

**“If We Were The Editors”:
Filipinos in Melbourne,
Australia Reading Their
Community Newspaper**

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March 1999

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY



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**"IF WE WERE THE EDITORS":
Filipinos in Melbourne, Australia
Reading Their Community Newspaper**

by
JANET AMADEO LEE

A minor thesis submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree
Master of Arts (Communication)



**Department of Communication, Language and Cultural Studies
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INTRODUCTION

The issue of the use of mass media by immigrants to sustain and develop special identities in their new country of residence has been a growing field of investigation over the past decade (see Riggins 1993, Gillespie 1993, Jakubowicz 1994, Gillespie 1995, Kolar-Panov 1997). In Australia, there has been work done on some immigrant communities including the Greek, Italian, and Vietnamese, but almost nothing on the Filipino community (see Bell et al. 1991, Young and Taylor 1985, Tenezakis 1984). This study, therefore, is an attempt to determine how Filipinos in Australia, particularly in Melbourne, use what might be called their ethnic newspaper, *The Philippine Times* (referred to henceforth as *TPT*), in sustaining and maintaining their cultural identity in relation to Australia's multicultural setting. For this study, Bednall's (1992:4) definition of cultural maintenance is adopted: "a range of activities in which the immigrant retains an interest in events, entertainment, and people related to his/her cultural background". According to Bednall (1992), these activities are in part facilitated or expressed through the production, distribution, and reception of ethnic media.

The study's focus on *TPT* is based on the assumption that the newspaper has a specific and possibly "specialist" function in terms of cultural maintenance compared to radio or television since it offers the possibility of a wider range and depth of information (Ata and Ryan 1989). Ata and Ryan (1989:3) state that the press "adhere to a common mode of presentation, including the editorial, news (in various categories), advertising, entertainment, and detailed information of a more practical sort. Within these bounds is opportunity for considerable flexibility, expressed for example, in terms of space and the placing of materials ...". This study is also an

attempt to determine how Filipinos in Melbourne define or describe themselves, their culture and their community and how they regard the function of *TPT* in terms of these definitions.

The research undertaken here is part of a growing body of investigation interested in mass media audiences and the way they use and make meaning of media texts (see Morley 1980, Lewis 1991, Fuller 1992, Jensen 1993, Renckstorf et al 1996). Part of the rationale for this current study is to move the boundaries of audience research in a slightly new direction – firstly, to focus on an “ethnic audience” not previously researched in Australia, and secondly, to attempt a slightly different kind of methodology in order to probe readership perceptions, values and definitions of identity as they pertain to a particular community medium, the newspaper. This study draws especially from Philo’s (1990) work on television audiences in which he requested people to imagine themselves as journalists writing news items, with the aim of determining how television news can influence public consciousness about important social issues. Like Philo (1990), this investigation uses a particular type of participatory activity, what will be called the “team editorial/lay-out exercise”, where a sample of members of the Filipino community in Melbourne were asked to imagine themselves as the editors of *TPT*. While Philo’s work was devised to determine how television news might influence audience cognition and understanding, the team editorial/lay-out exercise was envisioned as a way to determine how members of an ethnic group would prioritise available news stories if they were given the opportunity to take the role of community newspaper editor. It was also envisioned that the team editorial/lay-out exercise could be used as an experiential basis for a broader discussion of how Filipinos in Melbourne, Australia thought about issues to do with

ethnicity, multiculturalism and identity as these might be reflected or experienced in their community newspaper.

This study is also being done at this time in the light of the continuing growth of the Filipino community in Australia. According to the 1996 Census of Population and Housing conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the Philippines ranks eleventh in the main countries of birth of the Australian population, with an estimated population of 92,949. In the state of Victoria, the Philippines born population is estimated at 20,101. With this number, it was assumed that the Filipino community makes up a small but nonetheless substantial part of Australian society. This study in part tries to determine how *TPT*, as a medium of communication, “performs” in terms of its capacity to have the Filipino community recognised by other communities, or even by the society at large, as “Filipinos” and not simply as “Asians” or “Vietnamese” or “Chinese” with looks as the “determining factor” (see Ip et al 1992).

A brief history of the Filipino community in Australia

In order to understand the importance of this community’s ethnic newspaper and how readers perceive its functions, there is a need to discuss the development of the Filipino community in Australia. It is also important to present the cultural influences and composition of the Filipino population more generally – factors that may have an effect on the way the ethnic newspaper is produced and on how the readers perceive the functions of the newspaper in the community. Although Filipinos started migrating to Australia as early as 1901, a steep increase in the rate of entry began in early 1970s it was decided to further liberalise immigration policy. Based on the 1971 and 1976 censuses, the Philippines-born population more than doubled – from 2,550 in 1971 to 5,961 in 1976 (BIPR 1994). The BIPR report (1994)

also indicates that the Philippines became the seventh largest source country for immigrants in 1976-1977, fourth in 1986-1987 and third in 1988-1989, behind United Kingdom and New Zealand. Powson (1995) identified three streams of Filipino migration in Australia “within three significant time frames”: skilled Filipinos and their families for the period 1901-1971; skilled Filipinos and or those destined for marriage from the late 1960s to late 1980s; and Filipinos coming in for the purpose of family reunion from mid 1980s to the present.

According to the Census for Population and Housing conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) in August 1996, there were 92,949 Philippines-born Filipinos in Australia, 32,326 of whom are males and 60,623 are females; 50 per cent live in New South Wales while 21.62 per cent live in Victoria. Hugo (1995) attributes the “disproportionately large share” of immigrants in the states of New South Wales and Victoria to two major factors. Sydney and Melbourne are “important points of arrival of immigrants and many immigrants are ‘chain immigrants’ ... they wish to live with or near family and other settlers from their own country of origin who moved into Victoria and New South Wales in earlier years” (Hugo 1995:3). In terms of age and gender, there are more Filipino women than Filipino men starting from the age of 20. Powson (1995), however, states that this is not true only to Australia; internationally, women make up a majority of all Filipino immigrants. Also, the factor of intermarriage between Filipino women and non-Filipino men should be considered in the over representation of Philippines-born women in Australia.

Statistical data on the Philippines-born population in Victoria indicates that the Filipinos have been widely dispersed settlers. Generally, the Philippines-born migrants live in the West and North-West suburbs of Melbourne, including Sunshine,

Footscray, Broadmeadows, and Brunswick (Rasmussen 1991). In an Australia-wide context, Jackson and Flores (in Hugo 1995:16) made the observation that there were two distinct patterns in geographical distribution: “wholly Filipino families tend to be highly concentrated in the middle-income to low-income suburbs of capital cities”; and Filipinos married to Australians are distributed within large metropolitan areas and outside capital cities.

According to Pe-pua (1998), Filipinos have a penchant for organising clubs, associations or groups. Apparently, this Filipino tendency has led to the joke that “in areas where you find at least six Filipinos, expect to find four organisations (translated, Pe-pua 1998:1). Organisations are a way for the immigrants to recreate the social structure that they have been used to and at the same time serve as a “substitute” for the friends left behind in the Philippines (Pe-pua 1998:23). Filipino organisations tend to be based on local government areas, regions and institutions in the Philippines, educational, political, cultural, media, religious, sports and work related activities, and “people-centred” communities such as the elderly or students (Vergara 1998). In the state of Victoria, Vergara (1998) identified at least 46 Filipino organisations. It is possible that one person is a member of two or more organisations considering the bases of the organisations, however, affiliation is strongest in organisations that are based on regions in the Philippines. According to Pertierra and Wall (in Powson 1995:20) there is a tendency for Filipinos to “display some of the same regional class, religious and ethnic allegiances as in the Philippines”

The result of being under different colonisers, coupled with the geography of the Philippines, 7,000 islands with a population of more than 70 million, Filipinos have developed and maintained strong differential regional cultures. Ramilo (1990) argues that Filipinos basically are a multicultural people. Filipinos can be classified

into four major groups: Indo-Polynesian, Chinese, mixed European-Filipino, and the tribal or aboriginal groupings (Powson 1995). These groups are further sub-divided by religion: there are the animist mountain tribes, the Muslims or “Moros”, and the Christian Filipinos who comprise 90 per cent of the population. These sub-groupings have resulted in the creation of at least fifty-five languages and forty-two dialects (Asuncion 1990). There are eight major languages spoken: Tagalog, Cebuano, Ilokano, Hiligaynon, Bicol, Samareno, Kapampangan, and Pangasinan. Due to the existence of numerous languages and dialects, it is claimed that Filipinos from different regions had difficulties in communicating with each other, hence, Tagalog, which was later renamed “Pilipino” in 1959, was made the official language of the Philippines in 1937 (Powson 1995). Gochenour (1990:37-38), however, states that despite this, the Philippines has actually “no true national language” and that “English ... serves as the de facto national language in commerce, law, government and often popular entertainment”. Radio and television broadcasts are also often in English.

Additionally, Filipino culture has been influenced by what Andres and Andres (1987) refer to as “strains”: Malay, Chinese, Indian, Spanish, and American. The Spanish influence is manifested by the Christian religion and western social organisation. The Spanish regime introduced the Spanish language and a certain “Spanishness” in the national character, including Filipino names (Andres and Andres 1987). The Filipino languages and dialects also contain some Spanish words. The Americans, on the other hand, introduced the English language, mass education, public health and a system of roads. The colonisation of the Philippines for more than three centuries – three hundred years by Spain and 50 years by American – has contributed to the creation of further sub-cultures among the Filipinos. The consequences left the Filipino society to operate in an “acutely complex and

contradictory fashion” (Powson 1995:5). However, D’Mello and Esmaguél (1990:5) state that the influences of the colonisers’ cultures and that of the other cultures (ie. Asian) made the Filipinos a culturally enriched people: “the contradictions of the influences were interpreted and absorbed as part and parcel of the mainstream Filipino way of life”.

Filipino migrants carry this “Filipino way of life” to their new country, especially if they migrate after the age of twenty. Imbued with the “exigencies of their own cultural identity, with the sense of responsibility to transmit their values and traditions to their children”, Filipino migrants bring “not only their personal and material belonging but also their perception of reality and consequently, their interpretation of values” (D’Mello and Esmaguél 1990: 14). Given the complex interplay of social forces in the “homeland”, the notion of cultural maintenance and identity in the Filipino community in Australia has to be acknowledged as a complex and multilayered state of affairs. Hence it might be predicted that the cultural and social diversity of Filipinos might have an impact on the way their community’s media are developed and on the way audiences receive the media’s “messages”. The contents of *TPT*, for example, may be seen by its editor and publisher as the “things that readers need” but the “reader” may be hard to define in any concrete way, and depending on who this reader might be socially and culturally newspaper content may or may not have relevance. And all of the dynamics involved in message production and reception of the community newspaper also have to be contextualised in relation to the historical dynamics which operate to make the Filipino community not a single communal whole, but a series of social entities, some very discrete, others blending into one another. This study, therefore, is interested in investigating some of the ways

that *TPT* might be used by its readers to map elements of their identity and to function in the maintenance of their culture.

MULTICULTURALISM, ETHNICITY AND THE MEDIA

Multiculturalism as Australian government policy

The word “multiculturalism” or “multicultural” may seem to be a simple word but as a concept it is subject to diverse interpretations. Jamrozik et al. (1995) state that in Australia, the concept of multiculturalism was subjected to public debate and diverse interpretations since its adoption in 1972 and that it was only in the late 1980s that the government was able to develop a multicultural agenda based on explicitly formulated and defined policy. However, compared to Canada, which applied multiculturalism as an ideology in an attempt to unify its three ethnic and cultural communities (English, French and the indigenous population), there has been a question about what multiculturalism is in an Australian context.

Stratton (1996:334) states that multiculturalism first evolved in Australia to “deal with the problems caused by the failure of ‘white’ groups (Europeans particularly Greeks and Italians) to assimilate into the ‘Australian way of life’”. Summarising relevant research findings, Patterson (1987:37) observed that immigrants “did not shed their cultural baggage, and therefore did not assimilate in the way they [were] expected to”. Multiculturalism was therefore developed to replace the policy of assimilation and integration. In an Australian context, the notion of multiculturalism developed as a “shorthand way of characterising the doctrine of cultural pluralism” (Jayasuriya 1991: 83). Clancy (1994) states that Australia adopted Canada’s multicultural model, which managed cultural diversity as a “mosaic” rather than as a “melting pot”, the American model.

In the *National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia*, the main document formulated by the Office of Multicultural Affairs in 1989 aimed at defining the concept of multiculturalism and its implementation through government policy, “multicultural” was defined as “a term which describes the cultural and ethnic diversity of contemporary Australia”; and the policy of “multiculturalism” meant “government measures designed to respond to that diversity (cited in Jamrozik et al. 1995:99). Australia’s multiculturalism encompasses three dimensions: cultural identity, social justice and economic efficiency. In terms of cultural identity, Macphee (1990) says that under multiculturalism, every Australian was supposed to have the right to identify with a particular ethnic origin. Australians are therefore encouraged to be open about their ethnic origins and share their respective cultures with the society at large. Multiculturalism in a sense, is the “people’s legitimate right to preserve their ethnic and cultural identity while accepting the responsibilities of common citizenship” (AEAC 1977, quoted by Jamrozik et al 1995).

While multiculturalism may be seen as a positive response to Australia’s cultural diversity or “polyethnicity”, it is still subject to criticism. Jayasuriya (1991) identifies two aspects of the controversial nature of cultural pluralism: the characterisation of the notions of culture, ethnicity and identity; and the degree of differentiation that is permissible without damaging social cohesion. In a sense, the critics are looking at the inherent contradictions and limitations of the theory and practice of multiculturalism (Jayasuriya 1991). Jayasuriya (1991:84) states that ethnicity actually “differentiates a group by the possession of shared values, physical and cultural diacritica [sic] as well as common ancestry, geographical and national origin”. This happens because ethnicity, which denotes a “sense of peoplehood”, also

emphasises one's sense of membership of and belonging to an ethnic group. This emphasis of belonging leads to a prominent emphasis on the pronouns "we" and "they". As Gilroy (1997:304) states, "identities depend on the marking of difference".

Other critics argue that a plurality of cultures or "polyethnicity", which means the presence of various ethnic identities, leads to the impossibility in the formation or creation of a national cultural identity. They say that multiculturalism "breaks up society into nearly insulated cultural units, each claiming sovereignty over its internal life and immunity from external criticism and all sharing nothing in common" (Thompson 1997:164). And since a civilised and stable social life is not possible without a common national identity, critics say that multiculturalism is "a recipe for social chaos and political disintegration" (Thompson 1997:164). Moreover, the social justice dimension of multiculturalism, which aims to give equal treatment and opportunity to all regardless of background, would not be possible. Equality, according to Malik (1998) is not relative and therefore cannot have a meaning in the plural. Equality "cannot have different meanings for different cultural, social or sexual groups.... equality requires a common yardstick, or measure of judgement, not a plurality of meanings" (Malik 1998:125).

The proponents of multiculturalism, however, insist that multiculturalism makes it possible for different cultures to share and gain from each other thereby enriching each other's cultures. Macphee (1990) argues that there is much to gain from other people. Culturally, migrants partake of the richness and sophistication of the historic civilisations which they bring with them from their country of origin; and commercially, they bring skills and create jobs for other Australians by establishing businesses (Macphee 1990). As for the creation of a national identity, Kukathas

(1993:157) argues that there is not a pressing need for Australia to have a strong sense of national identity: “it does not make sense to talk of national identity in any strong sense of the term” because even a nation with lesser cultural variety than Australia will have difficulty in “presenting an identity that does not misrepresent the diversity of identities within the society”. Kukathas (1993:157) further explains that thinking of national “purposes” is a mistake because “individuals have their own purposes to pursue, and some they share with others – but it is unnecessary in a free society that all should share common goal, unless that goal be that of preserving the rules of a free society so that each might pursue his or her own ends”.

A discussion of multiculturalism could go on indefinitely and proponents and critics may never come to agree with one another’s ideas. It may only be the migrant communities themselves who can actually say if multiculturalism as official policy is good for them or not. In research conducted by the Department of the Parliamentary Library (1997:i) on immigration, social cohesion and national identity, it was found that “Australians generally support cultural tolerance and many find much of value in a culturally mixed society....”. Multicultural policies, however, had a mixed response. According to the research, Australians support the public funding of programs for non-English speaking migrants when they are seen as a part of a universal provision available to all, but were critical of programs that were seen as for migrants only.

Multiculturalism and the media

Multiculturalism policy emphasises services that are aimed at facilitating the settlement of immigrants (Jamrozik et al. 1995). Among the services are: the telephone interpreter service, the establishment of bilingual welfare positions in the public service, the encouragement of teaching community or immigrant languages in schools and the support for “ethnic” media. In 1978, a committee was formed to examine the provision of services to immigrants and to make recommendations. According to Jamrozik et al (1995), among the committee’s recommendations, the most significant to be adopted was the establishment of the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS), which would include radio and television, and the formation of a statutory body, the Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs.

Macphee (1990:52), who is one of the proponents of multiculturalism, believes that multicultural education is “one of the keys to achieving a society where cultural differences are understood and appreciated” and that this education needs to place great emphasis on language as the “deepest manifestation of any culture”. The emphasis on language in the interpretation or definition of culture has led Jayasuriya (1991:85) to suggest that “language has become the core of the ethnic identity model of multiculturalism”, the results of which in media terms was to give high priority to “ethnic television and radio”.

Patterson (1981) takes up these arguments from a different point of view. She states that immigration policies greatly influenced the “shaping” of ethnic broadcasting. Community language broadcasting was minimal when immigration policy was assimilationist but when multiculturalism was adopted, ethnic broadcasting developed. It was thought that with the development of ethnic

broadcasting, in this case multilingual radio, immigrants both literate and illiterate would be reached and that migrants would be familiarised with the social, economic and political workings of Australian society. However, mainstream broadcasting outlets like the government run Special Broadcasting Service, cannot provide all the needs of ethnic groups for survival. Hence, Riggins (1992:3) suggests that one of the best ways to ensure ethnic minority survival is for the members of the ethnic community to develop “their own media conveying their own point of view in their own language”.

The encouragement of ethnic communities to develop their own media is not limited to the inadequacy of broadcasting outlets to provide for their survival needs. The issues of media representation and coverage, especially in the mainstream media, are important factors for consideration as well. Research by White and White in 1982 found that ethnic and other minority groups were severely disadvantaged in terms of representation and coverage. More recently, Carruthers (1995:48) has argued that “...ethnic minorities are subject to ‘subdued’ racism endemic to the contemporary mainstream media”, which among other things, tends to “ghetto-ise” minority identities instead of presenting them in an offensive stereotypical way as was in the past. Similarly, Fleras (1994:286) argues that aside from being treated poorly by the media, minorities are also subjected to racism that is both “muted and polite as well as institutional and systemic”. As a result of the desire to maintain cultural identity and as a response to the mainstream media’s misrepresentation and non-coverage of minorities, the argument was put that minorities ought to be able to develop their own media to convey their own views and address their own needs independently (see for example Riggins 1992, Husband 1988, Gross 1998).

The ethnic press and its readers

In a comparison between the depth of journalism in television and in newspapers, Campbell (1995) argues that newspapers, in general, provide more incentive to address the complexities of news reporting. Campbell (1995:115) suggests that the routine of meeting deadlines results in the broadcasting of stories on television “without a good deal of thought given to the more complex framework in which those stories exist, including the historical, political, or sociological factors that have affected the stories”. He further states that since television news stories are run for no more than 90 seconds, there is not much chance to address these complexities. Kurtz (in Campbell 1995:113) believes that newspapers are better at “help[ing] us make sense of the blur of televised images racing by. [They] provide the context, the explanations, the fine print”. It might be assumed that ethnic newspapers work in a similar way – having the ability to provide more in-depth news reportage, providing the contexts and “fine print” – compared to ethnic radio and television.

Ata and Ryan (1989) state that migrants use the ethnic press as a venue for expressing their culture and language, which they do not necessarily want to relinquish. Further, the ethnic press serves as a “link to the institutions of the community itself, its club, societies and cooperatives – the things that maintain cohesion” (Ata & Ryan 1989:1). Ethnic publications in Australia are perceived to perform at least four functions: maintaining the cultural identity of minority groups, communicating local news and values to newcomers, orienting the immigrant to the Australian environment, and acting as a brake on assimilation (Gilson and Zubryzcki in MacLaren 1989:v). While these functions may seem contradictory, MacLaren (1989) states that studies on Australia’s ethnic press indicate that the press serves each

function to some extent. In its relation to the multicultural environment in Australia, MacLaren (1989:vii) states that the ethnic press “plays an essential role in the process of building one nation from many cultures”. This role is “performed” by the ethnic press by maintaining links between immigrants and their homelands, building links between immigrants and their new home, and nourishing debates regarding issues that affect immigrants. Riggins (1992) identifies two generalizable roles that the ethnic media play: as tools for cultural preservation and assimilation. Riggins (1992:283) further states that although they actually “perform” both roles, ethnic media “make their greatest contribution in the direction of resisting assimilation” (see Bell et al 1991, Young and Taylor 1985).

The use of ethnic newspapers as a way of maintaining cultural identity may be manifested in various ways. In Arab and Greek newspapers, Tenezakis (1984) found that more coverage was given to “homeland” than “Australian current affairs”. Young and Taylor (1985) found a similar trend in Yugoslav and Turkish newspapers, where there was more “homeland news” than “Australian news”. Also, in ten community based newspapers which Bell et al (1991) content-analysed, the space provided for ethnic “cultural entertainment” was very prominent. These researchers tend to interpret these findings as indications that the newspapers are used as channels for cultural and social information, which serves as an aid for maintaining specific ethnically based identities. Results of audience surveys conducted among readers of ethnic newspapers likewise indicate that despite their criticisms (eg staleness of news, excess of advertisements, lack of information), these newspapers are still read, albeit not regularly. Ethnic readers acknowledge that their respective newspapers have a function in their lives, the foremost of which is as a cultural resource. Bell et al

(1991:85) observed that their respondents assumed that their newspapers ‘...will provide a sense of continuity and an historical depth to their ethnically defined social world’. Najdovski (1992) echoes this in his study of Macedonian settlement in Australia. He says that the maintenance of culture and language is the main reason why Macedonians patronise their ethnic radio programs and newspapers. Macedonians, especially members of the “first generation”, regard the media output in the Macedonian language as a crucial link binding them to their past. Pe-pua and Morrissey (1994) likewise argue that ethnic newspapers are seen from the point of view of immigrant groups “as agents of ethnic group solidarity and morale, and cultural maintenance”.

The Philippine Times (TPT): an overview

Although this investigation is basically an audience study, it seems necessary to present a brief history of *TPT* and its general characteristics. This is to “understand” why the newspaper is published the way it is and to set a reference point for analysing the views of the participants. For a start, a set of questions was sent by way of electronic mail to the current Managing Director of the newspaper, who has been with the company since it started its operation. His responses were especially useful for filling in some of the newspaper’s background.

The Philippine Times, the only monthly Filipino newspaper in Melbourne, was first published in November 1990. It is published by Filcom Publishing Company Pty., Ltd. (henceforth referred to as Filcom), a company owned by Filipino-Australian shareholders who have a common interest in publishing materials of interest to the

Filipino-Australians. The aim of *TPT*, according to the current Managing Director is to:

provide a service of excellence in information sharing, news reporting and advertising...Filcom believes that the community has the right and deserves to receive accurate and reliable information. [*TPT*] is, thus, committed to fearlessly, accurately, fairly, and impartially analyse discuss, reports, and [to] publish significant and relevant issues, events and developments.

The commitment to serve the Filipino community in Australia remained even when changes were made to the newspaper's layout and editorial direction, over the years (*TPT* No. 45). The first edition of *TPT* had twelve pages, and contained messages from key government officials in Australia and the Philippines. There were seven Philippine-based news stories (news items from the Philippines), and nine Australia-based news stories (news items dealing with Australia but with passing references to the Filipino community as well as stories dealing specifically with the Filipino community). There were also sections focusing on "Filipino traits and values", literary pieces written in English and Pilipino, entertainment, and sport. The fifth anniversary edition of the newspaper, which was published in November 1995, had twenty pages, eight pages of which were supplement containing news and literary pieces written in Pilipino, and with more advertisements than the first edition. Under a different editorship, there were sections which included Australia-based news stories focusing on the Filipino community, Philippine-based news stories, profiles and a feature on Philippine tourism.

A content profile of the newspaper in 1998, editions 70 to 74, showed that the number of pages could vary – the smallest edition had 16 pages, the largest 24. All sections of the newspaper, however, were the same: "Local News" (news about the Filipino community in Australia and news about Australia that has relevance to the community), "Dateline: Manila" also identified as "RP news" in other editions (coverage from the Philippines), "Opinion", "Lifestyle", "Entertainment", and "Business Guide". Compared to the 1995 anniversary edition, the 1998 editions

contained only one article written in Pilipino (issue no. 70). Also in the 1998 editions there was more news about the Philippines than about the Filipino community in Australia or about Australia more generally. The exception was edition 72 (see Table 1). All editions in 1998 also contained a large amount of news about politics, perhaps the result of the Philippine elections held in May. 1998 also saw a change in the newspaper’s editorship in July (edition 74).

Table 1: Number of *TPT* news items by locale and edition.

Locale	Editions				
	70	71	72	73	74
Items focused on the Philippines	26	36	13	27	25
Items focused on Australia (including news about the Filipino community in Australia)	16	23	20	27	19
Total No. of Items	42	59	33	54	44

The current Managing Director of *TPT* identified the newspaper’s readers as Filipino migrants, who are mostly 30 years old and above, and residents of Melbourne, country Victoria, Queensland, New South Wales, Western Australia, and Tasmania, in that order. However, *TPT* also reaches other groups, particularly government bodies and community groups with special interests in the Filipino community. The newspaper currently uses the English language. Circulation ranges from 3,000 to 4,000 depending on the amount of advertising available for any one edition and on the present of Filipino special occasions, such as the annual fiesta which takes place in November. There are 1,612 subscribers listed in the database. Advertisements tend to be for a variety of business and personal matters – sea cargo, money remittance, Filipino stores, travel agencies and immigration agencies. These types of advertisements suggest some of the types of target readers the newspaper hopes to address.

Methodology

This study defines itself as preliminary and exploratory, with much more work to be done on the way ethnic audiences use their “own” media. However, as a start for investigating how a particular community, in this case the Filipino community in Melbourne, Australia, uses and relates to its ethnic newspaper, a “three-step” combination of methods was devised and executed. Once respondents had been recruited for the study, they were first requested to answer a set of questions about their socio-cultural background and current media use (see Appendix A). In the second step, doing the editorial/lay-out exercise, respondents were requested to assume that they were the current editors of *TPT* and to make decisions about what news ought to be included and excluded for an imaginary edition of the newspaper. The third step was a discussion in which respondents were asked questions about their role as “editors” and how they went about making editorial choices about the material in “their newspaper”. This discussion also focused on issues about multiculturalism and the use of the media in maintaining culture and identity.

The decision to use the team editorial/lay-out exercise was based on work done by Philo (1990) in his study of the influence of television on audience perceptions and values. In that study, Philo wanted to investigate the influence of television news reporting on the beliefs of audiences, specifically about the nature and origins of the violence in the 1984/85 miners’ strike in the UK. Philo (1990:22) relied on what he called “group work”, requesting the respondents in his study to act as journalists writing imaginary news stories collectively. He argued that since writing news was an unusual activity for people to undertake and his respondents were not journalists, writing in groups could minimise the “embarrassment of individuals and help those

who found difficulty in writing”. Overall, Philo’s study was done to determine how television news could influence public consciousness about important social issues. Using Philo’s methodology as a starting point, the team editorial/lay-out exercise was devised, not to determine the influence of news but rather to explore how members of specific a ethnic group would prioritise available news stories if they were given the opportunity to take the role of community newspaper editor, and to get some sense of how closely, or not, the “news values” of the newspaper were in relation to readers’ expectations and expressed needs. It was assumed that the editorial/lay-out exercise and the discussion that followed might indicate what the respondents perceived to be the most important and relevant news for themselves and their community. Following Philo, it was assumed that team work would lessen inhibitions and create a more comfortable environment to do the task at hand. It was also assumed that in group interviews or discussions, diverse perceptions, judgments and experience concerning a particular topic could surface, which might not come out during individual interviews (Lindlof 1995).

Five editorial teams were assembled and before meeting for the editorial/lay-out exercise, teams were provided with the set of eighteen newspaper stories from the October-November 1998 edition of *TPT* to be used in the exercise and asked to read these. The October-November 1998 edition of *TPT* contained fourteen Australia-based news stories, sixteen Philippine-based news stories four opinion pieces, six regular columns, eight features, a calendar of pending activities, and advertisements. From these, eighteen items were used in the editorial/lay-out exercise: seven Australia-based news stories, eight Philippine-based news stories and three items chosen from the regular and feature items. When they met, respondents in the five

teams were asked to assemble a “newspaper” consisting of four pages and to use a selection from the set of eighteen stories, choosing one story for a “mock up” page 1, three stories for “mock up” pages 2, 3 and 4, making a total of ten stories. Table 2 shows the items from *TPT* used in the team editorial/lay-out exercise. Each story in the set of eighteen was accompanied by its original headline, but respondents were asked to further prioritise stories in “their newspaper” in terms of headline size – large or small (see Appendix B).

Table 2: Items from October-November 1998 edition of *TPT* used in the team editorial/layout exercise.

Headline (1)		Content (2)	Headline size (3)	Col. Cms. (4)	Placement (5)
<i>Australia-based:</i>					
1	Australia: richness in diversity	The launching of an exhibition, which showcases the achievements and contributions made by various ethnic groups to the Australian society	2 cm. B	50.5	Page 1
2	Australia urged to support ASEAN	A call for Australia to support ASEAN efforts in dealing with the economic turmoil facing most ASEAN members.	1 cm. B	36	Page 2
3	PM Howard shuns racial discrimination	Report on PM's statement regarding racial discrimination and intolerance made during the Australian exhibition "Richness in diversity"	1 cm. N	50	Page 2
4	LOTE award discriminates against many community languages	Criticism of Hong Lim, MLA, Clayton about the decision of the state gov't. to limit the 1998 Languages Other Than English (LOTE) award to only 8 languages.	0.75 cm. B	27	Page 2
5	Ati-Atihan in St. Kilda	Participation of a Filipino cultural dance group in the City of Port Melbourne's Garden and Multicultural Festival.	1.5 cm. N	34	Page 3
6	When beauty and charity mix	The candidates for the Miss and Mrs. Philippines Victoria and schedule of activities of the pageant.	1 cm. N	63	Page 4
7	Seminar for news arrived Filipinos held	Report on the Post Arrival Migration Seminar, which was attended by newly arrived migrants.	1 cm. N	40	Page 13
<i>Philippine-based:</i>					
1	A world champ in a sport alien to Filipinos	A Norfolk Island-based Filipino, who is world champion lawn bowler travels to Philippines to conduct clinics and give tips on the game.	1 cm. N	72	Page 6
2	RP to float 'Erap bonds' next year	Floating bonds named after the president of the Philippines to support agriculture, housing, health and education.	0.5 cm. N	18	Page 6
3	RP files diplomatic protest vs China	Philippines' protest on the continued intrusion of China in the Spratlys Island.	0.75 cm. B	14	Page 6
4	Coming soon: Theme parks at Subic freeport	A proposed construction of theme parks to boost the country's tourism and provide facilities for people on modest incomes.	1 cm. N	44	Page 6
5	Cardinal back in the 'House of Sin'	Recovery and discharging from hospital of Jaime Cardinal Sin, Manila's Catholic Archbishop.	1 cm. B	30	Page 7
6	'Loleng' fatalities reach 199 in Bicol	Damages caused by typhoon 'Loleng'.	1 cm. N	24	Page 7
7	Philippine Airlines returns to foreign skies	Philippine Airlines returns to operation after a month of hibernation; international routes, financial and management status discussed.	1.5 cm. B	70	Page 8
8	Viagra a mix of sex, drugs and politics	Uses and effects of viagra taken from lectures and interviews given by Dr. Peter Ellis, the head of the research team that discovered the drugs.	0.75 cm. B	60	Page 11
<i>Feature articles:</i>					
1	"Pakikipagkapwa-tao": The spirit behind Filipino social relationship	Discussion of a Filipino trait and characteristic. ("Pakikipagkapwa-tao means sense of humanity).	1 cm. N	162	Page 14
2	Family relations: What is the youth response?	Report on outcomes of the Family Health and Development Program, attended by 12 to 19 year olds and their parents.	1 cm. N	112	Page 15
3	The Filipino migrant community in the Australian milieu	Report on the Filipino fiesta, and the Filipino community in relation to an Australian setting.	1.5 cm.	126	Page 18

- (1) Headline of news item as it appeared in the October-November 1998 edition of *TPT*.
- (2) Brief summary of what the news item was about.
- (3) The size of headline in centimetres; B-Bold font, N-Normal font.
- (4) The space occupied by the news item in column centimetres. One column of *TPT* is equal to 4-cm width, except for the first page, which is 5 cm.
- (5) The page where the news story appeared in the October-November 1998 edition of *TPT*.

During the team editorial/lay-out exercise, the researcher stayed out of sight in order to avoid possible influence on the team’s outputs. Once the “newspaper” was assembled, the editorial/lay-out team was asked to discuss their decisions and their decision making process and this discussion was moderated by the researcher. A set of common questions (see Appendix C) was asked during these discussions although the sequencing was not always the same considering that the teams were composed of people with different characteristics. These questions were divided into different topic areas, which included how the news items were selected and ordered and participants’ assessment of *TPT* as a newspaper. In order to expand the context of talk and to locate participants’ general perceptions and values, there were also several broader-based questions about identity and multiculturalism. All team editorial/lay-out exercises and discussions were done in the evening due to the availability of participants. The teams (referred to henceforth as Team I, Team II, Team III, Team IV, and Team V), had their editorial/lay-out exercise and discussion in the following hours:

Team I	-	11:00 pm -12:00 midnight
Team II	-	8:25 pm - 9:35 pm
Team III	-	6:40 pm - 8:15 pm
Team IV	-	11:35 pm - 1:00 am
Team V	-	6:05 pm - 7:00 pm

The teams devoted ten to twenty minutes on the editorial/lay-out exercise and the rest of the time was given to discussion.

The recruitment of respondents for the study proved to be somewhat problematic, even when a variety of approaches was used. To start, the current Managing Director of *The Philippine Times* included a notice about the study and an invitation to participate in the address sheet of subscribers in the October-November

1998 issue of the newspaper (see Appendix D). The same notice was included in the November-December 1998 issue of the newspaper, this time on page 7 with the “Local News” section. Notices were also posted at some Filipino stores, and on the bulletin boards of some Filipino clubs and associations.

The original plan to have five discussion teams of three to four *TPT* readers, who had common characteristics, especially with regard to the number of years in Australia, did not materialise. The editorial/lay-out exercise part of the study, once explained to potential respondents proved to be a deterring factor in the recruitment of respondents. While some prospective respondents said they did not have time to participate, others once informed about the editorial/lay-out exercise excused themselves as not “have[ing] the capability of doing it”. Due primarily to the difficulty of recruiting respondents, only two groups of three were used. In order to make up a reasonable sample size for a qualitative study of this kind, it was decided to include two-person teams. In this case, married couples were easiest to obtain and three husband and wife teams were recruited through telephone calls and face-to-face interaction with the researcher. The original intention to include both regular and occasional readers in the study was also not achieved since only the latter type of readers responded on the invitation to participate.

There are recognisable limitations to the methodology employed in this study, hence no claim is made to present a generalizable or complete impression of the function *TPT* performs for the entire Filipino community in Melbourne. To start, the study considered just one edition of the newspaper – the October-November 1998 edition, which was the latest issue during the preparation of materials for the editorial/lay-out exercise and the recruitment period. Second, although an attempt

was made to have discussion teams composed of respondents from different suburbs, belonging to different age brackets, having various occupations, having different arrival times in Australia, and being a mixture of regular and occasional readers, this was not possible given the response rate. The study, however, was never conceptualised to have a large representative sample rather it was always defined as small, and in-depth in focus. Despite sampling limitations, data gathered and observations made may still be useful given the lack of research in the area.

READING *THE PHILIPPINE TIMES*

Social and cultural profile of respondents

The socio-cultural profile of sample respondents was based on the questionnaire (see Appendix A) filled in prior to editorial teams getting together. The information obtained with this research tool was important for contextualising the results of the editorial/lay-out exercise and the discussion that followed.

All respondents were born in the Philippines and lived there prior to their immigration to Australia. Four arrived under the Independent Migrant Category while eight arrived under the Family Reunion Category. All respondents from Team I and Team II and the female members (the wives) of Teams III and V arrived unmarried. The husband and wife in Team IV arrived together. The respondents arrived in Australia between 1969 and 1994. Respondents belong to different age groups: three belong to the 26-35 age group, three to the 36-45 group and four to the 46-55 group. Table 3 shows other basic information about the respondents. It is particularly worth noting that the level of formal education among all respondents was very high given that many immigrant groups have tended to come to Australia with relatively low levels of education (see for example Castle et.al 1988). Even when the occupation listed might be considered “low status” the level of education remained remarkably high – with the questionnaire, respondent F, for example, classified himself as a “production worker” but had a BS Mechanical Engineering degree.

Table 3: Some basic information about respondents.

Team/ Respondent	Gender	No. of years living in Australia	Highest educational level	Occupation
Team I				
Respondent A	Male	4	BS Commerce	Computer officer
Respondent B	Female	10	BS Commerce	Senior accounts officer
Respondent C	Male	4	BS Computer Engineering	Computer analyst
Team II				
Respondent D	Male	7	BS Commerce	Tax auditor
Respondent E	Female	6	BS Nursing	Registered nurse
Respondent F	Male	9	BS Mechanical Engineering	Production worker
Team III				
Respondent G	Male	21	BS Commerce	Postal services officer
Respondent H	Female	29	BS Nursing	Registered nurse
Team IV				
Respondent I	Male	10	BS Electrical Engineering	Telecommunication Technician
Respondent J	Female	10	BS Nursing	Registered nurse
Team V				
Respondent K	Male	15	Post secondary	Forklift operator
Respondent L	Female	28	BS Nursing	Registered nurse

Respondents are residents of Altona (1), Brunswick (4), Ferntree Gully (2), Kew (2), Laverton (1), and Wantirna (2). Of all these suburbs, Brunswick has been identified as one where most Filipinos live (Rasmussen 1991).

Respondents came from different sub-cultures in the Philippines and therefore spoke different Filipino languages or dialects. Eight speak the language Ilocano, in addition to the Philippine national language “Pilipino”, which respondents refer to as “Tagalog” (henceforth, the term Tagalog shall be used). Most of the respondents reported speaking their regional languages at home but English was regularly used especially with children born in Australia. Respondents reported trying to teach their children to speak their regional languages or dialects, with variable success. There was even more difficulty in teaching their children the national language because they themselves seldom use it even in the Philippines.

Respondents identify themselves either as Catholics (7) or Anglicans (5), although not all of them were regular churchgoers. Respondent H attends religious services more than once a week, respondents B, J, and L attend once a week, respondents I attends once in every two weeks, and respondents A, C, and G attend once a month. Of the twelve respondents, only one claimed to be active in church. She is a member of the fund raising committee and helps in the maintenance of the church and her children attend special religious classes.

Eleven respondents said they did not attend Filipino gatherings regularly. The most common gatherings attended were the functions organised by their own regional organisations or by their professional organisations. Despite their lack of involvement, respondents said that they sometimes encourage their children to attend Filipino gatherings, especially those that have charitable goals, such as fund raising for the poor students in the Philippines. The respondents' children however, did not attend any special Filipino classes or Filipino clubs. Nine respondents are members of Filipino organisations based on the specific region in the Philippines from which they migrated. An example is the BIBAK, an acronym for the association of Filipinos coming from the five provinces in Northern Luzon, which collectively is known as the Cordillera region.

Respondents use many media outlets for news and entertainment. In terms of the number of hours spent watching television a day, only one respondent watched for more than four hours. Six claimed to watch between one and two hours, three watched between two and four hours, while one watched for less than an hour a day. The most viewed television station was Channel 9 with eleven respondents tuning to it. Channels 7, 10 and SBS were watched by eight respondents.

The respondents' favourite television program was reported as "news" (six respondents), followed by the program "A Current Affairs" (four), and "Foreign Correspondent" and documentaries were popular with three respondents. The Filipino news program on SBS at 6:30 AM every Sunday was not patronised regularly by the respondents. Only two claimed to watch it regularly, six said they sometimes watched and four said they never watched the program. The primary reason given for not watching this program was its very early timeslot. . Filipino films featured on SBS were also not viewed regularly by respondents and only one respondent claimed to regularly view their films. However, renting and watching English and Filipino videotapes were popular with ten respondents and they were able to name several Filipino films watched during the last three to six months.

Two respondents said they regularly listened to radio, eight sometimes did, and two never did. The stations they tune into were TT-FM (four respondents), Gold-FM (2 respondents), 3MP (2 respondents), and Fox FM (1 respondent). There are three Filipino radio programs on three radio stations: Radyo Kabayan on 3CR, Radyo Pilipino on 3ZZZ, and Programang Pilipino sa SBS on SBS. Seven respondents said they never listened to the Filipino radio programs while five said they sometimes did. Of these five, one said she listened once in a week, while four said they listened twice a week.

Six respondents said they sometimes attend theatre plays or music concerts put on by Filipino groups in Melbourne. The other six never attend. The six respondents who sometimes attend could identify four Filipino concerts that they had attended over the last three to six months. In terms of their music collection, all twelve respondents owned cassette tapes or compact discs of Filipino artists. Six identified singers from the region where they came from as their favourites while the others

identified some national and international Filipino singers as favourites. It is interesting to note that some of the singers identified by the respondents as their favourite are Filipinos who are known to specialise in songs about nationalism and Filipino folk songs (eg Freddie Aguilar, Asin). Respondents said listening to Filipino music brings back memories that can be related to their own children.

All respondents said they were interested in getting up-to-date information about what was going on in the Philippines. Respondents used a combination of media to obtain this information and *TPT* was only one source among the many used. Some said they relied on the Internet where they could read on-line newspapers based in the Philippines. Some requested their relatives in the Philippines to send them newspapers, particularly those that contained news about their community or region of origin. Phone calls and letters from relatives and friends were also identified by the respondents as a way of getting information about the Philippines.

Two respondents said they regularly wanted up-to-date information about the Filipino community in Australia while the rest said they sometimes wanted such information. Respondents mostly got this information from Filipino community newspapers published in Australia such as *TPT* and *The Philippine Community Herald Newspaper (TPCHN)*, a Filipino newspaper based in Sydney and circulating all over Australia. Respondents also identified television and radio as sources but they stated that these media were not used extensively if one really wanted to be informed about the local community. They also identified other means including telephone calls, exchange of letters through the post or electronic mail, and face-to-face encounters, all of which contributed to obtaining information about the Filipino community in Australia.

Multiculturalism, culture, identity

The respondents were asked during the team discussion questions on multiculturalism, culture and identity in an effort to map out the Filipino culture and identity in Melbourne and how the respondents maintain their culture. For most respondents the key idea of multiculturalism was being “culturally tolerant” and having an appreciation of diversity. Respondent L, who came to Australia in 1970, said that “back then, they really separate[d] you, they [were] really racists. But now, they are very accepting, except...extreme organisations [like] that One Nation...”.

Other definitions given about multiculturalism included:

...sharing of cultures from different countries.

...respecting other cultures.

[Australians] appreciate watching something unique, something special, something they haven't seen before....

...encourage[s] participation from various cultures...to present their respective cultures....

Some respondents who were members of their regional organisations said they had performed their ethnic dances when they got invited to cultural presentations by the local government agencies or other organisations. Respondents tended to perceive the invitations as a manifestation of Australia's becoming “tolerant” toward different cultures. The respondents' definition of culture however seemed to be confined in terms of practices, customs and traditions. As respondent G articulated, “culture...these are the rituals, or festivities as far as your origin is involved...it's your pride, it's your own heritage and no one will ever steal it from you”. Most respondents related culture to their values, exotic songs and dances, and the “Filipino way of life” in the Philippines.

When asked whether there is such a thing as a “Filipino identity” in Melbourne, all respondents said there was none. Respondents attributed the non-existence of a

Filipino identity to four factors: population, political representation in the society at large, competence in the English language, and the existence of many sub-cultures among Filipinos. Respondents said that in terms of population, the Filipino community was small compared to that of the Vietnamese or Chinese population. Respondent D argued that a group with a very small population “does not create an impact that warrants attention” by the society at large, hence Filipinos were simply identified as “Asians”. The absence of Filipino representatives in politics to “stir or promote” the existence of the Filipino community was also claimed to have the effect of the continued identification of Filipinos as “Asians”. In terms of English language competence, the respondents explained that most Filipinos understood and spoke English, an ability setting them apart from other Asians; however, this did not necessarily help in establishing a specific identity. In fact, as respondent E pointed out, the reverse might eventuate: “we can easily assimilate with others because we can speak English quite well”.

Most respondents said Filipinos in Australia did not have any commonality in terms of culture because they came from a country composed of many sub-cultures, hence “there is no one unique cultural feature that identifies the whole Filipino community” (respondent I). Most respondents also said that it was difficult to create a homogenous Filipino identity based on culture in Australia because “Filipinos carry their own distinct sub-cultures which were based on the region in the Philippines where they originally came from” (respondent E).

In order to explore further the issue of identity, respondents were asked to describe the Filipino community in Melbourne (see Appendix C). Respondents were one in saying, “the community is disunited”. They attributed the disunity of Filipinos to “too much competition among its members”, the desire for recognition and praise

and “most Filipinos want to be on top of the others”. Hence, as respondent H put it: “to satisfy their own needs, they form their own organisations”. The tendency to create a multitude of competing organisations has been recognised in work done by Powson (1995) and in an essay by Pe-pua (1998). According to respondents, the presence of many Filipino organisations in the community affects the way community activities can be conceptualised and run. In the celebration of the annual fiesta, for example, respondents related that several years ago, there were two separate fiesta celebrations, which were organised by two big Filipino organisations, in different venues on the same dates. This led to the confusion among Filipinos as to which event to attend. Some respondents said they went to both celebrations but some said they were disappointed they decided not to attend either. Respondents said that the fiesta, which might be considered a defining event, where people from different cultures could witness and be informed about the Filipinos and their culture, did not really help in promoting Filipino identity. Respondents said while the activity could be considered “big”, not all Filipinos attend and it is not widely promoted so that people outside the community could witness it. The recent Filipino fiesta, which was held on 21 and 22 November 1998, was described by respondent A as some respondents as “...more of a food festival...they had Filipino food but the show did not show case Filipino talents and culture...”. Respondent F commented that “...there was not ‘Filipino-ness’”.

The issue of identity and “Filipino-ness” was expanded when respondents were asked how they might characterise their ethnic and residential status: when talking to others about themselves, did respondents situate themselves as Filipino, Filipino-Australian, or simply Australians. Most answered “it depends”: on whom they are talking to or who is asking the questions. As stated by respondent D:

It depends on whom I'm with. If I'm with Australians or whites, then I call myself Australian. If I'm with other Filipinos, then I'm Filipino. If I'm with Filipinos who came from the same region where I came from, then I'm one of them. But the thing is, I live in Australia so I should call myself Australian. ✓

Respondent B said she “had made a pledge to Australia so I should call myself Australian”. She said that she “would not forget the Philippines as my background”. This was echoed by four other respondents, saying that they were Australians in name but they were “still very much Filipinos” in terms of culture and values. Respondents I and J (Team IV) said that while they had acquired a document stating that they were Australians, they preferred to be called “Filipino-Australian”. Respondent C wanted to be identified as a “Philippine-born Australian”. Respondent L described her family as 75 per cent Filipino and 25 per cent Australian in terms of culture and values stating that her family only accepted Australian values that are “deemed acceptable”. In the case of their children, respondents in Teams III and IV said that although they call themselves “Filipino-Australians” or “Australian in name but Filipino in culture”, they considered their children “Australian” both in name and culture because their children’s friends are Australians and “their environment, their social world is Australian more than Filipino” (respondent H).

Respondents stated that their description of themselves as Filipinos living in Australia had its significance. Respondents I and J, for example, explained that being identified as “Filipino-Australian” meant they had accepted Australia as their “new home” but their “values and culture” were still Filipino. Respondent L said that the description “Filipino-Australian” signified that “we accept Australia as our home but we still keep our identity as a Filipino...we are already here, we have already migrated here, my family is here...I think it’s only fair to say Filipino-Australian”. Although respondents indicated that they were now comfortable with the “Australian way of life”, this did not mean that they were not interested in the Philippines any

more, and even expressing a willingness to go back there for good. As well as wanting to be informed about their families a strong attachment to the Philippines was evident as overt concern about such things as the Philippines' economy, pollution and population problems. As respondent H said, "I still love the Philippines, that's why I keep in touch". Some respondents were emphatic. One said, "there's no place like home" and revealed a plan to retire in the Philippines. Asked why retirement in the Philippines would be a possibility, the following observations were made:

Respondent I: I don't want to end up in a nursing home when I get old...even if Filipino-Australian children are taught the value of taking care of their old folks, this is not an assurance considering the strong influence of the Australian culture.

Respondent A: The Philippines is economically down but it is spiritually high...

Respondent C: People in the Philippines are happy even if they do not have money...as long as they have their family and friends...

Respondent E: ...here in Australia, Filipinos have money but they feel lonely...

Respondent K: Life in the Philippines is more relaxed...here, life is like a race...

"Limited scope": problems with TPT

During the team discussions, respondents were asked a set of questions to explore their reading habits and interests with regard to *TPT*. To add another dimension to the respondents' observations presented here, comments made by the current Managing Director of *TPT* regarding its operations are included. Once it was known that respondents in the sample were not regular readers of *TPT*, one obvious line of questioning was to discover why this was the case. Three issues or concerns emerged: accessibility of newspaper outlets, frequency of publication dates, and newspaper content. Respondents said that Filipino stores, which were the most common outlets for distributing *TPT*, were not easily accessible. While Filipino

stores were found in some suburbs, respondents said they did not have the “luxury of time” to go to these if they were located out of their residential area. As explained by respondent F, “people here in Australia are all busy so we do not have the time to go out and hunt for a copy of the newspaper”. On the occasions when they did visit Filipino stores, respondents said finding copies of the newspaper was not assured because they were either not yet delivered or the outlet had already run out. Respondents, however, stated they sometimes got their copies from friends, and sometimes “from friends of friends”. Three respondents said a friend, who was regular contributor to *TPT*, personally delivered their copy of the newspaper each month when it was published.

All respondents commented that due to the inaccessibility of outlets and poor circulation, the newspaper’s contents became “stale” once a copy was actually obtained. Respondent L commented that “reading the newspaper was just like reading history”. Some respondents suggested that copies of the newspaper should be delivered immediately to all outlets, the number of outlets should be increased, and mail outs to subscribers should be more efficient so that its contents would be “fresh and still news”. As respondent D stated, “the newspaper means nothing if it does not reach the intended readers immediately ...they are just spending money for nothing and their efforts wasted”. Respondents also said that the frequency of publication of *TPT* affects the timeliness of the newspaper’s contents. Respondent I stated that “the frequency of the newspaper contributes to the staleness of the news ...it is because the news they put in the paper will be read after four weeks”.

Respondents expressed similar comments about *TPT*’s news content – that by the time they received the newspaper, the news stories were mostly out of date. Respondents also had specific criticisms of the content, and what they felt should be

included and excluded. Most respondents said the space provided for beauty contests was “too big” and “just a waste of space”¹. Respondent C said that this kind of coverage should be “minimised if not deleted”. Respondent A, however, said “you can not do that because the Filipinos are fond of beauty contests, it’s a cultural thing and it’s their way of raising funds”. Most respondents said that while this was so, they would rather be informed of the results of the fund raising. As articulated by respondent C,

We would like to be informed of where the funds went...the outcome of the fund raising. A wider space should be given to the fund raising aspect, not on the beauty queens who are called Miss Philippines like this and like that...they are called Philippines but they don’t even know how to speak Tagalog.

Respondent E said that the reason why she did not read all news stories about the Filipino community published in *TPT* was that “most local news are either about beauty contests or inductions of officers of organisations”². She said that while these stories might mean something to some readers, “the space provided for these kinds of stories should be minimised and more important stories or topics should be covered”. Respondent A expressed a similar view: “the news about inductions of officers isnot interesting especially if you know what goes on in a Filipino organisation. Also, induction speeches are boring, the same is said every induction”.

Respondents typically saw *TPT* as having what one explained as “limited scope”. The newspaper, they said, was limited to news stories about the Philippines and the Filipino community in Australia. They stated that they were also interested in

¹ Beauty contests/pageants are popular in the Philippines and Filipino migrant communities. In Philippine villages, beauty queens are usually selected during the month of May, when processions in honour of the Blessed Virgin are held, making it a part of religious practice (Roces and Roces 1985). In most cases, pageants are used by organisations to raise funds for their projects.

² Filipino community newspapers are known to provide wide spaces for beauty pageants and elections of officers of various Filipino organisations. In her study of the Filipino-American press, Flores-Meiser (1987:87) quoted Hart: “most of the publications devote themselves to their local Filipino-American events, e.g meetings, elections and installations of officers of the hundreds of social clubs...”

reading news stories or features about Filipinos and Filipino communities in other countries and news stories about specific regions in the Philippines. Respondents also identified “world news” as something they would like to read from *TPT*. Moreover, some respondents said that to add variety to the newspaper’s present sections, a “comic section” should be included which could be a venue for presenting actual events or experiences of Filipinos in an entertaining manner. As respondent D said, the comic section “could be a source of learning, a method of imparting what is the Australian way of life especially to new arrivals”. All respondents also complained about the presence of “too many advertisements” in the newspaper; however, some expressed “understanding” about why this was the case. Respondent A said “in order to produce a newspaper you need money, and to have this, you need to have sponsors or advertisers. It is the advertisers who mainly finance the production of the newspaper”. Respondent I said the advertisers “feed the newspaper”.

In the questionnaire, which was given out prior to their meeting as teams (see Appendix A), respondents were requested to indicate which three sections of *TPT* did they read first, second, and third. Of the twelve respondents, eleven said they read the news about the Philippines first, followed by news about the Filipino community in Australia, and news about Australia (see Table 4).

Table 4: Preferred order of reading types of news in *TPT*.

Types of news items	Order of Preference		
	First	Second	Third
News about the Philippines	11		
News about Australia		2	1
News about the Filipino community in Australia		6	3
Business guide			2
Notices/advertisements of forthcoming events of Filipino clubs, organisations, groups		2	1
Government advertisements			1
Entertainment news from the Philippines		1	1
Others – any of the above that interests me			2

In the same questionnaire, respondents were asked to rate the news types contained in *TPT* in terms of perceived adequacy of coverage. Table 5 shows that majority of the respondents rated *TPT* as “good” in all types of news.

Table 5: Rating of *TPT* by type of news items.

Types of news items	Rating			
	Very poor	Poor	Good	Very good
News about the Philippines	1	1	9	1
News about Australia		4	8	
News about the Filipino community in Australia		2	8	2
Business guide		1	10	1
Notices/advertisements of forthcoming events of Filipino clubs, organisations, groups		5	6	1
Government advertisements		2	10	
Entertainment from the Philippines		4	8	
Special in-depth articles on Filipinos, Filipino values/traditions		2	10	

Given the criticisms outlined above, it would have been expected that respondents would have rated all aspects of the newspaper as “poor” or “very poor”. The opposite seemed to have been the case considering that only the “news about the Philippines” had a “very poor” rating from one respondent. There seemed to be a contradiction in

statements given by respondents in the discussion and their rating of *TPT* using the questionnaire. In relation to “news about the Philippines”, for example, respondents expressed during the team discussions that *TPT* should increase the number of news stories about the Philippines but the majority of the respondents gave that type of news coverage a rating of “good” in the questionnaire. This discrepancy might be attributed to the “social desirability” response set which according to Dooley (1990:94) is the tendency for respondents to provide answers in a way that they think is socially acceptable or desirable when confronted by a document like a formal questionnaire. Respondents tended to be generous in rating the newspaper even if in their opinion the newspaper is “not good”. When this discrepancy was pointed out during team discussions, some respondents seemed to see the formal questionnaire-based ranking as a way to relay encouragement to those putting the newspaper together.

Respondent F: Giving a good rating is a way of encouraging them....

Respondent G: I wouldn't give them “poor”...they're trying their best to produce the paper.

Respondent A: I'm not a hard marker...it's a case of “it's good, but”... obviously I have my comments.

“If we were the editors...”

a. Making the newspaper

The editorial/lay-out exercise was the second step of the “three-step methodology” used in this study. It was specifically devised to determine how close the “news values” of *TPT* were in relation on the respondents' expectations and expressed needs. The editorial/lay-out exercise gave the respondents the chance to express their ideas on what they thought the newspaper should contain and on how contents ought to be prioritised and laid out if they were the editors of *TPT*. Grouped

as five “editorial teams”, respondents were presented a set of eighteen news stories and features and asked to select ten news items to include in their four-page version of *TPT*, to “lay-out” these items in terms of priority, select appropriate headline size and then discuss the criteria for those choices and order. Teams tended to devote between ten and twenty minutes to complete the editorial/lay-out exercise. Teams I and V used only ten minutes while Teams II and IV used twenty. Team III finished the editorial/lay-out exercise in fifteen minutes. When asked about their decision making process during the exercise, respondents reported that no one monopolised or dominated the team’s selection of items. Respondents in Teams I and II said all decisions were governed by a “majority ruling” and in the case of the husband and wife teams (Teams III, IV, and V), decisions were “shared”. However, it was acknowledged that respondents who read *TPT* more regularly tended to have more ideas about the selection process. In the case of Teams III and V, the wives read *TPT* more than the husbands did. The opposite was true of Team IV.

Although there were many stories chosen in common among five teams, there was not a single newspaper item which was chosen by all five teams. The three features (“‘Pakikipagkapwa-tao’: the spirit behind Filipino social relationship”, “Family relations: what is the youth response”, and “The Filipino migrant community in the Australian milieu”), two Australia-based news stories (“Australia urged to support ASEAN” and “Seminar for newly arrived Filipinos held”), and three Philippine-based news stories (“RP files diplomatic protest vs China”, “‘Loleng’ fatalities reach 199 in Bicol”, and “Philippine airlines returns to foreign skies”) were chosen by four teams. Except for the item “Seminar for newly arrived Filipinos held”, which was placed on Page 2 by four teams, many of the same newspaper items were “laid out” on different pages. The news story “Australia urged to support ASEAN”,

for example, was chosen by Teams I, II, III and V as appropriate content, but while Teams I and II placed the news story on Page 3, Team III had it on Page 4, and Team V had it on Page 2. Putting this news story on the same page, however, did not mean that it was given the same priority by both teams – Team I used a large headline with this news story while Team II used a small one.

There were however some commonalities between team selections. Teams II and IV put the news story “A world champ in a sport alien to Filipinos” on Page 4; Teams I and IV chose and placed “Viagra a mix of sex, drugs and politics” on Page 4. The former news story had a small headline in Team II’s “newspaper” but it had large headline in Team IV’s. The latter news story had small headline on the “newspapers” of Teams I and IV. Team IV was quite consistent in having one large and two small headlines on Pages 2 to 4 while Team V used large headlines on all news stories and small headlines on all features on pages 2 to 4.

The Australia-based news stories “Ati-Atihan in St. Kilda” and “When beauty and charity mix” were chosen by only one team (Team II) for inclusion. Notably, the original front page story used by *TPT*, “Australia: richness in diversity” was *not* chosen by any of the teams. It was in fact the *only* news story among the eighteen items available for the teams to select from that was not used. Overall, of the available eighteen stories, six out of the seven Australia-based news stories were chosen; all eight Philippine-based news stories were chosen; and all three features were also chosen. Table 6 shows the number of Australia-based news stories, Philippine-based news stories and features the teams chose for their “newspapers”

Table 6: Profile of news items chosen by editorial teams

Team	Australia-based news stories	Philippine-based news stories	Features
I	3	4	3
II	5	4	1
III	2	5	3
IV	2	6	2
V	3	4	3

For the front page story, Teams II, IV, and V decided to have a Philippine-based news story for their version of *TPT*. Team I decided to have an Australia-based news story, while Team III decided on a feature. Table 7 shows the front page news chosen by each team.

Table 7: Page 1 story chosen by editorial teams

Team	News story	Headline size	Placement in <i>TPT</i> .*	Original headline size**
I	PM Howard shuns racial discrimination	L	2	S
II	“Loleng” fatalities reach 199 in Bicol	L	7	S
III	Family relations: what is the youth response?	L	15	S
IV	Philippine airlines returns to foreign skies	L	8	L
V	Philippine airlines returns to foreign skies	L	8	L

* Page on which news item appeared in the 24-page October-November 1998 edition of *TPT*.

** Based on headline height: 1 cm and less = “small”; more than 1cm = “large”

The table indicates that the front page news items chosen by the editorial teams were from the “inside” pages of the original *TPT* edition - not one of the teams chose *TPT*’s front page story. The table also indicates that teams IV and V chose the same Philippine-based news story. It is also worth noting that four of the five teams chose items originally placed well back in *TPT* and Team III put an item from Page 15 on their front page. In terms of headline size, all teams used large because the news stories chosen were on page one, although in the original *TPT*, the front page stories of Teams I, II and III had small headlines.

While it is understood that respondents were not really editors (nor journalists) and had only scant knowledge of editing and lay out, from the results of the exercise, it was apparent that they did not want their individual newspaper pages to contain stories exclusively about the Philippines or Australia. This was manifested in editorial teams' decisions to "combine" Philippine-based news stories, Australia-based news stories and features on some or all Pages 2 to 4. Table 8 indicates the items chosen for Page 2.

Table 8: Page 2 stories chosen by editorial teams in order of priority

Team		News stories	Headline size	Placement in TPT*	Original headline size**
I	1	Philippine airlines returns to foreign skies	S	8	L
	2	Seminar for newly arrived Filipinos held	S	13	S
	3	RP to float "Erap bonds" next year	S	6	S
II	1	Cardinal back in the "House of Sin"	L	7	S
	2	Seminar for newly arrived Filipinos held	S	13	S
	3	LOTE award discriminates against many community languages	S	2	S
III	1	"Pakikipagkapwa-tao": the spirit behind Filipino social relationship	L	14	S
	2	The Filipino migrant community in the Australian milieu	L	18	L
	3	Philippine airlines returns to foreign skies	L	8	L
IV	1	RP files diplomatic protest vs China	S	6	S
	2	"Loleng" fatalities reach 199 in Bicol	L	7	S
	3	Seminar for newly arrived Filipinos held	S	13	S
V	1	Australia urged to support ASEAN	L	2	S
	2	RP files diplomatic protest vs China	L	6	S
	3	Seminar for newly arrived Filipino held	L	13	S

* Page on which news item appeared on the 24-page October-November 1998 edition of *TPT*.

** Based on headline height: 1 cm and less = "small"; more than 1cm = "large"

Four teams (Teams I, II, IV and V), placed the Australia-based news story "Seminar for newly arrived Filipinos held" on page two of their "newspapers". Interestingly this news story was on Page 13 of the original *TPT*. Table 8 also indicates that there was little agreement among the teams regarding Page 2 contents, although Teams IV and V and Teams I and III had one similar news story - "RP files diplomatic protest vs

China” and “Philippine airlines returns to foreign skies”, respectively. In the original *TPT*, the news story “RP files diplomatic protest vs China” appeared on Page 6 and “Philippine airlines returns to foreign skies” was placed on Page 8. The decision of Teams II and V to place the news stories “LOTE award discriminates against many community languages” and “Australia urged to support ASEAN” coincided with the placement of the news stories on the original *TPT*. Teams I, III and V did not make any prioritising distinction by the use of headline size while Teams II and IV used large headlines on one of their Page 2 stories. Four teams had headline size similar to the headline size used by *TPT*. Team V, however, was completely different with its decision to use large headlines on all news items that had small headlines in the original *TPT*.

On page three, Teams I, II, IV, and V decided to combine news stories and features. Teams I and V decided to have two features while Teams II and IV decided on one feature. Teams II and V both had “‘Pakikipagkapwa-tao’: the spirit behind Filipino social relationship”. Team V also had “Family relations: what is the youth response”, as did Team I. Teams I and IV had “The Filipino migrant community in the Australian milieu”. The features “‘Pakikipagkapwa-tao’: the spirit behind Filipino social relationship”, “Family relations: what is the youth response”, and “The Filipino migrant community in the Australian milieu” were on Pages 14, 15 and 18, respectively of the original *TPT*. Table 9 shows the news stories chosen by editorial teams.

Table 9: Page 3 stories chosen by editorial teams in order of priority

Team		News stories	Headline size	Placement in <i>TPT</i> *	Original headline size**
I	1	The Filipino migrant community in the Australian milieu	L	18	L
	2	Australia urged to support ASEAN	L	2	S
	3	Family relations: what is the youth response?	S	15	S
II	1	“Pakikipagkapwa-tao”: the spirit behind Filipino social relationship	S	14	S
	2	Australia urged to support ASEAN	S	2	S
	3	Coming soon: theme parks at Subic freeport	S	6	S
III	1	“Loleng” fatalities reach 199 in Bicol	L	7	S
	2	PM Howard shuns racial discrimination	L	2	S
	3	RP to float “Erap bond” next year	L	6	S
IV	1	The Filipino migrant community in the Australian milieu	L	18	L
	2	Cardinal back in the “House of Sin”	S	7	S
	2	LOTE award discriminate against many community languages	S	2	S
V	1	“Pakikipagkapwa-tao”: the spirit behind Filipino social relationship	S	14	S
	2	Family relations: what is the youth response?	S	15	S
	3	“Loleng” fatalities reach 199 in Bicol	L	7	S

* Page on which news item appeared in the 24-page October-November 1998 edition of *TPT*.

** Based on headline height: 1 cm and less = “small”; more than 1cm = “large”

In terms of headline size, it seemed that most of the teams’ decisions were in “agreement” with the original *TPT*, except for Team III who seemed to follow an “editorial policy” entirely opposite from *TPT*’s. Team I decided to make a distinction between its two features on Page 3 by putting a large headline on “The Filipino migrant community in the Australian milieu” and a small headline on “Family relations: what is the youth response”. This distinction was in “agreement” with the headlines used on the original *TPT*. The headline size used by Teams II, IV and V on their features were also in agreement with the headlines used on the original *TPT*.

Teams I, IV and V “laid out” one feature on page four of their “newspapers”. Team I decided to lay out the feature “Pakikipagkapwa-tao: the spirit behind Filipino

social relationship”; Team IV decided on “Family relations: what is the youth response?”; Team V decided on “The Filipino migrant community in the Australian milieu”. Team II’s decision to place the news story “When beauty and charity mix” on Page 4 coincided with the placement of the news story on the original *TPT*. The news stories chosen by editorial teams for Page 4 of their “newspaper” are shown in Table 10.

Table 10: Page 4 stories chosen by editorial teams in order of priority

Team		News stories	Headline size	Placement in <i>TPT</i> *	Original headline size**
I	1	“Pakikipagkapwa-tao”: the spirit behind Filipino social relationship	S	14	S
	2	RP files diplomatic protest vs China	S	6	S
	3	Viagra a mix of sex, drugs and politics	S	11	S
II	1	When beauty and charity mix	S	4	S
	2	Ati-atihan in St. Kilda	S	3	S
	3	A world champ in a sport alien to Filipinos	S	6	S
III	1	Coming soon: theme parks at Subic freeport	L	6	S
	2	RP files diplomatic protest vs China	L	6	S
	3	Australia urged to support ASEAN	L	2	S
IV	1	Family relations: what is the youth response?	L	15	S
	2	Viagra a mix of sex, drugs and politics	S	11	S
	3	A world champ in a sport alien to Filipinos	L	6	S
V	1	The Filipino migrant community in the Australian milieu	S	18	L
	2	Cardinal back in the “House of Sin”	L	7	S
	3	LOTE award discriminates against many community languages	L	2	S

* Page on which news item appeared on the 24-page October-November 1998 edition of *TPT*.
 ** Based on headline height: 1 cm and less = “small”; more than 1cm = “large”

In terms of headline size, Teams I, IV and V treated their features differently - while Teams I and V used a small headline over their chosen feature, Team IV used a large headline. The headline size used by Teams I, and II on all their Page 4 news stories were in “agreement” with headline size used by *TPT* on the news stories. Team III

used large headlines on all three items of its “newspaper”, which was in contrast to the small headlines used on the original *TPT*.

b. Discussing the newspaper

During the discussion which followed the editorial/lay-out exercise, it was found that respondents considered different factors in their decision making about which news item should serve the as front page story. Notions such as “homeland”, “timeliness and interest”, and “family need” were stressed by some of the editorial teams. For example, for Teams II, IV and V, where members said that *TPT* was read primarily for “homeland news”, Philippine-based news stories appeared on the front page. Respondent E from Team II explained, “the reason we produce the newspaper is to present stories about the Philippines”. Respondents in Teams II, IV and V, however, used different criteria for selecting their particular Philippine-based news story. Team II chose “‘Loleng’ fatalities reach 199 in Bicol” because as respondent D explained, “of all the news stories about the Philippines, the damages caused by typhoon ‘Loleng’ was the most current, most eye-catching during the period”. Teams IV and V both decided to have “Philippine airlines returns to foreign skies” because as respondent I said, “it was about the Philippines and it relates to the Filipino community here...and the title alone captures the interest of the readers”. Respondent K stated that the story “has a special meaning to the Filipinos considering that it is about the flag carrier of the Philippines”.

In their discussion of the choice of the Page 1 story respondents in Team I focused on what one member described as “timeliness and interest of the people”, but as these applied to local rather than international issues. According to respondent A, they decided to make “PM Howard shuns racial discrimination” as front page story

because “it is what the people, especially the Filipinos, want to hear – his (PM Howard’s) clear stand on the matter”. Respondent C added that the issue on racial discrimination was “very relevant, especially when Pauline Hanson and her group came out”. Respondents in Team III seemed more “personalistic” in their editorial decision making focusing on how the news reported might related to their own family or personal life. Team III decided on the feature “Family relations: what is the youth response?” as their Page 1 story. This was an item about family health and development program that tackled family relations from the points of view of Filipino parents and their children. Respondent H said they chose the feature because “it concerns about family...it gives information on what the youth think about their parents...it gives ideas on how parents can relate to their children”. The profile of respondents reveals that this husband and wife team were the only respondents who have teenage children, and perhaps it might be assumed that their personalistic approach was a response to their own family dynamic, although this was not spoken about directly in discussion.

During discussions respondents tended to say that they preferred to assemble their “newspaper” pages with a mixture of news items. The combination of Australia-based, Philippine-based and features on most, if not all, pages of their “newspapers” might be taken as a manifestation of what respondent C called the “Barok” value of Filipinos. “Barok”, he said, “is Filipino slang for a person who wants variety in everything and does not consider the factor of orderliness”. He explained thus,

We are used to variety, mixed up even. We like variety...like in gardening, here (in Australia), when they plant tulips, it’s all tulips. For us, we plant rose on this side, another flower here, another there...mixed...It’s one of the characteristics that makes the Filipino culture unique.

When asked about headline size during discussion, teams declared different reasons for using large or small headlines. Respondents in Teams II and III treated

the news items on pages 2 to 4 “equally” because as respondent G said, “the stories have the same degree of importance so they should have the same title size”. Respondents in Team I, however, said headline size on pages 2 to 4 was “insignificant”, hence they did really discuss whether a news story or a feature should have a large or small headline. As respondent A said, “all stories and features inside the newspaper, although relevant and equally important as those on the front page are secondary to the [front page story]. The title size does not really matter”.

The way the teams selected, prioritised and laid out their news items seemed to reflect, in part, personally held ideas and orientations. For example during the discussion respondents from Team I revealed that they were interested in the economic and political status of the Philippines. Their “newspaper” reflected this orientation by foregrounding news stories primarily related to Philippine current affairs (see Table 2). Respondent A explained that “if we were the editors, we would prioritise the publication of the accomplishment of Joseph “Erap” Estrada as the new President of the Philippines, an analysis of the fate of the Philippines under the Estrada administration and the role of the Philippines in the world economy”. The respondents from Team I also said that a “world news” section would be added to the present sections of the newspaper. Respondents from Team III also seemed mostly interested in news stories about the Philippines, but it was more on a “regional level”. During the discussion, for example, respondent G stated that “as editor, I would like to include Philippine regional news to encourage more readers...sometimes, it’s really interesting to read something about your own region”. The idea that a Filipino newspaper should contain more news stories about the Philippines and that these items should be prioritised over other types of news items, such as news about

Australia, was also raised in discussion by Teams IV and V and their “newspaper” seemed to follow this view (see Tables 9 and 10).

Having selected more Australia-based news stories than Philippine-based news stories for their “newspaper” (see Table 1) respondents in Team II, explained that they were most concerned about the “hardships” of being a new arrival. A newspaper based in the Filipino community in Australia, for them should include in the future editions items on “how to get around the area and adjusting to a new place”, “employment”, “organisations to turn to in times of need”. Respondent D also said that a section to “introduce the new arrivals to the Australian way of life, especially to some Australian slang commonly used for them to be familiarised would have to be included”. Respondent E added, “the newspaper should have regular updates about immigration”. In line with this editorial theme, respondent J from Team IV said being in a multicultural country, the newspaper should “have stories or analysis on the participation of Filipinos and the Filipino community as a whole in Australia’s multicultural activities”.

The influence of the respondents’ personal attitudes and values in the selection of newspaper contents and their subsequent “placement” was demonstrated particularly in the editorial choices of Team III. The respondents of Team III, a husband and wife team with teenage children expressed the importance of knowing “how children feel about their relationship with their parents who were born in the Philippines” in order to explore possibilities of improving this relationship. This need seemed to be the basis for Team III’s selection of the feature “Family relations: what is the youth response?”, not only as content of their version of *TPT*, but also placing it as front page story.

The three features (“‘Pakikipagkapwa-tao’: the spirit behind Filipino social relationship”, “Family relations: what is the youth response” and “The Filipino migrant community in the Australian milieu”) were given priority by the editorial teams (see Tables 9 and 10). When asked why this kind of prioritisation was important for their version of *TPT*, all respondents engaged in a “passionate” expression of ideas about what one called “Filipino relationships” in Australia. When asked to specify these, respondents pointed to relationships among Filipinos and among Filipino organisations within the Filipino community in Melbourne. Respondents said that the features chosen for their “newspaper” were “relevant” especially, as respondent H put it, to “remind all Filipinos that we are all the same...we should not try to outdo each other”. When questioned further about the use of these criteria as a way of making their “newspaper”, respondents commented on how the Filipino community was “disunited”, “very weak”, “divided”. Respondent A explained that:

The Filipinos are in mini groups and they are not united...one is here, the other is there...to each his own. They are grouped based on the regions where they came from. So when you say “Filipino community”, which is the real one?

The “disunity” among members of Filipino community was identified by respondents as reason why they tend either to confine themselves to organisations that were based on the region in the Philippines where they originally came from or not belong to any Filipino organisation. Respondent B, who was not a member of any Filipino organisation, said she does not intend to register as member of any organisation observed that:

Just like in the Philippines, Filipinos here in Australia are not united...maybe because we don’t have any single commonality except for being called “Filipino”.

During discussions all respondents claimed that a “Filipino cultural identity” did not really exist. Some respondents said this was due historically to Filipino “multiculturalism”. As respondent J explained, “...there’s no specific culture that is

common to all Filipinos ...even in terms of language, we have Tagalog but not all can speak it...”. Others seemed to think the lack of a coherent identity was more the result of conditions in Australia:

Respondent C: We don't have representatives in politics...unlike the Chinese or Vietnamese, they have a “voice” in politics...

Respondent A: Filipinos don't have what the Chinese have...like in festivals, when you say Chinese festival, many people go out and attend or see it because they know that the Chinese have their own attraction, own gimmick that came from them. Filipinos don't have that.

Respondent D: In terms of population, the Filipinos comprise a small number compared to the Vietnamese or Chinese. Also they migrated here way ahead of Filipinos...

With regard to helping to produce this identity, respondents said that *TPT* did not actually “perform” this function. As respondent L said, “I don't [read] much articles about Filipino culture except for one column...I don't think the paper is for this kind of articles”. Respondent D, however, expressed the possibility for a Filipino identity emerging with the help of *TPT*. “if only they include in their aims and objectives the unification of Filipinos and Filipino organisations”. For him, as for many of the respondents, “community newspapers are powerful tools in various ways”, but

...in the case of *The Philippine Times*, I think it's just there to inform...regarding the culture thing, I appreciate D'Mello's column⁴, but this is not enough. The newspaper should feature all cultures of Filipinos considering...we, as a people, do not have one common culture... In order for Filipinos to establish one common organisation, they should understand each other's cultures...the newspaper could be a venue for this...at the moment, the newspaper is just an information tool...

⁴ A regular column discussing “Filipino traits and characteristics”.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This audience study was conducted to investigate how members of a particular ethnic community, in this case the Filipino community in Melbourne, Australia, use their community newspaper and in the process determine how closely the news values of the newspaper corresponded to readers' expectations and expressed needs. The investigation included how respondents perceived themselves as members of a multicultural country and how they understood the role of their community newspaper in defining their identity as a community. The study was also an attempt to utilise a special methodology based on a type of role playing leading – respondents were asked to imagine themselves to be the editors of their community newspaper – which, it was hoped would lead to productive discussion about issues of ethnicity, identity and the future of community media. Being exploratory and preliminary, the study does not claim to present a complete picture of the way the Filipino community uses its newspaper. The problem of sample representativeness and size precludes broader generalisations, but still the investigation had some interesting findings from which to build further research.

The results of the team editorial/lay-out exercise and discussions indicate that the “news values” of *TPT* did not match the majority of respondents' expectations and expressed needs. This was indicated in three ways. First, respondents thought that as a community newspaper, *TPT* should contain more Philippine-based news items than is currently the case. Some respondents also stated that Philippine-based news items should be prioritised over other types of news items. These expectations were in contrast with *TPT*'s order of prioritisation. *TPT*, according to the current Managing Director, put priority on “articles written by (our) regular writers, followed by local

news – news that happen in Australia particularly within the Filipino community that are not reported by mainstream media – then Philippine news and human interest”. Second, in the selection of news items for their version of *TPT*, all five editorial teams did not choose *TPT*’s front page story (“Australia: richness in diversity”) as newspaper content. It was the only news item among the eighteen news items available for teams to select that was not chosen. The non-selection of the news item might be attributed to the assumption that respondents were already aware that Australia was multicultural and therefore diverse, and it was more important to take on other multicultural related issues, such as racial discrimination. Third, some expressed needs of respondents, such as “to read something about Filipinos in other parts of the world” and other “world news” seemed not satisfied by *TPT*. A profile of *TPT*’s 1998 editions revealed that “world news” and news about Filipinos in other countries were not covered. However, it was also found out that not all respondents were equally dissatisfied with *TPT* and its approach. With its emphasis on using their version of *TPT* as a way of “integrating” their readers, especially the new arrivals, to the society at large, the editorial “position” of Team II stood out.

During team discussions, it emerged that two somewhat distinct “editorial policies” were in play: first, an editorial “line” which stressed the production of a community newspaper that should contain more “homeland” or Philippine-based news stories. Second, an editorial approach which focused on the way a community newspaper might help new arrivals to adjust to their new place of residence. These editorial approaches might be related to the length of time respondents have resided in Australia. The seven respondents who wanted more Philippine-based news had been living in Australia for ten years or more while the three respondents in Team II who expressed the need for more Australia-based news stories had been living in Australia

for less than ten years. Respondents A and C from Team I seemed to be the “odd” respondents – they had been living in Australia for only four years, making them the “newest” arrivals among the respondents (see Table 3) – but they expressed their preference to have more Philippine-based news stories than Australia-based ones. This might have something to do with their particular experience as “new arrivals”. During discussion, respondents in Team II spoke about their “hardships” as “new arrivals” – being subjected to “subtle discrimination”, “not being able to find a job immediately” and “not knowing who to turn to for help”. In contrast, respondents A and C, who arrived in Australia four years ago, seemed not to have experienced what respondents in Team II went through. Perhaps four years ago, there was more enlightened attitude to migration and the “discrimination” experienced by members of Team II was not immediately evident. Hence, despite their relatively recent arrival in Australia, it may be that Team I did not perceive the community newspaper as mechanism to assist in cultural adoption.

The desire of respondents to read more Philippine-based news items and world news could also be related to what Merton (1968) calls “social and cultural orientations”. In his study of mass media audiences and media influence, Merton explored the correlation of structures of social relations, interpersonal influence, communications behaviour. According to Merton (1968), members of a community in the way they consume and interpret media may have either a “local orientation” or a “cosmopolitan orientation”. “Locals”, according to Merton (1968:447) are those who “confine their interests to the community” while “cosmopolitans” are those who regard themselves as residents of the community but also “as an integral part of the world”. In terms of print media consumption, Merton (1968) found in his study that the “cosmopolitans” read more magazines than the “locals” did but “locals” read

more newspapers than the “cosmopolitans”. However, Merton also found that the newspapers “locals” read were local newspapers found in the community or in a nearby community; “locals” seldom read metropolitan newspapers for coverage of world news. “Cosmopolitans”, on the other hand, were found to read metropolitan newspapers and seldom turned to community newspapers. Using Merton’s orientation “types” as an interpretive tool, it might be argued that respondents had two different orientations, which had an influence on the way they set out their editorial policy for their “newspaper”, and on the way they interpreted the function of *TPT* as it currently exists. Most respondents seem to fit the “cosmopolitan” orientation – “looking” beyond the immediate community in Melbourne, and expressing interest in the broader world. Only Team II seemed primarily local in orientation, focusing on issues concerned with how “locals” might improve their social and economic standing while the rest of the teams tended to have a more cosmopolitan outlook.

This “cosmopolitan” orientation of most respondents might be attributed to several factors, of which level of education and occupation are worth considering. Table 3 revealed that almost all respondents had been tertiary educated and most had occupations commensurate with such qualifications. Merton’s study revealed that “cosmopolitans” were characterised by higher formal education and holding of professional jobs compared to the locals who had low levels of education and were not professionals. It might be argued that having a high level of education and being a professional affected the orientation of respondents and that this orientation had an effect on the way they perceived *TPT* and its “failure” to cover the “right” sort of news. The respondents’ cosmopolitan orientation seems to have affected the way respondents “evaluated” the “performance” of *TPT* as a community newspaper. Seemingly, respondents were interested to read *TPT* but they tended to look at the

newspaper as “too local” to read hence “very much lacking” in content. They appreciate the publication of the newspaper but at the same time seemed to distance themselves from it. This was particularly manifested in their questionnaire rating of *TPT* as “good” but in discussion they were at the same time very critical and judgmental about the newspaper and its functions.

It might be also argued that despite respondents’ claims to the contrary, *TPT* is performing to maintain Filipino culture. If Bednall’s (1992) contention is followed – communication media can maintain culture if they express the community members’ “interest in events, entertainment and people related to their cultural background” – then this contention is “satisfied” by *TPT*” with its coverage of the Philippines, be it in terms of news stories, analysis or features and its provision of information about Filipino events that its readers might attend to satisfy their local social needs, thereby maintaining their links with other Filipinos in Australia. Respondents, however, did not consider *TPT* as a tool for maintaining culture. This perception might be due to their limited definition of what culture is and their very specific ideas about how *TPT* should function in maintaining culture. Respondents’ tended to take overt cultural practice as “culture” per se; their definition of culture limited to traditions, values, and customs that people actually perform, and were “inherited” from their forbears. As to how culture could be maintained through *TPT*, respondents’ perceptions seemed to be restricted to the idea that the newspaper should *represent* the plurality of Filipino sub-cultures. Due to this specific way of thinking about cultural maintenance – through inclusive Filipino-based newspaper content - respondents did not acknowledge the fact that they were actually using the newspaper as a resource for “handing down” a Filipino “way of life” to the next generation. The husband and wife teams, for example, admitted using information from *TPT* in explaining some Filipino traits and

values to their children. Clearly, for respondents, *TPT* is not fulfilling its role in the broadest sense and its editorial policy might have to be reassessed. One step might be for the editor to organise discussion groups, similar to the ones assembled for this study in order to get feedback about the newspaper and its current editorial policy..

Much work still has to be done on community ethnic media in Australia and elsewhere. Much more research could be conducted not only in the Filipino community but also in other ethnic communities in terms of the use of “their media”. Newspapers, as respondents made clear, are only one source of information and community views; there are many others including newly emergent community media such as the Internet yet to explore. And this study, hopefully provides a step useful towards that exploration.

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**APPENDIX A:
SOCIO-CULTURAL QUESTIONNAIRE**

**An Audience Study on
THE ROLE OF THE NEWSPAPER, *THE PHILIPPINE TIMES*, IN
MELBOURNE'S FILIPINO COMMUNITY
RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE**

JANET LEE

**Department of Communication, Language and Cultural Studies
Faculty of Arts
Victoria University of Technology**

This questionnaire is a part of a research project on the role/s of the Filipino newspaper in Melbourne as perceived by its Filipino readers. You are requested to provide information on your views regarding media, media preferences, and the use of the ethnic media in maintaining cultural identity. Some background information is also requested. Please write your answers or put a check mark in the space provided. If you need more space, please feel free to write at the back of the paper.

The information you will provide in this questionnaire, as well as during the group discussion, will be confidential. Only the researcher and her supervisor at the Victoria University of Technology will know whatever information you will provide.

If you have any questions, please contact me on (03) 9328-1758.

-
- 1. Name (optional):
 - 2. Gender : Male Female
 - 3. Age: 18-25 26-35 36-45 46-55 56-65 66 & up
 - 4. Marital Status: Single Married De Facto
..... Divorced Separated
 - 5. No. of children, if any: Age/s:
 - 6. Religion:
 - 7. Place of birth:
Place of birth of partner:
 - 8. Year of arrival in Australia:
Where did you live prior to coming to Australia?
 - 9. Suburb:.....
Please indicate reason for selecting this suburb:
.....
 - 10. Occupation/Main activity:
.....

11. Education:
- Primary education
 - Secondary school
 - Completed post secondary studies or certificate
(occupational training, TAFE, etc.)
Please specify the type of course you did:
 - Completed University course
Please specify the type of course you did:
 - If you don't fit the above, *please specify your
educational level and/or the type of course you did:*
12. Language/s spoken in the Philippines:
- Main language spoken at home (Australia):
- Do your children speak the *Pilipino* language or your dialect?
-Yes No
13. What school/tertiary institution do your children go to (please identify school/tertiary)
-
-
-
14. Do you attend Filipino gatherings/outings/organisational activities/Filipino cultural activities?
-Regularly Sometimes Never
- Which ones do you regularly attend?
-
-
-
-
15. Do you encourage your children to attend Filipino activities and learn Filipino dances, songs?
-Regularly Sometimes Never

22. In reading the Filipino newspaper, *The Philippine Times*, which section do you read first? Rank the first three section that you would read using numbers 1, 2 and 3.

- News about the Philippines
- News about Australia
- News about the Filipino community in Australia
- Business guide
- Notices/advertisements of forthcoming events of Filipino clubs, organisations, groups
- Government advertisements
- Entertainment news from the Philippines
- Others (please specify)

23. How do you get your copy of *The Philippine Times*?

- Subscribe
- Buy from news outlets
- From Filipino stores – free of charge
- From other people
- Others (please specify)

24. Do you read **every issue** of *The Philippine Times*?

- Yes
- No

Please explain why/why not:

.....

.....

.....

25. Do you use the information from *The Philippine Times* as a way of informing your children or the younger generation about life in the Philippines?

- Regularly
- Sometimes
-Never

26. Do you encourage the younger generation to read the *Philippine Times* for information on the Philippines and the Filipino community in Melbourne?

- Regularly
- Sometimes
-Never

27. If you want to know about on-going or forthcoming Filipino events around Melbourne and Australia, would you check in *The Philippine Times*?

..... Regularly Sometimes Never

28. As a community newspaper, how does *The Philippine Times* measure up on the following: *(Please tick appropriate column).*

	<u>Very Poor</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Very Good</u>
a. News about the Philippines
b. News about Australia
c. News about the Filipino community in Australia
d. Classified advertisement (business guide)
e. Notices/ads of forthcoming events of Filipino clubs, organisations
f. Government advertisements
g. Entertainment news - Philippine based
h. Special in-depth articles on Filipinos, Filipino values/traditions

29. On average, how often do you watch television in a day?

..... Less than one hour per day
..... Between 1 and 2 hours per day
..... Between 2 and 4 hours per day
..... More than four hours per day

30. Which television channel do you watch most often? *(You can check more than one)*

- Channel 2
- Channel 7
- Channel 9
- Channel 10
- SBS
- Others (please specify):

Please list your three favourite television programs:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

31. Do you watch Filipino films featured on SBS?

- Regularly Sometimes Never

Please state reason for your answer:

.....

.....

32. Do you watch the Filipino news program in SBS (6:30 AM every Sunday)?

- Regularly Sometimes Never

Please state reason for your answer:

.....

.....

33. Do you listen to the radio?

- Regularly Sometimes Never

Please state which station/s:

.....

.....

.....

34. Do you listen to Filipino programs in the radio?
..... Regularly Sometimes Never

Which program/s? (*You can check more than one*)

- Radyo Kabayan on 3CR; 855 AM
..... Radyo Pilipino on 3ZZZ; 92.3 FM
..... Programang Pilipino sa SBS; 93.1 FM

How often do you listen to Filipino programs?

- Once a week
..... Two times a week
..... Three times a week
..... More than three times a week

35. Do you rent (watch) videos?
..... Regularly Sometimes Never

Please name the last three videos you watched for the last three to six months:

1.
2.
3.

36. Do you go to theatre plays, music concerts put on by Filipino groups in Melbourne?
..... Regularly Sometimes Never

Please name the last two plays/concerts you attended for the last three to six months: 1.

2.

37. Do you listen to Filipino music on your stereo at home?
.....Regularly Sometimes Never

38. Do you have Filipino music in your music collection?
.....Yes No

39. Do you have a favourite Filipino group or singer? Please identify them/him/her.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION
(MARAMING SALAMAT PO!)

APPENDIX B:
SAMPLE OF HEADLINE SIZES

As they appeared in *TPT*:

Large headline

Ati-Atihan in St Kilda

Small headline

A world champ in a sport alien to Filipinos

As used in the editorial/lay-out exercise:

Large headline

A world champ in a sport alien to Filipinos

Small headline

A world champ in a sport alien to Filipinos

APPENDIX C:

SUGGESTED LINES OF QUESTIONING DURING GROUP DISCUSSIONS

The line of questioning during group discussions is hard to predict especially so that I still have to meet the respondents to the study. Sequencing of questions will not be the same for each editorial team since discussion will be based on how respondents in each team will react to the editorial/lay-out exercise and on how they respond to questions. However, it is intended that the following issues/questions will be discussed in all teams.

1. Of all the news stories, why did you choose this particular news story as the major story on the front page of your “newspaper”?
2. Why did you decide to have these stories on the rest of your “newspaper” in this order? Why did you decide to give these stories prominence/emphasis on each page?
3. Were there any major disagreements about the stories to be given priority or emphasis? How were these disagreements expressed? How were they resolved?
4. Did anyone in the group monopolise your decision-making? *Not Appropriate*
5. Which choice of news story had the most agreement about placement, prominence?
6. What other topics or types of stories would you like to see in *The Philippine Times*? Why?
7. What topics or types of stories do you think should be dropped from *The Philippine Times*? Why?
8. Why do you think *The Philippine Times* is printed in English? Would you like to see the newspaper printed in *Pilipino*? Why?
9. What, in your opinion, is the purpose of an ethnic/community newspaper?
10. Do you see this purpose/function being “performed” by *The Philippine Times*?
11. Some say that younger generation does not read newspapers. They are more interested in television and radio. Do you think the Filipino community should abandon or focus less on newspaper and put more energy into community television and radio? Explain?
12. If you had to describe the idea of multiculturalism to someone who did not know anything about it, what would you say?
13. How do you prefer to be identified, Filipino, Filipino-Australian, or Australian-Filipino? What is the significance of being identified as such?

14. Could you say that there is a distinct Filipino community in Melbourne? What would you say are the main characteristics of this community?
15. Do you involve yourself in activities within the Filipino community in Melbourne? How active are you?
16. Some people say that Filipinos have a tendency to group together in organisations. Are you a member of any organisation? Any reasons for choosing that organisation?
17. The fiesta is a big gathering of Filipinos in Melbourne. What, to you, is the significance/importance of the fiesta?
18. How do you feel about the Philippines now that you have lived in Australia? Would you ever consider going back and live there? Why?
19. Do you try to “promote” Filipino culture and values to your children? How?
20. What, to you, is the hardest thing of being a Filipino in Australia?

APPENDIX D : Address Sheet

Philippine Times readers have their say

The Victoria University of Technology is conducting a study on what readers of the Philippine Times think of their newspaper.

The study will focus on the role of the Philippine Times in Melbourne's Filipino community and whether readers are satisfied or want changes to the news they receive. The study is also interested in readers' other media preferences and their views on multiculturalism in Australia.

As a start to the study, Janet Lee, the researcher, is asking for participation from the Philippine Times readers who are over 18 years old and have been residents of Australia for at least one year. As study participants, readers will have the opportunity to state their views during discussions and in an entertaining role playing game where they get to do the job of a newspaper editor. All participants will remain anonymous and material gathered will be strictly confidential.

If you are interested to have input into the development of this important community resource, please ring (03) 9328-1758 and speak to Janet Lee. Your participation will be highly valued.

To subscribe:

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Email: filcom@eisa.net.au

Website: <http://eisa.net.au/~filcom/philtime.html>

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