and its sheer size makes one wonder how it has made its way to Newfoundland. For Val, the chandelier is a source of pride in ethnic craftsmanship and a visual joy in the domestic space. That is why regardless of the difficulty associated with carrying a heavy item on the plane and across the oceans, the chandelier still made it to Newfoundland. Val explains,

[It] was brought back from the Philippines late eighties. The edge of each shell is enclosed in bronze. Because the chandelier is to be brought to Canada, and to prevent breakage or damage during shipment, the store individually wrapped each shell in paper and placed in a carton which was then hand-carried on the plane.

To many of my participants who came here during the early decades of migration, such labours were worth the effort to create a sense of home within the domestic space in this province. Another participant of mine, who arrived in Newfoundland in the 1960s, brought Filipino artists' paintings back on a number of occasions. Carefully wrapping, securing and hand-carrying the paintings over a distance of almost thirteen thousand kilometres, the paintings made their way here safely with a considerable amount of determination. They now hang proudly in his living room and are a reminder of pleasant rustic sceneries from the Philippines. In addition to that, they also bring him a feeling of contentment at supporting local artists and are associated with amusing stories of successfully and unwaveringly lugging weighty paintings across the continents. It is interesting to note here that although it is not an uncommon practice among diasporic individuals to fill their suitcases with things from their homeland and carry heavy items back, when one considers the vast distance and incommensurable routes between the Philippines and Newfoundland such endeavours become even more impressive.

As these examples reveal, the urge to create a Filipino place within a largely unfamiliar Canadian province not previously inhabited by a sizable diaspora community, has been partially fulfilled through the procurement of valuable Filipino objects of belonging by the first generation of immigrants to Newfoundland. Alongside handmade crafts and artworks, intricate religious items such as the Santo Niño statue seem to have been a common choice. Considering the difficulty of access to such objects in the sixties, seventies, and eighties, the use and display of both objects of being and belonging when possible was a common practice. The reasons behind such efforts on behalf of these early migrants is manifold.

First of all, for the early Filipinos arriving in an unfamiliar environment, possession of material culture from the Philippines functioned as a reminder of home, roots, heritage, and

identity that helped maintain a sense of connection to one's community. Many of these things worked as "transitional objects" or in other words "security blankets" or "comfort objects" through which adults as well as children experience a sense of comfort and security (Harrington-Watt 2014; Hong 1978; Kahne 1967; Belk and Mehta 1991; Parkin 1999). These items serve "as cues to call to mind a prior life" and act as "surrogate objects" that provide "an important symbolic source of security and cultural identity" (Belk and Mehta 1991, 407), that helps ensure a sense of continuity as previously discussed.

Secondly, the display and use of objects helped communicate important cultural values and beliefs, especially religious expressions of faith in situations of uncertainty, alienation, and instability (such circumstances usually stemming from racism will be discussed in detail in the following chapters). Such objects can help "silently convey and express self to others" (Belk and Mehta 1991, 399). Thus to a majority of the people in the first generation of Filipinos who arrived in Newfoundland, the efforts put into procuring and transferring objects from one continent to the other were worthwhile endeavours because,

The comfort of carrying some familiar possessions from home keeps us from the total identity alienation we are otherwise likely to feel in unfamiliar surroundings with no material anchors for our previously established identities (Ibid., 400).

Third, considering the fact that home is a place that is "sheltered from the intrusions of public life" (Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton 1999, 123), the presence of Filipino objects created a visually recognisable place that within the domestic space fashioned a private environment where family and community members invited within the household could bask in the familiar atmosphere resembling those commonly experienced in the Philippines. The notion of *tambayan* as a hangout place is fortified when community members found themselves spending time in environments that they saw as familiar because of a range of factors, one of which is the presence of typically Filipino visual signs.

Last, for this first group of Filipino immigrants, objects of being brought from the Philippines facilitated the continuity of daily rituals and thus the preservation of memory and meaning imparted to them in their country of origin. As Irene Cieraad notes,

...meaning and meaning construction are not necessarily conscious efforts but are essentially related to and sustained in practice. Meaning dissolves when it is not enacted time and again (Cieraad 1999, 11).

The continued engagement with things in order to perform daily rituals is more visible for this group who established old meanings in new spaces by performing rituals, which were facilitated by the use of objects that were brought to Newfoundland. As it can be gathered, both objects of being and belonging were important to this group.

A key note to address here is the importance of class. Taking into account what has been discussed in the previous chapter about the historical context of Filipino immigration and the flow of migrants throughout the decades, it can be gathered that the majority of the Filipino people who arrived on the island in the 1960s up until the early 1980s, were healthcare professionals. Recruited to work at various hospitals and practices in Newfoundland, these first waves of Filipino migrants to Newfoundland were accomplished, well-educated doctors and nurses who enjoyed an upper socio-economic status. For this generation, who earned better salaries and benefited from a higher degree of job security, travelling back and forth and procuring costly objects for use and display was more easily affordable. In other words, making a good living meant being able to afford bigger homes and possessing more disposable income that could be spent on desired things in the household. Observing the range of Filipino objects brought over, preserved, displayed, and passed on to the next generations, I learned that locally and traditionally produced Philippine art, craft and religious objects, or as Delia put it “classic Filipino things” were the favoured choice for this group. For professional Filipinos in the early decades of migration to Newfoundland, preferences were given to objects of belonging that represented the culture, tradition, or craftsmanship of Philippine people. These objects

contained culturally aesthetic sensibilities that stood for a more refined or timeless taste. In comparison to a majority of later Filipino migrants coming to Newfoundland after the eighties through the LCP or with temporary visas who endured more precarious working conditions, the early migrants enjoyed a higher level of job security and better income. This is reflected in the material culture with which they surrounded themselves. Thus, religious items, local arts and crafts, and everyday objects of being were more commonly procured. Kitschy novelty items and suchlike decorative objects were, therefore, not a usual choice for this generation.

ii. Second Generation of Filipino-Newfoundlanders

Members of the second generation of Filipino-Newfoundlanders were born and/or raised in this province, spending the majority of their lifetime on the island. They were in their forties, fifties, or sixties at the time of the interviews and had either never been to the Philippines, travelled there for short visits, or had distant memories of being in the country as children. These individuals were raised in Newfoundland in the 1960s-1990s, a period of time that marked important political, economic, and social changes occurring in the province that led to its cultural revival starting in the 1970s. Therefore, in an atmosphere where members of a dominant majority were invigorated to revive and embrace their own sense of self, small groups of immigrants like Filipinos kept to themselves and quietly thrived within their respective professional fields and communities. The personal experience narratives relayed to me by the second generation of Filipino-Newfoundlanders varied in tone and content. As discussed earlier, the majority of the first generation of Filipino immigrants to this province were doctors or medical professionals. Therefore, societal expectations of their children were high. Some participants shared that they faced the pressure of being perceived as a model minority. “If you are from away, you must be good!” was a sentiment that a participant reminisced over, remembering what expectations were laid out for them, and how they aimed to fulfil them. Another participant, however, spoke of a range of racial slurs used against him amongst his

peers at school, and the difficulty of connecting to his parents' culture, with which he only interacted occasionally. In addition, regardless of their own cultural backgrounds, many Filipino parents who had immigrated here early on, also saw the value of assimilation that would help their children adapt and prosper in the new host society. Moreover, during a period of time where pride in regional culture seeped into local consciousness, proliferating artistic, literary, theatrical and musical creations, the appeal to engage in such an atmosphere regardless of one's background was inevitably present. Taking into consideration all these factors, it is understandable that the second-generation who were raised on the island and flexibly assimilated during the cultural revival in Newfoundland, did not inherit the same maximalist material aesthetics that their parents embraced at a time of change and uncertainty. Instead, their engagement with objects of belonging in order to create a Filipino atmosphere or lay claim to this ethnicity was flexible and at times selective. For example, opting for Filipino traditional clothes during special occasions was a common choice for the second generation.

As the Philippines is an island nation that is home to diverse indigenous as well as mixed-raced ethnic groups, various influences both from the East (e.g. Chinese and Indian) and the West (e.g. Spanish and American) have had an impact on the national clothes of the country. Fusing elements from native Philippine culture and Spanish colonial period, men's *barong tagalog* (or simply *barong*) and women's *baro't saya* are the national clothes of the Philippines and are considered the proper attire for formal or semi-formal events.

A delicate long-sleeved shirt that can come in a variety of colours but is most often white, men's *barong tagalog* is both simple and elaborate. Boasting intricate embroidery on the front and sometimes along the sleeves, the *barong* is traditionally made of piña (fibre made from the leaves of pineapple plants) or abaca (also known as Manila hemp, which is a fibre extracted from banana leaf stems). Wearing the *barong* is always accompanied with a white undershirt, formal trousers and shoes, and is never tucked.

Women's *baro't saya* comes with more variety. Traditionally, the *baro't saya* consists of four items of clothing: *baro* (blouse), *saya* (skirt), *alampay* (shawl), and *tapis* (overskirt). However, other more common variations include *kimona* (a type of *baro* that is short-sleeved and waist-length) and *traje de mestiza* (also known as *Maria Clara* or *Filipiniana*), which is a type of dress popularized by aristocratic families during the Spanish colonial era and is usually ankle-length or longer, with butterfly sleeves. The sleeves are very distinctive, with eleven to thirteen pleats and standing one to three inches high above the shoulders. Women's clothing comes with a larger range of colour and style but the fabric, the uniquely fashioned sleeves, and their inimitable design makes them stand out as the country's national clothes.

Lily, who was born in Newfoundland in 1969 and lived all of her life here, told me of the very few Filipino things that she had inherited from her parents. Her home, as she described it, was more like a typical Newfoundland house with very few Filipino things such as traditional games sitting around. Asserting her ethnic background in various contexts on the island, however, in order to claim her place within it was done, when possible, through the use of clothes. Her wedding to a Newfoundlander who wore Philippine national clothes during the ceremony serves as a good example,

My husband was married in a *barong* shirt. It was a number of years ago now but we did want to keep that tradition. So we had a very small wedding party. It was just my sister stood for me and my husband's friend stood for him. So my husband and his friend both wore *barong* shirts. And this is a funny story because my husband is 6'2" and a big barrel-chested man. So we had those shirts made in the Philippines. My aunt ordered them in because she was travelling and when the tailor had the measurements, he questioned her, "Oh! These measurements can't be right!" (*laughs*) And my aunt said, "Oh! No, they are right. They are North American men!" And he said, "Ohhh! Okay!"

As Lily's narrative reveals, the use of material culture comes to aid when the need to assert aspects of identity and tradition present themselves. Although Lily keeps much fewer Filipino things than her parents do in her household, the use of traditional clothes for her and her white Newfoundlander husband during important occasions and the display of photographs that mark

said occasion, help solidify cultural ties and affirm the diasporic group's place and belonging in the wider cultural context on the island.

Similar to Lily, Nora and Ed, who were raised in Newfoundland and spent the majority of their lifetime in St. John's, opted for such items of clothing during their graduations and proms. Ed explained that standing out in such occasions through the use of a Filipino attire could be seen as a statement,

It was like a small opportunity, right? I was the valedictorian when I graduated high school. I wore my *barong* during the ceremony. I stood out when pictures were taken. I wore it proudly [and] on purpose, because it sparked conversation. People asked. So when people asked me what I was wearing, I could tell them about us. I wanted to show we are here. We've been here! You might think you are the only ones here but that is not accurate. We may look different but we are part of what makes this place good.

For Ed as a teenager embracing the notion of being a model minority, the negotiation of belonging to a place was done through accomplishments and achievements. The use of clothes when the occasion called for it, facilitated this attempt. "We are part of what makes this place good," speaks of sentiments toward a place where meanings have been or are in the process of being made. In other words, the Filipino community has been creating a collective sense of place on the island and extending it to the public space can be done through the use of material culture on certain occasions. For this group objects of belonging served an important purpose, while objects of being did not feature in their lives in a similar way to their parents'.

It is interesting to note that although my conversations with members of the second generation of Filipino-Newfoundlanders reveal that they did not inherit the same desire as their parents to accumulate Filipino things to make their living space more in alignment with their cultural background or incorporate a variety of everyday items, they used objects selectively, and their attitude towards such things changed with the birth of their own children: the third generation of Filipino-Newfoundlanders. Nora, Lily, Ed, Jay and Danilo who have their own children, all spoke of a desire to familiarise them with aspects of Filipino culture, and to them objects and food (as will be discussed in the next chapter) were the most tangible ways to

achieve this task. Growing up in households where home as a meaningful place was defined through the visual familiarity of things that their parents used and displayed, they became accustomed to the visual references that made a place Filipino. However, growing up in Newfoundland during its period of cultural revival, the process of assimilation meant less engagement with the material culture of their parents' generation. Nevertheless, a reintroduction became necessary with the arrival of their children in order to acquaint them with their cultural heritage.

iii. Third Generation of Filipino-Newfoundlanders

Members of the third generation of Filipino-Newfoundlanders are the grandchildren of Filipino immigrants who arrived in the province in the 1960s-1980s. A majority of these individuals are multiracial and were born and raised on the island. Many of them have never been to the Philippines, however, they are aware of their ethnic background and often keen to claim that aspect of their identity. Unlike their parents who grew up in an atmosphere where the cultural revival in Newfoundland primarily guided public focus toward regional pride and the distinctiveness of provincial identity, these individuals were raised in a contemporary society where the notions of diversity, inclusion, and identity politics are prominent. Eager to engage with their cultural heritage, Filipino objects serve an important purpose for these young individuals whose primary frame of cultural reference is their grandparents. As sociologist Herbert Gans explains, for the third and fourth generation whose grandparents or great-grandparents were immigrants, embracing a voluntary "symbolic ethnicity" becomes a main way of engaging with heritage (Gans 1979). As folklorist Robert Klymasz (1973) and sociologist Wsevolod Isajiw (1984) observe in their studies of Ukrainians in Western Canada, remaining in touch with ethnic culture is primarily done through that which is physical, tangible, and accessible such as objects, food, music, and holidays. In fact, with the gradual loss of ancestral language, individuals of later generations rely heavily on the optical, sensory,

auditory, and tactile to maintain a sense of connection to their heritage (Klymasz 1973). My observations revealed that some of my participants in this group inherited objects from their grandparents and parents, and deliberately displayed them in more public areas of the house such as the living room, kitchen and dining room. These individuals create a nostalgic and familiar sense of place in their homes according to the visual references observed in their grandparents' households. However, being selective marked the process of adopting things in their homes. Catholic symbols, for example, did not feature prominently in their ethnically aesthetic choices. For the third generation, acceptance of ethnic symbols that marks identity is a selective process as Isajiw notes,

Retention of ethnic identity from one generation to another does not necessarily mean retention of all symbols contained in a culture. In fact, the ubiquity of culture does not mean that all symbols contained in it are equally meaningful or are accepted by all members or sectors of a community. Cultural symbols are always employed selectively. This is especially so in regard to the various ethnic generations who live in a culturally different society (Isajiw 1984, 120).

Thus, familiar decorative objects as well as popular or kitschy items such as stickers and a range of other paraphernalia with symbols of the Philippine flag are also common choices. However, it is interesting to note that this generation's methods of procuring such objects were vastly different to those of their grandparents. As it was mentioned earlier, in order to attain Filipino objects in Newfoundland, early immigrants painstakingly selected, carefully packed, and meticulously transported delicate decorative objects across the continents. However, in recent years the availability of online stores has prompted a new kind of approach to acquiring Filipino things as various shopping websites give customers a wide range of options that would be delivered right to one's doorstep. As Celina explains,

Online shopping makes it easy. I love it [the kulturafilipino website]! I know there are other ones too. You can find so many things. Before I thought if I want these things, like beautiful handicraft, I have to go there or ask someone to bring stuff. Now if I want to have something, I order it to Newfoundland. Easy! I don't do it a lot but I got some like this.

Availability and ease of access through online venues as well as Asian/Filipino stores in St. John's facilitate the process of procuring objects that help create meaningful places within the domestic space that function as reminders of one's ethnic background. There seems to be a level of ease and playfulness accompanying the act of selection of such objects. In this sense, kitsch and craft shipped to the Filipino-Newfoundland home, sit comfortably next to each other and mark a sense of belonging to the folk group. Modifications in taste are inevitably present, but the fact remains that objects that help one feel connected to kin and culture, play an essential role in cultivating meanings in space for this generation as well.

In addition, for this group, unlike their parents, embracing objects of being used by their grandparents marks a deeper level of connection, as they are treated as objects of belonging. Using everyday objects their grandparents did as a way of connecting to everyday Philippine culture, turns such objects of being to objects of belonging. For example, opting to shop at Asian or Filipino stores in St. John's to purchase commercial products used by their grandparents or choosing to get better at playing traditional games favoured by them, becomes an enactment of identity.

iv. Recent Immigrants

For the first generation of newcomers, keen to recreate a sense of home away from home, the presence of Filipino objects of being and belonging helped create visually familiar places, facilitated everyday practices in a new context, helped them feel connected to home, and provided a sense of comfort. For their children assimilating in Newfoundland society, the desire to acquire, keep, or display such objects in their household was not pronounced in the same way, although material culture that marked a sense of belonging to group was used to assert ethnic background when the occasion presented itself. For the generation after that, however, claiming their heritage and aligning the domestic space with ethnic sensibilities meant the selective re-emergence of familiar objects of belonging as well as being that help

them feel connected to the culture of a country they had only/mostly experienced in its diasporic setting in Newfoundland.

Then, the responses I received from those who had arrived in Canada in the 2010s were varied. A number of such community members had arrived in Canada as temporary foreign workers or students. Due to the short-term nature of their stay in Newfoundland, they generally kept fewer things. However, during the first years of migration, the Filipino stuff that they owned and used were commonly items of practical use. Such objects of being (a majority of which were commercial products) facilitated daily routines for these individuals, providing them with a sense of ease and comfort. It seems that unlike firstcomers in the early decades, more recent newcomers who found themselves in the presence of a well-established diasporic community and in a society where there seemed to exist a degree of awareness and understanding of their cultural background, did not feel the need to accumulate a large number of objects of belonging. It is interesting to note that often with change of status and more certainty about their stay on the island, their abode slowly embraced similar aesthetics and began containing both objects of being and belonging. In other words, things whether they were religious items, decorative objects, tourist kitsch, or practical everyday material found their way into new homes and made it specifically Filipino.

Thus, it can be concluded that regardless of the generation to which community members belong, the presence of objects play important roles. As Sabine Marschall explains,

In the context of migration where loss, alienation, xenophobia, cultural shock and nostalgic longing constitute new experiences, novel ways of relating to objects can develop. Even individuals who profess not to have a sentimental relationship to material objects may discover how the possession, contemplation and especially physical handling of certain items precipitate happy memories, produce a warm sense of belonging, or a soothing feeling of comfort and well-being (Marschall 2019, 264).

The functions that objects have in placemaking is complex. As it was demonstrated with examples, items of being and belonging associated with an ethnic background, such as “souvenirs, traditional folk items, familiar foods, or otherwise widespread national

goods/consumer items” serve an important purpose for communities in diaspora (Pechurina 2015, 35).

Conclusion

In their article entitled “Domestic Ethnicity: The Lebanese and Ukrainian Diasporas in the Host-Region of Newfoundland” (2024), folklorists Mariya Lesiv and Wyatt Hirschfeld Shibley use the term “reflective domestic ethnicity” (Lesiv and Shibley 2024, 240), to stress the significance of the domestic sphere in understanding diasporic lived experiences and expressions in non-representational settings such as Newfoundland. Crucially, emphasising a more focused examination of the specificity of contexts that stand apart from an erroneous assumption of a unified whole (i.e. Newfoundland vs. Canada), Lesiv and Shibley embrace the idea of the study of specific “host regions” (initially introduced by Lesiv in 2022). Considering the particularities of a host region (e.g. Newfoundland) rather than a generalised understanding of entire countries or continents referred to as “hostlands” (e.g. Canada) allows for more accurate observations. Their arguments have provided a helpful framework for the findings in this chapter.

In this section of my study, the material culture of the Filipino diasporic community was considered in the context of Newfoundland to confirm that specific regional differences shape varied diasporic experiences and thus placemaking efforts in return. Therefore, examining Filipino objects in the household (and beyond) has proven to be valuable, supporting the significance of a reflective approach in understanding domestic ethnicity. Lesiv and Shibley’s approach certainly contributes to the comprehension of the construction of diasporic consciousness in the particular context of Newfoundland, however, the small scope of their study with a significantly smaller community of diasporans poses limits to their overall conclusion. As my project is bigger in scope, the history of a larger community has been taken

into consideration to avoid underemphasising the dynamism of the context of Newfoundland. The study of different generations of Filipino diasporans in Newfoundland reveals that despite a static and steady diet of stereotypical images circulating about Newfoundland, with the passing of each decade, the arrival of each new generation of diasporans and immigrants, and the impact of various global, national, and local events, Newfoundland has also changed and must be seen as a dynamic context. Viewing place as a static space has pitfalls. Viewing Newfoundland as existing in a cultural time capsule erases important parts of its ongoing history in the making. Thus, acknowledging the significance of the “spatial turn” in our and other similar disciplines requires challenging “single-voiced historical narratives”, and recognising “that position and context are centrally and inescapably implicated in all construction of knowledge” (Cosgrove 1999, 7).

In this chapter, I discussed the role of objects in creating a meaningful place for the Filipino community in Newfoundland. As I considered and explained the categories of objects commonly seen in Filipino households and beyond, a variety of tangible examples revealed generational differences in the types, range, number, and treatment of ethnic objects of being and belonging that are complex and shifting. Rather than viewing the material culture of this community simply in the separate categories of “objects of being” and “objects of belonging”, I explored that with the changing contexts and more ease of access and availability, objects of being can turn into objects of belonging and the other way around. Thus, to the first generation of Filipino immigrants who arrived in the province, both objects of being and belonging mattered immensely, as they started building a new community and home in a context with no prior diasporic presence of people of the same background. To this first group objects of being used in everyday life also took on a symbolic meaning connecting them to their people. To their children growing up, assimilating, and getting educated in the context of Newfoundland with fewer direct cultural references from the Philippines, the occasional use and display of

objects of belonging mattered more than possessing things that were used in the everyday. To the third generation of Filipino-Newfoundlanders with the changing political climate, a desire to claim ethnic identity through the ownership of tangible objects of belonging is strong as they inherit or opt to purchase things online or in Asian/Filipino stores in town. In addition, to this group the use of objects of being becomes a symbolic enactment of ethnic group membership. To more recent immigrants arriving here and finding themselves among the community of their *kababayan* with things readily available in stores and online, the material focus shifts to objects of being that assist and smoothen regular everyday activities. To this group, the place of objects of belonging is secondary to those of being in their initial years of settlement.

Overall, the objects categorised and considered in this chapter help create meaningful places in Filipino households in Newfoundland because they facilitate the passing of cultural values, the practice of faith, the reconstruction of a sense of familiarity, comfort, and continuity, the re-establishment of rituals and common daily practices, the exercise of agency and control, and a sense of connection to kin and culture. Beyond the domestic sphere, the use of familiar symbols on a range of objects serve as subtle reminders of diasporic presence, which I proposed to understand as an emic signal.

As the study of material culture can be extended to foodways as well, the subject will be examined in the following chapter, in order to expand analyses of the placemaking effort of the Filipino community in Newfoundland.

CHAPTER 4: Home is Where the Food Is

Introduction

This chapter is dedicated to narratives and analyses that uncover the significant undisclosed history of Filipino foodways in Newfoundland, as it provides insight into the ways in which food functions as an indispensable vehicle in creating a sense of place and belonging, as well as connecting to, maintaining and claiming ethnic identity in diaspora. The historical narratives that are gathered here impart the cultural meanings behind efforts to procure, distribute, prepare, and share food for the community under study. This approach is especially important considering the fact that,

Anthropologists, folklorists, and food historians agree that food is invested with symbolic meaning and that any food related activity—from a simple meal at home to the most elaborate public celebration—is an act of communication” (Ferris 2015, 136).

When I initially started making connections with community members, I received invitations to join Filipinos in their homes in St. John’s for various gatherings. Among the numerous get-togethers that I attended, my very first visit to a community member’s house was a most telling one. The house I visited was located at the end of a long street. I walked slowly, paying close attention to house numbers. However, as I got closer I realized that this was not necessary. I could have never missed it! As I approached the house, I heard the all-too-familiar sound of a blasting karaoke with a singer’s muffled vocal efforts and voices that sporadically joined her, I heard jovial laughter, and the delicious scent of gastronomic treats left no room for doubt as to which house I was supposed to enter. When I gently knocked on the screen door that was left unlocked, I caught the attention of the host that was busy chatting with other guests. She came to the door with a plate in her hand, greeted me with a smile and a short “Tulóy ka! Kain na!” (Come in! Let’s eat!), beckoning me to come in. Before I had a chance to respond to the wonted greeting properly or even to take my shoes off, a plate was laid in my hand and the host hurried back to the kitchen to hear the rest of a joke a guest was telling.

Stepping into the house brought back a rush of intense familiarity that evoked all of my senses simultaneously. I exchanged greetings, making sure that I adhered to the *mano* gesture when approaching community elders. As I walked around and I saw Filipinos sitting around comfortably engaged in different activities in the most casual and unpretentious of settings, my eyes wandered here and there. I immediately noticed culturally familiar objects sprinkled around the living room and the kitchen: the wooden spoon and fork hanging on the kitchen wall; a figurine of the Holy Family sitting on an immaculate table; and a fridge covered with various magnets brought from the Philippines. Taking all of this in, I approached the kitchen table with its rich spread of Filipino food: a large bowl of rice (essential on any Filipino dining spread); a tower of two kinds of *lumpia* (Filipino spring rolls); a dish of *pancit bihon* (a type of Filipino noodles); Filipino-style chicken macaroni salad (a creamy concoction of chicken, pasta, cheese, pineapples, raisins and a whole list of other ingredients); a big tray of *biko* (a sticky rice cake made with glutinous rice, coconut milk, and brown sugar); colourful *puto* in purple, green, and white (steamed rice cakes with a signature cheese strip on top); and of course chicken *adobo* (a beloved chicken stew made with vinegar, soy sauce, garlic, and bay leaves). The sight of the elaborate feast accompanied by the very unique scent of rich aromas blending deliciously together, immediately sent me back to the kitchens in the Philippines. While I sat and sampled some rice and *adobo* on my plate with a few *lumpia*, I became acutely aware of the fact that regardless of my geographic location, in a setting where I was surrounded by Filipino things, where I could eat and smell Filipino food, and hear chitchat and music in Tagalog I could not help but have a strong sense of belonging right here at this moment, regardless of what the world outside the confines of this house presented.

As it was discussed in the previous chapter, stepping into the Filipino home involves a multisensory experience for the visitor. In such a setting, food plays an essential role. As “Filipino culture centres around dining” (Gilbuena 2017, 63), the discussion of food in the

process of place-making is an essential one. Therefore in this chapter, I will first provide a brief introduction to what Filipino food is (a subject that remains stubbornly ineffable to both reasoned food-lovers and laypeople). Then, after laying the foundation, I will look at the Filipino kitchen in Newfoundland, examining ingredients and the methods of their procurement throughout the years in this province. Next, a study of Filipino food culture in this province and the significance of culinary practices for the three generations of Filipino-Newfoundlanders will be offered. Because food holds such an important place in Filipino culture and their social gatherings, the concept of *salu-salu* (coming together as a group to eat), and social events and gatherings that would never take place without some form of Filipino food or treats, will then be discussed. Then, I will further my elaborations to show how food is used to claim a sense of place, identity, and belonging. As the discussion of private/semi-private events develops, the last part of this chapter will be dedicated to the analysis of Filipino restaurants in St. John's. Moving from private to public areas, this chapter will reveal how indispensable food is in the effort to make place within space, and how it serves as a powerful tool that helps shape a sense of ethnic and cultural identity and communal belonging for Filipinos in Newfoundland. As historical context is taken into consideration for different generations of Filipinos on the island, the concepts of being and belonging that were discussed in the previous chapter will also be revisited to demonstrate the ways in which availability or lack thereof, results in different approaches to the procurement and consumption of food and ingredients, and what they contribute to the notion of place.

To begin the discussion of Filipino place-making through food in the host region of Newfoundland, it is important to have some understanding of Philippine foodways, which folklorist Mellie Leandico Lopez describes as “the total cookery complex including taboos, attitudes, and meal systems—the whole gamut of cookery and food habits of Philippine society” (Lopez 2006, 362). Therefore, in the following pages I will provide a basic

introduction to Filipino foodways in order to lay the foundation for the discussion of concepts that would prove challenging without an introductory overview.

What Even Is Filipino Food?: A Brief Look at Philippine Foodways

To explain what Filipino food is has always been a challenge both for food experts and laypeople (Alejandro 1985; Fernandez 1986; Lopez 2006; Orquiza 2020). “The bedrock of the Philippine food landscape is indigenous food, drawn from land, sea and air, cooked in simple ways (roasted, steamed, and boiled)”; however, “foreign influences came to play upon this matrix which built up the totality now known as Philippine cuisine” (Fernandez 2002, 183). Filipino food is culturally unique: it is a “blend” and in order to understand it, one has to have “some knowledge of the country’s history and its cultural influences” (Alejandro 1985, 12). Historically in Philippine cuisine “intrusions and influences” have been received well “provided they are adapted and indigenised” (Fernandez and Alegre 1988, 18). As it was discussed in the introductory chapter of this thesis, both the Spanish and the Americans occupied the islands and left their deep mark on the culture of the archipelago. Foodways was of course not exempt from change. However, external influences on Philippine cuisine was not limited to colonisation. In the centuries prior to colonisation, through intermarriage and trade with the Chinese, Malays, Indians, Arabs, and Indonesians, Filipino food has borrowed, blended, modified and made its own, culinary practices and ingredients from multiple cultures. In other words, flavours, ingredients, utensils, methods of cooking from these cultures have become “nativized, indigenized, adapted, and accepted into the core of culture” in a process of “transculturation” (Fernandez 1994, 150). Thus, many flavours in Philippine cuisine have been “acquired from the various cultures that have touched it” (Alejandro 1985, 20). This is of course evident in diverse cultures because, as folklorist Don Yoder points out,

Viewed historically, each regional and national cuisine is a culinary hybrid, with an elaborate stratigraphy of diverse historical layers combined into a usable and evidently satisfying structure. (Yoder 1972, 334)

As such, “Philippine cookery as a whole is a hybrid,” as well since “a typical dish smacks of historical flavour” (Lopez 2006, 363). Thus, as cultural historian Monina A. Mercado aptly writes,

Drawing origins from various cultures but displaying regional characteristics, Filipino food was prepared by Malay settlers, spiced with commercial relations with Chinese traders, stewed in 300 years of Spanish rule, and hamburgered by American influence in the Philippine way of life. (Mercado 1976, 9)

However, among the cultures that have had an impact on Filipino cooking, the Spanish primarily and the Chinese secondarily stand out, as some of the most common dishes in Philippine cuisine come from these two cultures (Fernandez and Alegre 1988; Lopez 2006; Civitello 2011).

Kaldereta, *afritada*, and *menudo* (similar meat and vegetable stews), *embutido* (Philippine meatloaf), *tocino* (sweetened and cured pork belly), *empanada* (turnovers with a range of fillings), *chicharon* (deep-fried pork rind), *pandesal* (everyday breakfast bread rolls) and *adobo* (arguably Philippine’s national dish made with meat marinated in vinegar, soy sauce and peppercorns) are just a few examples of commonly consumed Philippine dishes with Spanish origins; while *pancit* (traditional Philippine noodle dishes with numerous regional varieties), *siopao* (steamed buns with different fillings), *lumpia* (Philippine spring rolls), and *siomai* (dumplings that can be steamed or fried) are of Chinese origin and a result of centuries of relations with the Chinese that have become deeply localized so as to become “almost invisible” in Philippine cooking (Fernandez 2014, 183).

A typical Filipino everyday meal consists of *kanin* (cooked rice) and *ulam* (what you have with rice sometimes translated into *viand* in English). Cultivated and consumed for thousands of years on the islands, rice is “the mainstay of Philippine diet” (Alejandro 1985, 14), the essential backdrop for sapid dishes, as it “enhances the flavour” (Alejandro 1985, 38)

and works as a necessary “background against which all our food is meant to be eaten” (Fernandez and Alegre 1988, 12). To the Filipino not having this staple with a meal renders it lacking and unsatiating (Leuterio 2022). Thus, to Filipinos rice and the most common *ulam* fish are “what bread and butter are to people in the West” (Lopez 2006, 366). Centuries of consumption and familiarity with this product has led to the cultivation of a wide variety of rice that is used not only as part of a main meal but as the chief ingredient of different types of flour, broth, drinks, dessert, and so on. That is why rice comes to be the symbol of life in the Philippines. “Rice is life” is a common saying that reveals the central place of this food in Philippine diet.

Aside from the ingredients that make up Filipino cuisine, which will be discussed in detail in the following section, the most important aspect of Philippine foodways is the culture of sharing. Common Philippine food practices such as fiestas, potlucks, *kamayan* or boodle fight, bringing *pasalubong* (small souvenirs that are commonly food items), the *balikbayan* box tradition (the practice of those living overseas sending boxes of treats and goods to family and relatives in the Philippines), *salu-salo* (gathering together specifically to eat), and the most common manner of greeting a visitor “Kumain ka na ba?” (Have you eaten yet?) reveal that food, whether an elaborate banquet or a humble spread, is meant to be shared. Ingrained in Philippine collectivistic culture that emphasises the values of *bayanihan*, *pakikipapwa* and *pakikisama* are embroidered the notions of interconnectedness and group welfare that precede individual desires. Thus, food as one of the most basic and important aspects of human life takes a central role in Philippine culture as an essential element in any kind of social affair.

Taking into account what has been discussed so far, one can gather that because of a range of historical events in addition to regional influences in the archipelago, native Filipino cuisine has adopted foreign influences, especially Spanish and Chinese, and indigenised it to include local ingredients and tastes. The core cultural collectivistic value of sharing has

remained an integral part of Filipino people's foodways. In the context of a smaller and non-representational host region, the search for essential ingredients and the community to share it with become further intensified.

Unavailability and Improvisation: The Filipino Kitchen in Newfoundland Then and Now

In a well-stocked Filipino pantry one will encounter most, if not all, of the following items: different kinds of rice (regular and glutinous) and rice flour; a variety of noodles; vinegar; soy sauce; calamansi juice/extract; *patis* (fish sauce); *bagoong* (fermented seafood paste); *daing* (dried fish); coconut milk; achiote (annatto seeds); ube powder, extract, or spread (purple yam used for a range of desserts); banana ketchup; and a wide range of premixed packs of stew, soup, and marination spices. In the kitchen, fresh ingredients such as garlic, onion, ginger, and a range of vegetables are always present. In the fridge or freezer (mostly in Pinoy kitchens overseas), aside from a variety of dried or frozen seafood and meat, *lumpia* wrappers and frozen packs of grated ube as well as *niyog* (fresh mature coconut) are commonly stored.

Since the primary flavours in Filipino cuisine are sour, sweet, and salty, the ingredients mentioned above help create recipes that present specific combinations that are familiar and favoured. In addition, condiments such as calamansi, vinegar, soy sauce, *patis*, *bagoong*, and chili oil mixed with other spices and ingredients create what is known as *sawsawan* or dipping sauces. These ingredients help customise and tailor food to one's tastes and preferences. As cultural historian and food critic Doreen Fernandez and author Edilberto Alegre make comparisons and explicate, Philippine food ethos is unlike that of the French, for example:

[To the French] the chef is the master creator and has sole authority over the dish. For the diner to tamper with it is discourtesy and insult. In the Philippine experience the diner cooperates and participates, and the creation is communal. The *sawsawan* thus transforms not only the taste, but also the relationship behind the experience (Fernandez and Alegre 1988, 42).

The condiments mentioned above come in small shared bowls along with meals so that diners can make adjustments according to their preferences: whether one is more partial to salty, sour, or spicy flavours, modifications can be made freely.

A brief familiarity with the ingredients used in Filipino food reveals that a majority of them are not commonly used in Western cuisine. In the context of Newfoundland from the early 1960s, and surprisingly, up to the early 2010s, many foodstuff regularly used by the Filipino community members were not widely available. Filipinos in Newfoundland, however, ever resourceful as they are, found ingenious ways to procure what they needed and shared it with their community.

The concept of unavailability and inaccessibility in non-representational diasporic settings has not received much academic attention in the research about food and migration. Foodways scholars tend to focus on food in such settings but not lack thereof. One of the main focuses of this chapter is to historically nuance unavailability in a non-representational diasporic setting and review the group efforts that go into the procurement of food in a small community. The findings of this chapter demonstrate that the study of the lack of food is as important as the study of other aspects of diasporic/immigrant foodways when availability is not an issue. Connecting this view to the non-representational context of Newfoundland, in the following pages, I will look at some of the ways ingredients were obtained and the processes of placemaking these endeavours entailed.

As it was mentioned earlier, rice is of “cardinal importance” to Filipinos (Fernandez and Alegre 1988, 11). Filipinos are, in fact, “among the top rice-eaters in the world” (Boquet 2017, 216). The significance of this food is so profound in Philippine culture that as Doreen Fernandez explains, rice,

fuels our daily lives... we are sensitive to its aroma, size, texture. We know when it is ripening in the field: we shape words for every stage of its being and becoming. If we

didn't have rice, our deepest comfort, we would probably feel less Filipino. (Fernandez 2000)

That is why in the Philippines there are over two hundred words related to rice, for example: *bigas, kanin, sinaing, palay, bahaw, tutong, mímó, pispis, galapong, kiping, sinangag, malagkit, sinandomeng, and pinipig*. Thus, this “diverse lexicon is reflective of the myriad of ways rice can be prepared and consumed in Filipino cooking” (Urbano 2018).

When the first and second wave of Filipino professionals arrived on the island, this food item was not commonly available in regular shops and supermarkets. When talking about this topic, reminiscing what was available in the seventies, Val recalls boxes of instant *Minute Rice* that occupied shelves at some Sobeys or Dominion locations. Finding the product baffling and unsatiating, Val and his fellow Filipinos used the product when other options were not easily available. However, “proper rice”, as Val puts it, could be eventually purchased at Mary Jane’s Specialty Food on Pilots Hill, St. John’s, which held a “reputation for selling off-beat food and attracting a counterculture granola-type clientele” as it was said to be “a one stop shopping for anything weird or unusual or different” (Smith 1996). Wholesale also became another option for Filipinos later. Fifty kilogram bags of rice were ordered by groups of Filipinos who would purchase and then divide them when families were small, couples had no children or individuals lived on their own. Isagani, who arrived in Newfoundland in the late sixties, recalls that when a newcomer would arrive, they would give them a bag of rice with some other foodstuff, which would serve as a “welcome package” to “make them feel less homesick and make sure they had something to start with” especially if they had just come from the Philippines.

As it was mentioned earlier, the most common Filipino meal is *kanin at ulam*, which is cooked rice with viand. The most basic *ulam* or viand in Philippine culture is fish. However, a variety of seafood is regularly consumed in the Philippines. Some of the most fascinating

stories my participants shared with me involved the methods of procuring the seafood that they needed for various dishes in Newfoundland.

Coming from a culture where seafood is heavily consumed, some participants recall that when immigrating to Newfoundland, friends and acquaintances in Canada would mention the fishing industry and the culture surrounding it and would draw parallels between the Philippines and Newfoundland, reassuring people of the availability and abundance of this common food item. However, Delia, who arrived in Newfoundland in the mid-seventies, soon learned that seafood “meant only cod,” though she further elaborates that this was helpful practical knowledge for Filipinos on the island. Reminiscing about life after immigration in the seventies, Delia recalls Filipinos gathering in the morning at the dock on Harbour Drive in St. John’s “around where Fish Exchange Restaurant” is currently located to meet local fishermen who were just arriving with their fresh catch of the day. Delia explains,

We would gather, a group of us. I think some other Asians like maybe Koreans too sometimes. The fishermen started to know us after we talked to them... We saw they throw away all the shrimp! All the squid! *Ang dami! Sayang naman!* [So much! What a waste!]. So we asked for that and they gave us for free. It was funny to them why we wanted this and that. For us, it was like feast! We got it, cleaned it, cooked it, and we shared with others. So many gatherings with free seafood from the dock. But later when we got crab, I think they caught on! Then, they would give us shrimp for free but crab \$3 a pound. I liked going to the harbour for this, when we chat and get fresh food. But it stopped in the eighties maybe. Too many people learned and came. A lot of Chinese people also came. Like all the Asians. So no more!

Delia’s narrative reveals how the dock became a space where members of the Filipino community would meet up, spend time together, procure food, and prepare it for sharing. The association made with this specific spot in the city was not one of the general public’s. The place created, as described in this study, is one where members of this specific group gathered and mingled with a different purpose. Discussions provided in previous chapters about the notion of liminality can be productively used here. Considering Delia’s narrative about what the dock began to mean to Filipinos at the time, we can reflect on the treatment of this area as a liminal space for some community members. To this group of Filipinos, this spot by the

harbourside began to be associated with experiences, memories, and activities different to those of the dominant local majority. Under the radar and unbeknownst to the general public, the dock on Harbour Drive in St. John's became a place where Filipinos would spend many a cheerful hour meeting each other, looking for fresh free valuable seafood, and treating this activity as a bonding opportunity. This kind of group experience could be considered liminal in nature where the "physically and symbolically marginalised" begin to cultivate "a strong social bond and sense of camaraderie" (Roberts 2018, 36), which has been introduced as *bayanihan* in the Philippine worldview. In other words, unavailability of desired food items led to bonding group practices that created liminal spaces for community members that in turn contributed to placemaking efforts.

In addition to obtaining much desired seafood at the dock, Filipinos found other ways to make use of what local fishmongers could provide: fish head was a favourite ingredient. In the Philippines, similar to a number of other Asian cultures, fish head is used in some dishes. In Philippine cuisine, a favourite dish where fish head can be used is a sour soup named *sinigang*, which is made with tamarind and a range of vegetables. The dish is frequently associated with a feeling of homey comfort and is, of course, eaten with rice. While on the dock, some community members came to know fishermen and local fishmongers. Realising that once cod was processed the head was occasionally used for cod tongue and cheeks, but more often tossed, some Filipinos started asking if they could have them. Their request for fish heads, another food that was given to them free of charge, amused some fishmongers who compared recipes and told them how people cooked them in communities outside of St. John's. "Townies" (people from St. John's), as Delia recalls, often did not consider fish heads desirable or edible, and "gave funny looks" when Filipinos left the harbour with bags of them.

Sharing at a time when many ingredients were scarce became a common practice amongst members of the Filipino community in the host region of Newfoundland, as "the

sharing of food attests to migrants' visions of their lives as closely, mutually intertwined" (Williams 1984, 117) and food serves as "a versatile counter for the exchange of good will" (Fernandez and Alegre 1988, 15). Many participants relayed stories of how *pasalubong* (souvenirs which are commonly food items) were shared when someone would travel back to the Philippines, or other larger Canadian or North American diaspora centres. Suitcases would be filled to the brim with packs of spices, dried fish, condiments, snacks, and treats. These foodstuff would then be divided into separate piles and placed in goody bags to be shared with friends and kin. Sometimes, as Delia puts it, close friends would gather for such *pasalubong* parties. However, when individuals would ask travellers for the purchase of various Filipino ingredients, another type of gathering would take place. During such occasions, travellers would place all the ingredients that they had purchased on the table and then friends would collect what they needed, offering monetary compensation for the shoppers' troubles. Small friendly business transactions like this would happen to ensure that *kababayan* had what they needed to cook their preferred meals.

Resourcefully finding ways to procure ingredients, distributing, and sharing were common practices for Filipino community members at times when general availability was an issue. In addition to these efforts, improvisation also helped create dishes with a degree of likeness to what was available in the Philippines. Two particular examples shared with me by my participants could help clarify this point.

One of the most common ingredients in Philippine cuisine, regularly used in the creation of a wide range of desserts is ube (Philippine purple yam). Characterised by its distinctively deep yet vivid shade of purple, ube is lightly sweet and possesses a nutty, earthy, and almost vanilla-like flavour (Musni and Domrongchai 2022). The unique purple colour of ube makes it an ideal natural food colorant that not only adds an attractive tint but also a subtle yet familiar taste to many a dessert in the Philippines. For earlier immigrants who favoured ube-flavoured

things, in the absence of the plant, ube *halaya* (spread/jam) or its extract or powder, purple artificial food colouring became a substitute. In order to make homemade birthday cakes that resembled the ube ones back in the Philippines, purple food colouring was added with care to the cake batter or icing in order to create the desired shade of purple closely mimicking the rich violet found in the yam. “It tastes nothing like ube, but at least it looked like it!” was a comment made by Linda about the visual comfort of the mock ube cake that “was okay, [and] added colour to our table.” Or as Tala put it, “It looked purple, it didn’t taste purple,” referring simply to the ube flavour associated with purple things in the Philippines. Aware of the superficial imitation that only visually resembled a beloved flavour, Linda’s further explanation reveals that in the absence of the actual ingredient, necessary adjustments were made to create its likeness. In other words, the visual presence of the purple cake regardless of its taste served as a reminder of that which is fondly familiar.



Figure 4.1 Ube cake, halaya and essence that can all now be purchased in the Filipino store in St. John’s (photo by author)

The second example of this kind of adjustment or improvisation was the use of wheat flour in recipes that traditionally require the use of rice flour. Rice flour is employed in a wide range of Filipino desserts. One such food is *puto*, which refers to a variety of steamed rice cakes. However, the most common type called *putong puti* (white puto) is regularly eaten as a dessert, snack, or alongside some other savoury dishes. During Filipino gatherings, *puto* is one of the most common snacks that is served. Traditionally made from *galapong* (slightly fermented milled soaked rice), *puto* is now regularly made with rice flour for convenience. This steamed rice cake is mildly sweet, has a light fluffy texture, and is sometimes topped with cheese, coconut, or salted eggs.

In Newfoundland at a time when the availability of rice or rice flour posed an issue, regular wheat flour became a substitute for some traditional Filipino rice cakes. Although aware of the difference in taste and texture when substitutes were made, the presence of *puto* during various group gatherings seemed more important than adhering to authentic recipes that required an ingredient that was not readily obtainable. This manner of substitution and improvisation is common to the immigrant experience. As social anthropologist David Y. H. Wu observes in his study of Chinese food overseas, recipes undergo a process of “recreation, invention, and representation of cooking” because various factors make immigrants “improvise both cooking materials and how they represent dishes” (Wu 2002, 56).

However, when the opportunity to procure desired ingredients presented itself, “stockpiling” as a number of my participants put it, was a common practice. Whether one travelled to the Philippines or other bigger North American cities and came back with a number of ingredients or received spices or condiments as *pasalubong*, the pantry would be filled with what was needed to cook hearty Filipino meals. The practice of stockpiling storable Filipino ingredients surprisingly continued up until the mid-2010s, when many more options became available to Filipinos in St. John’s, Newfoundland. Noticing the presence of the Filipino

community, small stores, local markets, and bigger chain supermarkets began to make accommodations to meet local demand. Many issues with availability were thus resolved and certain habitual practices embraced out of necessity by an old community in the province, were slowly relaxed.

Local Supermarkets, Asian Shops, Tindahan ni Kuya Brett, and Andaluzia Market

As it was discussed in detail in the first two chapters, groups of Filipinos who arrived in Newfoundland at different time periods came in different numbers and for different reasons. A smaller number of doctors, nurses, and teachers who arrived on the island alone or with their families had extended relatives slowly joining them throughout the years. In addition, later the community grew bigger with the arrival of Filipino nannies through the Live-In Caregiver Program in the 1990s, and a mixture of high-skilled professionals and low-skilled temporary-foreign workers from the early 2000s onwards, who would later most often achieve permanent residency and stay in Newfoundland. With the growth of the community, networking, collective effort, and well-researched business models designed to meet an expanding customer base, the unavailability of ingredients was no longer an issue after the mid-2010s.

Recalling shopping for Filipino ingredients even less than a decade ago, one can see the immense difference in terms of availability and convenience. Looking back to the year 2014, for example, when I first arrived on the island, I remember being more mindful of the amount of ingredients I had “stockpiled,” not using them as liberally as I normally would. However, things slowly started changing. After a number of years, I began noticing that Asian shops in and around St. John’s that primarily catered to Chinese customers, started to dedicate small shelves to Filipino ingredients. Some would even encourage Filipinos to order things for delivery and sale at the shop.



Figure 4.2 A notice put up in 2019 in English and Tagalog on a Chinese shop window in St. John's, encouraging Filipinos to put orders for ingredients they need (photo by author)

Thus, a bigger variety of spices, condiments, noodles, tinned fish and meat, jarred pickles and jellies, frozen produce, snacks, and treats started appearing on shelves at Asian shops that would normally sell Chinese, Japanese or Korean products. Favourite and trusted Filipino brands of things like vinegar, ketchup, and soy sauce that were not readily available in Newfoundland before, could now be purchased in such shops instead of big supermarket brands. At the same time, in the province and nationwide as well, local supermarkets such as Walmart, Sobeys, Dominion (Loblaw), Whole Sale Club, and Colemans started dedicating aisles not only to a variety of Asian food, but also specifically Filipino brand products. Bigger supermarkets went further to produce foodstuff with favourite Filipino flavours in their own brand as well. Thus, items such as ready-made adobo mixes, a range of ube-flavoured treats, frozen lumpia produced by brands like Great Value or President's Choice, started appearing

on supermarket shelves. One of my keenest and most helpful participants, who is a third-generation Filipino-Newfoundlander would always eagerly take photos of new Filipino things she saw at supermarkets and send me photos with a mixture of surprise and delight at her discoveries. Her amusement and enthusiasm was contagious. When informed of such products, I, too, would take a trip to the supermarket shelves she had mentioned to see things for myself. The sheer amount of things available now, made me think of the ease with which I could prepare food that made me feel at home. During one such trip to Dominion, I passed by the rice aisle looking at the towering shelves of numerous kinds and brands of rice at the supermarket, remembering how Val and others who had arrived here in the earlier years procured and shared this basic food.



Figure 4.3 Walmart Great Value brand ready adobo sauce to mix with cooked ingredients (photo by author)



Figure 4.4 Wall's ube ice cream sold at Sobeys and President's Choice ube boba pie sold at Dominion (photo by author)



Figure 4.5 Part of a local supermarket aisle dedicated to the sale of numerous kinds of rice (photo by author)

Then, in 2016 the very first Filipino grocery store opened in St. John's. The owner of the shop, Brett Delos Santos, sponsored by his sister who had settled in Canada years before, initially came to Newfoundland in 2011. Learning about the growing community's need for

Filipino ingredients, he started his business from his home at first. Connecting with suppliers in Toronto and purchasing multiple freezers, which were placed in his living room, he took orders from friends and acquaintances and provided them with what they needed. Filipinos would meet him at his home to pick up ingredients they had asked for or browse through the freezers to add to their supplies. As the customer base grew, Brett Delos Santos opened *Tindahan ni Kuya Brett* (Brother Brett's Store) on Empire Avenue, St. John's. Four years after that in 2020, a small café named Café MacQron was opened within the shop.



Figure 4.6 Entrance to Tindahan ni Kuya Brett located on Empire Avenue, St. John's (photo by author)



Figure 4.7 Shelves of Filipino goods as well as café tables for dine-in snacks at Tindahan ni Kuya Brett (photo by author)

The existence of a store solely dedicated to the sale of Filipino brand products matters to the community. As ethnic studies scholar Rick Bonus demonstrates in his ethnographic study of twenty oriental stores in the Los Angeles County area, such establishments not only delineate “a space of one’s own within a larger unfamiliar world” but also help in “reclaiming once familiar territory—a piece of home from the past” (Bonus 2000, 57). The atmosphere created within such shops often closely resembles those seen in the country of origin and, thus, the demarcated space comes to be associated with a sense of home. In addition, considering especially the availability of recognisable brands of products that are labelled “Made in the Philippines” turn them into symbols of “life and things in the homeland” because commodities like these “become expressions of, or even sources of one’s ethnicity” as they “trigger a connection that may have been physically severed” but is “re-established by the product’s availability in the new settlement” making labels “a basis for remapping one’s sense of displacement” (Ibid., 62-63). As such, the presence of Filipino brand products in the

atmosphere of a store closely resembling those found in the Philippines creates a distinctly Filipino spot for community members.

Four years after the opening of *Kuya Brett*, in 2020, Mohamed Kasmi who had initially come to Canada from Morocco in 2013 as a graduate student, opened *Andaluzia Market* on Peet Street, St. John's. In the initial years, the small space of the shop was dedicated to the sale of a variety of Middle Eastern ingredients, produce, and objects, and possessed an atmosphere resembling those experienced in bazaars. With the success of this business and the enthusiasm of a diverse clientele, more ingredients became available at *Andaluzia*. Then, in 2023, Kasmi expanded his business to a bigger location on O'Leary Avenue in St. John's in order to cater to Middle Eastern, South Asian, East Asian, and Southeast Asian customers. With more space in the second new location, the first establishment now focuses on the sale of a variety of Asian goods and groceries. The majority of the items sitting on the shelves of this smaller location were in fact Filipino things (Figure 4.7). The sheer volume of the Filipino products that were available in this store, evokes a feeling of nostalgia that positively triggered a sense of at-homeness for many community members. Recalling a visit to *Andaluzia Market's* Asian grocery store on a hot summer day, Chesa tells me,

My mother came to visit last year, and one day we drove a few minutes to Andaluzia. I wanted to show her the place. She was surprised to see shelf after shelf with Filipino stuff! She told me, "*Anak* [child/daughter], you have everything here now! Why did I bring back so much food?!" I told her not to bring, because we have it all now! But she didn't believe me before she saw it. I think because a few years ago when she came, there wasn't a lot. Then, we walked around and we bought queso [cheese] ice cream there. It was really hot that day, so it felt like we were in the Philippines doing [the] same things.

Considering the particular host region of Newfoundland, the experience of being minutes away from a grocery shop that sells all the food items commonly seen in the Philippines and the ability to easily enjoy treats popular in one's homeland in this context, speaks of the changing experiences of place for the members of this minority group. The role of goods and groceries in stabilising a sense of ease and security through the evocation of nostalgia is particularly

important when we consider how they bring the then and there to the now and here, by creating spaces of emplacement, which folklorist Kirin Narayan defines as “strategies of coming to belong somewhere” (Narayan 2010, 472). As Rick Bonus elaborates in his research about Filipino grocery stores in California,

...goods seem to trigger images and memories of a time and place associated with the original homeland. It is as if products mimic the objective existence of immigration while charting a different geography: the Philippines is simultaneously “here” and “there.” Looking at these products and shopping for them becomes an exercise in nostalgia, so that a specific “identity” is built on a kind of longing for what is missing and attempting to fill that space. Nostalgia, elicited through shopping for these specific goods, is of primary importance in dealing with displacement...and in purposely reordering present disruption. In a sense, nostalgia eases the trauma of immigration because it provides some degree of comfort or security, some feeling of being “at home”. (Bonus 2000, 64)

Thus, the role of such stores and supermarkets that carry Filipino groceries in the context of Newfoundland, cannot be underestimated. The existence of such spaces with a bounty of ingredients that evoke nostalgia and a sense of comfort, helps the process of immigrant and diasporic emplacement, as defined by Narayan. When foodstuff as the most basic and fundamental aspect of everyday life is readily available in abundance in a host region, a sense of belonging to a place that provides, is inevitable. This decreases a sense of foreignness and nonbelonging.



Figure 4.8 A majority of shelves at Andalusia Market’s first location were dedicated to Filipino brand groceries and products (photos by author)

The growth of the Filipino community and members' collective efforts throughout the decades have contributed to a change in context. From having to fill suitcases with ingredients, buying things in bulk, and meeting local fishermen at the dock to procure necessary ingredients in the early decades, Filipinos now enjoy the ease and comfort of buying all that they need in local shops and supermarkets. In 2024, having a well-stocked Filipino kitchen in Newfoundland, simply means a short walk or drive to a range of stores or supermarkets. Since food remains "one of the world's most time-honoured ways of sharing" (Shortridge and Shortridge 1998, 8), in a collectivistic culture like Philippine culture, availability does not necessarily lessen the desire to practice this important aspect of Filipino mentality. Thus, despite the ease of access and abundance, the spirit of sharing has not diminished. When ingredients are on special offer, exceptionally fresh or appealing, or not commonly available in the market (e.g. fresh tropical fruit and vegetables), people inform each other of their availability on group chats and social media pages. Bumping into each other at the Filipino store or other locations after seeing the same post, sometimes provides an opportunity for community members to catch up and linger for a short chat.

As folklorist Ayako Yoshimura explains in her article about the significance of ethnic grocery stores in diasporic settings, such places contribute to experiencing "the familiar, [as] the sights and scents of fondly recalled imported products... bring a sense of comfort" (Yoshimura 2010, 48). Furthering her argument about the folkloric place and importance of such establishments for diasporans and immigrants, Yoshimura writes,

An ethnic grocery store is for ethnic communities not merely a place to shop for food, but a social hub and a conduit of folklore. The store provides a space in which people encounter others living in the same circumstances, with whom they share not only cultural knowledge but also New World experiences. Exuding a homeland atmosphere that links immigrants and their descendants to their ethnic traditions and folkways, the ethnic grocery store supports the continuity of traditions in diaspora and their perseverance through subsequent generations. (Ibid., 49)

As I noticed on a number of occasions while shopping at Asian stores or enjoying a snack at the designated sitting area at Tindahan ni Kuya Brett (Café MacQron), people often do easily strike up conversations with each other. Some shoppers know each other well and linger a while to chat, while others who do not, often still strike up casual and polite conversations with their fellow *kababayan*. However, not every conversation is necessarily sought for or desired. The following paragraph from my fieldnotes can help elucidate this point,

While doing some grocery shopping today, I saw some of my participants at the Filipino store. We chatted and exchanged pleasantries. I got introduced to a few people I did not know. Then, when I was browsing through the noodle shelf, I saw Rosie come in. I waved at her. As she started walking towards me, a shopper warmly spoke to her in Tagalog. She apologetically responded, “I am so sorry! I don’t understand Tagalog. I wish I did, but I don’t!” The woman immediately switched to English, but I could still detect a mild look of embarrassment on Rosie’s face. Later when we left the shop, she told me that she knows that the majority of Filipinos who were born and raised here do not speak Tagalog, but it sometimes made her “feel self-conscious” when she was put on the spot. This made me think of Danilo who is also a member of the second generation but had a very different approach. Unlike Rosie, he found any interaction with Tagalog speakers in private or public spaces an opportunity to learn new words and phrases. (November 17, 2022)

Overall, occasional moments of misunderstanding and awkwardness did not seem to discourage members of the second and third generation of Filipino diasporans in Newfoundland from getting the food items they desired from establishments that offered an abundance of them. Food serves an immensely important link to background and community, and the preservation of that connection seemed to matter more than scattered instances of discomfiture. It is interesting to note that some research that is carried out about the meaning and place of ethnic grocery stores in diasporic settings, reveals that unlike what Yoshimura describes, the atmosphere of some such establishments carries a degree of negativity and tension for some diasporans. In their study of the Polish community in London, for example, cultural identity scholar Marta Rabikowska and migration geographer Kathy Burrell argue that, for the community they studied, ethnic stores matter because of their role in making food products accessible to Polish people who do not necessarily value or view such establishments

as places that provide opportunities for “networking and social gain” (Rabikowska and Burrell 2009, 219). Their ethnographic observations, in fact, reveal an overall disinclination displayed by Polish individuals to engage with customers and shopkeepers while procuring needed groceries in such places. Thus, “emotional value” is placed on the ability to find Polish food, not Polish company (Ibid., 230). The homelike feeling of familiarity that these Polish stores in London create is desirable because of,

...the shop’s position as a place where products, language, people and characteristically Polish design all merge to create an experience which resonates very intimately... Even when the migrants are resistant to social connectivity within the location, buying products in a Polish shop articulates a connection with the home country. The most mundane practice of choosing groceries becomes a statement, a material gesture acknowledging Polish origin and reinstating the meaning of home. (Ibid., 219-220)

Similarly, Asian Studies scholar Purmina Mankekar conducts a study about Indian stores in the San Francisco Bay area in order to examine the social spaces that such businesses create. Her ethnographic study reveals that emotions that are evoked by nostalgia can be contradictory in such spaces, because the familiar is not necessarily always redolent of “pleasure or security” (Mankekar 2002, 93). Mankekar explains that such establishments provide the researcher with a rich fieldwork site to study daily practices of social interaction and customs. Her observations reveal, however, that as a result of restrictive social practices stemming from patriarchal views and gender biases, the atmosphere of Indian grocery stores in the San Francisco Bay area create comforting spaces of familiarity for some, while for others they are “fraught with claustrophobia and community surveillance” (Ibid., 88).

My observations and interviews reveal that the sort of reluctance and mistrust Rabikowska, Burrell, and Mankekar notice amongst the diasporic groups they study, is not applicable at large to the Filipino community in Newfoundland. There seems to exist a general willingness to connect to people, albeit briefly, in such places. In fact, a nod, a smile, a short exchange of pleasantries, seems to make community members feel visible, connected, and

secure. For second and third generation Filipino-Newfoundlanders, who visit such grocery stores, the attitudes seem to vary. For some, if they are “put on the spot” linguistically, a self-conscious feeling of inadequacy might make them feel a degree of discomfort, but if they readily admit to not having sufficient knowledge of the language, they are not challenged especially because the cultural value of pakikisama especially in a small place demands that one remains cordial and obliging to those around. Thus, such places would simply become sites of abundant Filipino products that they like and use as a means of connecting to their culture.

As the discussions in this section demonstrate, over the years, Filipino food has become more easily obtainable to the community in Newfoundland. A brief survey of the methods of procuring ingredients throughout the decades reveals a major shift in terms of availability and accessibility. The reason behind such changes can be traced to immigration policies that have made it possible for different waves of Filipino immigrants to arrive and settle in Newfoundland. As it was mentioned earlier, many Filipinos who came here in the 1990s and 2000s, through the LCP (Live-In Caregiver Program) or as TFWs (Temporary Foreign Worker) were granted permanent residency after two years of work with their respective employers. After obtaining their status and the security that comes with it, some Filipinos who had viewed previous work in Canada as a stepping stone to their next career path, embraced opportunities to change their line of work and opened their own businesses to become self-employed. As it will be elaborated further when discussing Filipino restaurants and food establishments in Newfoundland, with the awareness of the steady growth of the community, more Filipinos started businesses that focused on the import and preparation of Filipino food.

The shift in the availability of Filipino ingredients in various stores and supermarkets in Newfoundland speaks of the palpable changes in the context of this host region. With the growth of the Filipino community, various providers started to offer foodstuff to address this folk group’s culinary needs. In this sense, Newfoundland cannot be merely or stereotypically

seen as a context where scarcity and inconvenience marks the ethnic experience. A growing presence over time has meant a collective awareness of diverse needs and cooperative efforts to address them.

Salu-Salo in St. John's

In her acclaimed book *Day of Honey: A Memoir of Food, Love and War* (2011), journalist Annia Ciezadlo, who spent over a decade of her life working in Baghdad and Beirut during times of war and conflict, expressively voices her need for cooking and consuming food as a way to make meaning of her surroundings and create a sense of place in the space around her, as she writes,

When I'm in a strange new city and feeling rootless, I cook. No matter how inhospitable the room or streets outside, I construct a little field kitchen... I cook to comprehend the space I've landed in, to touch and feel and take in the raw materials of my new surrounding... I cook because eating has always been my most reliable way of understanding the world. I cook because I am always, always hungry. And I cook for the oldest reasons: to banish loneliness, homesickness, the persistent feeling that I don't belong. (Ciezadlo 2011, 8)

To Ciezadlo the materiality of food that involves all five senses mixed with the memory and associations that go along with it, help one feel more at ease and at home. Later in the book, she further elaborates on why food, especially in the context of migration or displacement, helps deal with homesickness and anchoring oneself in a new location, as she writes, "If you couldn't bring the body back to the place it remembered, you did the next best thing: you brought a bit of the place to where the body was" (Ibid., 91). Contemplating on Ciezadlo's powerful memoir, I could easily make associations with what Filipino food in the context of Newfoundland meant to my participants, especially considering the fact that, "people prepare food, acquire it, consume it and reject it as a tool to help give them a degree of agency in defining the places they are constantly re-creating as home" (Abarca 2020, xii). For immigrant and diasporic groups such acts of reconstruction require the maintenance of a sense of

connection to people and homeland. These efforts are facilitated through gatherings that focus on food. As ethnic food studies scholar Paula Torreiro Pazo notes,

By means of collective culinary enjoyment of traditional foods of the homeland, ethnicity is reified and celebrated in the intimacy of a meeting with family and friends... [turning] food into a powerful magnet that keeps the ethnic community closely knit and linked to homeland (Pazo 2011, 219)

Communal efforts to create a sense of place for the folk group in this study often result in commensality. As a significant social practice, commensality is a “powerful means by which human beings create, express, and solidify feelings of mutual trust, intimacy, and friendship” (Leite 2017, 243). It functions as “symbol and confirmation of social community and of the assumption of mutual obligation” (Freud 1918, 174) as it forges “basic bonds of kinship” (Wilson 2019, 124). The cultural significance of commensality has been the focus of several interesting studies (De Souza Lima et al. 2015; Fischler 2011; Kerner et al. 2015; Kravva 2008; Tuten 2019). In Philippine culture, the study of commensality with regards to kin and community can be best understood through *salu-salu* culture.

As some familiarity has already been established about Filipino food and the ingredients needed to prepare it, it is important to look at the aspect of Philippine foodways that is associated with the culture of dining. As it was mentioned in the introductory chapter, the role of food in Philippine social life is deeply central to the point that cultural historian Doreen Fernandez declares that “food to the Filipino is history. It is bond, culture, and identity” (Fernandez 2000, 98), as it “punctuates the Filipino’s life, is a touchstone to his memories, a measure of his relationships with nature, with his fellowmen, with the world” (Fernandez and Alegre 1988, 9). Thus, taking into consideration the collective mentality of Philippine *weltanschauung*, the significance of dining together cannot be underestimated. *Salu-salu*, as a practice of eating together, is therefore a significant cultural practice for the folk group in this study as well.

As “virtually all Filipino social gatherings are accompanied by food and soft drinks” (Gallo-Crail and Hawkins 2012, 109), *salu-salu* becomes “a permanent feature” in every get-together where Filipinos are involved (Rebustillo 2023, 40). The term, as previously discussed, loosely translates into “banquet”, “feast”, “a spread” as well as “dining together”, “sharing a plate”, or “sharing food at one table”. It is thus considered “an informal banquet where the meal... does not just mean food,” but “the pleasure of one another’s company” as well (De la Torre 1978, 21). At its core, the emphasis of *salu-salu* is on togetherness because eating to the Filipino “is associated with the cementing of ties” (Ibid.). This Filipino kind of dining together therefore “promotes social networking” (Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000, 222), and is “a fundamental aspect of social culture and provides an atmosphere of familial love and community friendship”, especially when considering the fact that “maintaining family relationships, friendships, and social networks is an important aspect of *pakikisama*” (Gallo-Crail and Hawkins 2012, 109). Special occasions always warrant a call for *salu-salu*. However, if no solid reason is found, such get-togethers happen regardless, sometimes spontaneously because Filipinos believe that “food should always be shared. Food is always communal” (Mendiola 2021). Embracing *pakikisama* requires paying tribute to and acknowledging the role of friends and kin in one’s wellbeing and ability to succeed. Thus, as linguist Rhodalyne Gallo-Crail and historian Michael Hawkins explicate,

Birthdays, graduations, weddings, anniversaries, baptisms, confirmations, and births are all occasions accompanied by a *salu-salu*... While such parties are primarily meant to celebrate the individual achievements of specific family members, they are also intended as signs of gratitude and kinship to those in attendance. The hospitality of organisers and the quality of the festivities convey an implicit acknowledgement of the community’s collective contributions to individual successes. Notions of social cohesiveness and interdependence are reiterated in these gatherings. (Gallo-Crail and Hawkins 2012, 109)

Therefore, *salu-salu* is an intrinsic part of Filipino social life that helps promote a feeling of togetherness and coherence. But what does a typical *salu-salu* look like? As food author Reynaldo Alejandro explains with regards to *salu-salu*,

The components of a typical meal—fresh fish or other seafood; chicken, pork or beef; vegetables; hearty soups mixed with coconut and noodles—are arrayed around a large container of steamed white rice (Meals must include the staple, rice, or else the Filipino feels like he hasn't eaten at all). The delectable spread allows diners to feast first with their eyes (Filipinos are *takaw-mata*, greedy-eyed!) Then they partake with gusto... and merrily combine the varied dishes with heaps of rice and accents of dipping sauces. (Alejandro 2005, 15)

Salu-salo gatherings can be small or large. They can be the getting together of a few friends and family members, or the assembly of the whole community during special occasions. Thus, the amount of food that is provided varies. However, the Filipino way dictates that there is always more than enough food for leftovers and takeaways. Guests have to be able to go for second and third servings, as many Filipino dishes can also be enjoyed lukewarm or cold. The food, in fact, never leaves the table while guests are still at the house and busy mingling or enjoying other activities. This gives everyone a chance to go back and enjoy everything at a leisurely pace. Food is available in abundance at a *salu-salo* event. As Jay, a second-generation Filipino-Newfoundlander, reminisces, during such gatherings, “if there were ten guests coming, we would prepare food for fifty!” The Filipino brand of hospitality is best shown through the act of heartily feeding guests. As Asian studies scholar Eleanor R. Laquian notes, “hospitality is a Filipino trait that is best expressed through food served graciously and generously” and during *salu-salo* it is “usual for the host to give a take-home package of the best dishes for the guests to continue to enjoy it at home with family (Laquian 2023, 95). As a “spiritual value” (Root 1997, 330), hospitality nourishes a sense of *pakikipawa* (fellowship and acknowledgement of shared humanity), *pakikisama* (getting along with each other) and *bayanihan* (community spirit); because to the Filipino “living in a community and hospitality go together” and this requires the ability to “share one’s life and material resources” (Ibid.). Thus, the act of producing a spread and sharing food is an important vehicle for adhering to ingrained cultural values that help Filipinos consolidate a stronger sense of self and identity. In the context of immigration and in the process of the formation of a community in a different

setting, such regularly held get-togethers, be they informal gatherings or formal events, allow Filipinos to create a sense of place in the act of breaking bread together. In other words, such assemblies help cultivate a sense of intimacy and belonging to community. The examples that I will provide in the following pages will help elucidate this claim.



Figure 4.9 A humorous meme demonstrating the abundance regularly seen at *salu-salo* gatherings (photo sent to author by participant)

Salu-salo in the host region of Newfoundland has a history as old as the first Filipino arrivals on the island. In the early years, when many Filipino ingredients were scarce and the community was smaller and more close-knit, such get-togethers helped members cope and adjust to the new environment.

According to older community members who have lived in Newfoundland for several decades now, get-togethers during weekends would be organised regularly at different Filipino houses to socialise, eat Filipino food, catch up, vent, gossip, and organise future events. Some gatherings were pot-lucks, while others were occasions for hosts to show their cooking skills and feed guests and their families. Jay, whose family regularly hosted such gatherings when he was a child, remembers his mother cooking in stages sometimes, in order to prepare all the

food for the spread. The host would never only provide one dish. A variety of dishes were always offered.

During a *salu-salu*, all the food is laid out on the table at the same time. There is no need for sequential provision. Soups, stews, noodles, rice, appetizers, buns, finger food, dipping sauces, desserts, and drinks are placed on the table simultaneously. It is up to the diner to mix and match various dishes and plate up according to personal preferences. No judgement is made if one's plate contains noodles, stew and dessert at the same time. Filipinos embrace a *halo-halo* culture. The term *halo-halo* literally translates into "mix-mix". *Halo-halo* refers to a popular cold dessert made from crushed or shaved ice, evaporated milk and a host of other seemingly irrelevant ingredients such as sweet beans, *gulaman* (agar-agar), shaved young coconut, plantains, sweetened yam, *pinipig* (flattened rice), ube *halaya* or ice-cream, and flan, to mention a few. The layered mixture of such diverse ingredients turns into a beloved dessert that blends everything in an agreeable way. Figuratively, the term *halo-halo* refers to the cultural influences in the Philippines from indigenous as well as Asian, to Western culture, that creates a unique brand of Philippine ethos, viewed sometimes through the prism of the theories of hybridity (Peterson 2016, 100). Adaptation and resilience thus become ingrained in a culture that has endured much historically. The hodgepodge that is created is welcome. Purity is not a priority. One's attitude toward things is embroidered with a sense of resilience and playfulness. The presence of *halo-halo* culture is also evident on the Filipino plate during a *salu-salu*.



Figure 4.10 Halo-halo purchased at Sinaing Filipino restaurant in St. John's, Newfoundland (photo by author)



Figure 4.11 The author's plates during *salu-salu* gatherings in summer 2023 and winter 2022 showing a mixture of different Filipino dishes on one plate (photos by author)

As it was mentioned in the previous chapter, stepping into the Filipino house, especially during a gathering, is a multisensory experience. The presence of food during a *salu-salu* intensifies the involvement of the senses. To the Filipino nose, the aroma is familiar and welcoming: a blend of the smell of cooked rice, soy sauce, vinegar, garlic and onions along with other ingredients that are fried, boiled, and steamed. However, to the olfactory organ untrained in the Filipino way, the mixture of strong smells may be experienced as unpleasant

and sharp, as some community members who sometimes invited local guests commented. However, “the gathering...seeing, smelling, tasting the food with everyone [was] so comforting!” Linda tells me recalling a time when fewer Filipinos lived in Newfoundland when she initially arrived as a single nurse. Reflecting on regular Filipino gatherings to eat together, the way Linda describes such informal get-togethers is to mention the involvement of the senses: the strong smell of familiar food (pungent to outsiders and inviting to insiders), the taste of ingredients that bring with them a sense of consolation, the appetizing view of the colourful spread, and the company of those whose language you speak, whose social cues you do not miss, and whose interests and humour you comprehend. The place that a *salu-salu* creates for Filipinos in the context of Newfoundland is a liminal space where one can feel comfortably anchored. With an interesting story, Linda then goes further to explain that in the early decades of migration, for many newcomers, these *salu-salu* get-togethers became a significant source of emotional comfort that generated a sense of security and group belonging. *Salu-salu* events would take place regularly, if not on a weekly basis. Community members would take the time to feed each other or bring various food to share so that everyone could enjoy a taste of home. As a young nurse who had arrived in Newfoundland in the seventies, Linda started joining such gatherings that were often hosted by community members who were more well-established on the island. “They looked out for you”, she tells me. During an occasion in her early days in Newfoundland when she had witnessed a traumatising event at a local hospital, she sought the advice of one of these community members. Recalling the conversation and the patient ear that was lent to her, she adds,

Até [Tagalog honorific for an older sister/female person] told me, “Halika dito, magluluto ako ng adobo!” [“Come here, I’ll make adobo!”] I went and some other *atés* and *kuyas* also came. They fed me good food, Filipino food. We ate, talked, and then ate again. I cried a little and then laughed a lot. That was it. I just remember [it] well. The food and it was a good good community.

“Come here, I’ll make adobo!” is an excellent example of the type of gentleness and consideration common in the Philippine brand of hospitality that seeks to bestow succour by way of consoling both the body and the mind.



Figure 4.12 Adobo dishes made with varying amounts of base marination ingredients, i.e. vinegar, soy sauce, garlic, peppercorn, and bay leaves (photo by author)

When “other atés and kuyas” are asked to join the table, *bayanihan* or “the spirit of helping another who is in need” (Ramos 2004, 272), is at work. The presence of good food and good company soothes and solaces. Although the sharing of food is the ostensible reason for such gatherings, Linda’s narrative reveals that such informal events also generate a familial atmosphere where many important cultural values could also be practiced. Thus, a sense of place, as it has been discussed in this thesis, is created in such small congregations. Filipino houses in Newfoundland that regularly offered things that were familiar, consoling, and in alignment with what is culturally valued, provided what can be considered a liminal place for community members to seek refuge while adjusting to a different setting and a new life. Yet again, aside from *bayanihan*, which denotes the presence of community spirit, the cultural values of *kapwa* and *pakikisama*, can also be considered in such spaces. In fact, in the context of Filipino migration such values are highlighted, as psychologist Jei Africa explicates,

Pakikisama is considered to be deeply embedded in Filipinos' underlying core value, *kapwa*, which connotes shared identity. *Kapwa* is rooted in the ability to see oneself in others and an underlying belief that everyone has the same humanity. It is this sense of connection that allows one to see others as familial, whether or not any conventional family relationship exists. *Pakikisama* stems from this deep understanding that we are all related. In collectivistic cultures such as Filipino, a person's behaviour is typically motivated by doing what's good for the whole group or community. This contrasts greatly with the U.S. American culture of individualism, which prioritizes one's own personal interests over the needs and goals of others. Examples of *pakikisama* in the United States among Filipinos include long-time residents taking in recent immigrants, sharing resources, and helping them navigate the complexities of adapting to a new home country. This emphasis on community over self is based on shared values, experiences, and country of origin. (Africa 2022, 723)

As it can be gathered from Africa's statement, the belief in human connection creates a sense of duty to share and support members of folk group. A *salu-salo* gathering facilitates this process, considering especially that "the ways food smells, feels, tastes and is cooked motivate emotion and memory in a more powerful way than other reminders of home and the places we inhabit" (Matta et al. 2020, 4). For the second and third generation growing up outside of the Philippines and not being intimately familiar with the intricacies of Philippine cultural values, being raised in the community and joining various *salu-salo* events throughout their lifetime still means the demonstration of hospitality in a similar manner, which is acquired and instilled generationally. Showing a comparable brand of warmth and generosity when receiving guests speaks of the passing of such traditions.

It is important to mention here that although such get-togethers can go beyond the simple act of dining together, most are primarily light-hearted, cheerful, informal events where people share food, laughs, and stories in a relaxed environment. Consider the following example shared by Lisa,

You know what I like the most about it? It is easy. When people say "Come over, let's eat!" It's simple. I sometimes bring something to share, but like the host does not expect. You chat and gossip (*laughs*). You eat whatever you want. You want food again? Just go grab it! It is different when there is Filipino gathering. It's like back home with family and friends, sometimes a bit like when there's fiesta. Just food and people and a good time! For me, in Newfoundland it is like I teleport. I go to a Filipino's house and bam! Parang nasa Pinas lang ako! [It's just like I am in the Philippines!].

In Lisa's narrative, commensality during such get-togethers creates an atmosphere that closely resembles similar ones in the Philippines. At its core, the casual comfort of a *salu-salo* gathering and the warm and welcoming atmosphere it creates, are reminiscent of the kind of places such brand of hospitality creates.

Salu-salo gatherings in Newfoundland started as soon as the first Filipinos arrived on the island. They still happen whenever any occasion to celebrate or mourn presents itself. If there is no occasion, they still take place whenever community members can find the time to cook and feed each other. All you need is good food and good company and a space that transforms itself into a welcoming place brimming with creature comforts and ample reassurance.



Figure 4.13 Pictures from various *salu-salo* gatherings in Newfoundland (photos by author)



Figure 4.14 A serendipitous encounter with a *kababayan* in Toronto who designed his own tote bag that reads “This bag contains Filipino party leftovers” (photo by author)

“But Dammit! I Make a Good Adobo!”: Claiming Identity in Host Region through Food

While conducting my fieldwork, I talked to community members of various ages. Aside from Filipinos who have chosen Newfoundland as their permanent home in the last decade or so, in some cases I managed to speak with three generations in one family: grandparents (the first generation) who were among the earliest Filipinos to arrive in Newfoundland in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s; parents (the second generation) who were either brought here when they were very young or born here after the family had settled on the island; and grandchildren, who were often mixed-raced, born and raised in Newfoundland, and who in most cases, had never or seldom visited the Philippines. Mingling with people of different generations, I learned much about how ethnic sensibilities are passed on, considered, and reconstructed among different generations of community members at different times. A degree of discrepancy in approaches to ethnic food is expected as a result of “very different set of past references and memories” of homeland culture that exist generationally (Pazo 2011, 219), because the first generation refers to lived experiences and realities of homeland culture, while to their children

and grandchildren without such direct references, cultural practices as instilled and transmitted by the members of the previous generation (Ibid., 220).

Regardless, food provides one of the most tangible means through which individuals relate to their ethnic background in diaspora. However, in the context of Newfoundland, my findings reveal that as a result of the political climate in various decades, nuances highlight the embracement of Filipino cuisine generationally. This was especially highlighted when observing the third generation, reminding me of Hansen's Law that states: "What the son wishes to forget the grandson wishes to remember" (Hansen 1938). In other words, unlike the second generation, who strives to integrate and assimilate, the grandchildren of immigrants who feel secure in their place and belonging in the society where they are born and raised, find the space to take pride and an active interest in their ethnic heritage (Bender and Kagiwada 1968, 360). As it was mentioned in the previous chapter, both folklorist Robert Klymasz (1973) and sociologist Wsevolod Isajiw (1984), mention material culture, food, and group celebrations as some of the most accessible aspects of culture that allow younger members of an ethnic community engage with their heritage.

Going back to Hansen's Law, my observations reveal that while growing up, the second generation/children of early Filipino immigrants, made different associations with cooking and consuming Filipino food in comparison to their own children. Ritchie Perez, a well-known photographer in the province who had come to Newfoundland as a three-year-old with his parents in 1977, spoke of school lunches prepared by his Filipino parents, the need to explain his food and heritage when being othered in the school environment, and the innocent desire to eat like everyone else around him. A scene from the sitcom *Son of a Critch* (2022-Present), which is a semi-autobiographical account of comedian Mark Critch's life, portrays Mark and his soon-to-be best friend Ritchie in the schoolyard during a lunchbreak in the 1980s. The scene is compelling, heart-warming, and heart-breaking at the same time:

Mark the Narrator: No matter how bad I had it, Ritchie had it worse.

Teenager 1 (approaching Ritchie): What stinks?!

Teenager 2 (sitting across from Ritchie): Oh, my God! Your lunch is disgusting!

Teenager 1: What is that? Dog?!

Teenager 2: Gross! Is that what they eat back in China?

Ritchie: The Philippines.

Teenager 1: He speaks! What'd you say?

Ritchie: I'm not Chinese. I'm Filipino.

Mark the Narrator: The Foxes were not interested in the geographic segmentation of Asian countries. The only way to get a couple of foxes away from their prey was with better prey.

Mark (approaching Ritchie with a pack of crisps): So Ritchie, wanna trade lunches?

[the teenagers leave fighting over the pack of crisps]

Ritchie (offering some of his pancit to Mark): Want some?

Mark (hesitantly taking a fork to try the pancit): Sure.

Mark the Narrator: I was not used to food that had flavour. The foods I was raised on only had two colours: white and beige. Everything was boiled. You knew supper was cooked when all the windows fogged over.

Mark (gasping over the food he just ate): Ahh, guy's got a kick! Oh, that's nuts! What the hell is in this?

Mark the Narrator: Finally a little pain and suffering that I kind of liked.

[The children laugh over Mark's reaction to Filipino food]

Similar scenarios in real life happened often enough for a number of my participants who were growing up in Newfoundland in the early decades of migration. A strong sense of regional pride fuelled by the cultural revival on the island, a dearth of interest in outsiders' cultures, various forms of misinformation and xenophobia in a predominantly white society that had not embraced contact with other cultures to the same degree as some other regions of Canada, were some of the factors that contributed to the othering of newcomers. And as it is well established, food greatly facilitates the process of othering those we perceive as different (Appadurai 1988; Bernstein 2010; Bower 1997; De Souza 2019; Douglas 1972; Julier 2013; Karrebaek 2012, 2013; Ray 2004, 2016; Smith Maguire 2018; Williams-Forson 2022). However, it is important

to mention here that according to my participants, such attitudes toward unfamiliar food was displayed more often at school, where as Nora put it, “Kids behaved like kids, anyways.” Nevertheless, for the second generation growing up in Newfoundland in the wake of its cultural revival, Filipino food was consumed and enjoyed at home and during community gatherings. Nonetheless, in school environments in Newfoundland that, according to my second-generation participants, only housed a very small number of students of colour a few decades back, reactions to such attempts at othering ranged from self-consciousness and frustration, to resistance and confrontation, as well as opportunities for introduction and connection. Rosie tells me,

Often it was all “Ew! Nasty foreign food!” But once my friends tried my mother’s *lumpia*, they kept on asking about it later and wanted me to share my lunch if I had some. The first few times before they even tried Filipino food, they turned their noses up [at it].

In Rosie’s example, after getting to know her at school and forming a friendship with her, her “foreign food” was tested, approved of, and even desired later. In this case, food becomes a tool with which to initially other the Filipino child but eventually turns into a means through which to connect to a culture after establishing rapport. Thus, for this generation, while growing up in Newfoundland, Filipino food represented the comfort of homemade dishes as well as functioning as a potential marker of difference and nonbelonging.

Early Filipino immigrants continued their foodways with varying degrees of modifications to recipes and raised their children in households where Filipino food comprised the main diet. Grandchildren, however, who were born and raised in Newfoundland in mixed-raced families, engaged with and enjoyed Filipino food on special occasions. Daisy, for example, who is the granddaughter of an early Filipino immigrant to Newfoundland, speaks of how she associates Filipino food with celebrations. Thus, certain recipes passed on from her late grandmother, help continue Filipino family traditions in Newfoundland as she explains,

I associate making wontons with Christmas and New Year's, because that's when my *lola* would make them, which now is when I make them. So it becomes more of a family activity, because I have to make the meat, but then everyone participates in the folding because you're really taking a teaspoon of meat for a wonton. So you end up making two hundred wontons. So many hands make light work... My *lola* used to do it on her own, which I have no idea how she did it. But ever since we adapted it, it became a family thing. She would make wonton and pancit for New Year's, and then pancit for our birthdays. You know, 'cause long noodles, long life.

The practice of making the same food and adhering to the same family traditions, helps individuals of Filipino descent maintain a sense of connection to their cultural identity. As it has been well-established, food is indisputably linked (Skibinsky 2020) and central to a sense of self (Fischler 1988, 275), as the act of eating itself is often considered “a reaffirmation of [one's] cultural identity” (Kittler et al. 2012, 39). The subtle confirmation of one's heritage within the domestic space through the commitment to continuity albeit with a degree of creativity, generates a sense of place similar to what the previous generations has strived to establish: a Filipino place in Newfoundland. Looking for a higher degree of accuracy in recreating hand-written recipes left by her grandmother, Daisy adds that, “Usually, when I cook Filipino food I cook it at my parents' place because I need my dad to taste it to let me know if it tastes right.” As it can be gathered, a search for a deeper level of “familiarity as a way to access a sense of nearness” to that which is culturally tangible and desirable can be achieved through food (Nititham 2017, 206). Daisy further explains that since her main connection to her grandparents' culture is through Filipino cuisine, important life events call for its preparation and sharing. One such significant event was her wedding. Daisy explains that since she is of Filipino and her husband is of Lebanese descent, they decided to serve food showcasing their culinary heritage with “a Newfoundland connection” because they were both born and raised on this island. Sharing her grandmother's recipes with the chef in charge, they came up with the menu that served chicken adobo with garlic rice, and zaatar crusted cod with potatoes. Newfoundland berry pudding was the dessert, and midnight snacks included lumpia and falafels with baba ghanoush. The spread at the wedding harmoniously connected the three

cultures, and allowed the bride and her family to remember her grandmother through her recipes. Daisy fondly shared that a guest at the wedding, would still talk about the tasty chicken adobo many months after the wedding. Culinary endeavours such as this one help maintain a sense of connection to place and people, as “food powerfully communicates the humanity of those who live in the past, and through the senses this past is felt vividly in the present” (Abarca 2020, xiv). In addition, in a broader sense, since our foodways attest to our choices and need for connection to the folk “with whom we wish to identify” (Fiddes 1991, 33), they are indispensable tools in creating spaces, liminal as they may be, that are infused with meaning and significance.

Speaking with individuals who were born and raised here in Newfoundland in various decades, I soon learned that for many who wish to maintain their cultural heritage, fit in within Filipino spaces in the community, and introduce the Filipino aspect of their identity, familiarity with and enthusiasm over food were important factors in achieving a sense of belonging. Since “food associated with ethnic community becomes the quintessential marker of identity” (Garg and Khushu-Lahiri 2012, 80), for members of later generations it often translates into the most accessible and “primary marker of cultural identity” (Hickey 2023, 185). Nicky, who was born in St. John’s and had never travelled to the Philippines, claimed her heritage and place within the community through mastering recipes as she remarked, “I don’t speak the language. I sometimes miss the cultural cues during gatherings. But dammit! I make a good adobo!” As folklorist Robert Klymasz who has written extensively about the Ukrainian-Canadian community explains, “the loss of ethnic language or dialect often prevents the preservation of verbal folklore forms. But food, with its sensual qualities, is also a powerful reminder of the past and an ideal vehicle for communication” (Klymasz 1973, 133).

Thus, interaction with, knowledge of, and regular preparation of Filipino food by the children and grandchildren of Filipino immigrants reveals the continuation of efforts to

embrace heritage and maintain places of familiarity and belonging in the host region of Newfoundland.



Figure 4.15 A Thanksgiving spread in Newfoundland featuring turkey dinner dishes in addition to *pancit* and *lumpia* (photo by participant)

A History of Filipino Food Establishments in Newfoundland

In her study of the Filipino population in Dublin, cultural sociologist Diane Nititham views food as a “connecting site” explaining that places that sell Filipino foodstuff or serve dishes that the community consumes are sites that “evoke memories and a sense of comfort: nostalgia along with the components of day-to-day life...mix together and mark a space of difference” (Nititham 2017, 206). In the host region of Newfoundland, over the years, community efforts have created such places of connection not only within private domestic spaces that are immensely important to this folk group’s wellbeing, but also public establishments that provide places of familiarity and belonging for Filipinos while positively

evoking local curiosity and interest. Aside from the stores mentioned in the previous section, restaurants and eateries have played an important role regarding Filipino placemaking in Newfoundland.

The very first Filipino-owned food place in St. John's named *Coco Manga* was established by a Filipino couple in 1987 on Duckworth Steet, St. John's. They defined the place as having a simple setup without a set menu. Depending on the availability of fresh ingredients, two or three Filipino dishes would be served daily along with hot or cold beverages. Although the place was not advertised as a specifically Filipino restaurant or café, people in the community who knew about it, would visit and occasionally ask for catering services. Since the owners of *Coco Manga* had full-time jobs and young families, this business venture was short-lived.

Then, years later, the very first Filipino restaurant in the history of the province, *RJ Pinoy Yum*, opened in November 2015 on Ropewalk Lane, in St. John's. Jocelyn (Joy) Dela Cruz who had come to Newfoundland in 1997, met her husband Ricky Dela Cruz who had arrived on the island in 2009. Ricky had years of experience working in various restaurant settings as a cook. After catering for a number of events such as international and multicultural gatherings as well as smaller events (e.g. birthdays and even their own wedding), the couple decided to start their own Filipino restaurant. They came up with the name, *RJ Pinoy Yum*, by combining the first letters of Ricky and Joy, and adding Pinoy (a colloquial term for Filipino), and Yum (short for yummy). The establishment became a success, with local food critics such as CBC's Karl Wells, commending the food. Despite a range of challenges, the first Filipino restaurant in Newfoundland managed to stay open, prosper and become an important establishment for community members and locals alike. Joy, who has been working full-time for Eastern Health for over twenty years and working part-time at the restaurant to support Ricky and their business, spoke of eventually sponsoring family members in the Philippines to come and join

them to help run the restaurant. Then, in 2021, *RJ Pinoy Yum* transferred to a bigger location on Cashin Avenue, St. John's. Affordable, comforting fusion food served at this Filipino establishment created a sense of excitement and delight for Filipinos around. "Finally! After all these years, there was a place that served Filipino food!" was Nora's remark, who took her little daughter there regularly to try different Filipino dishes. As CBC reporter, Darrell Roberts noted after interviewing Joy and Ricky Dela Cruz, "*RJ Pinoy Yum* is home away from home for the St. John's Filipino Community" (Roberts 2023). According to many community members, the existence of *RJ Pinoy* and the food served there evoked nostalgia and a sense of comfort. This is understandable considering that,

Many people affiliate the foods from their culture, their childhood with warm, good feelings and memories. The food is part of who we are and become. It ties us to our families and holds a special worth to a person. Foods from our culture, from our family often become the comfort foods we seek as adults in times of frustration and stress. (Almerico 2014, 6)

RJ Pinoy Yum became an instantly popular place for members of the Filipino community who had long awaited to see a restaurant that served Filipino food in Newfoundland. However, this popularity was not limited to the community who knew the cuisine well. The local population, who had either tried and liked Filipino food before in other provinces or were curious to find out what Filipino food was, started patronising the restaurant as well. I was surprised and delighted whenever upon learning about my background, non-Filipino folk immediately asked or told me about *RJ Pinoy Yum*. Some Newfoundland friends even mentioned that ordering takeout Filipino food from this restaurant, was a regular weekend habit. Hearing this was intriguing to me considering that accepting foreign food as a part of one's routine diet takes a meaning beyond mere eating. It speaks of a degree of recognition and acceptance of the Other in one's daily life, and an openness towards its people and culture. In other words, "enjoying a foreign dish means more than ingesting food; it is an acknowledgement that the Other has a value worth welcoming into one's being" (Zialcita 2005,

1). Although in Newfoundland “traditional eating remains integral to regional identity” (McPhail 2016, 322), having knowledge of and opting for the less well-known Philippine cuisine when other ethnic options are available, speaks of familiarity with and embracement of this minority group’s culture in the context of St. John’s and its surrounding area.

According to Joy Dela Cruz, the popularity of the restaurant meant that local tastes and sensibilities were also important factors to be taken into consideration. Thus, various Filipino-style fusion food started appearing on the menu in order to attract and satisfy a wide range of customers along with the Filipino community who often opted for more traditional options. As Angela put it, the food served at RJ Pinoy Yum is “Filipino dishes but there is a tweak in the taste.” Therefore, modifications were made to traditional recipes and in some cases fusion food was created. For example, alongside a variety of traditional pancit, adobo, and other stews, dishes such as “Chicken Sisig Poutine”, “Wonton Nachos”, and “Steamed Bun Tacos” are also included on the menu and are popular options.

Thus, RJ Pinoy Yum became a popular spot for both the Filipino population who found the presence of such an establishment reassuring and non-Filipino folk who became familiar with and fond of Philippine cuisine through food served at the restaurant, which opened a second branch in Mount Pearl, a neighbouring city to St. John’s, in May 2024.



Figure 4.16 RJ Pinoy entrance located at Cashin Avenue, St. John’s (photo by author)



Figure 4.17 A wall in the interior of RJ Pinoy Yum displaying painted decorative plates and a spoon and fork, portraying Philippine rustic sceneries and a jeepney (photo by Victoria Wells)



Figure 4.18 RJ Pinoy's pork *inihaw*/Filipino barbecue (a popular street food in the Philippines) with vinegar dipping sauce (photo by Victoria Wells)



Figure 4.19 RJ Pinoy's *beef kare-kare* in its traditional thick savoury peanut sauce (photo by Victoria Wells)



Figure 4.20 RJ Pinoy's *pancit palabok*, which contains rice noodles in shrimp sauce, topped with boiled eggs, pork, shrimp, *chicharon* (crispy pork rind), and green onions (photo by Victoria Wells)



Figure 4.21 RJ Pinoy's lomi ("Lomi Overload" on the menu), made with egg noodles and various toppings such as crispy chicken, tofu, and pork, as well as vegetable *lumpia*, boiled eggs, and shrimps (photo by Victoria Wells)



Figure 4.22 Sizzling chicken sisig poutine, a fusion dish at RJ Pinoy (photo by Victoria Wells)



Figure 4.23 RJ Pinoy’s “Sizzling Pork *Sisig*” (photo by Victoria Wells)



Figure 4.24 A variety of dipping sauces (chili oil, vinegar, *bagoong alamang*/fermented shrimp paste) that come along with dishes at RJ Pinoy (photo by Victoria Wells)

A number of years later, another Filipino restaurant inaugurated in St. John’s. *Sinaing Home of Filipino Cuisine*, the second Filipino restaurant in Newfoundland and Labrador history, opened in December 2019. The story behind how *Sinaing* came to be is a fascinating one. While doing my research I spoke with MariChris Francisco, who is one of the founders of the restaurant. With a background in computer science but a passion for being in the restaurant

business, MariChris initially immigrated from the Philippines to the United States in 2007 and eventually came to Newfoundland in 2011. Working as a chef in a range of different food establishments such as O'Reilly's and Bally Haly, MariChris also established the first kitchen at Newfoundland's Colemans Supermarket. In 2015, at the request of a few community members MariChris and her partner, chef Richard Alata began catering events, and eventually at the encouragement of community elders started thinking about the possibility of opening a restaurant. The opportunity presented itself serendipitously. In 2018, MariChris, Richard and two other friends, who were also in the restaurant industry, went to *J Korean Restaurant* located on 194 Duckworth Street, St. John's. The four friends engaged in a pleasant conversation with the Korean owners of the restaurant that lasted hours long after the restaurant had closed that evening. Upon learning that MariChris and her company aspired to opening their own restaurant, the owners of *J Korean Restaurant* encouraged them to take over and turn the current Korean restaurant space into a Filipino one, since they were planning to pursue other business avenues. "It happened this way. And then the whole night we were chatting about things. I thought, 'Is this a sign or what?' Sabi ko. 'Tadhana ba ito?' [I said, 'Is this fate?']" remarks MariChris, adding "We went for it and accepted that if we fail, we fail. If we prosper, we prosper." With a leap of faith, the four Filipino friends decided to open the restaurant. However, a lot of work needed to be done. The restaurant space, as MariChris put it, was "Really Korean. Everything was Korean!" Therefore, a reconceptualization while adhering to a budget was necessary. "I asked 'How will we recreate this space? How will we make it Filipino?' Filipinos are very creative when it comes to whatever scrap we can find and then we can do something about it." Therefore, in order to recreate a Filipino space, various decorative things brought from home were incorporated into the design, including the big spoon and fork that were mounted on either side of the fireplace. The wall design on one side included vertical bamboo wallpapers, and on the other traditional *buntal* straw hats. Right on top of the kitchen

entrance a Philippine flag was mounted. A big Christmas *paról* found its permanent spot hanging from the front window frame. Filipino sauces and pickle jars for sale started adorning different spots and a television screen displaying ongoing karaoke songs popular in the Philippines as well as Filipino television shows, was added to the dining area. These changes contributed to the transformation of the Korean space into an easily recognisable and familiar Filipino place for those acquainted with Philippine daily and symbolic aesthetics.



Figure 4.25 Part of the decoration at *Sinaing*, displaying the spoon and fork, artificial *sampaguita* (Philippine national flower), in addition to jars of pickles and condiments made at the restaurant for sale (photo by author)

After setting up the place, designing a menu required a lot of meticulous thought, as MariChris commented,

Our cuisine is really underrated. We wanted to introduce our cuisine in the most authentic way we could. We tried to do it in the most exotic way possible. If a local person came for the first time, we said, “Let’s go slow! Have pancit first! When you come back, we’ll go deeper.” The most common food that they can handle if they’re coming from zero is pancit. It’s easy. The spring rolls we have, *lumpiang gulay*, and barbeque adobo or basic adobo. But nothing like *sisig*. But you’d be surprised because they loved it later! We are not trying to hide that the meat in *sisig* is pork head! We’re not hiding it and we want it to stay like what you can eat from the Philippines. It’s going to be the same as what you are eating here... What we did for that first menu of ours, it was really authentic. Big time authentic Filipino. We went from region to region.

Taho from the North, *Sinuglaw* from Davao in the South. We had *palapa* from Mindanao as well.

Slowly introducing regular Newfoundland customers to Philippine food that was not moderated to cater to Western tastes, MariChris spoke of the openness with which many came back to try different dishes, showing a change in the degree of reception of unfamiliar food in comparison to the social context that members of the first and second generations described.

Since some of the vegetables used in the dishes placed on the menu were “more unusual” and the meat required was “not the normal cut”, various challenges presented themselves. However, by making important connections with a range of different suppliers, procuring them became easier.

The efforts put into serving authentic Philippine food were worthwhile. To the local Filipino population, *Sinaing* became a spot where food as it was often cooked back at home was served. To non-Filipino folk, *Sinaing* became a spot to experiment and enjoy unfamiliar food. The long presence of Filipinos on the island had created a feeling of acceptance and curiosity for non-Filipino folk as well, whose attitude toward this cuisine had changed drastically since Ritchie and his peers’ time at school. Curiosity activated by a sense of familiarity is bred when introductions have been slowly made and trust has been established leading to the acceptance of minority members in a society and the depletion of othering through food, because,

Every culture is proud of its own food traditions and tends to be ambivalent about (or even contemptuous of) others. Others may eat food similar to ours, but they do not cook them half as well, they use too much or too little spice, the fats are greasy, the oils smell, and so on. However, under conditions of social stability and harmony, people are curious about the foods of others and experiment with them (Lockwood and Lockwood 2015, 81).

While explaining items on the menu to those unfamiliar with Filipino food, MariChris found the opportunity to talk about Philippine food and culture, explaining regional differences and

offering helpful insight into the diversity of recipes and ingredients. “I feel that people have accepted us here, big time. They always ask and they want to know,” she remarks.

Maintaining the practice of cooking the majority of the items on the menu in the way they are often cooked in the Philippines, *Sinaing* started serving Filipino street food including *inihaw* or Filipino barbecue. Sitting outside and enjoying the grilled meat exactly as I remembered it on the streets in the Philippines, immediately transported me to familiar places. The fact that I could touch, taste, and smell this food here in St. John’s while spending time with my peers, transformed the atmosphere into a deeply familiar one.



Figure 4.26 A range of street food commonly enjoyed in the Philippines, prepared at *Sinaing* during summertime (photo by MariChris Francisco)

The possibility of buying in the context of Newfoundland what is considered street food in the Philippines, speaks of a deeper level of placemaking. In diaspora, traditional food that is prepared and presented for festivities and special occasions is meant to showcase the most celebrated and presentable aspects of ethnic cuisine. Street food, however, requires a more profound familiarity with the everyday culture of a place. It requires knowledge of one’s locale, understanding native ingredients, and being savvy of what flavours to opt for. Being able to consume food that is popular on the streets of one’s homeland in the context of a small host region, speaks of the construction of a place that brings a valuable sense of everydayness of the “there” into the “here”. In other words, in a small host region, availability and ease of access

to food items consumed only by those deeply familiar with the locality of a homeland, speaks of a more profound shift in the meaning of how both food and place are perceived.

As it can be gathered, Filipino restaurants in Newfoundland have contributed immensely to the creation of familiar spaces for the community. The presence of ethnic food establishments creates a sense of belonging for immigrant communities (Allison 2020; Chakraborty 2018; Monila 2022), by crafting environments that offer comforting nourishment, visually familiar aesthetics, and a place to interact and seek company.



Figure 4.27 Ube cheesecake served at Sinaing (photo by author)



Figure 4.28 Beef tapa served with garlic rice, onions, and a boiled egg served on a banana leaf (photo by author)



Figure 4.29 Oxtail kare-kare with vegetables made in peanut sauce (photo by author)

Nuancing Unavailability: Ingredients of Being and Belonging

Various participant experiences detailed in this chapter reveal that availability as well as unavailability of food and the ingredients that make it, result in different and shifting attitudes toward ethnic foodways among the three generation of Filipino-Newfoundlanders.

In the early years of Filipino migration to the small host region of Newfoundland, in order to procure necessary ingredients to prepare Filipino food, the ingenuity and cooperation of community members was necessary. Scarcity of desired comestibles often marked the immigrant experience, who found ways to obtain and share food. Thus, local connections were made, important spots in the city were marked, and when the opportunity presented itself, suitcases were collectively filled to the brim with ingredients that were meant to be shared. Thus, a sense of *pakikisama* and more importantly *bayanihan* based on an understanding of the cultural value of *kapwa* that recognises the shared humanity and worth of one's fellow *kababayan*, were embraced for collective subsistence in a new host region where the community was slowly being built.

Viewing these experiences in the light of what was discussed in the previous chapter with regards to objects of being and belonging, I propose to extend the phenomenon to ingredients of being and belonging in the context of diaspora and migration studies.

For the early Filipinos who found themselves in the host region of Newfoundland that in comparison to bigger provinces in Canada received a very small number of immigrants, no previously established diasporic centre or community existed. Thus, obtaining everyday ingredients of being involved acts of cooperation and resourcefulness. When a degree of group effort went into the procurement of desired food, liminal spaces were created for Filipinos in St. John's. Thus, these collective acts turned ingredients of being into ingredients of belonging, because they took a meaning beyond the mere everydayness of familiar sustenance. Over the years, however, with ease of access and considerable improvement in terms of the availability

of ingredients, these food items have become the simple ingredients of being once more, unless they are used to prepare food for outsiders during special occasions.

For the second generation growing up in Newfoundland in the community and within Filipino households, consuming Filipino food was an enactment of the everyday as well as the symbolic. Eating Filipino food at home and other community members' houses was a simple way of being. However, bringing food to school or inviting peers to one's household and introducing ingredients and food to those outside of the community, involved the explanation and presentation of aspects of one's ethnic identity. In other words, amongst people outside of the community where differences were visible and at times used as a means of othering, the consumption of Filipino food marked a sense of belonging to one's folk group. With the passage of time and changes in context, however, Filipino food and ingredients took on a different meaning for both Filipinos and members of the general public. Nevertheless, the purchasing of Filipino ingredients for the preparation of food during special occasions, especially after the arrival of their children, turns these foodstuff to ingredients of belonging.

For the grandchildren of early Filipino immigrants, who make up the third generation in the Philippine diaspora in Newfoundland, Filipino food and the ingredients that shape it become symbolic of cultural ties to their heritage. For this generation, availability is no longer an issue. A range of supermarkets and Asian stores carry in abundance items that their grandparents had a lot of difficulty accessing. In addition to that, since the local population of non-Filipino folk has cultivated a degree of familiarity with and fondness of this particular ethnic food over the years, members of this generation do not face the same culinary stigma that their parents or grandparents tackled. Filipino ingredients are readily available. However, since this generation was born and raised in Newfoundland on a Canadian/North American diet, Filipino food is often reserved for special occasions or events where one has to showcase culture and heritage, turning them into food items that denote a sense of belonging.

More recent immigrants find themselves in the presence of an established community and spend time with their own *kababayan* while easily obtaining ingredients in a variety of locations within the city, going to Filipino restaurants, and even indulging in street food and snacks they used to enjoy in the Philippines. For these members of the community who have not had to tackle issues pertaining to unavailability that often marked the experience of early Filipinos, such foodstuff is viewed as everyday ingredients of being. Acknowledging the role of early Filipinos on the island who paved the way for future Filipinos to have an easier time preparing Philippine dishes, MariChris comments that ,“They started it and we are the ones who are getting the fruit of their efforts.”

As the discussions in this section as well as the previous chapter reveal, what marks the quality of everydayness and being and what stands for the symbolic that denotes a sense of group belonging, are not necessarily fixed categories. Context dictates their understanding and inclusion in diasporans’ lives, as various factors can contribute to a shift in meaning and perception.

Conclusion

In her study of Greek students residing in the UK, social anthropologist Elia Petridou examines the strategies and practices adapted by this group to navigate, understand, and recreate a sense of home. The process of emplacement or construction of a feeling of belonging, occurs when the “sensory totality of the world of home” is rebuilt for the displaced (Petridou 2001, 89). In this process, food is considered an indispensable vehicle. Petridou explains,

People who fear that they have lost a sense of depth by leaving a place that for them contained their historical foundations and arriving in another place where they do not feel they have roots, make up for this rupture by evoking the senses of stability of home through the very mobility of food. (Ibid., 102)

Various memoirs about immigrant foodways attest to this statement (Abu-Jaber 2006; Alibhai-Brown 2008; Furiya 2006; Rossant 2001). The discussions in this chapter also support the idea that the role of food and foodways in the process of placemaking is indeed essential.

This chapter covered discussions and analyses with regards to Philippine foodways, the role of food in diasporic placemaking and creating liminal spaces, and immigrant identity construction through culinary practices. In addition, in the specific context of Newfoundland, the notion of availability/unavailability was nuanced, an account of the methods of Filipino food procurement throughout the decades were explicated, and a history of Filipino food establishments in St. John's was provided. The study of Philippine food in Newfoundland and its role in placemaking were considered in the framework of culturally specific practices that centre around a collectivistic worldview. The notion of commensality viewed in the practice of *salu-salu*, for example, shed light on how the values of *pakikisama*, *pakikipapwa*, and *bayanihan* are experienced in the act of breaking bread together in this host region. Moreover, Filipino-Newfoundlanders' generational attitudes toward Philippine cuisine were assessed, revealing that with various approaches and to different degrees, food plays a significant role in claiming identity and creating ethnic places of comfort and belonging.

In chapters 3 and 4, material culture and foodways have been considered with regards to Filipino placemaking practices in Newfoundland, detailing the multiple layers of meaning that objects and food carry for the community under study. Since material things and comestibles feature in various get-togethers, the following chapter will examine the importance of formal events and casual gatherings in making a meaningful place, by utilising findings in the previous chapters and elaborating further on the concepts of *tambayan*, *salu-salu*, *pakikipapwa*, *pakikisama*, and *bayanihan*.

CHAPTER 5: “Tambay tayo!” (“Let’s hang out!”)

Introduction

For a long period of time starting in the late sixties, an unassuming apartment on Patrick Street in St. John’s religiously received about a score of Filipinos every single weekend on Saturday or Sunday. Teachers, doctors, nurses, and other hardworking professionals would congregate in this spot after long shifts, looking forward to spending time together. No special occasion necessarily marked these get-togethers, but if there was something to celebrate more effort would be put into the preparation of inviting comestibles. Music was always played in the background if no one else was playing an instrument. Singing along was optional, however, little encouragement was necessary to participate, if a popular song came up. Alongside the sound of music, the clacking noise of mahjong tiles being repeatedly shuffled filled the atmosphere, which was often punctuated by laughter and banter. Filipino food would always be brought for sharing: the dish you shared could be a pot of stew you slaved over for hours or a simple dish you whipped up in a hurry. You could participate in chitchat, gossip, hear jokes and stories, sing, dance, play, and eat to your heart’s content, or take a nap if you needed a rest before taking part in any group activity, or perhaps just relax and do nothing. Within the confines of this apartment everything was safe and familiar, everything was comfortable, foreign formalities were temporarily halted, the need to adapt and impress dissipated, and a general sense of easygoingness graced the atmosphere. This was a Filipino *tambayan*: a refuge and a haven for those who sought such temporary liminal spaces of comfort and ease.

Throughout the years such get-togethers continued and were held regularly by Filipinos in an informal capacity. Different community members’ houses would become makeshift *tambayan* spaces, where people could congregate and spend time with their *kababayan*. Those who had the means to receive guests would offer their space. The general sentiment among

early Filipinos who congregated in this way, according to Isagani, was “the more, the merrier. Because we knew how to share what we had.”

In the early decades when a small number of Filipinos were present in Newfoundland, such gatherings were immensely important. Recalling those who came here on their own without their spouses or families, Delia remarked that “their family was really just among ourselves.” With no internet at the time, prohibitive costs of long-distance calls, restrictiveness of snail mail, and the sheer infeasibility of regular travel back and forth, Filipinos sought each other’s company to banish isolation and loneliness, and manage and navigate their new environment with more assurance and ease. Such gatherings still do take place in different ways that I will discuss, and surprisingly not many things have changed about such assemblies for a community that currently comprises of over 2500 members. Filipinos do seek each other’s company in diaspora (Bonifacio 2013; Constable 2007; Johnson et al. 2010; McKay 2006; Marshall 2018; Nititham 2017; Quinsa 2024), and the gathering places that they create embrace various forms and dynamics from the most casual *salu-salu* in an unpretentious *tambayan* to formal events that take months of planning, fuss, and preparation. In this chapter, I will shed light on the compelling places that such group congregations construct.

In her deeply informative book about the Filipino community in Ireland, sociologist Diane Nititham closely examines the ways in which enacting rituals, religious practices and routines create “connecting sites” that for Filipinos function “as a link to homeland and each other”, by establishing “moments, images, and sensory emotions” that generate “multiple layers of familiarity” (Nititham 2017, 90). To Filipinos abroad, reaching out and seeking each other’s company helps nurture a sense of kinship. Similarly in Newfoundland, spending time within the community in various capacities whether it be a lowkey dinner or jamming session, or an elaborate well-planned formal affair, strengthens bonds. It creates places of reassurance,

familiarity and comfort. As Nititham explains while elaborating on the Filipino community in Ireland,

The reasons why Filipinos continued rituals, honoured celebrations and held get-togethers were multiple. On one level, Filipinos searched for familiarity, a continuity linking the past and present. Having familiar traditions under shared circumstances of migration helped them to ease the pain of emotional and physical separation. The sharing of beliefs, values, and ideologies were not only for Filipinos, but teaching children growing up in Ireland the values of the homeland. In addition, their gatherings provided opportunities to teach Irish people about Filipino Culture... Filipinos were aware of many different types of gatherings... Many of these [were] religious rituals, birthday parties, basketball tournaments, choir group practice, the performance of traditional dances and participation in small-scale organisations and associations. Because of the lack of dedicated public spaces designated for cultural groups, many of these gatherings occurred in community centres, parks, churches, and people's homes (Nititham 2017, 93).

As Nititham observed during her fieldwork in Ireland the purpose behind Filipinos' various forms of gathering were manifold: a strong desire for a sense of stability and belonging, emotional support, the passing of important cultural values to youth in the community, and the occasion to expose the host society to glimpses of Filipino culture. The enlisted reasons are applicable to other settings where Filipinos find themselves in a new foreign context (Cruz 2023; Johnson et al. 2010; Tondo 2013). My study adds to the existing literature by looking at this immigrant community through the folkloristic prism of community placemaking efforts that create sites of connection and belonging for this group in the particular host region of Newfoundland. In addition, the concepts of being and belonging examined in the previous two chapters with regards to objects and food will also be applied to informal and formal gatherings in order to nuance the sense of place that such get-togethers create. Thus, as I examine different kinds of Filipino gatherings in Newfoundland in this chapter, I will explicate how Filipino places are made on this island.

Having spent over seven years within the community during various kinds of get-togethers helped slowly forge an understanding of Filipino assemblies in Newfoundland. Contrary to many folkloristic and anthropological studies that primarily focus on larger

community-organised and predominantly formal festivities and events, the findings of my study emphasise the significance of casual and informal get-togethers to understand this diasporic group's dynamics in this specific region. Although the community's formally held events and their long history will also be examined in this chapter, the crucial place of a Filipino *tambayan* is highlighted to reveal the significant role of such intimate gatherings in placemaking endeavours. Therefore, in the following two sections I will first elaborate on regularly held casual gatherings that require little to no planning (gatherings of being), and then examine events organised by formal Filipino associations on the island (gatherings of belonging).

Informal Gatherings and the Creation of Ad Hoc Tambayan

“You know, Filipinos are a sociable bunch!” Linda tells me. She has been going to regular Filipino get-togethers since the seventies. “It really doesn't take much to bring people together. Just food and friends. The other stuff just happens.” When asked to further elaborate on “the other stuff”, a list of examples is given to me: chitchat, gossip, jokes and stories, sharing of information, sharing of food and drinks, playing instruments and singing, karaoke sessions, different types of games (e.g. cards, mahjong, *Pinoy Henyo*, etc.), prayer sessions, and Bible studies. Getting folks together does not seem to be a difficult task. “It used to be someone cooks something and calls you and says everyone is coming. Now it's more Facebook message, or group message.” Linda then speaks of the frequency of these gatherings and the fact that they are a stable part of Filipino life in Newfoundland. Recalling gatherings held every weekend at the aforementioned apartment on Patrick Street in St. John's and other houses decades ago, another participant, Val, then jokingly shares that “We saw everyone every weekend! Too much if you ask me! (*laughs*)”, his tone and humour reminding me of a familiar familial playful brand of teasing. The frequency in which these casual Filipino gatherings amongst community

members happened has not diminished in the span of over six decades. Having spoken to members of the three generation of Filipinos in Newfoundland as well as those who have arrived more recently, I have learned that the essence of such get-togethers has remained unchanged. Seeking the company of *kababayan* within private domestic spaces, as has been a long-established practice in diaspora for Filipinos, has also meant the creation of significant places for the community in Newfoundland. Referring to such “hangouts” as *tambayan*, I will delve further into the meaning of such spaces as crafted places of familiarity, comfort and belonging.

In the first chapter, where the notion of *tambayan* was initially introduced, I made use of the arguments provided by occupational scientist Terry Peralta-Catipon to explain the significance of regularly held informal congregations of diasporans and immigrants in a foreign host society. Peralta-Catipon’s research is based on Filipino caregivers in Hong Kong and their collective effort to gather and mingle in order to banish loneliness and feelings of nonbelonging, by creating opportunities to meet and spend time with each other in specific spaces. Such group endeavours, Peralta-Catipon explains, result in the establishment of liminality in a foreign host region and in the strengthening of bonds that lead to *communitas*. Temporary separation from the harsh realities of daily life for these workers during such congregations, meant an improved sense of wellbeing through *camaraderie*.

Peralta-Catipon’s arguments about the notion and importance of *tambayan* as a liminal sphere that results in *communitas*, are applicable to the findings of this study. As I will demonstrate the community practice of creating the space and time to be with each other regularly results in the creation of places where members feel anchored.

Speaking with people in different generations in the community, has revealed that at their crux, such gatherings have retained a certain quality throughout the years. Comparing the notes taken from my interview with Linda who is in her seventies and Bea who is twenty, for

example, I noticed that some words they used to describe these casual get-togethers overlap. “Warm”, “loud”, “cheerful”, “comfortable”, “fun”, and “easy” were used by both Linda and Bea (and a number of other participants) to explain the ambience crafted in the Filipino *tambayan* in Newfoundland. Pondering over my own experience of joining the convivial atmosphere created during such casual assemblies, I find myself using similar vocabulary to define them. The following lines from one of my fieldnotes can serve as an example,

I got to Kuya G’s house a little later than I expected because of work. I was exhausted but decided to head there anyways. I knew I would have a good time by joining the crowd even for a bit. When I arrived, the sound of singing and laughing was so loud that it took me a few seconds to orient myself. I greeted people as I approached them and everyone kept asking me if I had served myself already, pressing me to get some food. I sampled a plate of rice, *ulam*, and *pancit* as I chatted with people sitting around the dining table, then headed back to the family room where folks were singing on the karaoke. After being handed the microphone and being asked to sing something, I randomly chose Moira Dela Torre’s “Tagu-Taguan” and sang it rather badly. Hearing myself, I started laughing in the middle of the song and everyone laughed with me. I still got a generous applause! I then ceded the microphone and went to talk to others who were playing a game of cards. I stayed, engaged in chitchat and watched for a bit and then went to say hi to the half dozen kids who were watching a movie in another room. I eventually found my way back to the kitchen again, had some coffee and *biko*, and listened to Até B’s entertaining work stories. I sat there contentedly for a while. When I heard the sound of excitement and commotion coming from the living room, I headed back and saw folks doing a dance move in a group while the singer theatrically performed an upbeat song. I joined in and imitated the moves and enjoyed the playfulness of it all. After that, I made myself comfortable on the sofa and watched as this continued for a while. I joined in the chorus every now and then, but was happy just to sit there and watch. When it was time to go home, I was sent off with some more food wrapped in foil. Spending a few hours eating, singing, dancing, laughing, chatting and listening to stories in Tagalog, and just relaxing with everyone was massively uplifting today. (April 14, 2023)

These lines shared from my fieldnotes serve as an example of what a typical Filipino gathering looks like. Speaking to participants and frequently joining these kinds of get-togethers in St. John’s has revealed certain patterns that speak of the essence of such manner of assembly. First of all, these social affairs are casual and create an atmosphere that is light-hearted and comfortable. When Filipinos come together to mingle in an informal capacity, strict formalities are halted, expectations to perform and impress are momentarily ceased, and the need to adhere to the host society’s codes of behaviour is temporarily paused. Secondly, the relationship

between members of the folk group who assemble during such meetings is horizontal rather than hierarchical. Filipinos who spend time with each other in the *tambayan* spaces they create come from different backgrounds: some are well-established in the province and have lived here for decades while others are relatively new to life in Newfoundland or Canada; some are very highly educated and enjoy a better socio-economic status, and some are minimum-wage earners; some are very active in the community, while others show up only when they can. Nevertheless, during such get-togethers, one's place and status seems to hold very little significance. Respect and care is bestowed upon everyone, no seat or space is assigned, and no one is left out of an activity in which they wish to engage. Thirdly, the presence of ample food seems to be necessary and many share what they have prepared. *Salu-salo* is an integral part of such get-togethers. Regardless of what folks intend to do at the party, communal enjoyment of the spread is a vital component of coming together. Formal sitting arrangements at designated places at the table seem to be irrelevant. The spread, in fact, never leaves the table, and diners eat what they desire, when they want to, usually in stages. Lastly, a variety of activities popular in the Philippines as well as in the Philippine diaspora take place in different corners in the same house. Chitchatting and gossiping in the manner that is usually carried out in the Philippines, playing games, dancing and singing karaoke are popular activities among members of this folk group both in the home country and abroad. As such, ease and comfort embroider the atmosphere that is designed to embrace them in diaspora. Familiar and favoured activities with *kababayan* in a space that contains objects, food, music, and all other things that are Filipino, create a safe refuge for those who seek places of belonging, temporary as they may be, in a small host region. When they happen regularly (usually in households that can accommodate more people) a *tambayan* is created.

Observing various *tambayan* in Newfoundland throughout the years has shown me that regardless of the number of people present at such informal gatherings, members seem to see

themselves as a family unit. The honorifics “Até” (older sister or a female person who is a few years older than you), “Kuya” (older brother or a male person who is a few years older than you), “Tita” (literally “Aunt/Auntie” and used for a female person who is about the same age as one’s parents), “Tito” (literally “Uncle” and used for a male person who is about the same age as one’s parents), “Ninang” and “Ninong” (“godmother” and “godfather” as many younger people have community members as their godparents) are ordinarily used in Philippine culture where respect is highly valued. However, beyond respect, other ways of addressing each other that denote fondness and affection are also common in such spaces. When members are around the same age, the terms “maré” (close female friend or a person who is the mother of one’s godchild/the godmother of one’s child), “paré” (close male friend or a person who is the father of one’s godchild/the godfather of one’s child), and “utol” or “tol” (“sis”, “bro”, or “buddy”) are applied to address each other warmly. Such honorifics are culturally understood and always used in a *tambayan* space in Newfoundland, as well. Knowledge of such terminology even among younger community members who do not speak Tagalog is well-established since using honorifics to show respect is an important part of Philippine culture. Familial treatment of one another in such spaces, in fact, seems to be a given as many group messages, invitations, or announcements start with “Mga kapatid” (“siblings/brothers and sisters”). Thus, the ease and familiarity with which community members in different generations seem to carry themselves in such spaces is reminiscent of places where a sense of familial kinship brings people together. Since Filipinos are deeply “sensitive to the quality of interpersonal relationships and are very dependent on them” (Licuanan 1994, 36), such crafted spaces resembling family gatherings in diaspora help members feel anchored outside of the homeland, especially if immediate or extended family is absent in the host region. “We are our own safety net” Nora remarks, who was born and raised in Newfoundland and grew up in the Filipino community. Sentiments like this were often shared during interviews, although mild complaints were also made by some

who felt idle gossip an unbecoming practice among some members. “There’s always a Marites, a *tsismosa*. But who cares? I’m there for the food and fun!” was a sentiment shared by a participant. The colloquial name “Marites” and the term “*tsismosa*” in Tagalog (from *chismosa* in Spanish) refer to a gossip. Gossip as an ever-present trademark in “small-group membership” can serve to both unite, inform, and stimulate social life, and also divide and create discord (Brunvand 1996, 700). Nevertheless, treatment of *kababayan* as family members in such clusters is tangible when in the absence of family, familial duties and responsibilities are extended to community members. Picking up Filipino newcomers that one has never met at the airport is a good example of how care is bestowed. Filipino newcomers to Newfoundland usually find social media pages dedicated to the community, and by announcing their arrival, ask for guidance and help. On numerous occasions, I have witnessed community members volunteering to pick newcomers up from the airport and assist them in settling. A feeling of ease and trust is present when Filipinos meet each other in a small host region like Newfoundland, as a belief in *bayanihan* and *pakikipakwa* laces overall assumptions. In other words, members see themselves as part of a community and “the idea of community—of shared values and enduring association—is often sufficient to motivate persons to trust and help one another, even in the absence of long personal relationships” (Hirschman 2004, 392).

Considering the relationship dynamics described in such gatherings, and the exchange of gossip as well as care, the cultural role of the concept of *pakikisama* can be used for further analysis. As described earlier, *pakikisama* embraces the notions of “hospitality and fellowship” as it is a “folkloric practice” that “imparts a sense of warmth” because it is “gratuitous” and can thus create “a synergy of positive energies within the community” (Abarquez-Delacruz 2011, 395). However, since *pakikisama* is in essence “an act of living together with an attitude of getting along” (Ibid.), it may also “force one to keep quiet and ignore wrongdoing” (Menguin 2023). In other words, since Philippine culture places immense value on “the idea of belonging

to a group”, avoiding criticism and conflict to the point of favouring passivity “so as not to rock the boat, not hurt the feelings of someone, or be separated from the group” is generally adapted (Ibid.). Although some comments mentioned above about Filipino gatherings and the creation of *tambayan* reveals that members feel like a family unit that support each other, others speak of permissiveness toward negative qualities such as backbiting that can cause hurt and misunderstanding. Both of these situations can be attributed to the cultural practice of *pakikisama*. A balance between cooperation/social harmony and personal integrity is often encouraged in the search for the benefits of *pakikisama* (Abarquez-Delacruz 2011; Menguin 2023; Panopio and Santico-Rolda 2006; Timberman 1991).

Within the domestic space where a *tambayan* is created in Newfoundland certain traditions reserved for the family in the Philippines are practiced with community members. Some such traditions at times become inspired by North American culture and are adapted in these private community created places. An example of such practice is “pyjama parties” during Noche Buena celebrations. Noche Buena (literally “Night of Goodness”) or Christmas Eve celebrations are an important occasion in Philippine culture where after the Midnight Mass (or sometimes evening mass) on December 24th, family and relatives gather together for a feast. As many people in the community treat each other like members of a family, many assemble for the evening’s feast and festive activities in one household with immediate families wearing matching pyjama sets, a practice popularised through department stores marketing strategies in North America since the late 1950s (Chamberlain 2023). The tradition has been going on for a number of years amongst Filipinos in Newfoundland with a spread including special Noche Buena comestibles and delicacies, and gift exchange games popular in North America such as the Yankee swap/white elephant gift exchange, commonly known as the Chinese Christmas gift exchange in Newfoundland. During such light-hearted occasions excitement fills the atmosphere and the several families who have assembled in one household

join in the merry-making in a casual way like one family unit would. Given the history of the Philippines, adapting various Western and American traditions has been common in Philippine culture. However, certain significant values and beliefs dictate proper demeanour regardless of foreign cultural influences. Take for example the *Noche Buena* pyjama party held annually at someone's household. The atmosphere that is crafted is merry and relaxed. You appear in the most comfortable clothes, enjoy socialising, engage in numerous activities, eat to your heart's content, and can even nap if you experience postprandial somnolence. However, as cosy as the atmosphere may be, you do not forget to ask for elders' blessings when you enter, you adjust your language accordingly if you are speaking to someone who is older than you are, and you do not forget honorifics. During one such occasion I saw a child anxious to join her friends in the games they were playing, and yet she waited for an elder to finish his conversation with someone in order to show her respect through the *mano* gesture. As soon as she performed the quick gesture and received her symbolic blessing, she quickly ran and happily joined her friends for the rest of the evening. Therefore, in such places where the community assembles like a family unit does, Philippine cultural values like this are taught to the younger generation and observed by them. Thus, when Filipinos gather for such informal celebrations, they create an atmosphere of comfort and familiarity in their *tambayan* that not only helps them spend time with *kababayan* who share the same cultural beliefs and values, but also allows them to instill said principles and attitudes in the younger generation: a point that sociologist Diane Nititham (2017) also emphasises in her study of Filipino gatherings in Ireland.

The relaxed and familiar environment in a *tambayan* that allows for a sense of cultural continuity that Nititham (2017) also observes in the Filipino gatherings she describes in Ireland, allows for a welcome sense of visibility for community individuals. The convivial atmosphere of a Filipino *tambayan* in Newfoundland creates significant liminal spaces where community members feel seen, understood, and comfortable enough to do what they normally would

amongst family members and relatives. Thus, escapism is a contributing factor in the creation of *tambayan* through informal gatherings. Yi-Fu Tuan whose work has been extensively cited in this study, considers the important role of escapism in his article of the same name published in 1998. Considering the human tendency to look for a place of refuge, a safe haven, or an alternative situation when dealing with various pressures from the outside world, Tuan explicates different methods of mental and physical detachment that offer respite to individuals. Spaces designed and designated to such manner of escapism such as gardens and parks, shopping and recreational centres, and museums are deemed to facilitate the enactment of this desire in addition to everyday practices like the pursuit of fulfilling hobbies that can delight and gratify. The Filipino *tambayan* that is generated when community members come together creates such a place that allows folks to temporarily escape to such liminal spaces.

In the literature review section of this thesis, the work of geographer Nicholas Wise with the Haitian community in the Dominican Republic was briefly discussed. Studying the role of “football as a cohesive bond” that brings Haitian immigrants together during weekends (Wise 2014, 110), Wise notes that the “(re)creation of space and place in another country reinforces the impact of weekend events on generating a sense of togetherness and reinforces how social capital is achieved among Haitians residing in rural areas” (Ibid., 114). With similar conclusions, parallels between the findings of Wise’s study and mine can be drawn. In small host regions away from big diasporic centres, the creation of places that allow for diasporans’ activities that fulfill escapism and bond members together through shared likes and values matter immensely. In fact, as Wise explains, a sense of belonging occurs through “performances of cultural identity and... [shared] common beliefs and social values in...everyday life through recreational activities” amongst folk group members (Ibid., 107).

As my discussion of regular informal gatherings that create the liminal space of *tambayan* reveals, Filipinos in Newfoundland have been crafting such places since their arrival on this island. When friends are asked to join gatherings in a host's household, food is shared, common interest and hobbies are pursued, appropriate language and gestures are adapted, and social bonding is practiced. Gossip and idle hurtful talk can and does occur but the benefits of spending time within one's folk group in these spaces seem to outweigh the drawbacks. Ultimately, a *tambayan* offers to Filipinos in Newfoundland who hold such gatherings frequently a port where they can feel anchored regardless of what the outside world withholds.

Filipino Associations and Formal Organised Events

So far, the discussions provided in this study have mainly focused on individual and small group efforts in placemaking. In the private domestic space where agency and control can be easily exercised, the use and display of objects, the consumption of food, and engagement in activities in the company of fellow Filipinos help create significant places of comfort, meaning, and belonging for the Filipino community who has settled on this island. However, since the earliest years of Filipino arrival and settlement in Newfoundland, formal events organised by official associations have also played an important part in bringing the community together and showcasing Philippine culture through various performances.

Currently there are two main Filipino organisations in Newfoundland. The Filipino Association of Newfoundland (FILAN) established in 1967, and the Newfoundland and Labrador Filipino Canadian Organisation (FILCAN) founded in 2014. Both associations organise a variety of events and activities in which community members can participate. However, FILAN, as the older organisation with more established traditions, holds bigger and more frequent events.

The history of holding formal social gatherings for Filipinos on the island can be traced back to the 1960s. The first Filipino “public cultural activity” that took place in this province was held on June 12th 1966, which marked the twentieth anniversary of the country’s independence (Magsino 1982, 4). The event named “Filipinescas” (later referred to as “Fiesta Filipina” and ultimately “Filipino Night”) was held in Grand Falls at Central Newfoundland Hospital’s Nurses Residence auditorium. With two hundred guests attending, this cultural event included dance and musical performances alongside short speeches about Philippine history, becoming the “first cooperative exposure of Filipino culture in Newfoundland” (Ibid.). With the success of this event, a steadily growing population and a desire for coordinated activities that brought the community together and showcased Philippine culture, a need for a formal community organisation emerged. In Romulo Magsino’s words,

While [Filipinos] found Newfoundland a friendly and supportive environment, they missed the kind of companionship and cultural expression that could find release only among themselves (Ibid., 5).

Therefore, with the cooperation of active community members FILAN was established in 1967 with a four-fold goal,

To serve the welfare of Filipinos in the province, to disseminate information among them, to cultivate closer relationships between Filipinos and other members of the Newfoundland society, and to preserve and promote Filipino culture (Ibid., 7).

With the inception of FILAN, presidents and officers were elected and were appointed various duties. Since Filipinos were spread in different communities across Newfoundland, the Association divided its chapters regionally (e.g. St. John’s Chapter, Gander Chapter, etc.), so that Filipinos could be involved with various events and gatherings in the nearest region to them. In 1968, another elaborate cultural event was held, this time at *Holiday Inn* in St. John’s. From then onwards, the locations of Filipino annual cultural celebrations were rotated and held

in other cities in Newfoundland such as Corner Brook, Gander, Grand Falls, and Marystown for a number of years.

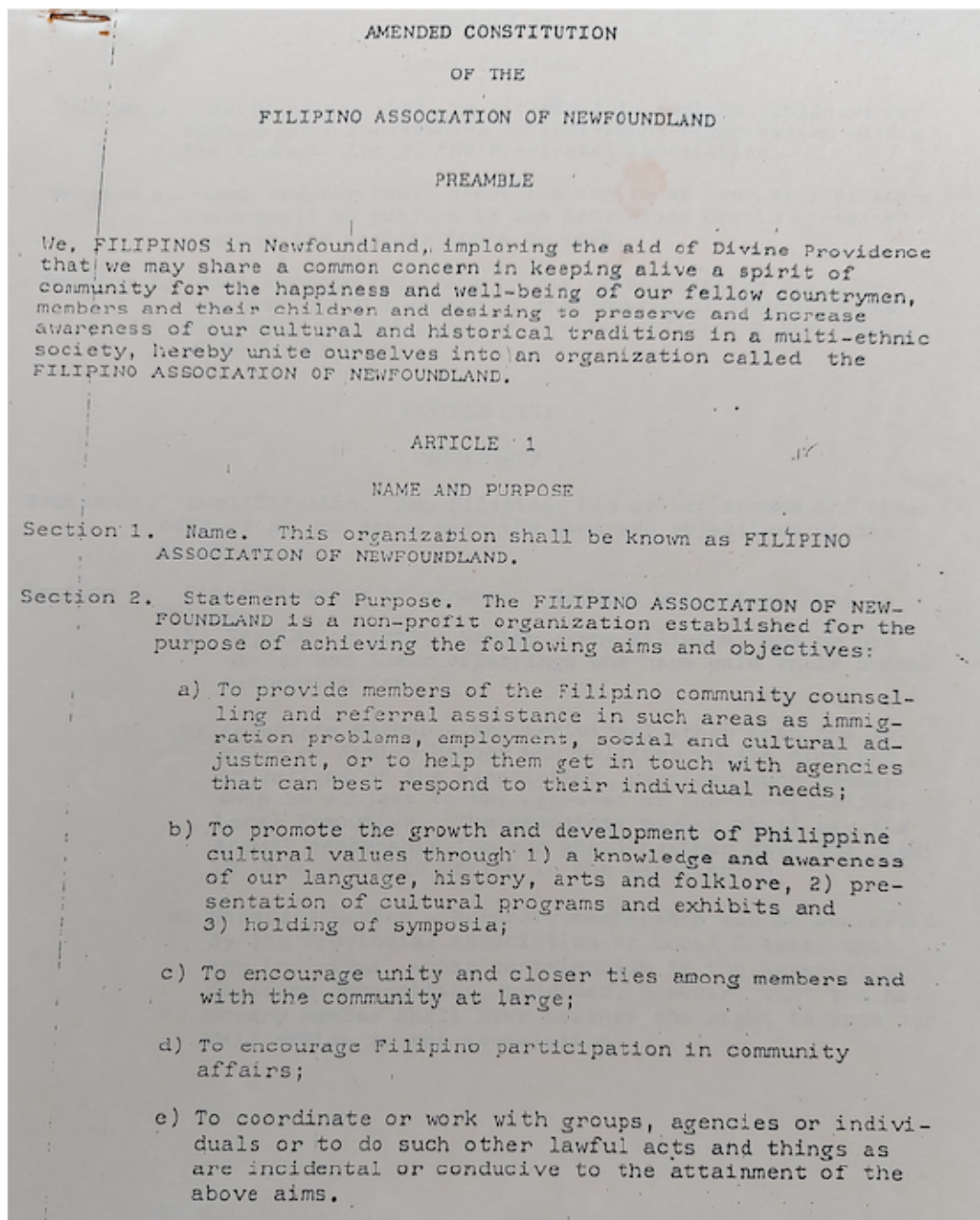


Figure 5.1 The first page of the constitution of FILAN established in 1967 (Photo by author)



Figure 5.2 FILAN logo (photo used with permission from FILAN Website)

As the Filipino community grew bigger in St. John's throughout the decades, the city became the main location for large community events. The Association organised (and continues to do so) the *Filipino Night* in May or June, the Christmas party in December, an annual summer barbecue gathering in July or August, and later assembled Filipinos annually for various masses throughout the year. From 2012 onwards, four masses would be held in Tagalog on New Year's Day, Easter Sunday, Mother's Day, and Grandparents' Day; and others in English such as the *Simbang Gabi* (a nine day series of masses from December 16th-24th). These masses would be held at either St. Pius X or Divine Mercy Parish both located in St. John's and would often be concluded with a *salu-salo* at the church hall or community centre. In addition to that, disaster relief fundraising events would also be organised when devastating natural calamities hit the Philippines, as the archipelago is "a place of environmental extremes where multiple hazards...occur with more frequency than much of the rest of the world, often in devastating intersection" (Smith 2020, xi).

Of these formally organised events, the *Filipino Night* was the most elaborate affair and substantial group effort would go into it, as it required months of preparation for those volunteering to take part in traditional dances and musical numbers. Community organisers

and volunteers would come up with a plan for the event's performances sometime after the Christmas party. Then, those willing to participate would start assembling weekly around the month of February to begin their rehearsals. Members with more experience or artistic flair would choreograph traditional dance routines, while others would take care of stage setting and performers' costumes. Association officers and community volunteers would cooperate to book a location and catering services (Filipino recipes would usually be given to the kitchen/restaurant booked to cater the event), prepare performers' costumes, set up the stage and venue, and take care of the program's logistics. The culmination of efforts would result in a formally organised event where community members would appear in their traditional/national Philippine attire, invite non-Filipino folk to join them, watch a number of cultural performances, listen to brief talks about Philippine history and culture, learn about Filipino presence in and contribution to Canadian/Newfoundland society, enjoy Filipino food, and mingle in an atmosphere dedicated to all things Filipino. The Filipino Night tradition was held for fifty consecutive years from 1967 to 2017. The fiftieth anniversary held in 2017 according to participants was the biggest and most impressive one FILAN had organised. Several groups of dancers dedicated to months of rehearsing polished choreographies under the supervision of art and music instructors as well as community elders with years of Filipino Night experience, performed in front of an enthusiastic crowd gathered from different towns and cities in Newfoundland to commemorate the history of Filipino presence on the island. Attendees appeared in their finest traditional clothes in a place decorated with the Philippine flag and various Filipino objects spending time with Philippine folk and enjoying a Filipino meal. Much Association and community effort went into the fiftieth Filipino Night celebration in Newfoundland, and then for some time, the fatigue and stress associated with such massive undertaking led to a few quiet years without the Filipino Night. Then, with the occurrence of a global pandemic, hopes of reconvening ceased for a few more years until June 2024.



Figure 5.3 A collage of FILAN fiftieth anniversary celebrations with different groups of performers in their costumes (photos by FILAN)



Figure 5.4 A collage of performers on the 47th, 48th, and 49th Filipino Nights in Newfoundland (photos by FILAN)



FILIPINO ASSOCIATION OF NEWFOUNDLAND
ST. JOHN'S CHAPTER



PRESENTS

"FIESTA FILIPINA '88"

AT THE MUN LITTLE THEATRE

SUNDAY, MAY 29, 1988 - 2:00 P.M.

FOLLOWED BY EXOTIC DINNER AT THE
MAIN DINING ROOM: GUSHUE HALL

TICKETS:

ADULTS \$7.00

CHILDREN \$3.50

CONTACT: TEL. 726-6924 / 364-6805

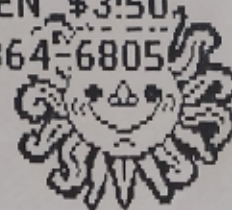


Figure 5.5 FILAN 1988 invitation poster for Filipino Night (photo by author)

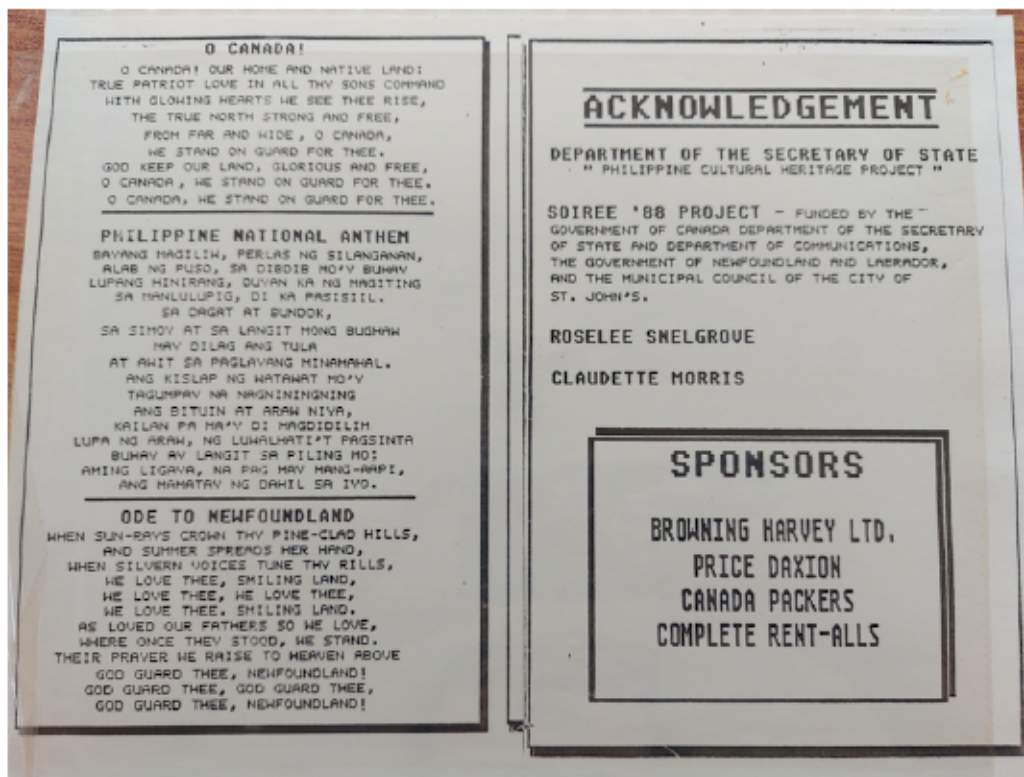


Figure 5.6 FILAN 1988 Filipino Night programme, first page (photo by author)

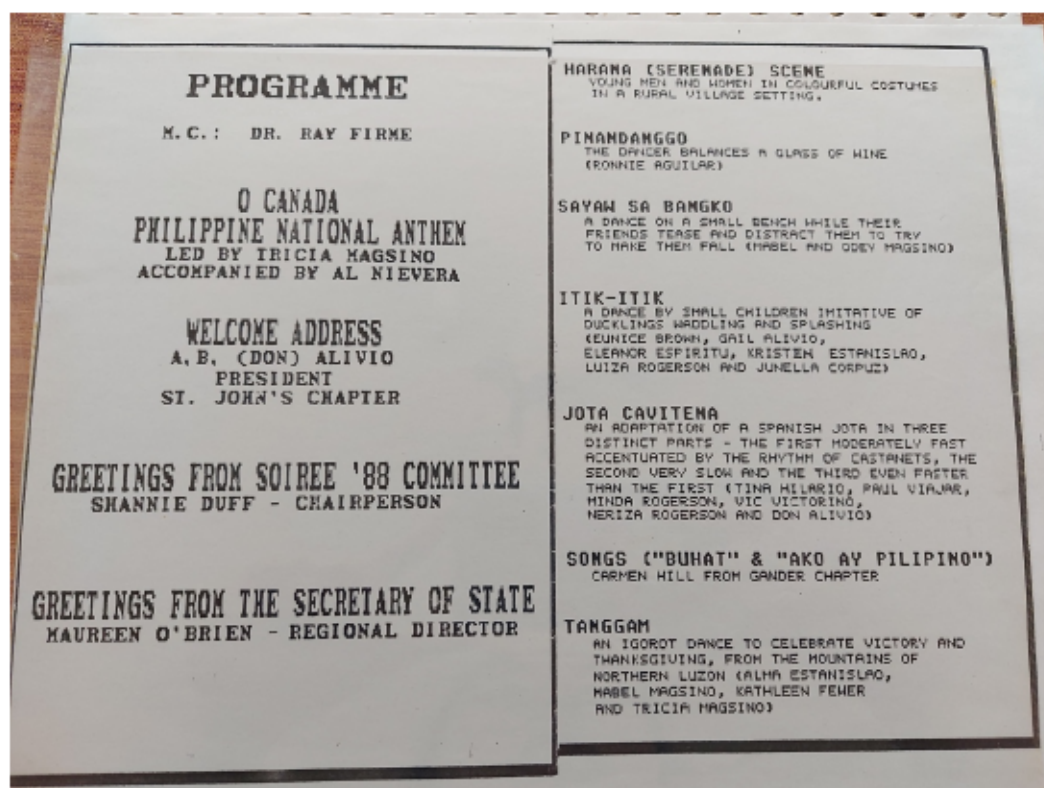


Figure 5.7 FILAN 1988 Filipino Night programme, second page (photo by author)

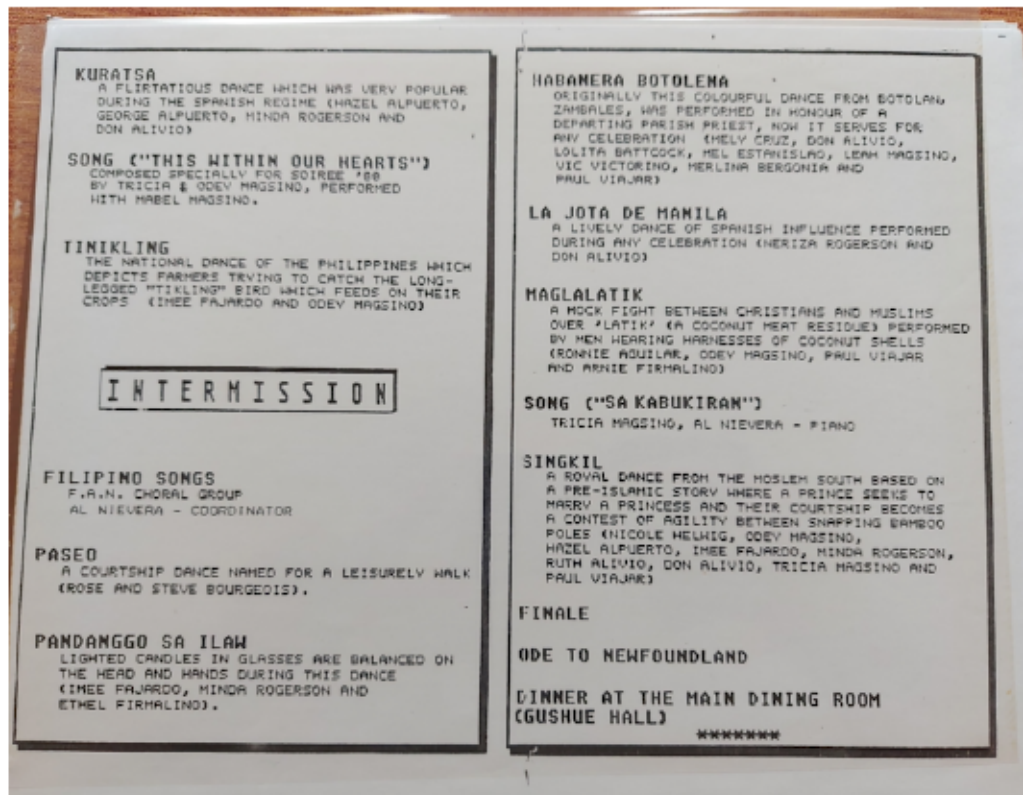


Figure 5.8 FILAN 1988 Filipino Night programme, third page (photo by author)



Figure 5.9 A collage of Filipino Night 1988 performances (photos shared by participant and edited by author)

Filipino Night Celebrations in June 2024

After a seven year hiatus, FILAN members decided to organise another Filipino Night commemorating the Association's 57th anniversary. Having never attended the Filipino Night celebrations in Newfoundland since my arrival on the island, I was keen to join preparation sessions and observe the ways community volunteers came together to organise the event. The Filipino Night event required the cooperation of FILAN officers and directors, and administrative, artistic, and performing volunteers to come to fruition.

In early March (over a month later than is customary for the Association), FILAN administrative officers announced through their website and social media pages that they were looking for talent willing to dedicate their time and energy to rehearsals in preparation for the event taking place on June 8th 2024. Over two dozen people got in touch to show their willingness to participate. The committee of officers, directors and volunteers who had already booked East Point Elementary School gymnasium in St. John's as the venue for the event, planned to have three main groups of performers representing the three major Philippine islands of Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao, with two other introductory performances. The event was to begin with a doxology dance as a form of commencement prayer. After that a group of performers were to dance to *Kinang Pilipinas* (Shine Philippines), which is a song about the beauty of nature and culture in the Philippines, in order to introduce each major island. Then, the three main performances were to include: a group of five singers representing the island of Luzon in the north, singing songs laced with nostalgia about popular things and places on this island; the second group representing the central island of Visayas doing a rendition of the *kuratsa* folk dance; and the last group representing the southern island of Mindanao executing a version of the *kini-kini* folk dance. Considering the diversity of cultures in each island and region in the Philippines, these representative regional performances gave a sense of unity to

Filipinos, turning what is regional/local into what is unanimously representative of an island nation's culture.

Rehearsals began in April 2024. Volunteers, all of whom had full-time jobs aside from a small number of students, committed their Saturday afternoons and early evenings for the following two months. As the gymnasium space at East Point Elementary School was rented out for rehearsals every Saturday, folks would show up, set up a table with food and snacks, mingle and catch up, and then split into their respective groups. Each group was led by a volunteer with more experience. However, in the beginning when the dance routines were not yet polished, ideas would circulate and adjustments would be made accordingly. Laughter and banter would regularly accompany practice sessions as folks seemed to be genuinely enjoying participation. Community elders with decades of Filipino Night experience also showed up every Saturday and offered helpful suggestions. Joining these practices, I observed that the environment crafted during such rehearsal sessions was similar to the casual gathering spaces Filipinos in Newfoundland create. Although the reason these rehearsals were held was a formal event to showcase Philippine folk culture to both insiders and outsiders, the atmosphere of practice sessions was warm and welcoming. Thus, folks enjoyed spending time with each other, people ate together and shared food, and Philippine cultural values of *pakikisama* and *pakikipawa* were tangible in people's interaction with each other, as easygoingness, respect, and fondness for the people around was visibly palpable.

While performers rehearsed and polished their choreographies, FILAN officers in charge of the logistics of the programme, arranged for *Sinaing* Filipino restaurant to cater the event, sold out 260 tickets to community members and those interested in attending the event, and organised the tailoring/shipping of dancers' costumes.

After two months of rehearsals, the day before the event, several volunteers gathered late afternoon and stayed close to midnight in order to set up the tables and chairs for the guests, decorate the stage, and prepare the props for the show. Once the setup was complete, a meal was shared, a dry run of the presentations was rehearsed, and final adjustments were made. Everything was ready for the event.



Figure 5.10 Various rehearsal sessions in April, May and June 2024 (Photos by author)

On June 8th 2024, doors opened at 4:30 pm. CBC journalists came to record the event. Attendees slowly arrived in their *Barong Tagalog* and various models of *Filipiniana* or evening gowns. The programme started with a choreographed doxology dance, before the Philippine and Canada national anthems were sung. The President of FILAN, Dr. Henry Borja, then gave a few opening remarks speaking about the history of Filipinos in Newfoundland and the establishment and goals of the Association. After that as a performer sang a eulogy to those community members who passed away in the last couple of years, their pictures were displayed on the screen for remembrance. The events of the evening followed the rehearsed dances, a game of “Guess the title of this Filipino song!” that came with prizes for the audience, a video

presentation of “This is the Philippines” (2018) showcasing Philippine cultural heritage in the three major islands in the archipelago, a choosing of *Lakan at Lakambini ng Gabi* (Gentleman and Lady of the Night) based on who wore the best traditional clothes amongst the attendees, dinner, draws for door prizes, and a closing performance followed by a party and keen community members taking souvenir photos together.



Figure 5.11 Filipino Night 2024 event programme (Photo provided by FILAN)

An Analysis of the Filipino Night

As anthropologists Alessandro Falassi (1987) and Frank E. Manning (1983) elaborate in their respective volumes on the role of festivals and community events in society, the temporal zones created during communal festive gatherings, separate individuals from their everydayness and contribute to the creation of liminal spaces that help achieve a sense of social cohesion. For Filipinos living in Newfoundland, the Filipino Night, that is the biggest community gathering of the year, is such a social event. The amount of volunteer effort that goes into the planning and organisation of the event speaks of the degree of significance it holds for Filipinos. Interviews have shown me that a sense of pride and accomplishment embroiders the event to which months of cooperation and hard work is dedicated. To the community, the Filipino Night is a remembrance of heritage promoting a feeling of connection to an imagined community (Anderson 1983), while simultaneously creating a sense of presence in place by reminding the public of local ubiquity by showcasing culture.

Historically speaking, the various forms of Filipino cultural events taking place in diaspora can be traced back to the 1930s when in the wake of the country's independence from both Spanish and American colonisers, romantic nationalists and the elite in Manila strived to create "a cultural repertoire that was both specific to the Philippines and comparable to the cultural repertoire of other nation-states" (Gonzalves 2010, 11). Utilising folklore as nationalists have historically done, Philippine folk art and folk dances became an essential part of the country's cultural repertory and an important means of introducing Filipinoness to non-Filipino folk. This was especially further promoted by national folk dance companies in the 1950s. Here, an elaboration on Theodore Gonzalves' *The Day the Dancers Stayed* (2010), helps shed light on important aspects of such organised cultural events. Comparative cultural studies scholar Theodore Gonzalves looks at the history of Filipino cultural performances in American

universities in the aforementioned work, by using various case studies to examine the ways in which romantic nostalgia and a sense of ethnic pride in public performances of Filipinoness through an invented tradition, help connect to community, negotiate belonging, and affirm cultural identity. The main focus of the book is tracing the “genealogy of the Pilipino Cultural Night (PCN), a cultural form made popular by Filipino students in the United States in the late 1970s and early 1980s,” in order to analyse “the relationship between the invention of performance repertoire and the development of diasporic identification” (Ibid., 9). As an annual event put together by thousands of students of Filipino descent across campuses in the United States and Canada, PCN includes the performance of a range of folkloric expressions, most importantly, folk dances. Gonzalves’ analysis is not merely celebratory but rather critical as he notes that such massive undertakings are not unproblematic, as he explains,

Cultural performances often take us directly to our most difficult and painful experiences—between “home” and “homeland”, across (and against) generations, and even within ethnic and national groups that we occasionally assume to be welcoming. (Ibid., 17)

Showcasing culture, tradition, and aspects of ethnic identity is never an uncontested practice. However, with regards to the PCN, Gonzalves notes that “the hundred or so hours of rehearsal spent by each student per show—and the notion of how much time is committed to the performance of ‘Filipino-ness’ is nothing less than astonishing,” highlighting the immense representational significance these events hold for those in diaspora seeking to (re)create a sense of cultural identity (Ibid., 89). Since some version of an annual event showcasing Philippine culture through folk art, dance, food, and costumes has been adapted in different diasporic settings, various Filipino communities in diaspora organise their own variety, usually in the month of June when the country’s independence is celebrated, and as June is Filipino Heritage month in Canada.

The last few pages detailed the Association and community members' considerable group effort that has gone into organising the Filipino Night in Newfoundland in the last few decades. Observing, communicating with, and joining rehearsals and the event itself, has proven that these endeavours can in fact be seen in the light of collective placemaking efforts, considering especially that events can provide environments where “various identities, emotions, and knowledge as well as affiliations are actually embodied and expressed visually.” (Hermkens 2007, 347).

When taking into consideration the ways in which formal events such as the Filipino Night create a sense of place for community members in Newfoundland, three important factors can be examined. First, as John Brinckerhoff Jackson explicates a sense of place is created as a result of the repetition of ritualistic habits and customs that foster a feeling of shared understanding and experience for people (Jackson 1994, 151). Within the crafted space of the Filipino Night, the sense of continuity that holding the event dedicated to all things Filipino creates for the diasporic community in this host region has slowly established spaces of acknowledgement and belonging for this folk group over the decades. Second, meaningful places can be made within a space through collaboration and social bonding as such endeavours can sustain a group in place through emotional investment (Altman and Low 1992, 5). The amount of time, effort, and energy dedicated to participation in and organisation of the Filipino Night speak of a great degree of emotional investment in the gathering that creates a liminal space for community members. As studies of festivals and community eudemonics suggest, a sense of community and psychological wellbeing is cultivated with involvement in such activities and spaces (Gedecho et al. 2023; Walters and Venkatachalam 2022). And lastly, the sustained practice of holding an annual Filipino Night in the host region of Newfoundland has contributed to public awareness and acknowledgement of the presence of Filipino-Newfoundlanders through their cultural heritage. A planned public event that brings a large

number of community members together, has allowed Filipinos to claim space and become visible to other members of the host region by gently asserting their presence. Thus, the Filipino Night as a more formally organised event, contributes to creating a sense of place for the community as a repeated annual event celebrating Philippine culture, simultaneously educates, entertains, and allows for escapism (Jepson and Clarke 2014, 3).

Assemblies of Being and Belonging

The house I lived in became my home. I cooked and hosted feasts. I held weekly movie nights and would invite people. Sometimes twenty people attended and sometimes only one person would show up. For about twenty years, I put in effort. Then, I forgot that it was effort. I just got into the rhythm and went with the flow (Pearlman 2024).

In her book *The Home I Worked to Make* (2024), political scientist and author Wendy Pearlman who has carried out hundreds of conversations and interviews with Syrian refugees over the span of a decade shares their personal experience narratives about efforts that they put into crafting a place of belonging for themselves in new contexts after being displaced. The lines shared above from the book are part of Asma's story in Tunisia. Finding herself in a new location and yearning to make sense of her environment, she makes a conscious effort to cultivate connections with the space and people around by devoting her place of residence to gatherings and activities that foster a sense of bonding and kinship for those joining the get-togethers. Her efforts to create opportunities to engage in collective activities that bring people together bear fruit, as these assemblies eventually become regularly-held and routine, creating a tangible place of comfort for her and her friends.

Taking into consideration Asma's narrative helps contemplate on the nature of assemblies that take place in diaspora. Her initial efforts to engage with the community in order to foster a sense of belonging eventually lead to the cultivation of places that simply denote a routine and comfortable way of being within a group and belonging to a place. Analysing the

meanings of gatherings and their significance in creating a sense of place for diasporans in the light of what has been discussed with regards to the concepts of being and belonging will help achieve a more profound understanding of their importance.

The Filipino values that have been discussed in this thesis reveal the collectivistic nature of Philippine worldview. Sociability, togetherness, and good interpersonal relationships are important aspects of the Filipino way of life (Lynch 1970; Agoncillo and Guerrero 1970; Licuanan 1994). Thus, various kinds of social assemblies are commonly held in order to spend time amongst family, friends, and the larger community. Here, I will interpret such get-togethers as those of being and belonging.

Philippine culture highly values togetherness, and both informal and formal gatherings that have been discussed in this chapter attest to this fact. However, a close look at very regularly-held casual gatherings in various people's houses reveals the different nature of such common assemblies in comparison to community organisation coordinated formal ones. When a *tambayan* that is a relaxed and comfortable environment is created, attendees enjoy aspects of casual Filipino quotidian life. A *tambayan* is crafted organically, and for those who join it, it becomes a simple routine and a way to be. The root word of *tambayan* is the verb *magtambay* meaning to "hang out", and thus *tambayan* denotes an easy way of spending time with peers without much planning or preparation. In other words, hanging out in a *tambayan* is an assembly of being. Participants' narratives reveal that since the arrival of Filipinos in Newfoundland, such regularly-held informal get-togethers, as modest as they usually are, have contributed immensely to the overall well-being of community members. As Enzo put it, a *tambayan* is "where you find Filipinos in their element." Engaging in very common activities popular amongst Filipinos in such places banishes feelings of alienation and nonbelonging especially since the relaxed environment of a *tambayan* diminishes performativity and instead

encourages unaffected enjoyment. Gatherings in a *tambayan* become “a refuge, a provisional society, and a home away from home” as they are “transformed into a liminal sphere laden with shared meanings that serve as a backdrop for shared experiences and shared identities”, allowing for the cultivation of *communitas* (Peralta-Catipon 2009, 35).

Assemblies of being contribute to diasporic survival as they provide spaces for people to feel anchored as well as pass on informal aspects of culture and more subtle values to younger members of the community who grow up in Newfoundland. Formally organised events or as I will discuss, assemblies of belonging, however, impart and communicate a different aspect of Philippine culture to both insiders and outsiders. They are primarily held to reinforce a sense of group belonging for Filipinos and showcase visual and performative aspects of culture to young members of the community in diaspora and non-Filipinos. Events such as the Filipino Night that have been held for over five decades on the island are highly performative and take on a symbolic meaning for the community in Newfoundland. Much time, energy, effort, money, and group coordination and cooperation is invested in this annual event in order to visually (and aurally) represent the most appealing aspects of traditional folk culture and national identity. Dance, music, costumes, food, and speeches that are prepared hold representational value (Klymasz 1973; Isajiw 184), as they remind Filipinos of their cultural heritage and familiarise the youth with it, while simultaneously introducing such tangible traditions to non-Filipino folk. Filipino Nights in diaspora (given a variety of slightly different names in different settings) are an invented tradition as they were crafted by folklorists and educators in Manila in the 1930s who created “a national folkloric repertoire that became a crucial tool for inculcating kinetic nationalism” for Filipinos abroad (Gonzalves 2010, 26). Such assemblies are those of belonging, where identities are meant to be performed through a set of mostly visual means and actions in order to showcase culture.

Formal events such as the Filipino Night that is organised by FILAN create representational spaces of belonging for community members where folkloric elements such as material culture, food, dance, and music from different regions in the Philippines create a sense of national pride amongst diasporans. For one night in the year in Newfoundland, such assembly of belonging coordinated by an official organisation creates a place for a formally recognisable sense of Filipinoness.

However, similar to the arguments of being and belonging carried out in the previous two chapters, the lines between different kinds of assemblies can blur and meanings can shift. Consider for example the inaugural *Pinoy Fiesta* event that took place on August 10th, 2024. The FILAN committee planned for and announced the event, members of the community signed up as food vendors, and FILAN officers and volunteers set up for the event.



Figure 5.12 Pinoy Fiesta event poster (photo by FILAN)

Pinoy Fiesta, which was open to the public, was held at Bethesda Pentecostal Church community centre in St. John's. On the day of the event volunteers and officers arrived early to adorn the place with colourful bunting and balloons, raise tents with logos of the funders' of the event, and help vendors set up their tables. An area was designated for visitors to be able to try on a range of Filipino traditional clothes from different regions and take pictures, a partition with fun facts about the Philippines was placed close to the entrance, and an area in front of the room was cleared and marked with tape to allow people to participate in Filipino dances and games. Close to three hundred people (both Filipino and non-Filipino folk) joined

the event. The community centre took on the atmosphere of a fair. Attendees mingled, enjoyed a variety of Filipino treats and street food, and participated in different activities. Volunteers in the designated area for dances and games took turns teaching various moves and rules of the games to participants.

The activities started with *sipa* (an indigenous Philippine game of using the outside of the feet, knees and elbows to pass around a distinct washer-type feathery/tinselly “ball”). A volunteer well-versed in the game taught participants some basic moves. Both children and adults found the *sipa* too challenging. Then, large bamboo sticks were brought out while the appropriate music was played to engage in the *tinikling* (a precolonial folk dance where one taps and dances in between beating bamboo poles on the ground). The upbeat music and fast clapping poles of bamboo brought much excitement to attendees as many people tried participating. The next two outdoor children’s games were *patintero* (a game of tagging and running along in designated lines) and *tumbang preso* (a game of knocking over a can with flipflops and running away from the guard who is the tagger). These two games brought a tremendous amount of excitement to the children who did not seem interested in doing anything else after that. At the sight of the children’s genuine enjoyment and involvement in *patintero* and especially *tumbang preso*, the rest of the games and the planned karaoke session were then gently dismissed. While the children played, parents and attendees sat around socialising and catching up with friends and enjoying the Filipino treats. As people settled and got comfortable after the initial excitement lulled, the atmosphere shifted to one resembling a *tambayan*, or one of being rather than belonging. The purpose of Pinoy Fiesta formally organised and funded was to engage the community and introduce some tangible aspects of cultural heritage as well as daily life and entertainment to the younger members of the community and non-Filipino folk. The nature of such an assembly is one that denotes a sense of belonging to group by way of engagement in traditional Philippine cultural and folkloric expressions. However, the place

that is ultimately crafted is one of being. Socialising in an informal capacity in a relaxed environment, eating street food, and watching children play and be entertained by simple outdoor games is indeed an everyday aspect of the Filipino way of life, it is a way of being.



Figure 5.13 A collage of Pinoy Fiesta activities (photos by author)

Contemplating generational differences with regards to what such gatherings mean to different members of the community, I would like to consider the concept of “source culture” as used by ethnochoreologist Andriy Nahachewsky (2008). Source culture in diaspora refers to the repertoire of cultural forms from the homeland that diasporans draw from as a resource for ethnic celebrations and performances. Since traditional forms embrace both dynamism and conservatism, source cultures on which people rely vary generationally in diaspora. To the community members who belong to the second and third generation, especially young children

who are most often born and raised in Newfoundland without having lived in the Philippines, community gatherings matter. For these individuals, an understanding of Philippine culture (both of the everyday and as well as special occasions) is often based on what is modeled for them during such get-togethers. Thus, events such as Pinoy Fiesta and Filipino Night turn into assemblies of both being and belonging for these two generations who shape their understanding of Philippine everyday and celebratory cultures in the small diasporic setting of Newfoundland and not directly in the Philippines.

Taking into consideration the types of gatherings and the significant places that they create for Filipinos in Newfoundland, it is understandable that both assemblies of being and belonging contribute to placemaking efforts. At times, during formal events the atmosphere shifts and the lines between assemblies of being and belonging blur. Both kinds of gatherings have historically contributed to the crafting of Filipino places in Newfoundland. Assemblies of being help diasporans thrive and survive, while assemblies of belonging function as reminders of cultural heritage and national identity, helping familiarise people in the host society with the background culture of some of its residents.

Conclusion

This chapter was dedicated to the analysis of the places that the community creates in the host region of Newfoundland in order to feel anchored and cultivate a sense of belonging in place. Informal spaces where a *tambayan* as a liminal space of comfort and refuge is crafted were analysed, revealing that feelings of security, group belonging, and well-being become possible in private spaces that allow for easy dialogue and social interaction. Formal activities held by official organisations were also discussed in order to demonstrate how these long-held events offer a sense of group belonging and continuity for Filipinos in the host region. Furthermore, such casual and formal assemblies were viewed in the light of the concepts of

being and belonging, revealing their different nature and purpose and the occasional blurring lines distinguishing them.

A historical view of various kinds of Filipino assemblies in Newfoundland highlights their value in emplacing this growing minority community on the island. Such gatherings offer increased chances for interaction and opportunities for connection among *kababayan* in a small diasporic centre like Newfoundland. Whether an elaborate formal affair or a cosy weekend gathering, the bond that such relations create follow the cultural values of *pakikisama*, *pakikipawa*, and *bayanihan* that connect group members to each other horizontally, allowing for the creation of meaningful places where social needs can be met.

Chapter 6: Final Thoughts

Chapters' Summary

In the introductory chapter of this thesis designed to provide information about the inception of this project, I looked at a myriad of different theories pertaining to the nuances of the notion of a sense of place. Taking into consideration the arguments of Yi-Fu Tuan, E.V. Walter, Edward Relph, and Kent Ryden, the importance of human experience in space was highlighted to emphasise that the expressive culture of everyday life creates individual and collective places of meaning for people and their communities. Furthermore, advocating for understanding an ethnic community and the intricacies of their culture in an emic manner, I introduced culturally-specific Tagalog terms in order to create a framework through which findings could be viewed. Thus, by presenting the meanings behind particular sociolinguistic terms that are ingrained and understood in Philippine culture, I set out to look at the Filipino community's placemaking efforts in the specific context of Newfoundland. As the research methods, core questions, challenges, and reflections were elaborated upon, I laid emphasis on the significance of a folkloristic standpoint that highlights the complexity of lived experiences and community narratives in order to examine a folk group in a specific region.

In chapter 2, I introduced a large body of literature that has informed and shaped my approaches and interpretations. Dividing this material into relevant clusters, I provided the reader with necessary background information about the history of Filipino diaspora in North America, the complexities of a sense of place with regards to the notions of liminality and *communitas*, the essential role of material culture in placemaking, the ways in which food and food culture contribute to making meaning in space, and the significance of community gatherings and events in diaspora. These scholarly works helped me notice patterns and gaps in research and formed the building blocks of my study, although I engage more deeply only

with a select number of sources that are thematically, methodologically, and theoretically relevant. In this chapter the notion of placemaking, sense of place, place-attachment, and topophilia were compared and reviewed alongside folkloristic concepts of regionalism. Then, since the folkloric genres of material culture, foodways, and community events were chosen as the prisms through which the Filipino community's placemaking efforts could be better analysed, a review of literature of each of these genres were provided taking into consideration the ways in which each contributes to the establishment of a sense of place for communities in diaspora.

Chapter 3 was dedicated to an analysis of Filipino things and their role in creating meaningful places for the Filipino community in Newfoundland. Nuancing the idea of Filipinoness, I put into categories objects commonly seen in Philippine households and beyond. Making use of literature that emphasises the significance of the domestic space, I provided ethnographic evidence to reveal their essential role in crafting a sense of belonging in place for community members of different generations. Religious items, decorative things, souvenirs and kitsch, and objects of everyday use were thus analysed to demonstrate the ways in which they serve as visual and practical reminders of ethnic identity and group belonging. In particular, they facilitate daily practices and foster a sense of connection to one's background and heritage in a host region that has its own very strong sense of regional identity. Beyond the domestic sphere, I looked at subtle public displays of symbols recognisable to Filipino eyes. Coining the term "emic signals", I proposed to look at this practice as the subtle effort of insider minorities to gently assert a sense of collective presence in the host region. Furthermore, I engaged with and challenged Povrzanović Frykman's idea of objects of being and belonging. More Specifically, I showed that such binary manner of classification does not accurately capture diasporic experiences as these categories are not fixed and with the passage of time and changes to context, their meaning shifts for each generation.

In chapter 4, various important and relevant aspects of Philippine foodways were elaborated upon, further establishing the collective mentality of Philippine worldview. Tracing the history of Filipino presence in Newfoundland, the concepts of availability and unavailability of ingredients were examined shedding light on community methods of food procurement and improvisation throughout the years. Then, a historical overview of establishments that started offering various Filipino ingredients and food items was provided, showing local awareness of (and gradual familiarity with) the presence and growth of the ethnic community under study in this host region. Moreover, the significance of commensality in the regular community practice of *salu-salu* was explicated, demonstrating the ways in which this practice has sustained the community by creating spaces of comfort, familiarity, and belonging for members who seek the company of their *kababayan* for various reasons during such gatherings. Then, looking at Filipino food as a marker of ethnic identity, I looked at examples where members of the second and third generation of Filipino-Newfoundlanders utilise food as a means of maintaining a connection to their cultural background and heritage. Furthermore, providing a history of Filipino food establishments in the province, I explicated their importance to both the Filipino community to whom such places offer opportunities to consume comforting and nostalgia-evoking comestibles, while making the community visible to non-Filipino folk who have become familiar with and have come to enjoy this ethnic cuisine. In addition, concepts of being and belonging were connected to foodstuff in this chapter as ingredients of being and belonging were discussed in relation to each generation's attitude toward Filipino food. As it was demonstrated, availability and lack thereof and changes in context impacts generational attitudes toward Filipino food in Newfoundland. Thus, it was concluded that even in relation to food, rather than being fixed categories, the concepts of being and belonging shift as well with changing factors.

Chapter 5 was devoted to understanding different kinds of Filipino gatherings that have been taking place in Newfoundland since the arrival of members of the community on this island. Here, I looked at informal gatherings, regularly held in various Filipino households, that construct the important space of a *tambayan* creating opportunities for casual and comfortable interactions and the continuation of common Filipino leisurely activities in private spaces in Newfoundland. In addition, I also provided a history of formal gatherings organised by the Filipino Association of Newfoundland and Labrador since the 1960s and discussed bigger community celebrations and other events that require months of planning and preparation and are meant to showcase Philippine culture and heritage to both insiders and outsiders. Yet again, looking at gatherings through the prism of the concepts of being and belonging, I categorised get-togethers in terms of those of being (regular assemblies where Filipinos can engage with each other in a casual manner) and those of belonging (events formally funded and organised by the Association and designed to introduce and highlight visual and folkloric aspects of Philippine culture to the public). In this chapter, the importance and value of both kinds of gatherings for different generations of Filipino-Newfoundlanders was emphasised, as in addition to a sense of comfort and continuity of routine practices, community gatherings also create a “source culture” in diaspora for members of the second and third generation to which they can refer. Moreover, by looking at the particular event of Pinoy Fiesta that took place in August 2024, the blurring line between assemblies of being and belonging was also examined, revealing the nuances of such gatherings that matter immensely to Filipinos’ sense of emplacement in Newfoundland.

Research Implications

i. Studying the Marginalised in the Margins

I devoted this thesis to the study of an often stigmatised minority group in a region that is no stranger to the sting of stigma itself. A question I posed at the beginning was, “What would the study of a heavily racialised minority group in a highly stigmatised region of Canada reveal about the concept of placemaking and belonging in a nation that prides itself as a forerunning beacon of opportunity and progress?” By posing this question, my aim has been to look at a population and a region that is often overlooked.

During the course of my research, I heard individuals repeatedly compare the Philippines and Newfoundland. Drawing on the fact that these two places are both islands, an array of fascinating comparisons were put forward by my participants. Aside from the islanders’ akin warmth, sense of humour, and awareness of geographical surroundings that “amplify a sense of place” (Conkling 2007, 191), historically people’s livelihood in these two places was dependent on the ocean enveloping them. Thus, similar stories of residents’ resilience and resourcefulness exists in both places. When talking about his early life in a village on a small island in the Philippines and his family’s dependence on fishing, Lino tells me with sincerity and an air of dignified understanding that he is a “bayman”: a term used in Newfoundland to refer to a resident of an outport bay/harbour area, sometimes employed in a derogatory manner to denote poverty and unsophistication, setting bayman “against businessman, outport against city, haves against have-nots” (Story et al. 1990, 33). Lino then shared details of his childhood in his small home island in the Philippines that sounded deeply similar to those I had read and heard about life in the outports of Newfoundland: big Catholic families, dependence on fishing, reliance on community life, and hardiness in the face of poverty and adversity. The comparisons did not stop there. The sociopolitical situation of the

two islands in their respective regions that often resulted in stigma and unflattering stereotypes were also considered. If Newfoundland with its distinct regional identity stood out when compared to the rest of the country, the Philippines held a similar position in Southeast Asia. In addition to that, historically, fiscal issues in Newfoundland especially after the cod moratorium in 1992 had led to the dispersal of Newfoundlanders across Canada in search of jobs and better economic prospects. In the Philippines, kleptocracy and the mismanagement of the country's wealth has placed many Filipinos in similar circumstances for whom migration is often necessary for survival. In other words, in a comparable manner, if there is a Newfoundland diaspora in Canada (Delisle 2013; Manning 2017; Thorne 2007), there exists a global Philippine diaspora as well. And here lies the crux of the similarities between Newfoundlanders, Filipinos, and those who leave home to survive.

In her acclaimed graphic memoir *Ducks* (2022), author Kate Beaton, who leaves Atlantic Canada for Alberta in search of a job that will help her pay her debt, speaks of the fact that to those who are economically underprivileged for too long, leaving home becomes a natural decision, and this decision marks a people's collective psyche, as she explains, "This push and pull defined us. It's all over our music, our literature, our art, and our understanding of our place in the world" (Beaton 2022, 11). Considering such factors, to researchers in the interdisciplinary field of island studies, a comparative exploration of Newfoundland/Newfoundlanders' and the Philippines/Filipinos' similarities would be a rich undertaking.

Unlike the majority of research about ethnic communities that focus on diasporic centres in larger cities with bigger populations, to find answers about place and belonging this study looked at the marginalised within the margins. In general many Canadians are "dimly aware" of Atlantic Canada and the Maritimes, and what they know of this region is often "well-worn

stereotypes” of “poorer provinces clustered along Canada’s eastern seaboard—places that [receive] wealthy tourists during the warm summer months and that [send] their youth ‘down the road’ in search of employment in the industrial cities of Central Canada” (Slumkoski 2011, 3). Newfoundland’s geographic location in the periphery of the country, its comparatively small population, its late entry into confederation with Canada and hence positionality in Canadian historiography result in a general dismissal of important enquiries about this region. Even when research is carried out about Atlantic Canada, Newfoundland and Labrador are often overshadowed by other provinces. However, in this place that embraces its own distinctive regional identity, studies that are dedicated to uncovering the history of the arrival and formation of minority communities offer much insight into contextual changes in Newfoundland. When considering the visible and steady growth of an ethnic group (that is often globally racialized and stigmatised) in a context where outmigration and poor immigrant retention is a big issue, we can gain valuable knowledge about the ways in which this community has cultivated a strong collective sense of place and prospered over the past few generations in the context of this often neglected host-region. Thus, with an immense potential to contribute to regional, ethnic, and community studies both the island and the ethnic community in this study merit more scholarly attention as they deserve to be understood beyond tired stereotypes and hold a higher place in Canadian historiography. Although Filipinos in Canada stand close to a million strong according to the most recent census (Statistics Canada 2021), they hold a “paradoxical position” because they are simultaneously invisible and yet hypervisible: “invisible because numerous kinds of people, problems and achievements are ignored, and hypervisible because only the stereotypes are deemed relevant and significant for public circulation” (Coloma et al. 2012, 5). Therefore, with the aim to willfully deviate from what Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie warns against in her speech about “The Danger of a Single Story” (2009) that flattens the human experience and

puts forward an incomplete image of a place or community, future research that considers the nuances in the context of Newfoundland and the diversity of ethnic minority experiences and their efforts in placemaking in this region, can contribute to the understanding of both this place and one of the biggest ethnic minority groups that reside in the country.

ii. Folkloristics and the Study of Place and Ethnic Communities

Exploring studies carried out about various immigrant, diasporic, and ethnic communities in a wide range of disciplines, I became acutely aware of the different approach embraced by folkloristics in comparison to other mainstream branches of social sciences and humanities. First of all, folkloristics lays emphasis on the vernacular, informal, and expressive culture of everyday life. Secondly, this discipline focuses on contextual, community-based processes of meaning-making rather than the analysis of generalised behaviour across cultures. Thirdly, it highlights the significance of continuity, change, and adaptation across generations instead of broader institutional forces that impact people's daily practices. And above all, this field of enquiry recognises the importance of emic perspectives and participatory construction of knowledge, contrary to common top-down etic verdicts on group identity. These characteristics make folkloristics an ideal prism through which to view communities in diaspora. Although the discipline of folkloristics is massively underused in the study of ethnic and diasporic communities, studies like mine reveal the value of such an approach that balance and nuance insider and outsider perspectives, holding in high regard what other disciplines view as easily dismissible and not worthy of scholarly attention. When examining diasporic and immigrant communities, folklore studies' embracement of daily life and vernacular cultural practices, in fact, help reveal norms and patterns of behaviour and power dynamics, understand lived experiences, and offer insight into the interplay of the micro and macro and the global and the local, ultimately humanising social research. As Dorothy Noyes'

explications in *Humble Theory* (2016) suggest rather than searching for sweeping universal explanations of human behaviour, the bottom-up, grounded, and reflexive approach used by folklorists can be immensely helpful. Such reflexive approach that focuses on how shared everyday practices of ordinary people construct social life, allows for understanding the ongoing and shifting social processes that are complex and fluid. Thus, folkloristic studies can provide excellent tools with which to closely view the processual and contextual nuances and richness of diasporic community experiences especially in small host-regions.

As a folklorist, throughout this study, I embraced a phenomenological approach. Phenomenology, which at its crux is the study of lived experience as it is interpreted and understood by those who live it, necessitates the act of quarantining and isolating personal judgements that could interfere with a deeper understanding of the subjects we study. In a truly phenomenological approach, the ability to judiciously evaluate one's own assumptions, views, mindsets, and prejudices, requires reflexivity and hence the process of bracketing/epoche. Therefore, aiming for a descriptive approach, I made use of some established methods of bracketing to avoid any "unacknowledged preconceptions" that could impede my observations, allowing me instead "[to reach] deeper levels of reflection across all stages of qualitative research" (Tufford and Newman 2010, 81). Therefore, before, during, and after my fieldwork I continuously engaged in dialogue, kept extensive journals, and crafted reflexive analyses, as folklorists do.

Thus, the pioneering information provided about Filipino-Newfoundlanders' experiences and community life in this study have been achieved by virtue of a folkloristic approach that has revealed the often unobserved dynamism of diasporic community life in this particular host-region. In other words, a distinctive and intimate view of the Filipino community's placemaking efforts in Canada's most easterly region, has been made possible

because of the analysis of their everyday folklore. Considering that this study is the very first academic undertaking about Filipinos in the host-region of Newfoundland, future research in a variety of disciplines can benefit from the insights offered about the intricacies of placemaking and community growth (which is currently viewed with increased interest and a sense of urgency in the context of Canada), and the dynamism present in diasporic community life in Newfoundland.

iii. Emic Perspectives: Marrying Folkloristics and Cultural Psychology

In his highly influential book entitled *The Translator's Invisibility* (1995) historian and translation theorist Lawrence Venuti speaks of the long-established practice of Western translators favouring domesticated translations of texts that adapt the source language by bending specific foreign concepts to fit them into the target language's cultural and linguistic norms, regardless of the fact that this practice often leads to the loss of the original text's cultural particularity. Venuti introduces the terms "domestication" and "foreignisation" to highlight the different approaches that translators can take. He explains domestication as the process of adaptation that fits into the target language linguistic specificities and cultural values in order to make it more familiar and more easily readable to the foreign readers of the translated text. Venuti explicates domestication as a biased approach that reflects dominant social values and reinforces the established power dynamics of English-speakers. Advocating the preservation of the specificity of the source text and a self-reflexive, responsible, and ethical approach to translation, he encourages the cultivation of better cross-cultural communication by detailing the benefits of foreignisation: an approach that seeks to retain and conserve the distinctiveness of the source language and the culture surrounding it, even if this means more effort for the target language readers who have to familiarise themselves with foreign and unfamiliar concepts. The approaches that Venuti tackles in his seminal work in the field of

language and translation can be productively viewed alongside what folklorists consider emic and etic interpretation of cultural phenomena. Often espousing an emic perspective, which is rooted in the comprehension of a community based on meanings and values significant to its members, folklorists prioritise insiders' views and the ways in which they understand their own culture, behaviour, and beliefs. Etic perspectives, which aims to offer generalised and comparative insights across cultures by searching for universal patterns and placing findings in frameworks of analysis external to the culture under study, often take a secondary place in folkloristic interpretations. Viewing language as a gateway to culture, the concepts of domestication and foreignisation, and emic and etic analyses can be fruitfully compared.

A folkloristic approach to the interpretation of ethnographic findings places immense value on emic perspectives. Prioritising insiders' understanding of their own culture requires introducing and analysing unfamiliar concepts that cannot be easily translated and do not readily fit within the linguistic and cultural frameworks that are at outsiders' disposal. This means stepping outside of "stolid tents of specialised knowledge" that many academics "[stay] securely in" (Adichie 2013, 401). Thus, a foreignising approach that opens up new and alternate avenues to viewing gathered data would require the introduction and familiarisation of outsiders with the intricate workings of a culture's psychology. In other words, the embracement of an emic approach that seeks to view things through insiders' perspectives, means the implementation of foreignisation in one's research in order to preserve linguistic nuances that would be lost in attempts at direct translation.

In this study, many Tagalog words that do not have a literal equivalent in English were introduced. Multiple paragraphs and at times pages were dedicated to the explication of these concepts that are deeply significant in Philippine culture and play an important role in understanding self and community as well as shape the subtleties of social interaction. The

introduction of these culturally-specific terms was necessary since the analysis of the community's efforts in the cultivation of a sense of place in Newfoundland required an understanding of members' cultural background and *weltanschauung*. Thus, instead of simplifying complex terms significant to this group's collective psyche, I made the effort to gradually elucidate concepts by explicating them and offering a variety of examples. Therefore, in the study of ethnic and diasporic communities, a folkloristic analysis that espouses an emic perspective alongside a foreignising approach invites the richness of cultural psychology in the study of folk groups in diaspora. Combining these fields of study that champion understanding ethnic group dynamics from within, can offer a fresh perspective and a wealth of contextual knowledge about people, place, and community.

Study Limitations

Since its inception, this study has undergone numerous changes. Not knowing exactly where my research findings would take me, I had to adapt a great deal of flexibility into the framework, structure, and timeline of this thesis. This meant that initial grand plans, especially with regards to the scope of study and the number of participants had to be diligently managed. Although I conducted 30 interviews with community members of different ages and backgrounds, they were all located in St. John's and the surrounding area. While aware of the fact that there are Filipinos living in other places in Newfoundland and a huge community in Labrador, time restrictions and limitations imposed by geographical distance restrained my reach. In addition to that, a global pandemic took away almost two years of precious face-to-face opportunities for interaction and community engagement. In an ideal situation where time, distance, and government regulations would not impose a multitude of predicaments, this research could be bigger in scope and reveal a more complete picture of the community under study.

Moreover, my positionality within the community has to be taken into account. While I was accepted as an insider, my presence and interest in the community was more in alignment with those of a researcher looking at the community from the outside. Although I attended different events and gathering and was happy and grateful to be included in casual as well as formal activities, I was not there only for mere enjoyment. I was there to ask questions and to find answers; I was there to understand the nuances of the places the community collectively created; and I was there to document members' everydayness while they simply lived it. Knowledge of my intentions and my presence might have affected my participants who could have withheld detailed explications, thinking that I am already savvy to the answers, or perhaps felt too self-conscious to provide further information. Therefore, although my position as a member of the community gave me easier access to spaces where an outsider might find difficulty in entering, I have to acknowledge the potential shortcomings that accompany overfamiliarity with a group when one is conducting ethnographic research.

Lastly, in order to understand Filipino diasporans' history of community building and placemaking, I chose three specific folkloric genres. Material culture, foodways, and community gatherings were the angles I used to look at how a strong collective sense of place and belonging is crafted within the community. While these three angles of research provided much insight into the community's lives and experiences in St. John's, I recognise that a host of other important folklore genres could also immensely contribute to this area of enquiry. Future research that looks at this ethnic group's placemaking within the host region of Newfoundland could surely benefit from examining the intricacies of vernacular religion and belief, verbal folklore and the wonders of adaptation in linguistic expressions, as well as ethnomusicology.

Closing Reflections

Narratives shared with me by participants of different generations revealed a shifting sense of place and belonging for Filipinos in Newfoundland throughout the years. My oldest participant, who was 93 at the time of the interview, told me that when she arrived in Gander, Newfoundland, in 1965, she was the very first female doctor that had been hired to work at the General Hospital in this city. Although she and her husband “fell in love” with the place and decided to raise their family there, her experience was not free of hardships and xenophobic attacks. Years later when she transferred to St. Clare’s hospital in St. John’s, one particular example that “brought [her] to tears” was an incident in the emergency unit, where while trying to treat an injured man, she was physically attacked. The irate man, a veteran of WWII, threw money at her face thinking she was Japanese and declaring to have intimate knowledge of the sort of things “her kind did.” Heartbroken after years of service, the incident left an unwelcome feeling of nonbelonging at the time. However, having and raising all her children on this island and helping build a community little by little over the years, changed things. This incident that happened in the eighties is very different to recent experiences shared with me. Chesa, who is a nurse in St. John’s, fondly talked about the fact that there seems to be more public acknowledgement of Filipino presence in Newfoundland. “I remember one of my patients actually was very happy to have me as his nurse, ‘Oh! You’re Filipino! Great, I am in good hands!’ he said.” Comparing the two narratives shared by participants of two different generations reveals shifts in the context and a degree of acceptance and awareness of the presence of this ethnic group in Newfoundland.

On June 12th 2024, the Confederation Building located in St. John’s displayed the colours of the Philippine flag in order to honour the country’s celebrations of Independence. Scores of Filipinos happily went to take photos in front of the building, beaming with a sense of pride

and cheerful, perhaps, over the public acknowledgement of their presence in the community. What this important symbolic gesture reveals is that formal recognition, in fact, contributes to the sense of belonging to this place.

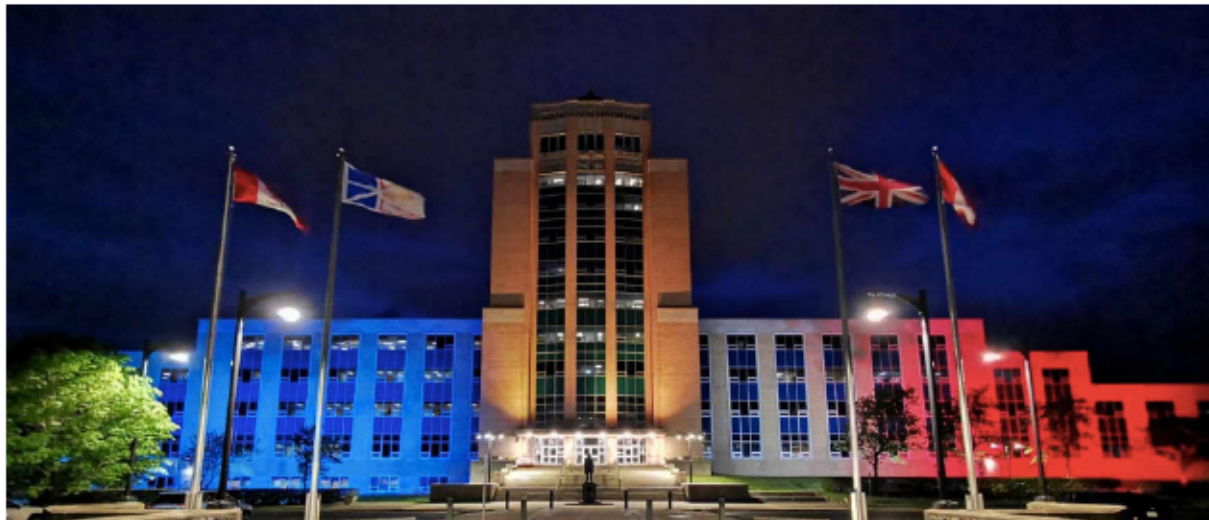


Figure 6.1 The confederation Building in St. John's displaying the colours of the Philippine flag (Photo by participant)

By conducting a doctoral study about Filipinos on this island, my aim was to add to this sense of formal recognition. Years of folkloristic research about the Filipino community's placemaking efforts have disclosed valuable information about how in the context of an often overlooked host-region like Newfoundland diasporic communities can form, grow, and thrive. Taking into consideration particular examples with regards to the concepts of being and belonging has helped produce untapped ethnographic knowledge that can help understand this region and the ethnic communities that reside in it. Future research that looks into other aspects of this community's life in Newfoundland would undoubtedly add to our understanding of the ways in which a sense of place far from diasporic centres is created for arriving communities.

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