

# **philippine studies: historical and ethnographic viewpoints**

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## **Facebook and the Intricacies of Migrant Self-Making among Ilonggo OFWs in South Korea**

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*Philippine Studies: Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints*  
vol. 66 no. 1 (2018): 19–47

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# Facebook and the Intricacies of Migrant Self-Making among Ilonggo OFWs in South Korea

This article explores the diverse ways that Ilonggo-speaking male Filipino migrant workers in South Korea engage with Facebook. It studies the performance of online identities in relation to the migrants' realities as social subjects and the technological mediation of the self and reciprocal exchange. It argues that online narratives can highlight facets of offline life that allow migrants a measure of biographical stability amid physical displacement, yet the same conditions create opportunities to negotiate competing online and offline narratives, complicating the illusion of a unified self. Online selves call for the need to reformulate Goffman's notion of the interaction order.

**KEYWORDS: OVERSEAS FILIPINOS • IDENTITY • SELF-MAKING • FACEBOOK • PERFORMANCE • ERVING GOFFMAN**

When I did fieldwork among Filipino domestic workers in Hong Kong from 2007 to 2008, communication between migrants and their families in the Philippines occurred mainly through overseas calls or text messages (SMS) by way of mobile phones. Only one of my research participants then was familiar with email. The proliferation of smartphones in the last few years and the rise of social media have clearly altered the digital communication landscape, creating unprecedented communicative opportunities. The emergence of a plethora of internet- and smartphone-based platforms has not only expedited and brought down the cost of communication but also created “new conditions of possibility” (Perterra 2010, 6). It is said that these platforms not only keep migrant Filipino workers connected to loved ones in ways that are said to be “simulating and mimicking quotidian life” (ibid., 5), but they also allow them to construct alternate lives that include “aspects of ourselves hitherto unrecognized” (ibid., 7). The explosive growth of the user base of Facebook (FB) since its founding in 2004—from 145 million monthly users in 2008 to 1.2 billion in 2013 (Sedghi 2014)—makes it a prominent part of this shifting landscape. Daniel Miller (2010, 9) notes that “there is a sort of surplus communicative economy to Facebook, in that people seem to do all sorts of things with it, and think of it in various ways that are hard to reduce either to some kind of communicative instrumentalism or indeed to any other kind of instrumentalism.”

Hoping to contribute to this strand of research, I explore the role of social media in the narrative production of selves among Filipino male migrants. More specifically, I attempt to describe how Facebook is implicated in the processes of self-making engaged in by some Ilonggo-speaking Filipino migrants in the Seoul metropolitan area in South Korea. If the coherent experience of self can be thought of as a process involving a specific and temporary stabilization of meaning (Hall 1996, 5–6; Barker 2000, 191), how does Facebook mediate this process and with what implications for theory? As migrants struggle with discontinuous sites of interaction due to prolonged separation from loved ones, how might we describe the role of Facebook in the stabilization of meaning that, at least from this perspective, is central to the production not only of migrant selves but indeed of selves in general? What are its implications for theory? Alternately, do not online and offline enactments, as versions of the self, strain against one another (Kondo 1990; Constable 2002), and if so how do Facebook users manage the dissonance?

Finally, it is important to be mindful not only of the human context of media use but also of the ways technology is shaped by its users (Miller 2011; Madianou and Miller 2012). What are the different ways by which migrants engage with Facebook, and what localized appropriation of this social networking site is apparent in them? To the extent that it is possible to speak of the mutual shaping of technology and its users, how is the process of migrant self-making also remaking Facebook?

This article's focus on men addresses the paucity of studies dealing with male Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs), a gap that has contributed to their lack of discursive visibility and hence the relative obscurity of male migrant workers in the public mind (Cruz 2012, 520–21). Furthermore, most Filipinos working in South Korea are classified as “production and related workers” under the employment permit system (EPS) of the Korean government, and up to 90 percent of them are men (Kim 2014, 240). This article features the cases of three Ilonggo men who represent different ways of using and engaging with Facebook. Note that speakers of Ilonggo, also known as Hiligaynon, are found mainly in the Visayan islands of Panay and Negros as well as in certain areas of Mindanao.

Ethnographic data were generated over a seventeen-month period from November 2013 to April 2015, through in-depth, unstructured interviews, participant observation, and close online engagement. Names of persons and some places have been changed to protect the identities of research participants.

## **My Informants**

I was introduced to Mario via Facebook by someone I knew from my hometown in Iloilo. We exchanged messages on FB (via “personal message” or PM chat), and I sought him out as soon as I arrived in Seoul for fieldwork. Buddy, on the other hand, I met and came to know one Sunday afternoon at a subway station while on my way to Hyehwadong. Later that day, Buddy introduced me to his friend Medel, who joined us. There was a certain openness among them toward someone who spoke their language, Ilonggo, a consequence I thought of being in a foreign land. I took advantage of this openness and quickly found myself in more convivial settings, sharing stories, food, and drinks. I spent hours chatting with Mario over coffee and dinner the first day we met. That afternoon in Hyehwadong with Buddy and Medel led to several rounds of beer at a *videoke* (video karaoke) joint. All were aware of my role as researcher as I made it a point to disclose this fact at the first

opportunity. There were palpable inhibitions at the beginning, but these were overcome as the reason for my engaging them—my research project—quickly faded into the background. It seemed to me that the more readily I laid bare my research agenda, the more quickly it was forgotten. It did not take long for all three to become friends of mine, if not necessarily offline, then at least online.

It was quite challenging getting to know individuals online *and* offline while not privileging as more authentic any one performance or presentation of self over the other. I did have recourse to a theoretical solution: Selves are inherently fractured, and all versions of the self involve arbitrary closures of meaning and thus entail revelation and concealment. It worked for me, although the discomfort was often there and was particularly pronounced when I briefly stayed with Mario and his family in Seoul. The loving and overtly religious family man I came to know on Facebook was very much in evidence offline. Yet, one night, a different version of him was enjoying a glass of Coke while seated with lady guest relations officers (GROs) in a nightclub. He did talk to me previously about his clubbing activities, but joining him at the club and seeing him in his element were rather unsettling. It was this other Mario that told me he and a friend had fun watching women perform on a cybersex site—which was fuel for reflection. The unease forced me to think more clearly not only about the fractured nature of selves but also about how deeply I was attached to the very notion of selves as unified wholes that I was trying to challenge. Understanding yourself while trying to study other people certainly made the discomfort a lot easier to bear.

Nonetheless, it was ethically difficult to be empathetic toward these starkly contrasting narratives. Having gained privileged access to these performances, I wrestled with the urge to ask Mario about such flagrant incoherence. At the very least, I wanted to know how he would have made sense of it, although the thought of forcing the question went against my ethnographic sensibilities (that he was seemingly not bothered at all was valuable data). But I also did not want him to think my silence on the matter was a sign of approval. I would have made a clean breast of it had Mario asked me. But he never did; neither did we come around to discussing what I thought of it. In the end, I could only remind myself that Mario entrusted me with these disparate narratives, and my task was to be attentive. I listened and did my best to follow and sift through his stories. I concluded that the incoherence was his to acknowledge and resolve if he wanted to, and in this way that dilemma was kept at bay.

Indeed, this approach served as a rough and ready template for dealing with somewhat similar, if less unsettling, situations in my research.

## **Performative Selves and Digital Spaces**

Miller (2010, 2011) has argued for the constitutive role of Facebook as “medium of objectification,” one that creates relationships and selves by making them visible. Miller (2011, 179) writes: “Facebook is a virtual place where you discover who you are by seeing a visible objectification of yourself.” Here, a person’s outward appearance in a Facebook profile or status update is not a disguise but—because carefully crafted or chosen—a better indication of the actual person than the “unmasked face” (ibid.). Providing a series of technologies for self-cultivation requiring minimal resources, FB, far from being a mask, allows someone to rise above his or her personal circumstances. The true person, Miller (ibid., 50) points out, emerges with the careful cultivation of who he or she could be, “if circumstances were otherwise and allowed this imminent self to be manifest in the world.” Following this logic of “truth by construction,” one may speak of “Facebook’s higher capacity for truth than the mere offline world” (ibid., 50). The other half of Miller’s formulation, however, accepts that who a person ultimately is lies in what others perceive that person to be and not in what they think or wish themselves to be (ibid., 51). The truth then about a person is finally demonstrated through the acceptance, affirmation, or acquiescence of others present in the social network. The capacity of FB to serve as a vehicle for truth (of a person) is due not only to the opportunities for self-cultivation, but also to the fact that it consists of “surfaces judged by others” (ibid., 51–52).

Setting aside essentialist notions of a truer or less true self, we can say that all versions of the self, including those enacted online, are performative achievements within particular frames of expectations (ibid., 177). This is consistent with the finding that in “many situations, both online and offline, individuals curate positive impressions by withholding disclosures which might reflect poorly on them and sharing those that are more positive” (Ellison 2013, 6). What the affordances of FB do, given unprecedented “opportunities for sharing self-presentational content, or ‘branding’ oneself online” (ibid., 4), is bring into greater relief “how selves *in the plural* are constructed variously in various situations, how these constructions can be complicated and enlivened by multiplicity and ambiguity” (Kondo 1990, 43). What is disclosed by identity construction online is not that identities

are being radically changed by social media technology, but that identities have always been more multiple and contingent than previously understood (Miller 2013, 10). Researchers from Yahoo! (Farnham and Churchill 2011) note that the inadequacy of assuming a singular identity “becomes more pressing as people create connections to others from multiple areas of their lives.” They argue that people’s lives are “faceted” in that they “show different facets or sides of their character according to the demands of the current social situation” (ibid., 1). They conclude that, “for many people, identity is faceted across areas of their lives, that some of these facets are incompatible, and that this incompatibility impacted technology usage and self-reported worry about sharing in social technologies, particularly in social networks” (ibid., 9).

The notion of selves as performative achievements belongs to a tradition of research that began with Erving Goffman’s (1956) dramaturgical perspective on everyday life. The self is viewed as a dramatic effect, a successful presentation or performance directed at an audience and framed by various norms and expectations. A more recent restatement of this perspective views selves as ongoing “narrative productions” by individuals as they come to occupy various subject positions within conflict-ridden fields of meaning (Kondo 1990, 26). These productions may also be conceived as temporary points of attachment between discourses and practices that hale individuals into place as social subjects, on the one hand, and those processes that produce subjectivities, on the other (Hall 1996, 5–6). While these narrative productions mark arbitrary closures of meaning, such closures are necessary for anything to be said or done (Barker 2000, 191). Despite its fictive character, identity is “lived as a coherent (if not always stable) experiential sense of self,” one that could not be reinvented at will (Gilroy 1993, 102). Thus, even as self-identities are fundamentally fractured and unstable over the long run, analysis may remain fruitfully attuned to the ways subjects struggle to achieve some coherence in their lives. In this struggle for coherence the self remains a transient creation, an ongoing project, always contextually constructed and relationally defined (Kondo 1990, 26). This study therefore asserts an understanding of identity as “something always in process, a moving towards rather than an arrival” (Barker 2000, 167) or, as Anthony Giddens (1991, 52) puts it, as “something that has to be routinely created and sustained in the reflexive activities of the individual.”

The turn to Goffman, with the foregrounding of selves as performances, brings us right into the conversation opened by ethnographic investigations into Filipino engagement with social media (e.g., Pertierra 2010; McKay 2010; Lorenzana 2016). Raul Pertierra (2010, 190) has called attention to the fact that “new media not only expands the possibilities for culture but also affects the way we experience it.” In an environment where digital media are an active presence demanding its own usage, shaping our sense of ourselves (i.e., in the sense of our possessions possessing us), culture has become increasingly mediated and now “includes images, practices, and representations often drawn from afar” (ibid., 24). As the latter become part of everyday life and as “[contemporary] culture is . . . aspired, imitated, and consumed” in the new environment, Pertierra (ibid., 190) argues that “we generate new identities, construct new norms, and shape new expectations.” Inspired by the deployment of an anthropological perspective on Melanesian sociality in the understanding of what goes on in FB (Dalsgaard 2008), Deirdre McKay (2010) has examined how in virtual spaces occupied by Filipino communities digital images and exchanges can make visible the interactions that sustain users as “partible persons.” She concludes that the use of historical photographs to index users’ profiles on FB reveal persons as constituted by relationships, i.e., a relational personhood. Within a form of reciprocal display on Facebook, photographs are appropriated by users not as objects of exchange but as intimate parts of themselves and others, parts that map them unto broader forms of belonging.

Jozon Lorenzana (2016) elaborates on the role of FB in the making of relational personhood, extending McKay’s analysis of the ways Filipino transnationals constitute identities online by exploring how the new media reconstitute the practice of recognition. He uses the concept of “mediated recognition” to focus on the ways in which social media provide people with opportunities not only to connect and present themselves, but also to give or deny recognition (ibid., 5). Arguing that recognition is “a key moment in the process of constituting [the] self through social relations” (ibid., 3), he points out how, in the case of Filipino transnationals in Indian cities, “Facebook provides not only a platform to showcase achievements but also a space for interactions wherein recognition from one’s social network takes place” (ibid., 8).

The present study engages with these perspectives even as it shifts the focus from the process by which users become partible persons within the



architecture of FB as networking site to the specific narratives crafted by users engaging in the reflexive process of self-production. In looking at how Filipino (specifically Ilonggo) workers in Seoul perform online identity by curating impressions on their timelines, I explore how migrant selves come into being as social accomplishments through their *presentation* and *performance*, “within the context of cultural resources, prohibitions and compulsions” (Brickell 2003, 172). The discussion points the way forward for elaborating on Goffman’s dramaturgical approach in the age of social media.

## **The “Aquarium”**

Mario is from a northern town in Iloilo, 30 years old at the time of the study, and has worked in Korea since 2006. He lives with his wife, Madel (31 years old), and his two young children, son Junmar (4 years old) and daughter Princess (1 year old), in a rented apartment in Seoul. A student at a university in Seoul when we first met, Mario also teaches English to Koreans for a living, although he has other “rackets.” He does his teaching mainly through the *hagwon* (academy) system or through private tutorials. An ordained deacon in the Filipino-International Seventh Day Adventist Church (FILSDAK), Mario is quite religious. He is also a much sought-after basketball player among Filipinos in South Korea, often playing for Ilonggo teams in and around the Seoul Capital Area and usually for a fee. FILSDAK and basketball are two distinct sites of engagement, representing two largely separate sets of friends.

Mario was already residing in South Korea when he first joined FB in late September 2009. At the time, his wall showed mainly his involvement with Farmville, a popular online game. On 21 October his son Junmar was born (he posted pictures of his wife delivering the baby) and from this point onward his wall increasingly featured his son and his young family, establishing a pattern still very much evident at the time of the study. Although there would be photos from Farmville until March 2010, Mario’s engagement with FB early in 2010 focused on his son. Many of these posts (from February to March 2010) were captioned “My baby boy” and included pictures of his son with other babies, wearing different clothes, sharing a bed with him or sitting in the park in winter, and being carried by different friends. More posts about his son followed in April, with one on 11 April captioned, “My little MVP Bb XYZ,” and showing photos of his son in basketball uniform with the letters “MVP.” Succeeding this post on the same

day was one showing studio photos of him and his wife in their wedding attires and in previous times, for example, at various parks, on an evening date under a tree bedecked with lights, having dinner, sitting on a bench, by the beach, together in a FILSDAK activity, about to kiss or kissing, in school, and so on. Except for a few odd posts, these kinds of family-oriented posts were typical of Mario's behavior on FB in the succeeding four years.

His timeline reveals a steady stream of photos or collections of photos (with or without captions) featuring him and his family, which grew with the addition of a daughter early in January 2013, as well as photos of him with close friends. Mario is also in the habit of changing his profile picture, sometimes in quick succession. He often uses photos of him with his family, of his wife and son, of him with his son (later, with his son and daughter), of his son alone, or of his wife. Mario rarely posts status updates and dislikes posting intimate messages on his timeline. However, he made an exception on his wife's birthday on 17 November 2013 when he posted a video of her accompanied by the following lines: "To my dearest beautiful lovely and wonderful wife HAPPY BIRTHDAY! I LOVE YOU VERY MUCH." On 5 January 2014, he posted a photo of his wife and two kids at the airport for a flight to the Philippines. The caption read: "I will miss you mommy, *langga* Junmar and *langging* Princess! \*sad emoticon sticker\*—feeling sad." *Langga* and *langging* are terms of endearment, shortened forms of *palangga*, an Ilonggo word meaning love.

Occasionally, a change in profile picture would be followed by a short, matching status update, such as what happened on 10 August 2011 when Mario used as his profile picture a photo of his wife in a mildly sexy pose before a waterfall. A status update followed, "my Jolie is back . . . . but still worried of my *langga*!" (his son then had yet to return from the Philippines). On 1 September 2011, he changed his profile picture to that of his son, replacing it within the day with another picture of the boy posted earlier by a relative of his wife. A status update followed: "missing my fisherboy." There were instances when he managed more than a one-liner. When his daughter was born, Mario announced the event via a status update on 4 January 2013, thanking friends for their prayers and informing them that, after three long hours of labor, "my wife safely delivered our little princess." He ended by saying that "God is always good." When his son made the honor roll, a very proud Mario posted on 18 March 2014 his longest status update thus far: "I never thought that my 4-yr-old boy who hardly spoke to his teacher and

classmates even until the end of the school year would become an honor pupil and to top that I didn't expect that this quiet boy is the Math wiz in their class!!" This came with photos of his son in a barong shirt, wearing his medal.

Notably, the bulk of the traffic on Mario's timeline is generated by other people: his wife and close relatives as well as his friends, who either tag him in their posts or post directly on his timeline. His wife's posts usually feature photos of their son or other family photos accompanied by status updates that comment on them or videos of their son eating his vegetables and even of her giving birth to their son at a Korean hospital, captioned, "The joy and pain that only mothers can explain." Sometimes there are lengthy postings during special occasions that are either tender or romantic. All these posts were made from May to September 2013 when his wife and the children were in the Philippines. The other posts by friends usually concern church-related activities, announcements regarding graduate courses at a local university where Mario was enrolled, or photos and occasional videos of basketball teams and games Mario plays in. In mid-2013, a few friends were also promoting USANA, a large multilevel marketing company based in the US that manufactures various nutritional products. They posted photos of the company's products as well as videos showing the company's founder delivering motivational speeches.

While much of what goes on in Mario's timeline reflects what he does offline, there are facets of his life not visible on FB. When I met him during my first visit (4 November 2013), we had this long and meandering conversation that eventually tackled the subject of prostitution in South Korea. We were about to call it a night near the steps of Seoul Central Station when he brought up the subject. He said it was legal here, giving the impression that he was familiar with the night life in Seoul. He said too that, like many Filipino migrants in Seoul, he went clubbing, although he stopped short of saying that he dated the girls who worked in the clubs. On my second visit in April 2014, Mario and I drove to Pocheon to see his basketball friends. Upon entering the area, without my asking, Mario motioned to the general direction of the clubs where Filipino women can be found working. He said some have managed to run away from the clubs with the help of Filipinos in the area.

On our way back to Seoul that evening, Mario took me on an unexpected tour of the red-light district in Cheongnyangni and showed me its "aquariums"—show windows displaying Korean ladies, all dolled up in sexy

outfits to entice customers. He was quite excited to show me the place. He said that his little blue car must be familiar to the girls by then since he had been going there often. He gave a detailed description of how the business was carried out, although he denied having availed of the “services.” He said that these ladies only transacted with Korean men. Interestingly, Mario mentioned a cheaper, more accessible alternative involving women past their prime lurking in the back alleys. He said he also visited Cheongnyangni with his Ilonggo friends who were always rowdy. On my third visit (April 2015), Mario arranged for us to go clubbing in Dongducheon with a close friend named Mon, one of his Pocheon buddies who has been staying illegally in Korea for many years now. Once a manager of an Ilonggo basketball team Mario played for, Mon frequented the clubs in Dongducheon and was known to many Filipina GROs working there. Although Mario never touched alcohol that night, he certainly enjoyed himself and our company. This outing was, after all, his idea.

That night, in one of the two clubs we visited, Mario shared that he and Mon often went to these places with their other friends. There were times too when he would help himself to these GROs, sometimes hugging them (*Kon kaisa may kupo-kupo*) and even placing a tip in a woman’s underwear band—the better to hide it from club managers who demanded a share, or so Mario explained. The following day, on our way to lunch, he revealed that he had in fact joined his friend Mon in some of the latter’s Camfrog sessions. (Camfrog, according to Mario, is a video chat and messaging app often used for cybersex.) He described how women could be seen performing lewd acts in Camfrog chat rooms, although it was not clear to me how Mon managed to get these women to do such things. Mon often acted as some kind of DJ, Mario said in an amused tone. He went on to share the case of another friend whose marriage broke up when he got too involved with a woman he met on Camfrog. His friend did not have the good sense to control himself, he said.

Many of Mario’s friends, particularly those he plays basketball with, are illegally working in South Korea. Parenthetically, the term used by Filipinos in Seoul to refer to those without proper documents is *artista* (actor/actress), with the immigration agents who run after them called “fans,” handy language for warning people about an impending raid in the middle of a game. Mario estimates that about five in ten of those he plays with have no proper documents. He informs me that some of those who attend Sabbath services at FILSDAK are in the same situation. He has personal stories about

the plight of Filipinos in such circumstances. For instance, he knows a man who is already in his fifties and has not been home in fifteen years; Mario often sees him walking in the street, visibly drunk. There are times when he will contribute money for someone in detention, or he will help gather the personal belongings of someone who is being processed for deportation. He has even lent one of his bank accounts to an artista friend who, lacking papers, could not open his own account in Korea. He really feels for Filipinos in such circumstances and has strong words for compatriots who report them to the authorities, saying he feels like punching them (*Daw mga nami sumbagon*). There are no hints or oblique references to such sentiments in Mario's FB timeline.

A large part of Mario's social life is built around basketball, and his basketball buddies are the very same people he goes clubbing with. These friends form part of a network that Mario has profitably tapped for his various side businesses: basketball uniforms, call cards, *balikbayan* (migrant returnee) boxes, and most recently refurbished bicycles. He admits to being a player-for-hire, but insists friendship is always part of his decision to play for a team. It is never just about the money, he said once, adding that he prefers to play with friends. He also normally does not accept offers from non-Ilonggo teams because he does not want to end up playing against fellow Ilonggos many of whom are his personal friends. Basketball is an important source of income (averaging P20,000 a month, he claims), but it is also *kalipayan*, a source of enjoyment and fun, a site populated by friends. These friends present Mario with certain challenges. An ordained Seventh-Day Adventist (SDA) deacon, Mario rejects alcohol out of religious conviction, and alcohol is something his friends are very fond of. Basketball games are always followed by drinking sprees. However, being a serious Adventist has not stopped Mario from hanging out with his basketball buddies, who in turn have been quite understanding by not insisting that Mario drink with them. Some, like his Pocheon friends, make it a point to prepare nonalcoholic beverages and food without pork (which is also prohibited in the Adventist community), if they know Mario will be joining them. It helps that he is a valued member of the different basketball teams, often called in during critical games.

While Mario's presence in Facebook bears the stamp of his religious commitments and his identity as a young husband and father, his offline life is more colorful. There is evidence of a narrative quite different from what is portrayed on FB. There are overlaps—his basketball friends do show up on

his timeline, and he consistently observes the SDA dietary prohibitions when out clubbing with non-SDA friends—but these offline and online narratives are discordant. Mario has had to keep details of his clubbing activities from his wife, although she gets suspicious at times and would ask him what exactly is going on in those clubs. She accepts Mario's assurances that it is all clean fun, but Mario complains that every time he goes out with friends his wife stays up late to wait for him, pressuring him to be home early.

He had more personal space when his wife and children returned to the Philippines for an extended period in 2013, leaving him alone in Seoul. With his wife not around, he found it easier to navigate between these two narratives. She was assured not only by what she was seeing on his FB timeline where she often participated by tagging Mario or posting directly, but also by their twice daily communication through internet-based apps such as Viber, Tango, or Skype, as well as by Mario's habit of taking pictures of people he went out with and sending them via smartphone to his wife, something he did to me twice. These digital links to his wife complemented his presentation of self on FB, even as they also allowed him to keep his alcohol and pork-loving friends and join in their nocturnal activities.

As medium for presenting the self, Facebook for Mario is a crucial medium of visibility not too unlike the "aquariums" of Cheongnyangni where, in the glare of a generic public gaze, he engages in meticulous self-cultivation. From September 2009 up to the end of December 2010, Mario changed his profile picture a total of 15 times; from January 2011 to the end of December 2011, 16 times; from January 2012 to end of December 2012, 7 times; and from January 2013 to end of December 2013, 10 times. As earlier mentioned, in these photos Mario never appears by himself. His self-cultivation on FB through photographs suggests a kind of "bracketing"—that there are things about him he wants to keep out of FB. Basketball might be an important part of his life but over the period from late September 2009 and late May 2014 only two activities by Mario actually had anything to do with the game. The first was on 6 April 2011 when he uploaded photos of him and his wife and of his wife and son, all taken during a game. The second was on 21 June 2013 when he used a team logo for his profile picture.

Posts explicitly about basketball appearing on his timeline, including photos and videos, are almost always made by friends and not by Mario. The only notable exception are photos or colored sketches of basketball uniforms that he supplies to the different teams—but that is business. When

communicating with basketball friends, he prefers to use Cacao Talk, an instant-messaging app popular in Korea. He says it is faster, allowing teams to bring players together more quickly.

### **“Deny Everything”**

Medel was a 24-year-old migrant worker from Central Mindanao, then employed at a foundry shop in Incheon when I first met him in April 2014. He said conditions at the foundry were difficult, and he was quite concerned about its impact on his health, especially since the company did not provide them with any safety gear. He was planning to return to the Philippines after five years (he was on his second year at the time). His friend Buddy told me Medel was married to a nurse based in Saudi Arabia, although they have no children. He hides this fact from all but a few who are close to him. Actually, Medel has a girlfriend in South Korea and is engaged in what Filipinos there call “coupling,” i.e., when two people move in as a couple. His FB timeline begins in March 2014, and it is interesting that he uses an alias quite removed from his real name as any alias could be: “DX” (not the real alias, of course). Not surprisingly, there are no pictures of him or of his girlfriend on either his FB profile or timeline. Instead, one finds drawings or sketches.

This alias has allowed Medel to carry on as if he were still single, Buddy having been sworn to keep his marital status a secret (not very reliably, it seems). I once sent a PM to Buddy over FB if he was the only one who knew of his friend’s little secret; he said that he and another friend knew about it, and they thought it was probably all right as long as Medel could keep his real status under wraps and did not admit that he was married (*Kmi nla dan yah pay la sala amu nah rason namun la sala mo basta di angkunon*). Although he hides behind an alias, Medel’s timeline is anything but fictional since he regularly interacts with real, offline friends, often about love and relationships. These exchanges are usually triggered by something that Medel posts, for instance, a quote about relationships, a poster or a meme, a video about love, or an intriguing status update (e.g., “feeling inspired”). Medel is particularly fond of posting about love and relationships, including quotes about marriage. On 4 April 2014, he posted a picture of a man being kissed by the man’s wife accompanied by the following caption: “Real men stay faithful.” This triggered a lengthy and in many parts flippant exchange between friends. One friend made the provocative comment (in Tagalog) that the temptations were just starting and he hoped his friends would not give in because, as they

knew from the holy book, they were not to claim what did not belong to them (*Nag umpisa plang ang mga tmptation. . . hihihi. . . sana wag kyong matukso. . . ayon sa ating banal na kasulatan . . . wag mong angkinin ang hindi mo pag aari. . dba DX. . . hihihhi . . . pis*). Half-jokingly, Medel replied that he was not coveting anyone, but was only interested in those who were willing (*Hnd nmn ako nang aangkin Jun . . . ang willing lng . . . hehehe*).

On 12 April 2014, Medel featured an interesting Ilonggo song (with lyrics) on his wall. The song, *Tonto nga Gugma* (Crazy Love), tells of how people who are in love end up getting hurt because they do stupid things, like going after a married woman or man. Again, a long exchange followed, this time Medel almost giving himself away in a back and forth with a seemingly conservative lady friend. The friend said she did not understand why some people insisted on having affairs with those already married and with families when there were a lot of single people around. “That is crazy and cannot be love,” she emphatically said (*Kay damo mn dalaga kag soltero, ngaman ya s pamilyado k? hahaha . . . TONTO! Indi ina ya GUGMA!!!!!!*). Medel responded by saying, “Sometimes you just find yourself in certain situations and you struggle . . . against all odds” (*Ti anhon mo kay pagkilala amu nmn nang sitwasyon . . . against all odds . . .*). She shot back, arguing that it could not be love if you were involved with someone already with a family (*Indi na ya guro gugma nga mapatol k p sa may pamilya na . . .*) and adding that “Family is d basic unit of society daw, so if u had an affair w/ a married man/ woman meaning u r destroying d society.” Apparently wanting to disengage in the face of serious opposition, Medel replied flippantly that it was not about destroying anything but adding something (*Wla mab gna guba . . . gndugangan lng. hehehe*). His friend would not let him off the hook: “Ow c’mon! hahaha . . . male perspective? If u want to look at it dat way, go! Hahaha . . .” Medel tried to wiggle his way out, lamely explaining that perhaps others were doing it, but not him since he preferred single women, the better to avoid complications (*Cla guru . . . pero sa dalaga jpun akan eh wla pa libog*).

On 7 May 2014 Medel updated his cover photo with a quote on marriage: “Marriage is getting to have a sleep over with your best friend, every single night of the week.” A month later, on 10 June, he changed his profile picture using a series of drawings showing a young couple in various intimate poses. I posted a comment, asking if he was the man in the drawings. He wished it was him, he said (*Haha . . . tani sir*). He seemed to be telling his friends that he was very much in love. Three status updates in July were quite interesting:



11 July: “was [emoticon] feeling loved”; 12 July: “My girlfriend is a *gumiho*,” referencing a South Korean romantic comedy television series starring actress Shin Min-ah; and 15 July: “was [emoticon] feeling inspired.” This last update again provoked his feisty conservative lady friend. She teased him, saying that somebody must really be in love (*May inlababowootoot . . . hahahaha*). Medel responded with “Shhhh . . .” Clearly, Medel’s timeline almost screamed about his being in love—with someone not his wife, with someone who was never named in these exchanges, and with love itself, however hackneyed that may sound.

I met Medel aka DX personally for the first time in early April 2014 when he joined his closest friend, Buddy, who was then with me on a Sunday in church at Hyehwadong. Many Filipino workers congregate in this area not only for the Catholic Mass but also for the *barkadahan* or camaraderie that happens in the many restaurants and videoke bars in the area. By late afternoon, we found ourselves in one of these videoke bars—Buddy, myself, Medel, and their other friends most of whom were Buddy’s townmates from Mohon, a municipality in Mindanao. During one of the songs, Medel was paired and teased with a pretty girl who was doing most of the singing. He was awkwardly shy, unable to dance properly. She, however, quickly got fed up and decided to put his hands on her waist, the better for him to find his rhythm. The group approved loudly. But this budding attraction (that was what I thought it was) seemed to have been doomed by Medel’s bashfulness. Buddy later explained Medel’s predicament. One of the ladies in the group was his girlfriend—they were a “couple”—and he was keeping this fact a secret to most of his friends, thus explaining his awkwardness when the group teased him about dancing with the girl and when the latter placed his hands on her waist. Buddy explained that Medel was just “lying low.” As things turned out, later that year (around August, per Buddy’s information), Medel left his girlfriend for the pretty girl who loved to sing.

Medel managed to present himself as someone very much in love while keeping the identity of his girlfriend a secret from all but a few of his very close friends. A physically distant husband, flippant lover boy, and somebody’s actual lover, Medel found that navigating between and among these parallel, tightly segregated narratives of the self was tricky. In one of our FB chats, I asked about his status: “Last question for today . . . : Married? Single? Feeling single? In a relationship? Confused? Or ‘it’s complicated’?” Medel replied, “Single sir . . .” Trying to be provocative, I jokingly asked,

“Single again? Haha.” He quickly corrected himself, saying that he was really in a relationship (*Aw in a relationship gali . . .*).

Obviously, Facebook’s privacy settings play a crucial role. According to Buddy (his not entirely reliable friend), Medel’s account is restricted to friends. Facebook’s privacy settings has allowed Medel or DX to create a tight circle for himself within which a wide range of interactions occur, but especially about intimate relationships and love. Within those settings, Medel can and does “deny everything,” as his FB cover photo says—not so much because he does not want to confront reality but to protect another reality in which, even in a foreign land, he can be surrounded by friends who will comment on what he has to say about love and relationships or even celebrate his amorous pursuits.

I could only think that this was the reason why he did not contact me when he once visited Manila, despite our prior agreement. Buddy implied as much when he expressed doubt that Medel would come and visit me as he would then be with his wife (*py ambut lng mkahpit nah hy ara daan sawa nya cina upod nya*). Medel’s reason was different: “There was a typhoon,” he said. Typhoon or not, he did have good reason to keep things airtight and perhaps thought it best not to give me a chance to meet his wife. Early in 2015, Medel blocked most of his friends, including Buddy and myself, from accessing his account. It seemed things got too complicated for him since his new girlfriend’s estranged husband—she was in some kind of “complication” herself—found out about her relationship and started harassing Medel and his friends. Buddy claimed Medel blocked most of them from his account so he might continue with his relationship without being exposed to the adverse judgment of friends who now found themselves involved in the mess. Still, Medel did not isolate himself completely and could still be reached through Viber. As of last count, he was down to a mere eighteen “friends” on FB. It remains to be seen if “DX” as a performative achievement will remain viable. Interestingly, some of his friends do refer to him as DX even in offline conversations.

### **Buddy and the Mohonians**

Hailing from Mohon, a municipality in one of the Lake Lanao provinces in Mindanao, Buddy was a 29-year-old factory worker when I first made his acquaintance at a train station in April 2014. He was then on his second

year as an EPS (employment permit system) worker in South Korea and was employed in a family-owned furniture factory in Incheon. The closest friend of Medel (aka DX), Buddy is married but his young family—his wife, Marlene (30 years old), and son Andrew (5 years old)—lives with his parents and siblings in Mohon. He had started building his own house there, but construction was suspended even if he had spent around P300,000 on this project. Buddy explained the suspension as due to the uncertainty created by the possible inclusion of Mohon in the Bangsamoro entity provided for in the peace agreement between the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). Mohon is the only Christian-dominated town in an otherwise Muslim-majority province comprising more than thirty municipalities. Not keen about political issues, Buddy nonetheless expressed strong opposition to the plan to include his municipality in the Bangsamoro entity only minutes after meeting me for the first time in the early afternoon of 6 April 2014. He said they were prepared to fight.

From late 2012 to early 2013, during his first few months in South Korea, Buddy's family was especially prominent in his FB timeline. Shortly after arriving in Korea, on 24 November 2012 he updated his cover photo using a picture of his son. Aside from a series of posts where he posted pictures of himself during winter in Korea, Buddy's activities on FB usually featured his son. On 1 December, he posted a photo of the boy celebrating his birthday and captioned it, "My bigboy son." In one of his comments, he said he felt bad because at that time he was training in Manila and could not go home for his son's third birthday. The following month (1 January 2013), Buddy changed his profile picture to that of his son sitting on top of a motorbike. Around the middle of the month and in quick succession, Buddy updated his profile picture thrice, each time using a different photo of the boy. Yet, even as Buddy was obviously trying to deal with his separation from his family during this period, his timeline also showed him increasingly engaging a small circle of FB friends from Mohon. Although from time to time he would post various logos of the fraternity to which he belonged, his constant online companions were never his fraternity mates but his Mohon buddies, most of whom were also working in South Korea. For instance, earlier on 27 December, he uploaded a picture of himself in winter outfit and greeted people in Barangay Paghalong, his village in Mohon, which was about to celebrate its annual fiesta. He jokingly said he was sure that the disco the following day would again be marred by fighting; that he was not around was

good, as at least there was one less troublemaker (*Hapi2x fizta . . . isa lang xure ko dra disco nyo sa bwaz my inaway gd mau gni la ko dra nbuynan kmu isa hehehe jok*). This would occasion playful comments from friends.

Such online engagements happened regularly and could be triggered by posts like the one on 10 January 2014. Buddy shared a poster in Filipino that warned of the dangers of illicit love affairs and captioned it by tagging some friends, saying it was for them. A series of flippant exchanges followed, including insinuations about who among them were fooling around. Another example was the long series of playful comments made on a video uploaded by Buddy early the following month (3 February) showing him and his Mohon buddies slaughtering a goat at a Korean farm. A friend was mockingly impressed at how one of them dispatched the poor animal, saying that this guy was a seven-year resident of the slaughterhouse (*7 years ni nag istar sa slauter . . . hehehe*). Another jokingly suggested that there was an easier way to kill the goat and all they needed to do was to cover the animal's nose to keep it from breathing (*mga mango hoy bisan takpan lang ninyo ang irong sina patay nan a.sos*). As often happens, this thread meandered and some comments tackled other things not related to the video.

There were times too when a friend would tag Buddy and others in a post, and it would lead to a series of similar exchanges. Later that month (24 February 2014), a friend named him in a post featuring photos showing Buddy and a few friends all with suitcases, making their way from the subway through one of Seoul's more crowded districts. A long series of over a hundred playful and sometimes racy comments ensued (such as, *anu dw wla ngdako*, or roughly: What was it that did not grow big?) until someone suggested they go to bed and continue the exchange the next day (*M2rurug nta mg amigo ah . . . bwaz tdman sugpunan ja*). There were also occasions when, absent all that bantering stretching into the late evenings, Buddy would simply end the day by playfully saying goodnight to all his friends on FB (e.g., in Manila slang, *Gudnyt madlaaaaaaangggg pipzzzzz polllllll hmmmmm*, or perhaps as a concession to his Cebuano-speaking Mohonian friends he would say, *Guddddddd nyt njud hmmmmm!!!! god blesssss us mga amigos ug amigos*).

I observed a similar camaraderie in Buddy's offline activities. When I first met him on the way to Hychwadong, he was planning on meeting friends from Mohon once he had attended mass, something he looked forward to, although he said he was going to church first before having fun. In church we were joined by a close friend of his who was not from Mohon but who

hung out with them, Medel. With the mass over, we were met by two or three other friends, and we proceeded to one of the makeshift street-side canteens catering to Filipinos congregating in Hyehwadong every Sunday. Over lunch the discussion focused on basketball. Buddy was on top of efforts to organize a basketball team made up mainly of players from Mohon, and the team would be called “Mohonianz.” He presented to his friends the design for the uniform that he had in his phone, and they seemed to concur. They also spent a lot of time discussing team composition. Buddy was concerned about this massive player whose team they would soon be playing against. He had the player’s photo on his phone, and he showed it around to impress on everyone the threat they faced. This would be the subject of repeated banter among friends, apparently to make light of an otherwise serious problem for they did not have anyone in the team to match this player.

After lunch we met up with a much bigger group from Mohon at a BBQ Chicken joint in a nearby street. By late afternoon, and after a few rounds of beer, we moved to a nearby videoke bar and stayed there until around 8:00 PM. Although he neither sang nor danced like the others, Buddy was noticeably losing himself in the company of his friends. He would apologize occasionally for not attending to me as his personal guest. He kept asking if I was okay and requested his friend DX a few times to keep me company. Once assured I was having fun, he would promptly rejoin his friends across the floor. Still, later that evening, he told me via FB chat that he felt a little embarrassed at having left me when he was with his friends (*cenxa gd medyo gbiyaan tka gaina vah huya ko gawa sa imo vah*). He could not help but be thoroughly engaged in the Mohonian fellowship, he seemed to be implying. After videoke, Buddy explained that this kind of gathering did not happen every week, and they were lucky if they could have it once a month because of work. Of course, he and his friends (or at least some of them) would go on to “see” each other on FB and carry on this barkadahan. There, Buddy could count on his Mohonian buddies to be present most of the time (if not always) and could have his fill of banter.

For Buddy FB does not present opportunities for pursuing an alternative narrative of the self. Rather, it is a way for him to remain grounded in his hometown of Mohon. Offline and online, Buddy remains primarily a Mohonian, able not only to resist the transgressive processes of migration and physical separation, but also “to bring geography back in” (Mitchell 1997) through a technologically mediated yet localized “Mohonian” sensibility.

What is clear in Buddy's timeline is his emotional investment in place and how this is enacted through online camaraderie in the supposedly deterritorialized world of FB. This recalls Mizuko Ito's (1999, 5, 20) early caveat regarding geographically based places as durable sources of embodied and localized sociality and how digital media can also be "productive of localized social relations and interests." Indeed, as his day was about to end on the evening of 3 February 2014 (shortly after the series of flippant exchanges triggered by that video showing him and the other Mohonians dispatching an unfortunate goat), Buddy posted eighteen late-winter photos of his visits to various places in Korea as well as photos of him sitting on a snowmobile and on a car. He tagged his wife, Marlene, using a "feeling great" emoticon. This was followed at 10:02 PM by a status update playfully greeting his hometown of Mohon (*Ello Mohon hmmmmmm*). Buddy may be simultaneously "here" and "there" through the affordances of digital social media, but he cannot be described as someone thoroughly "lifted out" (Giddens 1991) of a local context or as someone devoid of any orientation to place. With him, online and offline are not two different places.

### **From Managing Interactions to Performing Selves Online**

In Facebook the management of online narratives and the opportunities for interaction are functions of the architecture of the social networking site. Yet technology alone does not determine what online narratives are produced and how they are presented or, to return to a theoretical concern articulated by other ethnographies on Filipino use of Facebook discussed earlier, what particular kinds of "partible persons" users become or indeed whether they eventually become reflexively aware of their so-called relational personhood (McKay 2010; Lorenzana 2016). The online lives of Mario, Medel, and Buddy are technological *and* social accomplishments that present varied cases for reflecting on the role of Facebook in migrant self-making. As digitally enabled narratives of the self enjoying the explicit or tacit "buy-in" of friends (i.e., FB "friends") within consensual networks, these presentations raise issues regarding Goffman's (1983) notion of the "interaction order." Unlike face-to-face engagements in which "a great diversity of projects and intents . . . [are] realized through unthinking recourse to procedural forms" (ibid., 6), enabling conventions or ground rules often in situations that include people not of one's choosing, presentations and interactions on Facebook can be less improvisational, less in the order of embodied

or practical operations, and more reflexive. While the uncertainties that attend networked audiences in social media have been acknowledged and the potential for visibility of shared content is great (Ellison 2013, 12; Boyd 2014, 11–12), the fact remains that FB provides users not only with the capacity to present themselves in their own terms, but also with the space where recognition and affirmation can be easily elicited from a primary audience constituted by one's own social network (Lorenzana 2016, 8; cf. Miller 2011). For Miller (2011, 51–52) FB serves as a potent vehicle for truth about a person because, other than providing low-cost opportunities for self-cultivation, it also consists of “surfaces judged by others.”

This difference has prompted one eminent sociologist to bewail that what is created through social media sites are networks, not communities. The difference, Zygmunt Bauman notes, is that you belong to a community while a network belongs to you: “it's so easy to add or remove friends on the internet that people fail to learn the real social skills, which you need when you go to the street, when you go to your workplace, where you find lots of people who you need to enter into sensible interactions with” (Querol 2016). Steffen Dalsgaard (2008) argues that a fundamental discontinuity exists between offline social life and online sociality. By design, a “Facebook person” is always at the center of that person's own social universe, even as that person must also see “friends” as centers of their own social universes (see Athique 2013 for a similar argument). Most interactions on Facebook are based on this assumption; thus a person is always presented relationally, “not . . . as bounded individuals, but rather as unbounded individuals” (Dalsgaard 2008, 9). The Facebook person appears somewhat in the form of a Melanesian “partible person” defined by a relational matrix and not by any notion of indissoluble individuality (*ibid.*, 8–9; cf. McKay 2010; Strathern 1988; Brown 1992). In this context, where the user is assumed to be the center of his or her own social network—i.e., whoever you may be, says Dalsgaard (2009, 9), “your Facebook website has you as the one in focus”—and given the possibilities for crafting a self-image unimpeded by copresence, success is more likely to come in the form of a compelling, digitally enabled performance rather than skillful, on-the-fly management of unstated ground rules.

The dramaturgy that Facebook facilitates prospers on the basis of an exchange relationship. When one user admits another into his or her network by “confirming” a relationship after a “friend request” is sent, a form of reciprocal exchange occurs within which subsequent interactions are

carried out (McKay 2010). Self-presentations, in so far as they are sustained in interaction, may thus be taken to mean as bearing within them what Strathern (1988, 13) describes as a “generalized sociality” in that, as ongoing narratives, they emerge out of one’s continuing engagement with friends. It is this relationship of exchange that sustained the timelines of Mario, Medel/DX, and Buddy. It is this relationship too that appears to have collapsed when Medel/DX decided to shut most of his friends out of his timeline after the scandal of his affair broke. Critical, if merely oblique, comments from friends about his previous posts on love and relationships may have alerted him to the precariousness of his self-presentation.

The extent to which the self is “constituted by the reflexive ordering of self-narratives” (Giddens 1991, 244) on Facebook reveals the limits of Goffman’s dramaturgical perspective where he emerges mainly as a theorist “of the taken-for-granted nondiscursive practices of everyday life” (Manning 2000, 285). Philip Manning (*ibid.*, 289) argues that the latter’s emphasis on how a credible presentation of self is sustained “provided us with a model of the structure of social interaction, not a model of the performing agent.” His concern to analyze the ways in which people make their performances credible make people themselves appear hollow: “all we have are just ‘expressions and gestural equipment’ for providing certain kinds of displays” (*ibid.*, 292). Goffman himself, in an interview with Jef Verhoeven (1993, 324), admitted that, although he believed in the social construction of reality, he “[does not] think the individual himself or herself does much of the constructing.” In fact, Goffman was not so much interested in the individual as he was in the central reality of the social organization. You cannot, he insisted, begin to understand society by proceeding from individuals who very often have only “very partial and narrow roles to play in the whole”; rather, “society has got to . . . constitute individuals in such a fashion that social organization can be sustained” (*ibid.*, 323). Because his focus was on the ground rules that people use in daily life, Goffman appears to have “downplayed the importance of analyzing the interpreting self in favor of an analysis of the interpreted self” (Manning 2000, 290).

## **Conclusion**

The study illustrates how the stabilization of meaning occurs in technologically mediated contexts. Born of the migrants’ attempts to sort out events in the external world into ongoing narratives of the self (Giddens



1991, 53–54), these performative achievements (Miller 2011, 177) either foreground key facets of offline life, as shown in the cases of Mario, the loving and religious family man, and Buddy the Mohonian, or result in a highly discontinuous, less stable identity project as in the case of Medel/DX, the lover boy. In these “fictions marking a temporary, partial and arbitrary closure of meaning” (Barker 2000, 191), Mario, Medel, and Buddy have turned to Facebook and the kind of “Melanesian” sociality it makes possible, in order to negotiate their displacement as migrants. The control over privacy settings and information contained in the FB profile as well as the ready deployment of digital photographs and other types of images and, just as important, the kind of sociality based on reciprocal exchange that obtains between a user and that user’s Facebook “friends” provide unprecedented opportunities for managing and sustaining online narratives.

One can assert with Dalsgaard (2008, 12) “that the choices people make in what they want to exhibit on the internet would necessarily mirror the complexity of the social relations they are engaged in.” Nonetheless, online selves are “reflexive projects” (Giddens 1991, 32), and the revelation or concealment of facets of their offline lives is central to the narrative process of self-making. But this is hardly unique to Facebook. Miller (2011, 178–79) argues that similar processes occur offline, and Nicole Ellison (2013, 6) points out that in both online and offline situations people struggle to “curate positive impressions.” I note, however, that the revelation and concealment that go into these instances of mediated impression management involve more than Goffman’s (1983, 6) notion of a nondiscursive and “unthinking recourse to procedural forms.” They gesture toward a more reflexive dramaturgy, suggesting the need to reformulate and extend the latter’s notion of the interaction order to account for the space of social media as an “arena for conscious choice, justification and representation” (Appadurai 1996, 44).

The narratives featured in this study represent possibilities shaped both by the affordances of social media technology and by the particularities of the migrant experience, i.e., vis-à-vis those who live more geographically situated lives. With Mario and Medel, physical separation from families and loved ones partly account for how well each can pursue and negotiate between discordant online and offline narratives of the self. Despite his efforts at constantly curating positive impressions on FB, Mario has had to contend with his wife’s suspicion regarding what goes on in his clubbing activities with

basketball friends. When she and the children left for the Philippines for an extended period in 2013, Mario had an easier time negotiating between his online and offline lives, even though he still found it necessary to support his self-presentation on FB by being in touch with his wife daily through other digital platforms such as Viber and Tango and by sending her pictures of people he is with. In Medel's case, his viability online as DX has been largely due to the fact that he and his wife are in different countries and none of his friends know or have met the latter. Unfortunately, the fate of DX now looks uncertain due to complications resulting from the discovery of the affair by his girlfriend's jealous former husband. Eager to avoid a hostile audience, Medel has blocked most of his friends from his FB account.

While Facebook has greatly extended the potential for enacting plural identities (Miller 2013, 10), there remains the possibility of FB being used to resist transgressive processes as migrants deal with the realities of physical separation and displacement. In attempting to achieve biographical continuity under these conditions, they may engage in the "performative conquest of physical distance and displacement" (Camposano 2012, 99–100). Compared with the timeline of Medel/DX, those of Mario and Buddy cohere more closely with their offline lives. Mario highlights his role as a loving family man and excludes those facets of his offline life not in accord with this role. It is a meticulous curation of positive impressions, but it does give him stability in the face of the challenges and errant possibilities of migrant life. Whoever he hangs out with and whatever he does offline, online he is always a loving father and husband. Buddy, for his part, displays a localized sociality framed by his hometown of Mohon as a community. For him it is a durable source of communal identity, a locality invested with experiences and intentions as well as memories and desires (Silverstone 1994, 27). In Facebook Buddy not only expresses his longing for Mohon but also performs Mohonian-ness: Through regular online barkadahan, he is without a doubt a Mohonian in the company of fellow Mohonians. This suggests not only the persistence of the local—or even the localization of the global—but also how FB can become this hybridized place that disrupts the old local/global binary, even as it allows a culturally productive process that strengthens yet modifies existing contexts of affiliation (Ito 1999, 20). Whatever the possibilities, these different narratives reveal how socially embedded the process of performing online identities can be.

The presentations of self of Mario, Medel/DX, and Buddy bring together discourses that work to emplace them as social subjects (i.e., loving and religious family man, lover boy, or Mohonian), on the one hand, and those technologically mediated processes of self-making and reciprocal exchange, on the other (Hall 1996). As these individuals come to occupy particular subject positions through the affordances of Facebook, they do so within conflict-ridden fields of meaning (Kondo 1990, 26), negotiating with or suppressing other potentially disruptive elements. Consider, for instance, how gender is inflected across narratives, revealing different and contending ways masculinity can be performed by the same person. The resulting tension is never resolved but merely attenuated. Mario's pork-loving, nightclub-going basketball friends occasionally show up on his timeline but never become prominent in it. Medel, the married man, lurks beneath DX, the lover boy, who does his best to keep details of his marriage from friends critical of his views on love and relationships. Buddy early on shifted his focus away from his wife and son toward the Mohonian camaraderie, although from time to time he posts about the young family he left behind. Whether online or offline, selves come into being or become "visible" as social accomplishments, "within the context of cultural resources, prohibitions and compulsions" (Brickell 2003, 172).

Beyond stating that we need to go beyond arguments based on assumptions about a "separated out 'virtual domain'" (Miller 2013, 10), we should describe processes where online meets offline in complex ways. The above cases reveal how online identity performance on FB is mediated in contradictory ways by migration. Online narratives can be generated by highlighting key facets of offline life (e.g., being a family man or belonging to a place or locality) that allow migrants a measure of biographical stability and continuity in the face of physical separation and displacement. But these very same conditions also allow migrants more opportunities to pursue and negotiate between competing online and offline narratives, making the illusion of a unified self harder to maintain (Constable 2002). This embeddedness notwithstanding, it is important to acknowledge, given the affordances of FB and the system of reciprocal exchange that have emerged from these affordances, that online sociality is fundamentally different from offline social life. Online sociality involves a more reflexive dramaturgy defined by the meticulous curation of impressions rather than skillful yet nondiscursive recourse to unstated ground rules of the "interaction order"

(Goffman 1983). This observation suggests that analysis of self-making on social media should focus not only on the structure of social interaction but also on the performing agent (Manning 2000, 289).

Finally, there is some evidence that curation is complicated further by access to other digital media where migrants engage in complementary performances or engage in different performances across different media. Mario supported his performance of identity on FB by connecting daily with his wife through apps such as Viber, Tango, or Skype when she was in the Philippines. Interestingly, he relies on another internet-based app, Cacao Talk, when linking up with basketball friends and organizing games. After blocking friends from his FB account, Medel continued engaging them through Viber. Under this condition—Miller (2013) labels it “polymedia”—the reflexive dramaturgy can also involve navigating between different digital media and the identity performances they enable. There is a need to move not only from “simplistic arguments based on a dualism between online and offline” but also toward an appreciation of the fact that people may “engage with a mix of communication and identity platforms which usually include a multiplicity of online and offline identities without any clear break between these” (ibid., 10). Focusing on the performing agent should thus involve a reorientation toward questions of this new media environment and the increasing mediatization of everyday life and evolving forms of digital agency (Jansson 2015).

## Note

*This study was made possible by the financial support extended by the Overseas Korean Studies Incubation Program (OKSIP) through the Samsung Korean Studies Program of the University of Asia and the Pacific. The findings, perspectives, and other ideas contained in this article are, however, the sole responsibility of the author.*

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