The Asian Diaspora in New Zealand Film:

Conceptualising Asian New Zealand Cinema

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Abstract

New Zealand is officially described, and effectively operated, as a bicultural nation guided by the Treaty of Waitangi. Nonetheless, this society of four and a half million people also appears markedly multicultural and multi-ethnic at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The shifting demographics of New Zealand and its ethnically diverse composition have, in the last decade, rekindled debates about the role of creative and cultural production in the representation and construction of new narratives for the nation. New Zealand scholars have recognised the potential of film (screen media) for creating 'the imagined community' by referring to the scarce representations of ethnic communities in New Zealand, and also to the stereotyped images in other media forms that reinforce the enduring discourses of exclusion in representing the nation. Nevertheless, there have been healthy signs in recent years of media productions being made by New Zealanders of ethnic descent that attempt to represent a wider range of social and cultural experiences amongst the contemporary population. As more people from different backgrounds commit to a future in New Zealand, some feel the need to reflect publically on their experience of migration and diaspora. The desire to shape their related experiences and perspectives into various forms of media and visual culture has fed some notable works in contemporary New Zealand. Consequently, emerging Asian diasporic talents, and the voices of filmmakers who have presented alternative world views, identities and cultures in the dominantly Europeanised New Zealand cultural and social arenas, have become evident.

This research project is based on the premise that there has been an increasing visibility of filmmakers with a migratory background in New Zealand film and cinema, and also a growing sense of cultural diversity in New Zealand society. The thesis speaks of an 'Asian New Zealand' arena which is a relatively recent possibility, and fundamentally engages with exploring and conceptualising a group of diasporic films and filmmakers as aspects of 'Asian New Zealand cinema', which in a broader sense reflects manifold social realities within contemporary New Zealand as whole. This is the first study of (Asian) diasporic films in New Zealand and, therefore, creates a foundation for investigation of this type of film and

filmmaking within New Zealand cinema scholarship. By foregrounding an emerging group of films and filmmakers that have delineated important aesthetic, cultural, social, gendered and political complexities in the New Zealand social and cinematic imaginary over the last decade, the thesis advances New Zealand film scholarship by highlighting the roles diasporic films can play, as well as perspectives they can provide in responding to the increasing reality of cultural diversity in New Zealand at a social level, particularly through the lens of Diaspora Studies.

This research utilises theories and concepts of diaspora, which over the last two decades have served many functions within film and cinema scholarship; in particular, they have spoken to the ways in which films made and written by directors and writers with a migratory background can be understood, interpreted and studied. My research innovates in the area of diasporic film studies specifically by paying attention to the diasporic film *viewer* or *audience*. Previous diasporic cinema studies have largely assigned a primary role to the diasporic *author* and the diasporic *text* as a series of wide-ranging relationships in which the filmmaker's migratory background and deterritorialised locations affect various aspects of the cinematic productions and the text. Given my interest in foregrounding the concept of Asian New Zealand film and its power to offer a platform for multilayered dialogues between diasporic subjects and the New Zealand host society, I was drawn to exploring what kinds of relationships exist between the diasporic audience/viewer and the diasporic film. In this way, my project enriches these conversations by bringing the notion of diasporic audiences as significant meaning-making bodies to diasporic cinema studies.

This thesis follows the 'PhD with Publication' scheme and therefore needs to be read and understood in this manner. It presents a collection of five scholarly articles and one book chapter which are interconnected and linked to the research's central goal: conceptualising Asian New Zealand cinema.

Preface: PhD with Publication Thesis

This thesis follows the 'PhD with Publication'[1] scheme, and it is beneficial here to provide an explanation of the nature of this dissertation model. The purpose and structure of the thesis conducted and written as a PhD with Publication differs from the traditional PhD model in that it consists of a series of both published and unpublished materials written for publication purposes. Hence, it places additional demands on the candidate to plan the research project in a way that retains a holistic structure and central focus, whilst comprising several articles.

As per the University of Waikato's (UOW) 'Requirements for PhD with Publication', this thesis presents a collection of five scholarly research articles and one book chapter which are interconnected and linked to the research's key objective: to conceptualise Asian New Zealand cinema. According to the UOW's Requirements for PhD with Publication (updated Sept 2014), the main chapters that are required to accompany the articles include the Introduction and the Research Methodology. Additionally, as advised by my supervisory panel, I have included several other chapters to ensure the context is established for understanding the chapters which include the articles and book chapter, and more importantly, to indicate the gaps these contributions aim to address within the wider field of diasporic cinema, and New Zealand film and society.

It is noteworthy that the PhD with Publication scheme is not well suited to answering a set of questions in the way we expect the traditional PhD to do. In the traditional mode, the candidate must address and investigate research questions regardless of the extent to which each question (and its sub-questions) may significantly contribute to the body of knowledge. By its nature, the PhD with Publication can provide theoretically in-depth and scholarly reviewed materials on several *major* dimensions of the research questions. For this reason, I structured the

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[1] Please see Appendix I for the 'Requirements for PhD with Publication' at the University of Waikato (updated September 2014), based on which this thesis has been carried out and structured. I have further explained the framing of this thesis within the PhD with Publication model and also the nature of collaboration in the case of the co-authorship with supervisors and other scholars in Chapter 4.

research project around a central inquiry and let the research take deeper routes in areas where gaps in the existing academic scholarship were found to exist. Since it is imperative to get the materials published, the articles presented here predominantly target under-researched areas which had to be at the same time within the domain of the overall structure of the PhD research project.

As is the ultimate goal of any PhD, the PhD with Publication thesis (perhaps more so, based on my experience) makes a significant contribution to the research literature and also indicates the candidate's capabilities to conduct independent research and produce high quality, peer reviewed research outcomes.

Acknowledgements

Many people have in one way or another played supportive roles in this research journey. Many thanks are due above all to Dr. Ann Hardy, a great scholar, who allowed and welcomed my intrusion into her daily office hours in the last three and a half years. As this journey turned out to be situated in the increasingly difficult years of my life, a process of de-situating and re-situating that life circumstances brought upon me, I found me trying to juggle and manage numerous roles and positionings – simultaneously vital and ambitious – yet, I have managed to remain faithful to myself that 'struggle is growth'. In the course of my journey, I realised that people I related to professionally have become part of the only small community I have in my life in Hamilton. At the centre of this is Assoc. Prof. Geoff Lealand whose good will and generosity in providing me with New Zealand materials made my PhD life a pleasant journey. Many thanks to him. I have learned from Dr. Carolyn Michelle's professionalism and scholarship, who once said to me: 'it is important to keep on positioning yourself well, should the opportunity arise'. Throughout this journey, these words were reiterated in my head, and gave me strength to keep moving.

I found myself fortunate to get to know people in New Zealand without their support this journey could be more than it would appear to be worth doing. Many thanks to my participants who agreed to be part of this project, with whom I share the belief that this research will contribute to a land we all have chosen as home. My thanks also go to the staff at the Screen and Media Studies and School of Arts who soon got used to seeing me walking in and out the foyer and along the corridor. I have appreciated their smiles and welcoming notes in the last few years. Among them, my thanks to Assoc. Prof. Adrian Athique for the opportunity to collaborate on a paper on the reception study of this thesis. I am also grateful to my colleagues at the Centre for Tertiary Teaching and Learning for their support during the final months of this project.

I can never appreciate sufficiently the support of my family, my dad, Manouchehr, and my sisters, Shirin and Leila, and my best friend, Dil. They have always been there for me when there was no one and nothing else to turn to.

My mother beckons to me from the shadows… This is to dedicate to her soul for teaching me the value of life!

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

New Zealand is officially described, and effectively operated, as a bicultural nation guided by the Treaty of Waitangi. Nonetheless, this society of four and a half million people also appears markedly multicultural and multi-ethnic at the beginning of the twenty-first century. European migrants and their descendants, referred to as Pākehā, constitute a broadening range of European cultures that go well beyond a singular British heritage. The Māori peoples of New Zealand are also now hosts to a large number of recent arrivals from across the Pacific region, giving Auckland the largest Pacific Islander population of any city in the world. Further, almost a quarter of Auckland's population is now classified as 'Asian', this itself being a catch-all term for a wide range of peoples and cultures covering half of the human species. As such, in considering the ethnic demography of contemporary New Zealand, many scholars believe that New Zealand's increasing cultural diversity is a reality that can no longer be ignored (Brunton, 2014, 2015; Friesen, 2008; Smeith & Dunstan, 2004; Spoonley, 2013; Spoonley & Bedford, 2012; Ward & Masgoret, 2008).

Despite their growing physical and statistical visibility, however, it remains difficult for members of the Asian diasporas to create a significant presence in the sphere of cultural production fostered by a range of official agencies in New Zealand. The changing face of New Zealand's population as a result of the increasing numbers of migrants who have arrived in the country since the 1990s, and the consequent formation of several diasporic communities, have brought new challenges for New Zealand's society and its people. The shifting demographics of New Zealand and its ethnically diverse composition have, therefore, rekindled debates about the role of creative and cultural production in the representation and construction of new narratives for the nation. New Zealand scholars have recognised the significance of television and cinema in creating 'the imagined community' (Benedict Anderson's popular concept) by referring to the scarce representations of ethnic communities in New Zealand or to the stereotyped images that reinforce the enduring discourses of exclusion in screening the nation (Kothari, Pearson & Zuberi, 2004, p. 150). Nonetheless, there have been healthy signs in

recent years of media productions being made by New Zealanders of ethnic descent that attempt to represent a wider range of social and cultural experiences amongst the contemporary population. As more people from different backgrounds commit to a future in New Zealand, some feel the need to reflect publically on their experience of migration and diaspora. The desire to shape related experiences and perspectives into various forms of media and visual culture has fed some notable works in contemporary New Zealand. Consequently, emerging Asian diasporic talents, and the voices of filmmakers who have presented alternative worldviews, identities and cultures in the dominantly Europeanised New Zealand cultural and social arenas, have become evident. The thesis begins with exploring these Asian diasporic talents and the range of cultural productions made by them as significant examples of a collective effort to increase the visibility of Asians in New Zealand society and their discursive incorporation into the national community at a time when multiculturalism[2] is evolving within the country.

This research project is based on the premise that there has been increasing visibility of filmmakers with a migratory background in New Zealand film and cinema and also a growing sense of cultural diversity in New Zealand society. The thesis speaks of an 'Asian New Zealand' arena which is a relatively recent possibility, and fundamentally engages with exploring and conceptualising a group of diasporic films and filmmakers as 'Asian New Zealand cinema', which in a broader sense reflect manifold social realities of contemporary New Zealand as whole.

My study is guided by scholarship in Screen and Media Studies (including Film Studies), Sociology, and Cultural Studies in general and also draws on Diaspora Studies. In the book *Teaching Film* (Fischer & Petro, 2012), there is chapter on teaching diasporic cinema where Hamid Naficy, a key theorist in diasporic cinema

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[2] 'Multiculturalism' here refers to 'cultural diversity' and not an ideology or policy at an operational level. UNESCO defines multiculturalism as "as a systematic and comprehensive response to cultural and ethnic diversity, with educational, linguistic, economic and social components and specific institutional mechanisms" (Inglis, 1995, par 2). However, the operational aspects and reality of this concept is far from being captured in such a definition, especially when applied to different contexts. For example, Galligan and Roberts in *Australian Citizenship* (2004) explain the ways that, after the election of the Whitlam Labor Government in 1972, multiculturalism became a "full-blooded ideology, defining Australia at home and abroad" (p. 74), and changed the notion of Australian identity. Though multiculturalism can affect the notion of national identity, it is, however, "not able to translate itself into a uniform, recognisable, nationally unifying citizenship policy" (Mishra, 2006, p. 294). This concept will further be examined in this thesis.

studies, accentuates the necessity of having the cultural competency and understanding of the experience of diaspora at a personal level for researching, teaching, and writing about diasporic cinema. I am, therefore, privileged in this manner as my migratory background has informed my thinking and researching the central inquiry of this project in numerous ways. Perhaps a brief on my personal background is appropriate here. I was born and grew up in Iran. When I completed my MA in 2000 in Iran, I was invited to take up a fulltime lecturer position in two branches of Islamic Azad University in Garmsar and Karaj. A few years later, I left Iran to pursue my studies in Malaysia where I lived and continued to work in academia for several years. Indeed, leaving Iran did not occur as a result of a deliberate liberalism, an intellectual plan or careful thought on what life might look like leaving home, family, friends and memories and choosing to live in a foreign land with no family, friends and memories. It was in Malaysia that I encountered the concepts of postcolonialism, migration, diaspora, and multiculturalism (this was because Diaspora Studies was not popular in Iran back in 2000, or maybe because we were never colonised). So it took me some years to understand that I too am part of a contemporary diaspora and transnational community; the Iranian diaspora (people originally from Southern Asia), those who have left their homelands to settle in other countries for a better life and future (and also those in exile). My natural advantage of having lived far from my original homeland for many years – in Malaysia in South-West Asia, with the two large diasporic communities (Indian and Chinese) – and also teaching Postcolonial and Diasporic literature at the National University of Malaysia, granted me the opportunity to learn about diaspora as a real site of life and also as a field of study. It was in 2010 that I learned about the Asian diaspora in New Zealand which I believe is one of the youngest diasporic communities in the world in terms of cultural production. I came to New Zealand to research the formation of a diaspora within the domains of cultural production in a country where I fell in love with the sky, and have stayed to put down roots.

Research Context

The landscape of New Zealand was originally occupied by the indigenous Māori people, and then became a homeland for British European settlers in a formal partnership as set out in the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi (Awatere, 1984; King, 1985).

Later, New Zealand became home to a small number of Chinese and Indian migrants who started coming to New Zealand in the mid to late nineteenth century for work opportunities, despite the discriminatory racial policies and practices of that time (Ip & Pang, 2005; Leckie, 1995). Migration from the Pacific regions to New Zealand mainly occurred after World War II in response to severe labour shortages in the country (Ward & Masgoret, 2008). The homogeneity of white Europeans as the official source of migration in New Zealand was gradually transformed as the New Zealand government opened the skilled and entrepreneurial categories of immigrants to non-Europeans under the 1987 Immigration Act (Parliamentary Council Office, 2011). Since then, there have been a large number of immigrants from Asian countries, mainly ethnic Chinese (from China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Vietnam and Malaysia), Indian, Korean and Japanese. The latest Statistics New Zealand Census shows that Asians are still the largest ethnic group, with an increase from 9.6% in 2006 (Statistics New Zealand, 2006) to 11.8% after Pākehā (74.0%) and Māori (14.9%) (Statistics New Zealand, 2013a).

New Zealand's two major cultures, the indigenous Māori and European Pākehā, have gone through major changes as a result of the bicultural policies of the 1970s – which gradually emerged following the mutual partnership of The Treaty of Waitangi in 1840. Biculturalism originated as "a progressive project committed to incorporating Māori culture into the nation's symbolic identity" (Rata, 2005, p. 267). It was an attempt to give voice to Māori culture and rights to the land so that they gained power "to determine their own lives" (William, 1997, p. 35). Biculturalism as an official policy moved Māori from the margins of the 20th century society and recognised Māori culture, history and customs as a treasured part of the New Zealand nation (Awatere, 1984; King, 1985; Rata, 2005). In the late 1970s, Asian and Pacific immigrants in New Zealand were assumed to assimilate into mainstream New Zealand society, and multiculturalism was understood as a model – subsidiary to biculturalism – including cultures that can "exist alongside one another retaining their differences and respecting one another" (King, 1985, pp. 104-105). However, the experiences of Asian New Zealanders showed that integration, assimilation and adaptation is more elusive than New Zealand policy makers assumed (Brooking & Rabel, 1995). Bandyopadhyay (2006) opines that since the 1990s, multiculturalism should gradually become "an accepted norm of

mainstream politics and a defining principle for New Zealand's national identity"
(p. 125). Considering New Zealand is officially described and effectively operated
as a bicultural nation guided by the Treaty of Waitangi, the impact of immigration
and the ethnic demography of contemporary New Zealand have added more
complexity to the current situation (see Chapter 2).

This 'multicultural' New Zealand has embedded several diasporas in its
demographic composition. Scholars have referred to the notion of diaspora as a
form of dislocation of people who migrated from their ancestral homelands and
settled in a new homeland (Clifford, 1997; Cohen, 1997, 2008; Safran, 1991;
Tölölyan, 1996). The concept of diaspora in its contemporary sense covers a
massive dispersion of people who have left their homeland either voluntarily or
involuntarily. The presence, formation and appearance of diasporic communities is
understood or sensed in the host society mainly through their participation in
cultural, social, economic, political and media practices. The involvement of media
in the formation and construction of identities and its effects on the ways that a
community can be perceived within and across cultures have been recognised and
supported by many scholars. This involvement and role of media becomes visible
in those contexts where cultural diversity is more evident as the result of migration
and diaspora. Cultural diversity refers to "the sum of the various kinds of difference
– ethnic, 'racial', or cultural," where cultural identities are constructed "in and
through the media" (Siapera, 2010, pp. 6-7). Film, as a prominent form of media,
is one of many different vehicles for the representation, construction, production
and distribution of ideas and concepts about a society/nation and its
people/identities. As noted by Berghahn and Sternberg (2010), "The migrant and
diasporic film [has been] the most significant and influential popular and artistic
practice with regard to self-representation of migrant and diasporic groups and their
experiences and concerns" (p. 2).

New Zealand has always been an immigrant nation, "but in the last twenty years,
the country has become diverse in new ways: increasing migration from Asia […]
The implication for New Zealand is that it is, increasingly, a country with multiple
cultural identities and values" (Royal Society of New Zealand, 2014). Local
scholars have also referred to and discussed in various ways the increasing cultural

diversity of New Zealand and its impact on society and culture (Brunton, 2014, 2015; Friesen, 2008; Smeith & Dunstan, 2004; Spoonley, 2013; Spoonley & Bedford, 2012; Ward & Masgoret, 2008). The relative absence of a substantive Asian New Zealand presence on screen reflects not only the export orientation of commercial media productions towards the Anglophone world, including a close relationship with nearby Australia, but also the primacy of biculturalism as a set of ongoing negotiations between European and Māori peoples (e.g. Awatere, 1984; O'Malley, 2012; Rata, 2005). Looking at New Zealand media and film, there have been a significant number of films made by Māori people, or about their experiences, lives, customs, and culture, but until recently few made by Asian New Zealand filmmakers or about Asian diasporic communities in New Zealand. In recent years, media productions have started to be made by New Zealanders of Asian descent that offer representations of migrants' social and cultural experiences amongst the contemporary population. Although their exposure within the media mainstream has been limited, these diasporic media productions are critically important, not least because the communicative sphere of media remains vital for effective public participation in contemporary life and society. In that light, I argue that the role of media in the increasing visibility of Asians in New Zealand society and facilitating their discursive incorporation in the national community becomes crucial at a time when multiculturalism is evolving within the country.

Research Focus and Standpoint

In May 2011, about two minutes into the morning television broadcast of TVNZ's ONE News, Korean New Zealand filmmaker, Stephen Kang, was congratulated for the award he received during Critics' Week at the Cannes Film Festival 2011 for his short film *Blue* (ONE News, 2011). In March 2011, the romantic comedy feature *My Wedding and Other Secrets*, directed by Roseanne Liang – a New Zealand born Chinese – reached number three at the New Zealand box office (Onfilm, March 11, 2011); the commercial advertisement of its DVD release appeared on prime time TV on the 20th of July 2011. In 2012, and with no budget, Liang started a comedy web series *Flat3* which "has rapidly gained an army of fans" and in 2014 managed to receive considerable funding from NZ On Air for its third season (News3, 2014).

In September 2014, *The New Zealand Herald* wrote about the first New Zealand feature film in the Mandarin language, *The Love* (2014), made by a fully New Zealand-based Chinese cast and crew (Tan, 2014). Such relatively rare evidence illustrates the public emergence of the Asian diaspora in New Zealand cinema. A review of related literature on the topic of the Asian diaspora in New Zealand cinema indicates that Asian New Zealand filmmakers, their films and practices as well as New Zealand films that portray Asian communities and their stories, comprise a body of knowledge and cultural productivity – even though small in number but socially and culturally significant for New Zealand's society – that has not been formally acknowledged nor publically recognised. This research aims to investigate, identify, examine and discuss various aspects of this neglected and exciting body of work, which I call Asian New Zealand cinema.[3] This study defines 'Asian New Zealand cinema' as a body of films by New Zealanders of Asian descent and also New Zealand films producing images of Asian migrants and communities. Asian New Zealand cinema includes features, short films, documentaries and television series produced in the last few decades.

Most of this work, which is in its early stages of appearance, comes from New Zealand immigrant filmmakers, whose films have resulted from their experience of living as members of Asian communities in New Zealand, and thus address the flows of displacement, cultural dislocation, integration, assimilation, and other related topics and issues. Most of the filmmakers whose work is central to this study are members of the first and second generations of the Asian diaspora living in New Zealand; directors and screenwriters such as Roseanne Liang, Helene Wong, Stephen Kang, Shuchi Kothari, and Mandrika Rupa.[4]

The concept of diaspora is a relatively recent theme in the Social Sciences and Humanities; as Bulmer and Solomos (2009) notes: "Although the role of diasporic communities has been the subject of historical reflection for some time, it is in the

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[3] Throughout this thesis, 'Asian New Zealand film', 'Asian diasporic film' and 'Asian New Zealand cinema' refer to the same group of films and filmmakers.

[4] Based on my request, the NZFC developed a list of filmmakers ('screenwriter and director but not producer') in New Zealand of Asian descent since 1990 to April 2012, which is inclusive of my examples, with the exception of Mandrika Rupa.

current period that the concept of diaspora has become a core theme in the social sciences and humanities" (p. 1301). Many studies have used diaspora as a conceptual or theoretical framework for analysing the varied experiences of people who have left their homeland and settled in a new land (e.g. Brubaker, 2005; Cohen, 2008). Likewise, within the context of New Zealand, a growing number of studies have focused on the increasing phenomenon of Asian immigrants and communities from the vantage point of social sciences (Bartley & Spoonley, 2008; Friesen, 2008; Johnson & Moloughney, 2006; Pio, 2007; Voci & Leckie, 2011). However, the concept of diaspora in New Zealand appears to be rarely addressed in Media and Film Studies.[5] The limited research on (Asian) diasporic films in New Zealand, which this thesis aims to address, reflects the fact that this body of work is an emergent phenomenon, and not yet deemed sufficiently large or visible.[6] Hence, this research – as the first and only substantive research to conceptualise Asian New Zealand film/cinema – attempts to provide a forum for a range of discussions on the Asian New Zealand experience in New Zealand films that have been written or directed or in some way originated from New Zealanders of Asian descent, by interpreting them through the lens of theories and concepts of diaspora.

The concept of diaspora has served many functions within film and cinema scholarship. In particular, it has spoken to the ways in which films made and written by directors and writers with a migratory background can be understood, interpreted and studied. For instance, Catherine Simpson, Renata Murawska, and Anthony Lambert (2009), the editors of *Diasporas of Australian Cinema*, highlight that "Few entire collections deal with diaspora in cinema, and fewer […] engage with specific

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[5] A Google search in June 2011 for the phrases "Asian Diaspora in New Zealand cinema", "Asian Diaspora in New Zealand media" and "Asian New Zealand cinema" did not produce any results (14 June 2011). This simple evidence suggests a scarcity of research on this topic. In Jan 2015, I repeated the same Google search and found several references to *My Wedding and Other Secrets* as Asian New Zealand cinema – some of which were made by my interview participants – in non-academic websites, as well as references in my own published materials, and conference and seminar presentations.

[6] Based on my research the first Asian New Zealand filmmakers are Mandrika Rupa (of Indian descent) with her short film, *Poonam*, directed in 1994, and Helene Wong (of Chinese descent) with her documentary, *Footprints of the Dragon* (1994), even though she did not play an active role as a film director after her early attempts.

diasporic national cinemas"[7] (p. 16). Therefore, the incorporation of diaspora as a unit of analysis in the field of New Zealand film studies will comprise a significant contribution to both recent and critical scholarship. This research identifies, investigates and analyses examples of Asian New Zealand film through the lens of theories of diasporic cinema to map out the key concepts and aspects of the Asian diaspora, utilising a tripartite methodological structure addressing three main aspects of the communicative circuit: a) production/industry, b) texts/representations, and c) audiences/reception. Drawing on a range of data sources, this research explores and develops key features and components of Asian New Zealand cinema.

As my understanding of the topic of diasporic film was enhanced during the course of reading, collecting data, and analysing my findings, I was driven to let the research take a deeper route into theories of diasporic cinema/film, particularly in the areas where the academic gap becomes more visible – in this case the diasporic film viewer or audience. Diasporic cinema studies have primarily assigned a particular role to the diasporic *author* and the diasporic *text* and their wide-ranging relationships in which the filmmaker's migratory background and deterritorialised locations affect various aspects of the cinematic productions and the text. We incessantly learn from diasporic cinema studies that diasporic texts/films are preoccupied with questions of displacement, (national) belonging, nostalgia, identity, boundary maintenance, journeying, homeland orientations, integration to the host land culture and society, agency and subjectivity, and diasporic structures of feeling (Desai, 2004; Marchetti 2006; Marks, 2000; Martin 1995; Naficy, 2001, 2014). This means that diasporic cinema studies mainly analyse the deep structures of diasporic films, identifying themes, subjects and narratives (using textual analysis), and exploring their varied relationships to the filmmaker's preoccupations and perspectives through the film's visual style and aesthetics or modes and conditions of film production. Given my interest in exploring and foregrounding the concept of Asian New Zealand film and its power in offering a platform for the multilayered dialogue between diasporic subjects and the New Zealand host society, I became naturally concerned with the relationship between

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[7] It is noteworthy to mention that 'diasporic national cinemas' is a vague category in this quote and the scope of this thesis does not allow sufficient space to deal with it.

the diasporic audience/viewer and the diasporic film. In terms of the nature of this relationship, my research leads me to suggest that there is some continuity between the diasporic filmmaker's own experience of displacement and diversity, as articulated through the films they produce (and also the conditions in which the film is produced), and experiences of displacement and diversity among diasporic film audiences; yet those experiences remain *differently* similar. While there are contiguous elements and processes involved in migration and settlement, migrants' journeys remain heterogeneous and idiosyncratic. I shall revisit this point and illustrate my argument in the final Chapter.

This thesis is written to be read in three modalities: at one level it is the first study of diasporic films in New Zealand and discusses the local emergence of this genre of cinema. It thus aims to make a foundation for critically examining this type of film and filmmaking within New Zealand cinema scholarship by foregrounding an emerging group of films and filmmakers that have delineated important aesthetic, cultural, social, gendered and political complexities in the New Zealand social and cinematic imaginary over the last decade. At a second level, the thesis advances New Zealand film scholarship by highlighting the roles diasporic films can play, as well as perspectives they can provide in responding to the increasing reality of 'diversity' in New Zealand at a social and cultural level, particularly through the lens of Diaspora Studies. At a third level, by focusing on a substantial gap that exists in diasporic cinema studies, my project innovates in the area of diasporic film studies specifically by paying attention to diasporic film viewers or audiences as significant meaning-making bodies. As noted before, diasporic cinema studies have paid great attention to the narratives, visual style and aesthetics, and to a limited extent the production[8] of these films. Film audiences (diasporic or non-diasporic) in diasporic cinema studies have been treated as a homogenous or imagined audience or community. In addition, within Reception Studies, diasporic film audiences have always been discussed in relation to the distribution and consumption of diasporic films. The thesis poses further questions regarding the 'diasporic audience/viewer' – conceived here as multiple and heterogeneous – and

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[8] The article on the modes of production of Asian New Zealand film in Chapter 5 has aimed to address the limited research-informed examination of film production in New Zealand.

asks what their modes of engagement and position-takings can tell us about the place, roles, and meanings of these films within the cultural and social politics of the host society. Furthermore, examining the ways diasporic audiences engage with such cultural products can provide us with social and cultural trajectories of their understandings of themselves in their new environment.

Research Significance

There are many ways that this study can significantly contribute to New Zealand cinema and 'multicultural filmmaking in New Zealand'[9] within the context of the demographic shifts that are occurring in New Zealand. This research arrives at a time of considerable change in New Zealand cinema: (a) the emergence of New Zealand filmmakers of Asian descent who have started to produce their own versions of multicultural and diasporic realities in New Zealand and to narrate their own communities, lives and identities. Their films have addressed and reached (to some extent) both diasporic communities in New Zealand as well as New Zealand mainstream audiences; and (b) the growing debates around ethnic media in New Zealand especially after the release of the 2013 Census data.[10] This becomes significant at this stage of time, when aspects of multiculturalism in New Zealand are being investigated and discussed by scholars and the related experiences have been represented by diasporic filmmakers in New Zealand.

While there have been many studies on representations of Asian communities and diasporic cinema in other Western countries which incorporate several diasporas in their demographic structures, such as the UK, the US and Australia[11], there is a paucity of research on Asian diasporic filmmakers in New Zealand cinema. As

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[9] See *Directory of World Cinema: Australia and New Zealand* (2010)

[10] Examples include the discussion forum organised by Unitec in 2014, where I was invited to be part of a panel to discuss the concept of ethnic and migrant media and its nuances in New Zealand.

[11] Scholars in Australia, for instance, have conducted research and published extensive literature on Asian Australia cinema where this phenomenon has been investigated using various approaches and viewpoints (see in particular the Journal of *Studies in Australasian Cinema* and materials published through the Asian Australian Studies Research Network, and the Asian Australian Film Forum Network).

already noted, this study takes a step in that direction by studying various cultural and social dimensions of films originating from the Asian diaspora in New Zealand.

This research also hopes to contribute to the New Zealand research clusters and institutions that focus on Asian studies and identities in New Zealand in general and New Zealand media and cinema in particular There are several institutions in New Zealand that are interested in studies on Asian communities and the ways they can become more engaged in New Zealand society. Several research clusters and groups have been established in the last few years that are interested in matters related to Asian immigration and the relationships between New Zealand and Asia, such as the New Zealand India Research Institute established in October 2012, the Postcolonial Studies Research Network founded in 2012, and the Asian Migrations Research Theme which commenced in 2012. There have also been academic conferences where migrants in New Zealand have been at the centre of debate, such as *Cool New Asia Symposium: Experiencing East-Asian Popular Culture* at Unitec in 2012, a Seminar Series on media produced by and for ethnic minority groups in New Zealand at the University of Canterbury in 2013, and the Ethnic Media Forum at Unitec in 2014. The New Zealand Asian Studies Society (NZASIA) aims to seek and encourage research about Asia, its cultures and issues related to Asia: This study can foster NZASIA's mission to spread knowledge about Asia in New Zealand.[12] The Asia New Zealand Foundation (ANZF) is another institution that may benefit from this research. ANZF invests in enhancing "New Zealand's engagement with Asia" through social, economic and education research and activities. Though not directly related to media and cinema, ANZF can play an important role in providing information and platforms for the growth of ethnic media in New Zealand.

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[12] When I started my research in New Zealand in 2011, I came across the Asian New Zealand Film Foundation Trust (ANZFFT) website, which was set up to promote Asian representations within New Zealand's screen arts. ANZFFT was dedicated to advocating "better representation of Asians in the creative and decision making processes within the film and TV industry" and "accurate story-telling and representation of Asian characters beyond stereotypes" (ANZFFT, 2011). My attempt to contact them in 2011 was unsuccessful. It is my assumption that it has been inactive since then. Having similar interests, in 2016, I plan to inaugurate a series of efforts towards the establishment of Asian New Zealand Cultural Production (ANZCP) to promote representations of the Asian diaspora in New Zealand (visual) arts, and screen and media. This cluster will be linked at a transnational level to the cultural activities of other Asian diasporas in the world. It will establish, among other things, an economic-cultural cluster for showcasing New Zealand cultural production.

I hope this research offers greater knowledge and understanding of diasporic cultural production in New Zealand in order to cultivate meaningful engagement with audiences. Such understanding may be of interest to policy makers within various media sectors in New Zealand, as it may lead to the development and production of diasporic screen media in local public and private media sectors – a step towards embracing diversity in New Zealand. Taking initiatives in the cultural production sectors seems to be significant for the New Zealand media and screen industry at a broader policy level given recent actions by the New Zealand government to develop closer business cooperation with Asian countries such as China. An outcome of the recent visit of the Chinese president and the (controversial) Free Trade Agreement between New Zealand and China in 2014 was to enable a television co-production arrangement. The New Zealand Prime Minster, John Key (2014), stated that "The Television Co-production Agreement will allow programmes co-produced by New Zealand and Chinese companies to be officially broadcast on Chinese TV, where potential viewing audiences are huge" (par. 7). Having films made about Chinese living in New Zealand, for instance, can initiate making other stories which can attract Chinese audiences in both countries.

Chapter Outline

In what follows, I explore the emergence of a group of films in New Zealand that at the representational level cut across the boundaries of dominant images in New Zealand cinema – that is, of Māori and Pākehā. The structure of the thesis, as presented in this section, has aimed to reflect the tripartite methodological approach adopted for this research, bearing in mind the three main aspects of the communicative circuit: production, text, and viewer. This thesis, which comprises eight chapters, follows the 'PhD with Publication' scheme and therefore presents a collection of five scholarly articles and one book chapter which are interconnected and linked to the research's central goal: conceptualising Asian New Zealand cinema.

Chapter Two provides a contextualisation for the research project and focuses on both the historical formation of the Asian diaspora in New Zealand, as well as their

appearance in New Zealand scholarship. It sets the ground for the use of the term 'Asian', and more importantly, reviews and examines the literature related to New Zealanders' perceptions of and attitudes towards Asians. A larger part of the chapter is devoted to local studies that have discussed any aspects of the Asian diaspora within New Zealand screen and media. I have structured such studies in relation to 'representation', 'production', and 'reception'. This chapter demonstrates the paucity of research in these three areas with regard to the Asian diaspora on New Zealand screen.

Chapter Three presents a critical review of major ideas and theories of diaspora and diasporic film, foregrounding the gap that exists in diasporic cinema studies with regard to the film audience/viewer. Critically engaged with the relevant theories and concepts, I have intended to showcase a theoretical contextualisation which has informed my thinking and helped shape the arguments in each article. This chapter establishes the arguments around diasporic cinema which will then be finalised in a synthesis of findings that I offer in the final chapter. I have drawn my discussion from international scholarship in order to contribute to the debates in these areas with reference to the New Zealand context.

Chapter Four outlines the research methodology, and includes discussions of the research paradigm and design for the thesis, data sources, and methods of data collection. It also presents a discussion on the ways the articles have been thought out and placed in different journals, the challenges of doing a PhD with Publication, as well as the nature of collaboration with other scholars (including my supervisors) and the manner in which they have contributed to the discussions and writing of the three articles.

Chapters Five, Six and Seven comprise materials submitted for publication or in print. They present five articles and one book chapter based on the three phases of the circuit of communication – 'production, text, reception'. Each chapter is prefaced by an introduction to show the way each article is interconnected within the overall research project.

Chapter Eight presents an elaborated conclusion to the discussions this thesis has initiated in the conceptualisation of a diasporic cinema in New Zealand. It summarises the key features and components of Asian New Zealand film in terms of text and modes of production. More fundamentally, I draw on the research findings in relation to the theoretical literature in Chapter 3 to offer my conceptualisation of the relationship between the diasporic text and diasporic audience. Chapter 8 also presents the areas of investigation for further research and some of my working ideas for possible future publications.

It is worth mentioning that, according to the Requirements for PhD with Publication (updated Sept 2014), in addition to chapter 1: Introduction, it is also required to include one separate chapter for Research Methodology. As noted, I have exceeded this expectation by providing two extra chapters: Chapter 2 on a critical review of the existing literature on the Asian diaspora within New Zealand scholarship, as well as Chapter 3 which presents the theoretical framework based on which the study has taken its path. The Requirements for PhD with Publication also advises to include a short concluding Chapter. However, I intended to synthesise my findings in the final chapter by proposing the incorporation of the diasporic audience's relationship to diasporic film in the wider conceptualisation of diasporic cinema.[13]

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[13] These three extra chapters and materials have been written in a way that different parts of them can be further developed for future publications.

Chapter 2: The Asian Diaspora in New Zealand Scholarship

This chapter examines the literature related to the various aspects of the Asian diaspora in New Zealand and discusses studies that have looked at the three largest communities of the Asian diaspora locally – the Chinese, Indian and Korean communities.[14] It also offers a historical contextualisation for the research and indicates the gap that exists in the literature on the Asian diaspora in New Zealand film and media. Most importantly, it presents a critical review of the available studies on New Zealand media which have discussed Asian communities with regard to screen and media representations and diasporic cultural production. Reviewing New Zealand scholarship on the topic of 'Asian New Zealand film' provides insights into New Zealand's sense of multiculturalism and/or cultural diversity, diverse diasporic and cultural experiences, otherness and ethnicity, and also the medium of film (screen and media) as a means to reflect, or construct, contemporary New Zealand society and nation. Furthermore, the scarcity of available scholarly studies on the topic of Asian New Zealand film and filmmaking specifically highlights the limited body of work on this topic, something that this research seeks to rectify through a series of articles on diasporic film in New Zealand.

The Asian Diaspora: Historical, Social and Cultural Accounts

Setting the Ground for the Term 'Asian' in this Research

'Asian' is a constructed category and is often utilised as a topographical and geopolitical term, connoting political associations and alliances in Asia and the diasporas whose origins revert to countries in Asia. This ambivalent term is also one that blurs the heterogeneity and disjointedness of people whose extraction is

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[14] At the time of the research, these were the three largest communities in New Zealand according to Statistics New Zealand (2006). The most recent census conducted in 2011 – results were released in 2013 – shows that migrants from the Philippines are now the third largest group replacing the Korean diasporic community. There has not yet been any significant filmmaker emerge from this community.

from Asia. Nevertheless, 'Asian' has generally been used within a range of fields as a catch-all term for social and ethnic identities and categories, without necessarily alluding to national identities. According to Edwina Pio, a Professor of Diversity at the Business and Law School of Auckland University of Technology, the term 'Asian' in New Zealand public culture and society refers to those of "Chinese ethnicity or those with Chinese facial features such as Japanese, Koreans and Vietnamese", excluding those from India and the Indian subcontinents (2010a, p. 485). She opines that this classification is based on mainstream perceptions and everyday, informal usage of the term 'Asian' in New Zealand. In the same vein, other New Zealand scholars have said South Asians – mainly Indians, Sri-Lankans and Pakistanis – are seldom called 'Asian' by New Zealanders (Ip & Murphy, 2005).

However, there are also studies that show there is no differentiation among these ethnic groups for New Zealanders (Bedford & Ho, 2008; Butcher, 2008). Andrew Butcher (2008), the distinguished New Zealand population analyst, states that "New Zealanders do not […] easily distinguish between an Asian of one ethnicity or birthplace from another Asian of a different ethnicity or birthplace" (p. 7). It can be argued that this is the way individuals are ascribed to the category by others in New Zealand society, and may not typically be the way they identify themselves and their ethnic groups, since 'ethnicity' is a self-perceived category. Statistics New Zealand defines 'ethnicity' as:

> the ethnic group or groups that people identify with or feel they belong to. Ethnicity is a measure of cultural affiliation, as opposed to race, ancestry, nationality or citizenship. Ethnicity is self perceived and people can belong to more than one ethnic group. (Classifications and related statistical standards, 2014, par. 1)

New Zealand Statistics include "Chinese, Indian Tamil, Southeast Asian, Sri-Lankan, Pakistani," and several more (Statistics New Zealand, 2013b)[15] under

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[15] For further information on the ethnic groups in this category see *2013 Census ethnic group profile*, URL:http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census/2013-census/profile-and-summary-reports/ethnic-profiles.aspx?request_value=24726#24726

categories of 'Asian' ethnic groups, which have been the largest population group in the last decade after the European, Māori, and 'other' ethnicities (Statistics New Zealand, 2006, 2013a).

'Asian' is a "catch-all term, albeit inadequate" in New Zealand's academic public discourse, and it is possibly useful for geographers, population analysts and demographers, but it lacks descriptive quality for peoples who come from more than two dozen countries (Butcher, 2008, p. 8). Bedford and Ho (2008) emphasise that despite concerns:

> […] about the irrelevance of a label of Asian for peoples with cultural links to a vast region stretching from the Middle East to Japan that Europeans have labelled as Asia, it remains common practice in New Zealand to refer to the country's Asian population as an entity. (p. 1)

Having raised the above points around defining the term 'Asian' in New Zealand, I agree with Butcher (2008) and others who explain that the term 'Asian' is "useful" because of "its common usage" in discussions on Asian peoples in New Zealand (p. 8). In addition, the use of the construct 'Asian diaspora' within similar scholarship in other contexts proves its common usage. Therefore, in this study I utilise the umbrella term 'Asian' to refer to the diverse groups of individuals and groups whose backgrounds are from any parts of the vast continent of Asia and who now reside in New Zealand. This also aligns with the definition of 'Asia' offered by the United Nations, as it includes four main regions in the continent of Asia: Eastern Asia, Southern Asia, South-Eastern Asia, and Western Asia (United Nations Statistics Division, 2010). In this study, therefore, all the migrants whose backgrounds are from any of the four main regions in the continent of Asia are called 'Asian'. The Asian communities settled and currently living in New Zealand are considered part of the Asian diaspora in New Zealand.[16]

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[16] The use of the term 'Asian New Zealand film' follows the type of phrasing and conceptualising that other scholarship in the area of diasporic film in different contexts has employed and utilised, such as 'Asian British cinema', 'Asian American cinema', and 'Asian Australian cinema'.

The presence of many Asian immigrants who have settled in New Zealand – mainly Chinese, Indians, and Koreans – has created a relatively large Asian diaspora in this small nation. The term 'diaspora'[17] here refers to a population living outside its homeland (Tölölyan, 1996), when migrants in the course of time form a recognisable social group that reserves "its ethnic, or ethnic-religious identity and communal solidarity" (Sheffer, 1986, p. 9).

The Asian diaspora in New Zealand

The nineteenth and twentieth century immigrants in New Zealand were mainly English, Scottish and Irish, as well as some from Europe (Pio, 2007). These early immigrants, who were predominantly considered as 'white' – known among Māori as 'Pākehā' – have maintained a majority presence in New Zealand. However, the original inhabitants of Aotearoa New Zealand were the Māori who officially allowed the British European settlers to stay in this land through a mutual and formal agreement – The Treaty of Waitangi – signed in 1840, which laid the framework for New Zealand to later be defined as a bicultural society (King, 2004; O'Malley, 2012). Overall, there are three main phases in New Zealand's approach towards Asians with reference to colonization, biculturalism, and New Zealand's recent shift towards a multicultural[18] society.

The first phase of the Asian diaspora in New Zealand occurred in the 1860s, when the first Chinese settlers came to New Zealand during the Gold Rush (Ho & Farmer, 1994; Ip, 2005). Subsequently, New Zealand also became the new home of a small group of Indians, who came for trade and a better life. In 1899, many restrictions were imposed on Asians who wanted to migrate to New Zealand, and this continued till 1920. The Immigration Restriction Amendment Act of 1921 increased the process of 'othering' of Asian ethnic minorities in New Zealand as immigration policies gave preference to Europeans and those with British origins

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[17] The concept of 'diaspora' will thoroughly be examined and discussed in Chapter 2.

[18] From a broad perspective, 'multiculturalism' refers to two concepts: one is 'cultural diversity' or the multi-cultural situation, and the other is 'multiculturalism' as an ideology or policy. In this thesis, 'multiculturalism' primarily refers to the former. Multiculturalism in New Zealand will further be discussed in the coming sections and chapters.

(Bandyopadhyay, 2006). Until 1945, the New Zealand government continued to practice "an unofficial 'white New Zealand policy'" favouring a society of European settlement (Brooking & Rabel, 1995, p. 23). Consequently, Asian immigrants were received and understood with ambivalence, as outsiders and aliens (Ip, 2005).

Fifty years later, the decade of the 1990s was a time when the New Zealand government encouraged migration from non-European origins under the skilled and entrepreneur categories (Ip, 2005). As a result of immigration policy changes, there was a significant increase in the number of migrants from Asia arriving in New Zealand, mainly from China, Hong Kong, Malaysia and India. Ward and Masgoret (2008) state that "Asian migration has seen an enormous burst of activity [since 1991], increasing 240 percent" in the last decade (p. 228). The 1990s phase also showed a comparatively large migration from Korea in the pursuit of education, and a higher quality of life (Epstein, 2007). By the mid-1990s, Asians outstripped the number of immigrants from the Pacific Islands. In the 1990s, New Zealanders' consciousness of the presence of Asians in New Zealand and its effect on their notion of New Zealand national identity created, as Ip and Murphy state, "a wake-up call" for Pākehā New Zealanders that their country's face was not only British or European (2005, p. 7). These immigrants, who were mainly from various parts of Asia, remained unseen in official matters of the nation and faced discrimination at varying degrees (Ip, 2005).

The third phase in the history of the Asian diaspora in New Zealand, as I would categorise it, refers to the 2000s, when immigrant flows from Asia continued to increase (Statistics New Zealand, 2013a). It has been only in the 2000s and the current decade that multiculturalism – in the form of the increased visibility and presence of cultural diversity and/or also as an incipient policy in New Zealand – has more frequently been negotiated, discussed, and researched by scholars in various fields within the Humanities and Social Sciences. The scholarship on multiculturalism and migration in New Zealand reflects the appearance of this phenomenon in the history of New Zealand, also looking back over the century between the 1880s and 1990s. This is in contrast to the minimal references to multiculturalism in academic studies conducted in the 1990s. In the coming sections

of this chapter, in addition to other relevant literature, I will further examine the current concept of 'multiculturalism' as discussed in New Zealand scholarship.

Chinese in New Zealand

The Chinese diaspora in New Zealand has the longest history of settlement and has established more visibility compared with the other two communities – Indians and Koreans. Chinese were the first "Asians to arrive in New Zealand" (Ip & Murphy, 2005, p. 19). In the 1860s, many Chinese came to New Zealand as gold-miners through an invitation by the Dunedin Chamber of Commerce (Ip & Murphy, 2005; Ng, 1993). They started working remote deposits of gold in Otago, whereas European miners moved to discover gold mines on the West Coast. Later, some Chinese moved up to city areas such as Auckland and Hamilton, taking labour-intensive jobs which were usually avoided by Europeans (Ip & Murphy, 2005).

Looking at the history of Chinese migration in New Zealand, an important event for Chinese migrants was the New Zealand's poll tax apology in 2002. All Chinese immigrants had to pay ten pounds poll tax each according to the Chinese Immigrants Act of 1881 (Ip, 2012). The poll tax was finally abolished in 1944, and "New Zealand became the first country in the world to issue a formal Poll Tax Apology" (Radio New Zealand, 2013, 15:32). Prime Minister Helen Clark announced this apology in parliament:

> I wish to announce today that the government has decided to make a formal apology to those Chinese people who paid the poll tax and suffered other discrimination imposed by statute and to their descendants. With respect to the poll tax we recognize the considerable hardship it imposed and the cost of it and the impact of other discriminatory immigration practices split families apart. Today we also express our sorrow and regret that such practices were once considered appropriate. (Te Ara, 2012, p. 5)

Manying Ip (2013) interprets this as "a closure" to the disgrace and suffering of many of Chinese poll-tax descendants, and "a formal recognition that the Chinese

should be accorded a fair share of the level playing field" (p. 170). The Chinese newcomers and New Zealand born Chinese are now an important segment in "professional, academic, and commercial circles in Auckland" (Ng, 2001, p. 27), and have been engaged with the historical, social and economic development, and the cultural production of the country (Ballantyne & Moloughney, 2006; Ip, 2003; Ip & Pang, 2005; Ng, 2001).

Many New Zealand born Chinese think that their "Chinese identity contains a distinct 'local' element, [which means] these people are New Zealand oriented and hold to New Zealand values and social norms" (Li, 2013, p. 21). Scholars have also discussed that the contemporary Chinese New Zealanders are far from being "a totally isolated and self-contained community" and have a strong presence in New Zealand contexts in various domains (Voci, 2011, p. 23).

Indians in New Zealand

The history of Indian settlement and identities in New Zealand and the characteristics and composition of the Indian population have also gone through many phases since circa 1890 when the first Indian arrived in Aotearoa/New Zealand. There are numerous research projects that have focused on the historical aspects of Indian migration to New Zealand (Leckie, 1981, 2006, 2007; McGee, 1961, 1962; McLeod, 1986; Taher, 1970; Tiwari 1980). A cluster of research investigators have looked at the Indian community and the new migration pattern after the 1986 Immigration Act with reference to settlement, integration and acculturation in the areas of language (Shameem, 1993), education (Keen, 1999), mental health (Jaisim, 2003), employment obstacles (Trlin et al., 1999), and gender identity (Leckie, 2006; Pio, 2005). Indian migration to New Zealand mainly occurred through "family and kinship ties and the patronage of the 'sponsors'" (Bandyopadhyay, 2006, p. 127). Indian migrants were typically men who came to New Zealand as unskilled manual labourers and got jobs in areas such as road and building construction. They used the earnings of these intial temporary jobs to open their own small businesses, which were typically in fruit and vegetable retailing and were concentrated in the Auckland and Wellington regions. They formed their first

association in 1920 in Auckland and five years later another one in Wellington. After the immigration policy change in 1987, which inagurated skilled and entrepreneur migration, many Indians migrated to New Zealand. This new generation of Indian immigrants changed the composition of Indian communities in New Zealand, as some of them were highly qualified with postgraduate degrees and professional job experience, as well as being able to speak English fluently. The number of New Zealand born Indians, who of course mostly had New Zealand educations, also increased. The new generation of Indians in New Zealand has also shifted the composition of the Indian communities in terms of religion as they become more diverse – there are Muslims, Sikhs, Christians and Hindus (Bandyopadhyay, 2006; Friesen, 2008).

Koreans in New Zealand

Among the three main communities of the Asian diaspora in New Zealand, the Korean diaspora is the smallest in terms of population numbers and newest in terms of length of history of migration. The literature shows that the term 'Asian' is also used for Koreans in New Zealand since they share facial features with Chinese, Japanese and Vietnamese (Pio, 2010a). There are very few studies that discuss the Korean communities in New Zealand, especially in the 1990s. An exception is Lidgard and Yoon's (1996) study which looked at the employment experiences of Korean settlers in New Zealand. The scarcity of research on the Korean migrants in New Zealand can partly be traced to features of the history of the Korean diaspora in New Zealand as a more recent migrant community. In the early 1990s, there presumably were still less than a hundred Koreans living in New Zealand (Epstein, 2007). In general, the Koreans who settled in New Zealand can be characterised as "well-educated, middle or upper-middle class, and relatively affluent" (Epstein, 2007, p. 149). It is interesting to note that the reasons that impelled migration to New Zealand for Koreans were not so much obtaining better economic conditions or for business (the compelling forces of trade diaspora), as was the case with the other two Asian diasporic communities. Consequently, the Korean diaspora in New Zealand was shaped by rather different circumstances and conditions, including the desire to provide better education for children and also to obtain a higher quality of

life (Penman, 2011). New Zealand was mostly used by Koreans in the 1990s as a stepping stone to move to other countries such as Australia and the US. The mobility of these Korean migrants can also be seen in their tendency to travel back and forth between Korea and New Zealand (Epstein, 2007). Park and Anglem (2012) researched Korean migrants and found that their inclination to travel between Korea and New Zealand is an aspect of a transnational lifestyle: "The lifestyles of Korean migrants are likely to be 'transnational' between the homeland and the host society, and their family relationships are necessarily across the two nations" (p. 1). Such a lifestyle could lead one to assume that the assimilation and integration of Koreans within New Zealand society may not be a priority, or might take longer as compared with other migrant/diasporic groups. In fact, research shows that many 1.5 generation Korean New Zealanders return to their original homeland, South Korea, after some time (Lee, 2011). 1.5 generation refers to "children of migrants who arrive in their new country aged between 5 and 17" (Kim, 2013, p. 78). The 1.5 generation children have typically undertaken New Zealand educations and interacted with New Zealand culture and society.[19]

New Zealanders' Perceptions of and Attitudes towards Asians

As so far discussed, New Zealand is an immgrant nation incorporating a large number of immigrants who are originally from countries in Asia and have different cultures to the New Zealand majority – Pākehā and Māori. New Zealand scholars believe that "Asian influences and Asians themselves are now an indeliable influence on New Zealand society," living in New Zealand alongside Pākehā, Māori, and other ethnic groups (Johnson & Moloughney, 2006, p. x; see also Beathie, 2007; Mologhney, 2005; Spoonley & Bedford, 2012; Voci, 2011; Williams, 2013).

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[19] Parenting styles and patterns of Korean migrants and their settlement in New Zealand practices have been discussed in several articles, such as Alice M. Aye and Bernard Guerin's (2001) "Astronaut Families: A Review of Their Characteristics, Impact on Families and Implications for Practice in New Zealand"; Hyeeun Kim's (2013) "Parenting Patterns Of '1.5 Generation Kowis' in New Zealand: 'Take Best Of Both Worlds To Raise The Next Generation'"; and Robyn Dixon's et al. (2010) "Family Resilience: The Settlement Experience for Asian Immigrant Families in New Zealand."

To get a glimpse of New Zealanders' perceptions of and attitudes towards Asian migration and diaspora, it helps to look at the surveys and government reviews conducted in the last few decades. The 1980s government reviews indicated that "the old notion of assimilation is no longer seen as the desirable outcome of immigration to New Zealand", and that New Zealand society could clearly see "a positive value in diversity and the retention by ethnic minorities of their cultural heritage" (Burke, 1986, p. 48). This has been interpreted by migration analysts such as Fletcher as a "shift to notions of multiculturalism" in the context of migration in New Zealand (Fletcher, 1999, p. 7). Fletcher makes an analogy with Australia, asserting that the New Zealand government was aware that having New Zealand citizenship "did not necessarily reflect a stronger commitment to reside here. Nonetheless, 'commitment' to New Zealand remains a key aspect of the current popular concept of migrant settlement and integration into New Zealand life" (Fletcher, 1999, p. 7). This was in contrast to Australia's emphasis on migrants having Australian citizenship in their process of multicultural policy implementations.

The surveys conducted in the 1990s show that New Zealanders had negative perceptions of Asians in the past with many of them: (a) being culturally different, (b) not speaking English, and (c) being wealthy. These surveys also indicate that New Zealanders believe Asians' presence undermines what it means to be a New Zealander, as Asian migrants have no intention of integrating to New Zealand society; they always mingle with their own people, and also take job opportunities (Butcher, Spoonley & Trlin, 2006; Brunton, 2008, 2009; Gendall, Spoonley & Trlin, 2007; Gendall, Spoonley & Butcher, 2013; Henderson & Perince, 1998). Twenty years later, surveys show that New Zealanders' attitudes towards Asian immigrants are more positive, but have also found more diverse dimensions. Butcher and Spoonley's (2011) report on the *Asia: NZ's 2009* survey shows New Zealanders still feel Asians are "taking over" jobs and resources and that they do not try to integrate to the New Zealand way of life; but at the same time, a large number of New Zealanders are also aware of the "positive future impact" of immigration from Asia (pp. 105-106). In recent surveys conducted in 2012 and 2013, "the importance of Asia had increased in the eyes of New Zealanders"

(Brunton, 2014, p. 2; see also Brunton, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012).[20] *New Zealanders' Perceptions of Asia and Asian Peoples 2014 Annual Survey* shows that although most New Zealanders were positive in 2014 about the benefits of New Zealand's relationship with Asia, they were less optimistic in 2014 than in 2013 (Brunton, 2015). New Zealanders' views on immigration from Asia were still positive with the largest proportion of 53 percent (Brunton, 2015).

Similarly, in a research-based investigation on attitudes towards immigration and multiculturalism in contemporary New Zealand, Europe, and Australia, it was stressed that New Zealanders embrace multiculturalism and hold more positive attitudes towards immigrants and approval of multiculturalism to a larger extent than do Australian and European citizens (Ward & Masgoert, 2008). Their findings showed that 80 percent of New Zealand participants agreed that "it is important to accept a wide variety of cultures in New Zealand and a strong reference for migrant integration" (Ward & Masgoert, 2008, p. 235).

More recently, increasing immigrant flows to New Zealand, and the resultant growing ethnic heterogeneity and cultural diversity (commonly referred to as multicuturalism) have generated debates amongst scholars about reporting and understanding this social and cultural diversity. There are many studies that have shown that New Zealanders endorse 'multiculturalism' [21] (Asia New Zealand Foundation, 2009, 2011; Bartley & Spoonley, 2008; Johnston, Gendall, Trlin & Spoonley, 2010; Spoonley & Bedford, 2012; Spoonley & Butcher, 2009; Spoonley & Meares, 2011; Spoonley & Meares, 2011; Ward and Masgoret, 2008; Ward et al., 2011). Books such as Pio's *Longing and Belonging: Asian, Middle Eastern, Latin American and African peoples in New Zealand* (2010b) picture a culturally diverse New Zealand nation by tracing aspects of life experience and identities

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[20] New Zealanders' recent attitudes towards Asian is more based on economic and business values in which they see the importance of Asia and Asian peoples in New Zealand's future, and not exactly or necessarily in relation to integration and inclusion of Asian migrants and diasporic communities in New Zealand society and life.

[21] It is my understanding that New Zealand scholars (including population analysts) have not made explicit distinctions – neither at a description level nor theoretical – between the two notions of multiculturalism: (1) as cultural diversity, and (2) as a set of ideologies and policies governing cultural diversity. In the two articles on the diasporic film audiences in Chapter 7, I have discussed the concept of multiculturalism in New Zealand as perceived by my participants.

through migrants' own stories about New Zealand. This book is an intimately humanistic account of contemporary New Zealand; its preface suggests that there are basically two large groups of people living together in New Zealand now. One group are migrants originally from Asia, the Middle East, Latin America and Africa, and another group is the host comprising Māori, Pacific peoples and New Zealand Europeans. Alternatively, there are also studies that argue that discrimination in contemporary New Zealand remains an issue "for those migrant groups that are culturally (and often 'visibly') different from the majority European or indigenous Māori populations" (Daldy, Poot & Roskruge, 2013, p. 138; see also Butcher, 2010; Butcher, Spoonley & Trlin, 2006), especially in the workplace (Daldy, Poot & Roskruge, 2013; Wilson & Parker, 2007).

The signing of the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840 between the British Crown and a large number of Māori chiefs laid the groundwork for the development, albeit 140 years later, of a bicultural demography for New Zealand, which has seen consideration of Māori interests become a regular element in national governance. From the mid 1990s onwards, the Waitangi Tribunal's deliberations on historic grievances over land confiscations have also resulted in settlements that have enabled iwi, espeailly Tainui in the central North Island, and Ngai Tahu in the South Island, to participate as leaders in their local economies (Wheen & Hayward, 2012). Nevertheless, although the process of actualising a truly bicultural society remains incomplete, as early as the late 1990s and the early 2000s, we find instances of scholars' being ambivalent about the restrictiveness of a bicultural ideal for New Zealand. In one of the early publications on cultural diversity in New Zealand, *Race, Colour and Identity* (2000), biculturalism was defined as:

> A perspective rather than descriptive defintion, official biculturalism in New Zealand marginalises ethnic minority groups who do not see themselves represented under the umbrella term of 'Pākehā', while at the same time presupposing a homogenic 'British' culture as the binary opposite to Māori. (Nola, 2000, p. 207)

A local scholar from a South Asian background, Ramesh Thakur (1995), pointed out that "groups which are neither Māori nor European [Pākehā] are frozen out of

the debate on the identity and future of the country […] with respect to the politics of multiculturalism" (p. 271). The related literature also shows that in New Zealand society, 'minority' refers to non-Pākehā and non-Māori New Zealand residents. Voci (2006) says in this regard:

> […] these two groups [Pākehā and Māori] are seen as the only culturally relevant inhabitants of the country, most Kiwis would agree that an accurate representation of New Zealand needs to take into account the long standing presence of other non-European and non-Māori residents. (p. 165)

Fleras and Spoonley in 1999 brought to attention the implications of growing cultural diversity in New Zealand, proposing that it was essential for New Zealand to "rethink [its] core institutions and values in a way that now encompasses the pluralistic nature of contemporary New Zealand" (p. 252). Clark (2006) discusses the processes and consequences of such 'rethinking' in relation to understanding 'multiculturalism' in New Zealand:

> The issue of multiculturalism is considerably complicated by the official policy of biculturalism that has developed out of political dialogue between the state and indigenous Māori. Biculturalism is framed as an equal partnership between Māori and Pākehā, with the latter group seen as an essentially homogeneous Anglo-white cultural community, with no room for other partners […] The terms 'multicultural' and 'multiculturalism' litter government documentation and official policy, though little or no attempt is made precisely to define the nature or limits of this multiculturalism. The term is used in general public discourse in a broadly positive manner, sometimes contrasted, but more often juxtaposed, with 'biculturalism', as meaning the tolerance and acceptance of a certain form and degree of cultural difference. (pp. 76-77)

Debates about multicuturalism by local scholars such as Clark and others discussed above often imply that multiculturalism conveys or demands a re-distribution of power, or shifts in resourcing in important policy areas such as education and cultural funding. However, the current situation in New Zealand is that

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multiculturalism has complicated the prevailing discourse of biculturalism but has not supplanted it, nor is likely to do so in the near future. Multiculturalism in New Zealand has primarily manifested in the form of cultural diversity, particularly in New Zealand's largest city, Auckland, and has also had an economic impact on the country. In other words, "New Zealand's Asian population compared with Māori presents some challenges to New Zealand's bicultural framework" (Butcher, 2010, p. 140).[22]

In the current situation in New Zealand, we also come across assertions of Māori unease at increasing levels of immigration such as these in an article in the *Sunday Star Times* on 24 May 2014 which had the headline: "Māori more important?" or "Māori dislike of Asian immigrants deepens", Columnist Simon Day claims. Māori blame Asians "for taking jobs from Māori, driving Māori to Australia, lacking understanding of the Treaty of Waitangi and competing for cultural funding" (Day, May 2014, para. 2). Also in this particular article, the Māori Party leader, Te Ururoa Flavell, highlights that "the most important thing is that the people of the country recognise our unique part in the fabric of this nation" (Day, 2014, para. 5). The first settlement of grievances related to non-observance of the Treaty of Waitangi occurred two decades ago, about the same time as immigration flows to New Zealand began a sharp increase. Although many settlements have been substantially concluded and tribes that have invested the financial portion of their treaty settlements wisely are doing well (Bootham, 2014), the settlement process is still unfinished and ongoing, both on practical and less tangible emotional levels. The embedding of biculturalism is thus an on-going process to which Asian immigrant flows have added more complexity on top of an already complex Māori-Pākehā relationship. The current situation is, however, neither a binary setting between two main cultural blocs – Māori and Pākehā – since other voices (Pasifika and Asian, for instance) are joining the conversation, nor is there a choice to be made between Asain and Māori communities.

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[22] It is interesting, for example, that there are two state-funded Maori Television channels but Asian-language channels are only available via pay-tv. Given the long historical and migratory relationship, it seems that in the list of priorities in terms of policy and funding initiatives, Pacific Island communities would be the next priority, rather than Asian communities.

As discussed above, the current scholarship demonstrates that the implications of the changing face of New Zealand have become more visible for members of the New Zealand nation. The changing face of New Zealand has also been highlighted by several official New Zealand sources. "New Zealand's becoming more Asian" (Williams, 2013, para. 1) has been the current public discourse since the 2013 New Zealand Census release, as well as in the Human Rights Commission's annual review in 2012. *NZ Race Relations 2011* identified two of the ten top priorities for 2012 as being: (1) "inclusion", which is described as "actively focusing on inclusion in all aspects of New Zealand life as a means to break down discrimination against Asian New Zealanders and other minority ethnic groups," and (2) "diversity in media" as a way of "improving representation of diverse communities in the media, recognising the changing demographics of the New Zealand audience" (2012, p. 6). Scholars have raised questions such as how Asian New Zealanders (particularly those born in New Zealand who identify with an Asian ethnicity) might be represented in New Zealand screen and media, "which tends to resort to the lowest common denominator in their reportage" (Butcher, 2010, p. 138). Considering the relative absence of a substantive Asian New Zealand presence in mainstream culture, the role of screen and media in increasing the visibility of ethnic communities and migrants in New Zealand society – as a way of facilitating their incorporation in the imagined concept of the nation – becomes crucial, especially when Asian migrants and their succeeding generations make up a large proportion of New Zealand population (see Bartley & Spoonley, 2008; Johnston, Gendall, Trlin & Spoonley, 2010).

As a response to increasing cultural diversity, Statistics New Zealand (2014) is also currently consulting on a special topic in relation to cultural expression and production, to be added to the next General Social Survey in 2016: 'civic and cultural participation'. They say that:

> With a bicultural constitution and a high proportion of immigrants, New Zealand society is becoming increasingly diverse. Cultural diversity needs to be accommodated within a cohesive and inclusive society. Information on civic and cultural participation can help us understand the shared norms and values which underpin New Zealand society. Measures of cultural

expression, tolerance, diversity, active citizenship, and inclusion across sub-population interest can inform our understanding of the drivers behind a sense of belonging and national identity. (p. 7)

One key arena of 'cultural participation' and 'cultural expression' comprises the screen media, and other forms of representation. Scholars have repeatedly stressed the power of media in culturally diverse environments and media (collective) representations as social facts (see Appadurai, 1996, 2011).

The role of contributions made by New Zealand scholars in the current debates, as this section aimed to demonstrate, is significant in creating awareness and depth of understanding about cultural diversity and its nuances and impacts on various cultures and groups that shape the New Zealand nation. The points and concerns raised in the next section aim to identify a major gap in the representation of diversity in New Zealand, despite the country's growing 'multicultural' realities. It also aims to highlight the important roles screen and media can play in (national) identity reconstruction as well as communication of New Zealand's 'imagined community'. New Zealand scholars of diasporic background, such as Shuchi Kothari, Sarina Pearson and Nabeel Zuberi (2004), have recognised the role of media in this regard and highlighted that New Zealand television and film "must more adequately represent the diversity of subjects, identities and communities in an increasingly multiethnic Aotearoa New Zealand [where] non-white/non-Pākehā/non-European minorities are largely absent from the box" (p. 135-136).

The Asian Diaspora in New Zealand Media

The review of related literature indicates that little attention has been paid to the representation of the Asian diaspora in New Zealand mainstream media. Most existing studies on the Asian diaspora in New Zealand examine the historical and sociological aspects of the three main communities of the Asian diaspora in New Zealand, namely the Chinese, Indian and Korean communities. However, studies that examine the Asian diaspora within the context of New Zealand media (particularly screen and film) are extremely limited. This section presents a critical

review of the major studies that have discussed representations of Asian migrants and communities in New Zealand public media culture. I also discuss studies that have been written on the production of those representations.

There are several studies that have focused on 'representations' of Asians in newspapers, political discourse and cartoons. Manying Ip and Nigel Murphy (2005) in *Aliens at My Table: Asians as New Zealanders See Them* discuss New Zealand attitudes towards Chinese, and the various ways Chinese have been portrayed in New Zealand cartoons of the past 140 years. As the unequivocal implication of the book's title suggests, New Zealanders' views of Asians – at least as depicted in cartoons – reflect an "exaggerated and persistent negativity" (p. 9). In the past, Chinese have been depicted in egregious images and representations which reflected the negative attitudes towards them at that time. Such representations from the 1990s and earlier tell us about New Zealanders' dissatisfaction with and concerns about losing 'New Zealand' values, including Māori fears over the changes that may happen to Māori culture (Ip & Murphy, 2005, pp. 129-130). The 2000s images of Asians still see them "as competitors for jobs, and increasingly as competitors for social and natural resources" (Ip & Murphy, 2005, p. 110).

Similar to Ip and Murphy's study, Donna Moana Cormack in her PhD thesis, "Once an Other, always an Other: Contemporary discursive representations of the Asian Other in Aotearoa/New Zealand" (2007), reports on the recurring representations of Asian Otherness in New Zealand political discourses and newspapers. Cormack categorises them as: "impermanent", a "commodity", a "threat", and "victims". "Asian as an impermanent Other" describes the unstable and unsettled position of Asians in New Zealand as international students, tourists, or recent immigrants. Representations of Asians as a 'commodity' show that they have become the means of a "potential or realised benefit to Aotearoa/New Zealand" (Cormack, 2007, p. 234). Benson's (2006) study on the radio news also reports the same type of representations and shows that Asian students, for instance, are portrayed as monetary sources and a market rather than a social community or an individual, which places them within "the category of 'other' to mainstream Pākehā society" (Benson, 2006, p. 193). In these examples, it is important to remember that international students and tourists have a rather different relationship to New

Zealand compared with the sense of belonging immigrants may develop in the course of time. Cormack's research also shows that Asians have been represented as dangerous and a 'disease' which threaten New Zealand people. Racializing migrants and representing them as a threat has a long history, though contextually specific (Miles, 1989). References to Asian Otherness as "victims" of crime or crime suspects can be found in a large number of newspapers and political texts: Asians are "victims of social problems, predominantly crime and racism, but also within the topic areas of abortion and drowning" (Cormack, 2007, p. 237) – which associates them with passivity and impulsiveness. Such references to and representations of Asians undoubtedly indicate the ambivalent feelings of many host community members towards Asians in this country in the past.[23]

Asians were also characterised as 'problems' in a study that examined print media constructions of Asian immigrants and immigration from 1993 to 2003 by Andrew Butcher and Paul Spoonley (2011). This study reports that particularly between 1993-97 as the result of the publication of a series of 'Inv-Asian' articles,[24] the concept of Asians as 'problems' was aggravated.[25] 'Inv-Asian' was a label given to a series of articles published in community (free) newspapers in Auckland in the early 1990s. The articles discussed the increase in the number of Asian migrants and the problems they presented. Inv-Asian articles included text such as:

> What lies behind the image of crowds of Asian children coming out of the
> best schools, the buy-up of expensive homes, slow, erratic drivers in big
> Mercedes and migration figures which suggest Auckland is becoming the

[23] Cormack mainly used discourse analysis and also an examination of the lexical choices "involved in the representation of the Asian Other by elite institutions in Aotearoa/New Zealand" (Cormack, 2007, p. ii). Cormack did not discuss Asian migrants as diasporic communities and that their unfavourable representations could be partially or entirely related to their diasporic condition; having been displaced, they have to live as a minority group on the margins of the society within the majority of the host society. In the section on suggestions for further research, Cormack includes the value of broadening the investigation and the lacunae in exploration of 'additional media' among which she mentions film, which is the focus of my study.

[24] By Booth & Martin, 16 April 1993, pp. 6-7 and 23 April 1993, pp. 6-7.

[25] Similarly, 'dawn raids' occurred in the mid-1970s and early 1980s, where the New Zealand police was tasked to deal with Pacific Islanders overstaying their visas (Anae, 2012). There is also a documentary film, *Dawn raids*, by Roger Fowler about the Polynesian immigrants and their fights with the police at that time.

Taipei/Hong Kong/Seoul of the South Pacific. (*Eastern Courier*, 23 April 1993)

The tone of these articles was "a mix of outraged concern and fear and set the tone for many subsequent media reports and commentaries" (Butcher & Spoonley, 2009, p. 363). Similarly, "Asian Angst: Is It Time to Send Some Back?" published in 2006 by Deborah Coddington in the magazine *North and South* was concerned with the New Zealand perceptions of the criminal activities of (some) Asian immigrants in New Zealand, and portrayed the Chinese as 'the Yellow Peril'; reinforcing historical Western stereotypes. Hannis (2008) reports that the magazine was slammed by the Press Council in New Zealand for breaching standards of "accuracy and discrimination" (p. 22). As Butcher and Spoonley (2011) note, "Asian immigrants were cast as threatening aspects of New Zealand's way of life" (p. 107). The 'Asianisation' of immigration debates, Butcher and Spoonley found in their content analysis of all articles from 1993 to 2003, were associated with the media attention given to comments by the political party New Zealand First and its leader, Winston Peters. Their findings also indicate that immigration debates in New Zealand were 'Asianized', as though the white European immigrants – those from South Africa, various parts of Europe, and the United Kingdom – were not also immigrants.

More recently, public discourse is cited as evidence in some recent studies which report a shift from anti-Asian sentiments to either an absence of Asian representations (particularly on New Zealand screen), or to a lesser extent 'anti-Asian' than the 'Inv-Asian' articles in the 1990s. *The Dominion Post* started to run several series through 2002 and 2003 on the immigration debates, such as "Ethnicity: Celebrating Cultural Diversity", where Asian immigration was reported and discussed as a good benefit for New Zealand's future (economic) development. One example of studies on the absence of screen representations of Asian ethnic groups (and also Māori and Pasifika) is Michelle's (2012) article on "Co-Constructions of Gender and Ethnicity in New Zealand Television Advertising", where she finds that Māori and Pasifika women and Asians of both genders were almost entirely absent from key roles in New Zealand advertising, "potentially exacerbating the multiple axes of subordination encountered by these groups in

New Zealand" (p. 21). In a similar vein, other New Zealand scholars believe that "stereotypes and prejudice remain present" in contemporary Aotearoa (Voci & Leckie, 2011, p. 19; see also Butcher, 2008; Spoonley & Bedford, 2012; Voci, 2011).

Being included in media representations can be a means of or a way towards diasporic communities' incorporation in the imagined concept of the nation. Media theorist, Denis McQuail (2000), states that "media to a large extent serve to constitute our perceptions and definitions of social reality and normality for purpose of public, shared social life, and are a key source of standards, models and norms" (p. 64). Social reality is communicated through various forms of media and the collective processes of communication and construction of that social reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). The role of media in democratic nations has been the focus of "debates surrounding the notions of the public sphere, media texts as the site of contestation and conflict" (Harindranath, 2012, p. 386; see also Harindranath, 2009, p. 3). Being excluded from this process in any form and shape – either as producers/makers of the representations or the content of those – in any given context affects social integration and harmony. Lack of media representations of migrants and diasporas within the public culture and discourse of the host country embeds numerous connotations which may lead to migrants' alienation, the failure of multicultural considerations and strategies by the host country's government, marginalisation, and cultural and political conflicts (Trebbe & Schoenhagen, 2011). Not seeing their own images on the screen influences their diasporic group members' identification with the majority and may ultimately affect their media use.

In examining media and screen representations, the key questions that arise are: 'who represents who and what?', and 'who tells whose story, and in what ways?' Delving into these questions within the existing New Zealand academic scholarship on the Asian diaspora, I came across Alison Wong's (2011) commentary on her own work in the book *Localizing Asia in Aotearoa* (2011). This Chinese New Zealand fiction writer and poet tells us about writing her first novel, *As the Earth Turns Silver* (2009). Wong's personal account of the connectivities between the Pākehā/Māori majority and the Asian minority in New Zealand is an example of

when a diasporic author tells her own story, when a member of a diasporic community is in charge of creating their own representations. Wong shares with readers various stages of writing this novel and its effect on her sense of identity and (un)belonging as a migrant in New Zealand. Wong's narrative in *As the Earth Turns Silver* (2009) combines her own story and its link to her Chinese ancestors who settled in New Zealand, and unearths and personalises the publicly presumed connections Chinese have had to New Zealand's land and its people. The representation of Chinese New Zealand identity *by* a Chinese migrant and *through* a migrant life narrative is the epitome of diasporic cultural production.

In this section, through the review of available scholarship on representation of Asians in New Zealand, I also aimed to raise questions which have not been discussed by scholars: How do the members of diasporic communities in New Zealand participate in cultural production of this country? Are members of the (Asian) diaspora able to create a presence in the sphere of cultural production in the current situation, when even media representations of Asians in New Zealand – whether by diasporic authors themselves or by the majority – are rather inadequate in terms of their scope and quantity?[26] These questions immediately remind us of the role of media and cultural production in contemporary New Zealand and its growing cultural diversity. The role of media is vital in the contemporary life and society, when being able to participate in the social and political life of a culture or the public sphere requires "access to the kinds of media which enable one to do so" (Turnbull, 2010, p. 67).

The Asian Diaspora on New Zealand Screen

New Zealand film is rooted in narratives of travel, migration and settlement. Being the remotest land at the far end of the Pacific Ocean, the idea of moving across borders and regions is inscribed in New Zealanders' imaginary. One of the most prominent films in New Zealand cinema, *The Piano* (Jane Campion, 1994), which travelled a decade ago far beyond Karekare beach, is based on a narrative of

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[26] My research participants predominantly referred to the limited representations of Asian migrants and communities on New Zealand screens.

migration and dislocation – Ada's journey to New Zealand, the encounter with the foreign land and people and her consequent dislocatory sense of alienation and loneliness (the frequent feeling structures among characters in diasporic cinema), her inability to develop effective communication with the host people because of her muteness (a simulacrum of migrants' inability to communicate fluently in English at early stages of migration), and her final resettlement with Baines (a symbolic representation of social integration into the host society).

The motif of 'journeying' has underpinned many New Zealand features such as *Goodbye Pork Pie* (Geoff Murphy, 1980) – travelling the length of the country to the South Island in a mini and the stories that are created along the way; *The Navigator: A Medieval Odyssey* (Vincent Ward, 1988) – an apocalyptic journey to a tunnel deep into the earth and the community appearance on New Zealand land; *Te Rua* (Barry Barklay, 1991) – a group of Māori travel to Germany to retrieve tribal carvings from the basement of a Berlin museum; *Utu* (Geoff, Murphy, 1983) – the British troops' settlement in New Zealand and the invasion of Māori territory; and *The Wake* (Annie Goldson, 1994) – a self-reflective account of New Zealand as 'the promised land' for the filmmaker's family when they immigrated in the 1960s. It is that motif, a sense of mobility, and deterritorialising and reterritorializing journeys taking several forms, which link all these films.

Among documentary makers in New Zealand, it is perhaps Annie Goldson whose work is closer to the theme of migration. At the core of the 'difficult' questions Goldson puts forward in *He Toki Huna* (loosely translated as 'the hidden adze'; co-directed by Maori filmmaker Kay Ellmers) lies the fear and anxieties of leaving one's homeland: why did New Zealand soldiers have to leave their homeland to fight on another land with an enemy they knew least? The temporary host land for these soldiers was equally unfamiliar and alien as the enemy itself. In *Pacific Solution* (2005, directed by James Frankham), Goldson (producer) gets closer than ever to the theme of migration, and explores the pleas and predicaments of people who seem to have no space in this world to reside. *Pacific Solution* is a story of a group of Afghans, the Tampa boys, who finally find a new home in Aotearoa; their journeys from Afghanistan to exile in Iran, being rejected on the borders of Australia, their imprisonment on Nauru Island, their settlement in New Zealand,

and their reunion with their family members in the land they desire to be able to call 'home'. *Pacific Solution* depicts forces, experience, and consequences of migration not only as a theme but also through its "expository journey style" and structure (Goldson, 2011, p. 259).

Immigrants and multicultural narratives in New Zealand have also been the themes of two State funded features in the 1990s: *Illustrious Energy* (Leon Narbey, 1987) and a decade after that, *Broken English* (Gregor Nicolas, 1997). These films are important in the history of migration and diaspora in New Zealand, as for the first time, members of the Asian diaspora could finally see their own faces and images on screen. In fact, it could be said that one of the early manifestations of New Zealand as a multicultural nation was through New Zealand films, which for the first time incorporated New Zealand immigrant stories, suggesting that "New Zealand's national stories might include people other than Māori, Islanders and Pākehā" (Margolis, 2010, p. 290).

Illustrious Energy is a fascinating story of Chinese gold miners in Central Otago. It takes migrants in New Zealand as its central story and tells us a version of New Zealand life in the 1980s. Allen (2012) opines that *Illustrious Energy* was "a film ahead of its time" in reclaiming the history of Chinese New Zealanders, at a time when the number of Chinese arriving in New Zealand gave this ethnic group "a higher public profile" (p. 249). Even though this film delves into the past history of Chinese in the gold mines of Central Otago, it is also forward-looking in terms of portraying the emergence of Chinese diasporic communities, which were then in the form of extended families and clans. The film, as Leon Narbey views it, stages the 'conflicts of cultures'. Narbey said in an interview in 1988: "there is a deep-seated racialism in New Zealand, and it pops out every now and again. There is an acceptance, but there is [he thinks] a feeling that the Chinese are an inferior race to our white stock, and [he is] fascinated by the blindness of that attitude" (Campbell, 1988, p. 4). *Illustrious Energy* represents the strong sense of dislocation that the first generation Chinese diaspora experienced, represented by Chan and his elderly father, Kim, and also offers a solution when hybrid identities are forged in the new land. The film portrays the presence of another culture in 1990s New Zealand life, which co-exists parallel to New Zealand culture without undermining either of

them. This can be seen in the discussion of religion between the Chinese migrant, Chan, and Reverend Don, for instance. Chan, represents cultural qualities which may not have existed in New Zealand at that time.

Similarly, *Broken English* takes the story of a Croatian migrant family in New Zealand as its main plot, and the Chinese migrants this time comprise the subplot with explicitly racially stereotypical features. The Croatian migrant family's daughter, Nina, develops an affair with a Māori boy, and makes friends with the Chinese migrants and helps them, even though having her own benefit in mind first, to get permanent residency. Nina promises to marry Wu, the Chinese man her co-worker Clara is going to start a family with, so that he can establish citizenship. Even though packaged as a "contemporary racial politics and domestic urban melodrama" (Waller, 2008, p. 28), *Broken English* portrays a New Zealand life where migrants struggle to settle and develop relationships with the host people, while overcoming their 'broken' English (which symbolically invokes the unsettled experience of migrant life). This film was criticized by local reviewers for its "lack of realism and any hold on a social-historical actuality to which it might presume […] as a contrived look into the kiwi melting pot" (Simmons, 1997, p. 10). Nonetheless, the film brings to New Zealand screen migrant characters along with Māori, something that was not done before.

Even though the two films represent Asian stereotypes, their migrant narratives are valuable in reflecting the cultural diversity in New Zealand society in the 1990s. NZFC Act 1978 defines 'a New Zealand film' as one with "a significant New Zealand content" (p. 8). These two State funded features as New Zealand films are early examples of a shift being underway in the 1990s' New Zealand cinematic and social imaginaries. Duncan Petrie, the New Zealand film scholar, has described New Zealand cinema as becoming more diverse since "the changing face of New Zealand society is encouraging a more diverse local film culture" (2007, p. 173). He opines that the production of films such as *No. 2* (Toa Fraser, 2006) and *Sione's Wedding* (Chris Graham, 2006) that portray the Pacific Island communities in Auckland, plus a number of short films by "young New Zealand Asian

filmmakers"[27], reveal the culturally and socially diverse demographic nature of New Zealand (Petrie, 2007, p. 173). This is the path my thesis has set out to foreground by examining examples of films made by Asian New Zealand filmmakers. The following three sections look at New Zealand scholarship on Asian New Zealand filmmaking with reference to the production processes of screen texts, representations and narratives, as well as audience receptions.

Studies on the Production of Screen Texts

Among the very few studies in New Zealand that have shifted their focus from researching and examining local media representations of Asia and Asians to the production of such representations are two PhD projects by Henk Huijser (2002) and Virginia Pitts (2008). Huijser[28] describes the film *Broken English* as 'a break in New Zealand cinema' by representing ethnic communities in New Zealand – Croatian, Māori, Chinese and Cook Islanders – and aims to examine the kind of discourses that "policy makers, filmmakers and viewers" of this film draw on in situating themselves and others within the nation (p. 374). He found that "the central part of the production dynamic of *Broken English* is that the film is directed and produced by Pākehā New Zealanders, but features virtually no Pākehā New Zealanders" (p. 284). Therefore, he concludes that because the ethnic minorities in the film have not been represented "by and for themselves," they are shown as a "social problem" with an almost non-existent connection to the wider society. This disconnection separates them from mainstream New Zealanders, which in turn reinforces their exotic representation as the Other (2002, p. 374). Huijser, however, does not provide a convincing argument on the complexity of the relationship between Otherness, film production, and the viewer's position, and what they may mean in the New Zealand national framework and its film industry.

Research on cross-cultural productions in New Zealand was conducted by Virginia Pitts (2008). Among her case studies, she examined the creative production of two

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[27] For Petrie, this is a descriptive phrase.

[28] Huijser's (2002) rationale to study *Broken English* was that features before this film were "either mono-cultural or bi-cultural" (p. ii). However, it was, in fact, Leon Narbey's feature, *Illustrious Energy* in 1987, which offered for the first time a migrant story in New Zealand cinema

short films – *Eating Sausage* (2005) and *Fleeting Beauty* (2005). These two short films represent the narratives and experiences of Asian migrants in New Zealand. Pitts discusses these films as intercultural filmmaking, adopting Laura Mark's concept of 'intercultural cinema' as part of her theoretical framework. Pitts highlights that for the first seven years of the 2000s, "Asian filmmakers have been virtually absent from dramatic features funded by the New Zealand Film Commission" (p. 201). Furthermore, Pitts (2011) in an article on "low-budget digital" features states that the digi-feature sector in New Zealand has offered refreshing representations in New Zealand cinema notably through a range of "contemporary urban imagery" presented in the work of immigrant filmmakers such as Stephen Kang.

There are many studies which discuss New Zealand film and cinema, in which they refer to the historical processes of the establishment of the New Zealand Film Commission (NZFC), the financial support for filmmaking by the government, features which were supported by NZFC and other funding agencies in New Zealand because they have 'a significant New Zealand content and story', particularly within the framework of 'New Zealand national cinema', transnational and global dimensions of New Zealand filmmaking, and many other topics (Conrich & Murray, 2008; Dunleavy & Joyce 2011; Petrie, 2007, 2010). However, there are very few references explicitly made about related subjects this thesis has been interested to explore in terms of film production, such as the exigencies and challenges of migrant and diasporic filmmaking; images of ethnic/migrant/diasporic people/communities on New Zealand screens or the lack of those images, what this means within New Zealand national cinema; and funding opportunities for films that incorporate multicultural stories in New Zealand as a response to the growing diversity in New Zealand society. As noted by many local scholars:

> A close State relationship to the film industry suggests that industrialized notions of nationhood and national identity inform many of the funding decisions behind a feature film. This close proximity allows the State to use the film industry as a national branding exercise within a global

environment (Smith, 2010, p. 130; see also Conrich & Murray, 2008; Dunleavy & Joyce 2011; Horrocks, 2011; Petrie, 2010).

Within New Zealand filmmaking, there has always been a continuing effort by the film industry to maintain a national cinema. Drawing on NZFC's emphasis on maintaining a 'national identity' through filmmaking, the recent shift in New Zealand demographic composition in terms of it 'becoming more Asian' (William, 2013; Statistics New Zealand, 2013a) demands certain considerations for inclusion of Asia communities on New Zealand screen. Such considerations will address the wider questions of migrant belonging and integration that characterise participation in the national culture as whole.

Jo Smith's (2010) article is one of few commentaries on the diasporic film production in New Zealand where she discusses *Apron Strings* (2008) as the first State-funded feature film produced by "two diasporic media producers [Shuchi Kothari and Sima Urale] […] who work within [the New Zealand's] national film industry" (p. 129). Smith discusses the screen maker's style and preoccupations as 'postcolonial exotic', and concludes that *Apron Strings* is an example of the ways diasporic filmmakers can "negotiate national film funding structures, New Zealand's national film industry, cultural policy and aesthetic practices in ways that complicate centre/margin relations" (2010, p. 142). In an article in Chapter 5, I have examined approaches utilised by other diasporic media producers in New Zealand to showcase the variety of practices and modes of production involved in making Asian New Zealand film within the New Zealand film industry and society.

Kothari and Pearson's (2010) description of the production processes of *A Thousand Apologies* is a rare reference to the production of screen texts made by or about Asian diasporic communities in New Zealand. Kothari and Pearson, who were responsible for the production processes of *A Thousand Apologies* (2008, TV Series), are also local scholars with migratory backgrounds in New Zealand. They described their goal in production of this TV series was "to tap into unrecognized New Zealand audiences at a time when Asians in New Zealand were "virtually invisible on screen and in the screen production industries" (Kothari & Pearson, 2010, p. 8). *A Thousand Apologies*, which received mainstream funding, is 'N*ew*

Zealand's first prime-time Asian show', where local ethnic minorities in New Zealand have been represented by and for themselves. Kothari and Pearson used their postgraduate students of Asian descent at the University of Auckland to make a TV series that publicly satirizes Asian stereotypes utilising "racial and ethnic humour", hoping that audiences would be able to differentiate between ironic representation and racial issues (Kothari & Pearson, 2010, p. 10). The pre-production stage was financially supported by TV3, and the main reasons for the broadcaster's support were that "Asians had become a socially, politically and economically significant but underrepresented constituency", along with the hope that the show might attract "the ethnic minority as the potential audience" (Kothari & Pearson, 2010, p. 8).

Studies on Screen Representations

Another group of studies have examined and discussed films made *by* Asian migrants in New Zealand, or films *about* Asian migrants and their diasporic lives and experiences. These studies, which compromise only a few articles, use textual analysis to examine representations of the increasing cultural and ethnic diversity in New Zealand with reference to its 'growing' sense of multiculturalism. "Menus for a Multicultural New Zealand" by Pearson and Kothari (2007) discusses the ways food is represented "as nourishment for a multicultural nation" in several New Zealand TV shows which incorporate ethnic food and people, *Asia Downunder*[29] (1994-2004), *An Immigration Nation* (1994), and *Taste New Zealand* (1998-2003). They investigate "how food narratives" in another film, *A Taste of Place: Stories of Food and Longing* (2000), signal "alternative food discourses that resist the unproblematic appropriation and incorporation of immigrants into the national body" (p. 46). *A Taste of Place* was a prime-time documentary made by Pearson and Kothari themselves – both of whom are part of the Asian diasporic communities in New Zealand – about migrants, and their food preparations in Auckland. Their line of argument about the distinctive qualities of *A Taste of Place* over the other

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[29] *Asian Downunder* (1994-2011) was a weekly show about the Asian people in New Zealand on TV ONE, which featured a wide range of stories such as news, arts, festivals, cooking, travel, sport, business, etc. It was produced and presented by Melissa Lee (later a National Party MP) who is of Korean descent.

three TV shows about ethnic food in New Zealand reminds us of the power of screen and media in the hands of diasporic people themselves; because what makes *A Taste of Place* different from them is not only the diasporic content, features and attributes of this documentary, but also its diasporic authorship – unlike the other three TV shows, where the personnel responsible for production are primarily from the mainstream majority. Likewise, "Food for Thought: Filmic Recipes for New Zealand's Multiculturalism" by Frenso-Calleja (2013) analyses three short films – *Eating Sausage*, *Fleeting Beauty* and *Coffee and Allah* – whose plots revolve around food, arguing that "these films can be read metaphorically as attempts to nourish current social and political discussions about incorporation of the 'multicultural ingredient' into [the] official 'bicultural recipe'" (p. 850). In addition to relating food representations to multiculturalism in New Zealand, in another article Frenso-Calleja (2011) has analysed the short film *Take 3* (2008) by looking at the ways filmic representations discard cultural and ethnic tokenism in the context of "New Zealand's underdeveloped multiculturalism" (p. 19).

The sharing and selling of foods is a relatively uncontentious incentive for groups of different people to mingle and socialise, so it is not surprising that documentaries about food feature in the corpus of New Zealand works about Asians. Furthermore, as myself and Ann Hardy explore in one article in Chapter 6, [30] the significance of food and culinary practices in diaspora can be examined for their ability to re-establish and maintain community and family relationship. We extended this dimension and examined the conflation of food, religiosity and women – the ways in which the creation of food draws on the role of diasporic women as carriers of culture across the old and new homelands; the role of women in creating affinities between their family members, themselves and the neighbours aligned with them in a multicultural context; and how food as an earthly pleasure can elevate people's souls by letting them feel, perhaps momentarily, the happiness of life, and the beauty of belonging to a community. The strength of our argument lies in bringing samples of diasporic audiences' responses to discussions of representations of the interplay of food, women, and religiosity in diaspora.

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[30] This article was submitted for publication in 2013, and will be published in the early 2016.

Studies on the Receptions of Screen Texts

In addition to studies that have discussed representations of diasporic communities in New Zealand by members of these communities, as well as those few studies on production processes, there are probably only two studies that have focused (as part of their larger inquiries) on the viewers or audiences of such images and stories on New Zealand screen. Hujiser's PhD research (2002) provided some information on audiences for the film *Broken English*, having conducted focus groups with participants from the Māori, Chinese, and Croatian communities in New Zealand. It is interesting that in his anlaysis, Huijser treats Māori as an ethnic minority along with the Chinese and Croatian immigrants, without looking at the complexities of Māori viewers' positionings as being *tangata whenua* who have a unique relationship to migrants and migration by virtue of that status. His focus group discussions demonstrated that most participants considered New Zealand as their 'country', though the recent migrants emphasised national identity as part of their individual identity (Huijser, 2002). The diasporic concepts of dislocation and in-betweenness, Huijser says, could be discerned from their ambivalent feelings as members of New Zealand society.

As part of a larger project on the documentary series *An Immigrant Nation* (1994-1996), Jane Roscoe (1999) explored "the process of making documentary in New Zealand, [looking at] the production context, textual strategies of representation and [also examining] the reception of the texts by those immigrant communities who are the focus of the documentaries" (1999, pp. 11-12). Roscoe approached the documentary series *An Immigrant Nation* as "a specific screen form which serves as the immediate context that frames the cultural fabric produced and negotiated by the participants within the series" (p. 102). Her focus group participants were from Chinese, Dalmatian, Italian and Irish communities in New Zealand. Of interest to this thesis, the episode entitled *Footprints of the Dragon* (1994) does have Helene Wong, an Asian New Zealand filmmaker and historian, playing a key role in its production process as a consultant, narrator, writer, and director. I have discussed *Footprints of the Dragon* (1994) in an article in Chapter 5.

To address the scarcity of reception research within national screen and media studies in New Zealand, the two articles in Chapter 7 discuss, through empirical research, samples of audience responses in relation to diasporic screen and media products. These two articles provide a platform for understanding the ways Asians in New Zealand engage with the screen images of their own communities, their perceptions of New Zealand society, as well as the kinds of values and beliefs they feel are important in relation to such representations and also in their New Zealand-based lives.

This chapter has summarised a critical reading of numerous sources, related directly or contextually to the topic and inquiry of this thesis within New Zealand scholarship.[31] In addition to serving as a contextualisation for this research project, this chapter also intended, among other things, to demonstrate a gap in New Zealand scholarship with regard to screen images of Asians and their cultural products.

While in this chapter I primarily engaged with local scholarship on the subject of this thesis, the next chapter delves into the international scholarship on the concepts of diaspora and diasporic film to provide a theoretical context and framework for the thesis. It will also shed light (in an indirect manner) on the ways my thinking was shaped in order to make decisions for framing the articles for publications, and also the ways I want to take this research further in the future.

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[31] I collected and studied numerous academic sources and a range of other sources from *History of New Zealand* to documents published by the *New Zealand Film Commission* (NZFC), to short essays published in the *New Zealand Herald* and *Stuff.co.nz*, etc. – many of which I have not included here. Many of these sources have not been used in my writing of the articles directly either, but they have informed my 'thinking', and also understanding the New conetxt in significant ways.

Chapter 3: A Critical Literature Review of Related Theories of Diaspora

This chapter presents an overview of the theories and concepts with which my research has engaged and also demonstrates the ways I have navigated my understanding of the discursive concepts of diaspora and diasporic cinema/film. My research project concentrates on conceptualising a range of experiences, subjects, perspectives, representations, narratives and practices under the banner of the Asian diaspora in New Zealand film, and for that reason this chapter will be preoccupied with 'diaspora' as a descriptive and interpretive concept, but fundamentally in relation to the main subject area of the thesis: diasporic film.

The first part of the chapter focuses on the main concepts of diaspora and its constitutive criteria and features. It is important to note that this research aims to discuss diaspora within the domain of Cultural Media Studies and considers the film as a cultural form. While presenting the complexity and broadness of the topic of diaspora, I will discuss the major ideas around the dynamic concept of diaspora – such as identity, (dis)location and displacement, home, community, ethnicity, maintenance of boundaries, belonging, hybridity, and difference. I focus in particular on a constellation of three terms – diaspora, cultural production, and identity – in order to show how these concepts can be usefully applied to gain an understanding of people's (re)settlement and the cultural expressions and practices that take place in the host societies.

More importantly, this chapter examines the literature on diasporic cinema with an emphasis on the concepts of production and representation, and images of diasporic experience and life. I will then conclude the chapter with a particular emphasis on the gap that exists in diasporic cinema scholarship in relation to film reception, and with the suggestion to include diasporic audiences/viewers' relationships with the diasporic text as part of the conceptualisation of diasporic film/cinema. The relationships and engagement of diasporic audiences with diasporic film will be introduced and further theoretically and empirically examined and discussed in the articles in Chapter 7.

Overall, this chapter presents a critical review of the theories related to the topic of this thesis in order to show my depth of understanding of the theories from which the published materials have emerged. Some of the theories may have not directly been used in the analysis, but have informed and developed my thinking.

Diaspora and its Plethora of Concepts

Diaspora Studies is a multidisciplinary field that evokes a plethora of concepts from within various disciplines. It draws on writings and theories from other fields such as anthropology, geography, psychology, post-structuralist theory, history, literary studies, and cultural studies. Diaspora Studies is also connected to the concepts of postcolonialism, imperialism, orientalism and transnationalism. Diaspora has been discussed in different areas or territories which can be categorised under the umbrella term of 'the West' and Europe, such as the UK, the US, Canada or Australia (referring to the overall notion of the colonizer or imperialist, as the point of destination and formation of diasporas in the past). Diaspora has also been conceptualised considering various points of departure, such as African, Latin American, Asian Pacific, East Asian, South Asian, Southeast Asian, Caribbean, South American, and Central European. There are many scholars and theorists who have been working on the concept of diaspora, including: Robert Cohen, James Clifford, William Safran, Khachig Tölölyan, Stuart Hall, Vijay Mishra, Homi Bhabha, Edward Said, Paul Gilroy, Frantz Fanon, Gayatri Spivak, Avtar Brah, Arjun Appadurai, Steven Vertovec, Sudesh Mishra, Rajagopalan Radhakrishnan and others. There is a kaleidoscope of meanings attached to the term 'diaspora', but there is no single specific theoretical or analytical approach that can pragmatically be used in interpreting and understanding a text, phenomenon, etc. Diaspora's proliferated meanings have been stretched in many directions and expanded in relation to many cultural, political, social, economic, geographical, and intellectual agendas.

Numerous scholars have identified features of diaspora or guidelines, limitations, classification, and criterions for understanding it, and have related it to various issues, in an effort to theoretically set boundaries for this concept. For instance, in

his book, *Global Diaspora*, Cohen (1997, pp. 23-26) enumerates "nine common features of a diaspora". Brubaker's (2005) article "The 'diaspora' diaspora" best shows the proliferation and complexity of the term diaspora and its meanings and elements. He opines that there are three general characteristics or elements that continue to be understood as constitutive of diaspora: "The first is dispersion in space; the second, orientation to a 'homeland'; and the third, boundary-maintenance" (p. 5). Tölölyan (2007) writes about the persistent issues that arise around the topic of diaspora:

> When ethnics, exiles, expatriates, refugees, asylum seekers, labour migrants, queer communities, domestic service workers, executives of transnational corporations, and transnational sex workers are all labelled diasporas, the struggle to maintain distinctions is lost, […] It becomes displaced into a new effort to recall how very different the communities gathered under the label of diaspora remain. (p. 649)

Considering the level of convolution, density and the widespread nature of the concept of diaspora, the best way of navigating one's way through the academic construction of diaspora seems to be an investigation and examination of the key terms and major distinctions that can be drawn from the literature on this topic. In the following section, my aim is to delineate and discuss several main elements, features, criterions and related constituents of diaspora to provide a broad theoretical contextualization for the research project.

The term diaspora is loosely defined as a population living outside its homeland (Tölölyan, 1996). In Ancient Greece, the word 'diaspora' referred to migration and colonisation, for instance the scattering of the Greeks after the destruction of the city of Aegins (Cohen, 1997). In Hebrew, diaspora referred to the settlement of colonies of Jews outside Palestine after the Babylonian exile (Aviv & Shneer, 2005). Diaspora also designated the dispersal of the Armenians when invaded by Persians and Turks (Naficy, 2001; Tölölyan, 2005). In his comprehensive book, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (2008),[32] Cohen categorises these diasporas as

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[32] This book was first published in 1997 and have, since then, been edited and reprinted several times by its author. The latest publication was released in 2008.

the 'victim diaspora', which is the most traditional form of diaspora. The meaning of victim diaspora is mainly rooted in "the idea of dispersal following a traumatic event in the homeland to two or more foreign destinations" (Cohen, 2008, p. 2). In addition to the victim diaspora, Cohen suggests another three main categories of diaspora: labour diaspora, colonial/imperial diaspora, and trade diaspora. Historically, a 'labour diaspora' was generated in search of work, such as Indian seeking to be indentured labourers working in British, Dutch and French plantations from the 1830s to 1920. Colonial/'imperial diaspora' was the result of emigration to "further colonial ambitions" (Cohen, 2008, p. 61). Commercial contact encouraged European adventurers and merchants to be settlers and colonizers; "Where settlement for colonial or military purposes by one power occurred, an imperial diaspora can be said to have resulted" (Cohen, 2008, p. 68-69). European settlers in New Zealand were part of this type of diaspora when they migrated to Aotearoa. A 'trade diaspora' occurs in pursuit of trade and business; an evident example of this type of diaspora is the large number of Chinese migrants scattered all over the world. In New Zealand, for example, Chinese have continuously been the largest ethnic group.

Brubaker (2005) explains dispersion as one of the criteria of diaspora: "forced or otherwise traumatic dispersion […], provided that the dispersion crosses state borders … [and even] dispersion within state borders" (p. 5). A key feature of dispersion is that it commonly refers to the dispersal of a group of people who come from the same point of departure, rather than an individual. Diaspora refers to a group, "that segment of a people living outside of the homeland" (Connor, 1986, p. 16). People are categorised in groups under the same ethnicity or "ethnic communities divided by state frontiers" (King & Melvin, 1999, p. 5). Dispersion, therefore, refers to the scattering of an ethnic community in several nation-states; for instance, people from Chinese ethnicity have settled in the UK, America, Canada, Malaysia, New Zealand and Australia. Likewise, dispersion also designates an ethnic community who may come from various countries or homelands. 'Chinese diaspora' is an umbrella term which generally refer to Chinese ethnic people who come from the mainland China, Hong Kong, Vietnam, Taiwan, and Malaysia. Dispersion can be forceful or voluntary, and so considering these

options adds more dimensions and nuances to the term diaspora, and links it with other concepts such as exile and migration.

Tölölyan (2007) believes that there should be a distinction between 'diaspora' and 'dispersion' in academic scholarship. In this regard, he emphasises the characteristic of traditional diaspora as inflicted by a collective calamity and trauma, "to which the work of memory, commemoration, and mourning is central, shaping much of its cultural production and political commitment" (p. 649). His conceptualisation is an attempt to make a distinction between a diaspora which is rooted in a collective catastrophe and its resultant sense of collective commemoration and mourning, and diaspora as individual and chain migration for economic reasons or in search of a better life, with less prominent sense of collective memory and mourning. He believes that the latter is in fact dispersion and not diaspora. At the core of diaspora lies the idea of dislocation and therefore, I believe making such distinctions would not change its quintessence.

Diaspora as the forced or voluntary movement of people from one or more nation-states to another has come a long way from its classical use.[33] The traditional concepts of victim, labour, colonial/imperial and trade diasporas have evolved, invigorated and received new dimensions over the course of time. From the 1980s onwards, the term 'diaspora' entered a new phase that associates it with "*different categories* of people 'expatriates, expellees, political refugees, alien residents, immigrants and ethnic and racial minorities *tout court*'" (Cohen, 2008, p. 1).[34] The contemporary sense of diaspora refers to any forms of scattering and immigration for various reasons or purposes, either voluntarily or involuntary. What Tölölyan calls diaspora, referring to the traditional notion of the diaspora of the Jews, Armenians and Greeks, does not apply to contemporary migration. Therefore, in the same way, Safran's concept of diaspora, which considers the traditional diasporas as 'models' or the 'ideal type' of diaspora (1991, p. 84), has been disputed

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[33] Indeed, reviewing the existing literature and the scholarship on diaspora, I have not come across any studies where 'dispersion' has been used instead of 'diaspora' in order to distinguish people who migrate for economic motives.

[34] William Safran (1991; 1999) argues that the term 'diaspora' is used to cover all sorts of expatriate ethnic communities that can somehow be identified as ethnic, racial or religious groups, and even indigenous minorities that are not related to any external point of origin or 'centre.'

by Clifford and many other diaspora scholars. Making history "a definitive model" for diaspora should be avoided, as "diaspora is a discourse that is travelling or hybridizing in new global conditions" and "no society can be expected to qualify on all accounts, throughout its history" (Clifford, 1994, p. 306).

New transportation systems, telecommunications and the Internet, international and transnational business transactions, advances in technology and new media have made communication and transferring information as well as travelling more effortless and simple today. As a result, movements of people in the contemporary era occur more frequently and on a massive scale. The beginning of the twenty-first century has seen a rapid increase in mass population movements that has taken place in all directions across the globe. These population movements set in motion new meanings, identities, and alignments of power and articulation, and make visible and invisible configurations in numerous aspects and structures of communities, and individuals' lives and experiences, as well as the societies they emigrate from and the ones they immigrate to. Furthermore, the popular movement of migration from the East to the West has been mobilised and now the regions previously thought of as areas of emigration are considered as areas of immigration (Brah, 1996). Such mobility has occurred for a number of reasons: the economic inequalities within and between regions and the possibility of flow of capital, people's desire to pursue opportunities that might improve their life chances and that of future generations, social strife, gender inequalities and identities, political conflicts, cultural and intellectual incongruities, wars, and natural disasters are some of the motivations that remain at the heart of the impetus behind migrations (Brah, 1996). Additionally, the transforming impacts of advancements in communication and technology on peoples and societies in the era of globalisation have created new means of mobility and movement which consequently result in the dispersion of more people. Addressing the range of concepts related to migration across and within borders and their impact on cultural formations is closely related to diaspora, as migration is the prerequisite for the formation of a diaspora. The community that is created as a result of immigration has been called 'diaspora'. In other words, a diaspora follows migration in which migrants in the course of time form a recognizable social group that reserves "its ethnic, or ethnic-religious identity and communal solidarity" (Sheffer, 1986, p. 9). "Time has to

pass" for a group of migrants to be considered as "really a diaspora" (Marienstras, 1989, p. 125).

Even though New Zealand has a long history of migration, the labelling and conceptualising ethnic communities as being called 'diasporic' in nature is a relatively recent phenomenon in New Zealand scholarship, particularly within media and film studies scholarship (see Chapter 2 for 'The Asian Diaspora in New Zealand Scholarship'). Migration as movements of peoples and ideas remain a growing area in New Zealand scholarship.[35]

Home and Border

One axiomatic element of diaspora is the notion of home and the connection of migrants and their succeeding generations to an ethnic homeland. 'Home' refers to "the orientation to a real or imagined 'homeland' as an authoritative source of value, identity, and loyalty" (Brubaker, 2005, p. 5). 'Home' is embedded with emotional connotations referring to people's attachment to their motherland, fatherland, or native land. All diasporic communities start their journeys from home; so home is the initial stage of any diaspora. Most early discussions of diaspora were rooted in a conceptual homeland, such as in the classical diasporas: the Jewish diaspora (Alpers, 2001; Edwards, 2001), the African diaspora (Shepperson, 1966), the Palestinian diaspora (Cohen, 1997); the Greek and Armenian diasporas (Armstrong, 1976). Safran defines several features for diaspora (1999, pp.83-84) which in one way or another relate diaspora to the notion of homeland:

o Dispersal from a specific "centre" or origin to foreign regions;
o Preserving a collective myth or memory of their origin or homeland. Homeland becomes "the true, ideal home and as the place to which one would (or should) eventually return". They keep remembering or reading about home's history, geography, events, news and achievements;

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[35] Examples of recently established research clusters in New Zealand after 2011 were provided in Chapter 1 (p. 23).

- Thinking strongly that "they are not - and perhaps cannot be - fully accepted by their host society and therefore feel partly alienated and insulated from it;"

- Feeling responsible for or being collectively "committed to the maintenance or restoration of their original homeland and to its safety and prosperity;" and

- Linking and relating their life, "personally or vicariously", in some way to the original home. This relationship continues to form their "ethnocommunal consciousness and solidarity" – their identity and a sense of who they are.

In an attempt to set conceptual boundaries for diaspora, Tölölyan (2007) opines that defining diaspora as "that segment of a people living outside the homeland" (as cited in Conner, 1986, p. 16) is a typical conceptual problem for the contemporary diaspora discourse. Tölölyan stresses that the word 'segment' cannot be applied to the later generations of diaspora as they cease to be a segment of the homeland's population. However, I argue that if we put aside the idea of 'segment' in defining diaspora, and understand diaspora as people not as an extension of a place, we realise that the imagined homeland for succeeding diasporic generations becomes a source of ethnic cultural roots and identity.

Inherent in the notion of homeland is the idea of return or desire to return either physically or emotionally, which some diasporas have demonstrated. Tölölyan (2007) characterises 'return' as a "form of a sustained and organised commitment to maintain relations with kin communities elsewhere, and with the homeland" (p. 649). Diasporas return to the homeland either through actual repatriations in the case of a traumatic exit from their homelands, or they commonly attempt to maintain connections to the homeland through "travel, remittances, cultural exchange and political lobbying and by various contingent efforts" (Tölölyan, 2007, p. 649). The later generations of diaspora, as citizens of the host country, conceive home through their ancestors and their links to the homeland, even though they may feel completely at home in the host society. The sustained contact with the homeland in later generations of diasporas varies in different host contexts.

Brubaker (2005) refers to a significant shift in the recent discussions on diaspora and homeland. Many studies have reduced the importance of homeland orientation as a criterion of diaspora (Anthias, 1998; Clifford, 1994; Falzon, 2003; Tölölyan, 2007). Their argument centres on the fact that much recent migration and the experience of dispersion does not signify the longing and hope to return to the original homeland. Amita Ghosh once highlighted this with regard to the South Asian diaspora, as it "is not so much oriented to roots [homeland] in a specific place and a desire for return as around an ability to recreate a culture in diverse locations" (1989, as cited in Clifford, 1994, p. 306). Diaspora is not limited any more to groups of people who were forced to leave their homeland or who necessarily try to maintain a strong link to their homeland while settled in a new land. The contemporary scholarship has theorised the concept of diaspora in a wide sense and expanded it to incorporate situations that are not associated with categories of people forcefully dispersed or those who have the desire to return (see Agnew, 2008; Brah, 1996; Desai, 2004).

Embedded in the ideas of migration and diaspora is the notion of border crossing. People become migrants when they cross geographical borders and move away from their home to another place. Immigration is defined as cross-border movements of people which may lead to permanent relocation and settlement (Liu, Volcic & Gallois, 2011). Furthermore, the border crossing exceeds its geographical sense and associates migrants with various forms of 'cross-' activities, forms and processes, crossing political, social, religious and cultural borders and boundaries. Brah, for instance, refers to a border as "a political construct" (1996, p. 180) where power operates to differentiate one group or diaspora from another group or diaspora (referring to connections of diasporas within one nation-state and across the globe). The idea of border and boundary crossing strongly implicates and solidifies the existence and presence of borders and boundaries. They become visible, noticeable and evocative when they are crossed. "A boundary is not that at which something stops but […] the boundary is that from which something *begins its presencing*" (Heidegger, 1971, p. 154). Being attentive to the existence of boundaries and where, when and how they are crossed is an important concept in diaspora. Border crossing associates diaspora with the subsequent sense of not being in the previous location. Furthermore, the attention to the idea of border and

boundary complicates the sense of home and belonging as a result of being displaced or dislocated. Following the lead of Brah's concept of border as a political construct, in my project one perspective of border is a creative-cultural construct. Hence, the main focus of this research project in identifying a group of migrant filmmakers and films, which have made their presence felt in New Zealand cinema, is to explore an example of boundary crossing in terms of cultural production.

Seemingly contrary to the idea of border and boundary crossing, maintaining boundaries has been defined as an important constituent of diaspora (Armstrong, 1976; Safran, 1991; Tölölyan, 1996; Cohen, 1997). Drawing on Armstrong (1976), Brubaker (2005) defines the concept of 'boundary-maintenance' as "the preservation of a distinctive identity vis-à-vis a host society" (p. 6). Maintaining the boundaries can take the form of "resistance to assimilation though self-enforced endogamy or other forms of self-segregation" (Brubaker, 2005, p. 6; also see Armstrong, 1976, pp. 394-5; Smith, 1986). Laitin (1995) explains that boundary-maintenance can actively result in diasporic people's being socially excluded from the mainstream. The boundary-maintenance characterises a diasporic group as being a 'community', which is distinguished both from the people back in the original homeland and the mainstream host society. Boundary-maintenance refers to "the processes whereby group solidarity is mobilized and retained, even accepting that there are counter processes of boundary erosion" (Cohen, 2008, p. 12). The erosion of boundaries takes place – in varying degrees – only in the course of time with the diasporic people's inclination and determination towards integration and assimilation. The ethnic boundaries, however, may be long-lasting even after many diasporic generations in a given context. This is one of the reasons why the characteristics and elements of diaspora in the first generation are relatively different from those evident in the second and third generations. I will examine and discuss manifestations of maintaining and crossing borders and boundaries in Asian New Zealand films in terms of their presence, periphery/centre, identity construction and community formation with reference to the production, representation and reception of these films (in Chapter 5, 6 and 7).

Ethnicity and Identity

Scholars have frequently described diasporas as "complex formations whose positioning in the receiving society is embedded in the social circumstances of the new context" (Brah, 2008, p. 387; see also Hickman, Morgan, Walter & Bradley, 2005). One significant aspect of community formation encompasses the emergence of diasporic communities within the social and cultural structure of the host country. The axiom of community inevitably entails the juxtaposition of inclusion and exclusion in a new society, and this implicates various other concepts and issues built upon a close linkage between personal identity, political citizenship and communal culture(s). For example, in a general sense the dominant view is that shared values, ideas, beliefs, identity, and memory and our "sense of a need to belong" lie at the core of community as a social entity (Silverstone, 1999, p. 96). It is no surprise, then, that the challenges of community orientation are widely perceived as being exacerbated and intensified in diasporic contexts, given that migrants' sense of belonging is necessarily disrupted and fragmented through the process of mobility and migration. In discussions of diaspora, it is beneficial to make a distinction between an ethnic community and a diasporic community. "All diasporic communities are also ethnic communities, but not all ethnic communities are diasporic" (Tölölyan, 2007, p. 649). Migrants build diasporic communities in the long run when they become able to link to their ethnic fellows in their new home and communicate their shared issues, which have occurred as the result of the same task of moving between their home country/culture and the mainstream cultural group in the country of settlement. A diasporic community is comprised of a group who share ethnic attributes and the culture of their original homeland within the host context, and are linked also through transnational relations with other diasporic communities across the globe. A diasporic community would identify their ethnicity based on the countries from which they have migrated or their ancestors came.

The boundary-maintenance in diaspora marks the identity of migrants as distinctive within the host society, while also placing it in tension with the notion of (mainstream) national identity. The question of identity and its meanings is perhaps the most researched concept in Humanities and Social Sciences. The major debates

around identity include identity as identification, as a social construct, as a performative practice, and also the fluidity and multiplicity of identity as a process (See Georgiou, 2006). Diasporic conditions, lives and experiences complicate the notion of identity even more as the sense of belonging becomes additionally complicated in relation to both the original homeland and the host country. Other aspects of diasporic conditions such as the operation of cultural and ethnic diversity (and/or multiculturalism) within a nation, or the memory of the original homeland (which can be manifested as a form of ethnic identity) can increasingly render untenable the efforts to explain the identity (re)construction processes in diaspora.

Identity has been applied to ethnicity and race. Race is based on biological features, and ethnicity is based on cultural features shared by people of a particular origin, race, religion and language (Barker, 2008). In other words, ethnicity is not defined by birth or bloodline and it is more based on cultural belonging. In New Zealand, for instance, "Ethnicity is a measure of cultural affiliation, as opposed to race, ancestry, nationality or citizenship. Ethnicity is self perceived and people can belong to more than one ethnic group" (New Zealand Statistics, n.d., par. 1). Furthermore, ethnicity is a performative identity as it has become contingent on "the subjective naturalisation of culturally agreed upon signifiers" (Stratton, 2000, p. 21). In other words, being a Chinese is not principally the same as performing Chineseness. In diasporic conditions, individuals perform their ethnic identities on some occasions, those performances being a manifestation of negotiating boundary maintenance. In the example of Jewish diaspora, "Jewishness, like other ethnicities, can […] be thought of as a set of attributes which are repeated and become naturalised as identifiably Jewish" (Stratton, 2000, p. 21). Ethnic performative identity practices affiliate individuals with certain communities, traditions, customs, pasts, and national and transnational affiliations. The notion of diaspora suggests "a way of thinking about ethnicity that enables exploration of fluidities and differences within particular groups at the same time as recognizing the sense of identification which either loosely or strongly binds members together" (Hodkinson, 2011, p. 210). An individual's connection and relation to an ethnic group creates an assumed sense of belonging to the group as a manifestation of their ethnic identities. Ethnicity defines the symbolic relationality to a particular diasporic community or an ethnic group or groups that people may or may not

identify with or feel like they belong to. At the same time, from an exterior perspective ethnicity is partially conceived of as how other people recognise us – politically, historically, socially, culturally, and religiously.

The performance of ethnicity for diasporic people becomes a strategic response on some occasions to a shifting sense of time and space in the new environment. In "Ethnicity in an Age of Diaspora", Radhakrishnan (2003) discusses the ways in which immigrants in the US treat their ethnicity. The first phase is when "immigrants surpass ethnicity in the name of pragmatism and opportunism. To be successful in the New World, they must actively assimilate and, therefore, hide their distinct ethnicity" (p. 121). The next phase is the immigrant's reassertion of ethnicity, which seeks "the hyphenated integration of ethnic identity with national identity under conditions that do not privilege the 'national' at the expense of the 'ethnic'" (p. 121). Radhakrishnan opines that in the United States, the naturalisation into American citizenship marginalises the notion of ethnic identity because a migrant is considered as 'an ethnic minority American citizen', and not as a first class American citizen; the ethnic identity of the migrant could merely be celebrated as 'an Indian immigrant' in America. In my research project, the notion of ethnicity is examined and discussed looking at the ways ethnicity has been projected in Asian New Zealand films, and also the ways viewers of the films responded to such representations and positioned themselves in relation to them.

Ethnicity has become a hallmark of cultural difference in diasporic contexts and multicultural societies. Hall (1992) utilises the concept of ethnicity to discuss identities in diaspora: "The term ethnicity acknowledges a place of history, language and culture in the construction of subjectivity and identity, as well as the fact that all discourse is placed, positioned, situated and all knowledge is contextual" (p. 56). Debates around ethnicity and identity have shaped the major analysis of diaspora and its related concept of transnationalism. However, ethnicity has been criticised in some contexts as it tends to essentialize and reify identity especially in diasporic and multicultural conditions. In discussions and conceptualities of diasporas, the notion of ethnicity and ethnic affiliations is the first entry point in order to recognize the diversity and visibility of diasporic people in a nation where the migrant population is increasingly growing such as New Zealand.

Hall (1992) highlighted the notions of new ethnicities and ethnic identities coming into being as a result of the forces of diaspora and migration, by which identities are culturally constructed and are also malleable in nature. Hall's idea of ethnicity in relation to identity can be understood this way:

> If we regard ethnicity as a product of ongoing processes of human thought and representation rather than nature, rather than being a fixed state of *being*, ethnic identities are always developing, changing or *becoming*. They may retain certain stable or shared elements, but are constantly open to development, influence and diversification according to changing social circumstances – not least, experiences of migration. (Hodkinson, 2011, p. 209)

The consequences, experiences and challenges of living in a new culture and society create new, often fluid, dimensions of identity. Scholars show that the notion of diasporic identity is conceptualised by the ways the cultural identities of diasporic individuals are constantly being transformed and redefined as they explore and experience new similarities and differences with cultural and social characteristics of the host country. In 'Ethnicity: identity and difference', Hall (1989) reminds us that identity has to be recognised as:

> a cover story for making you think you stayed in the same place, though with another bit of your mind you do know you've moved on. What we've learned about the structure of the way in which we identify is not one thing, one moment. We have now to reconceptualise identity as a process of identification, and that is a different matter. It is something that happens over time, that is never absolutely stable, that is subject to the play of history and the play of difference. (p. 22)

To understand the complexity of the notion of identity in diaspora, it is beneficial to go back to the definition of diaspora itself as a 'diasporic consciousness' offered by Vertovec (1999):

> [A] relatively recent approach to 'diaspora' puts greater emphasis on
> describing a variety of experience, a state of mind and a sense of identity.
> 'Diasporic consciousness' is a particular kind of awareness said to be
> engendered in diaspora among diasporic and transnational communities […]
> Its particularity is variously described as being marked by a dual or
> paradoxical nature. It is constituted negatively by experiences of
> discrimination and exclusion, and positively by identification with an
> historical heritage (such as 'Indian civilization') or contemporary world
> cultural or political forces (such as 'Islam'). (p. 8)

Both Hall and Vertovec link, epistemologically, a sense of identity to 'mind', 'think', 'consciousness', which I suggest signifies that a sense of identity is inscribed in diaspora. The manifestation of a 'diasporic consciousness' or a particular 'state of mind' can be reflected in identity (re)construction in diaspora, as both by nature are marked by fluidity and identification processes. Furthermore, Vertovec's (1999) definition of the concept of diaspora as "the collective diasporic consciousness" refers to the creation of a society and a polity within a larger society of the mainstream. These perspectives tell us of a formation of (collective) identity in diaspora which goes beyond ethnic attributes and historical heritage, which constantly fluctuates partially based on a (individual and collective) state of mind which in many ways operates in relation to places and movements, longing and belongings, being and becoming.

Cultural Production and Representation of Diaspora

The identity formation of groups in diaspora is characterised by their close relationship to the ways they are represented in the host context. One of the key elements in the formation of a diaspora and its appearance in the social structure of a host country is through the migrants' cultural, economic, educational and political practices. An important factor in this aspect of diasporic formation is the ability of migrants and their succeeding generations to be visible as a part of the creative and cultural production of the new homeland; an achievement which consequently enhances their participation in the social and political domains of the host society.

One form of identity formation is through the encounter and interaction of different cultures. The interaction between a diasporic or migrant culture and the host culture may evoke some form or account of creolization through cultural practices in food, festivities, music, and dancing, but the association of diasporic consciousness with the past and the notion of an original home and culture (to varying degrees) may interrupt to recast old identities or ethnicities (Cohen & Toninato, 2009). Creolization refers to a process in which members or participants choose "particular elements from incoming or inherited cultures, endow these with meanings different from those they possessed in the original culture, and then creatively merge these to create totally new varieties that supersede the prior forms" (Cohen, 2008, p. 71). Creolization tends to move towards "a severance of past identities in the interests of establishing a new cultural and social identity" (Cohen, 2008, p. 73). In this project, my interest was developed in the concept of creolization in relation to Asian New Zealand films in which different generations of diaspora are portrayed as less concerned with the homeland orientation and more with settlement in their adopted land. This tendency, however, may not lead to the dominance of assimilatory behaviours or the subversive force of hybridising tendencies, as would be expected in diasporic conditions and lives. The concept of creolization has informed my analysis when looking at the cultural territories diasporic subjects explore, encounter, occupy, or negotiate in their relationships with the host society; where and in what ways they occur and what they indicate or implicate about contemporary New Zealand society.

The fluidity of identity in diaspora is manifested in the cultural production of diasporic communities. Vertovec (1999) also has defined diaspora as 'a mode of cultural production' in which diaspora can "involve the *production and reproduction* of transnational social and cultural phenomena" (p. 21). Viewing diaspora from this perspective helps to account for the connections and influences of the homeland and the adopted land on individual and group identity formations. Diaspora as 'a mode of cultural production' emphasises the "fluidity of constructed styles and identities among diasporic people" (ibid, p. 19). In fact, some of the most creative sites for contemporary cultural production belong to diasporic people where they "are obliged to live together, struggle for space and speak across cultural

languages" (Hall, 2010, p. ix). The presence of the creative potential of diaspora is what Homi Bhabha (1994, p. 326) calls bringing "newness […] into the world". The cultural production of diaspora is, therefore, manifested in hybrid, syncretic and creolized cultural forms as the result of the intermingling and blending of cultural traditions (Hall, 1989). Diasporic cultural products are more than mere recreations of traditions or a reproduction of social forms in a new place, because they are the creative product of experiences of living in a new place and conditions (Hall, 1989, 1990).

Diasporic cultural production becomes a space from which diasporic people can create and convey their realities: a locus from which to express their uniqueness, speak of their experiences, of living in between, a particularity of migrant life and their proceeding generations, an articulation of their journeys, narratives, and their sense of displacement, home and belonging. It is conceded that "reality can be constructed, destroyed or reconstructed by the work of representation, imagination and social action" (Cohen, 2010, p. 69). Diasporic cultural production in any form is, therefore, the communication between diasporic subjects and the world. Mediated communication has always been a process closely interrelated with the re-construction and representation of identities and communities. As in this current study, various forms of media from the press, radio, television, film, arts, and visual culture have been platforms for the construction of identities and communities. Numerous scholars have referred to the concept of diaspora and the way it can effectively engage with the complexities of the construction and formation of identities (e.g. Georgiou, 2006; Hall, 1990; Naficy, 2001; Tölölyan, 1996). There are also many references in academic scholarship to the ways diaspora is constituted by representation and cultural production (Hall, 1990, 2008; Naficy, 2001). One of the most important characteristics of the concept of diaspora lies in its productivity in allowing for identity to be viewed as constantly re-constructed and transformed, and not as a fixed subject such as race (Clifford, 1997; Hall, 1990; Gilroy, 1993). My research project highlights the (re)construction of Asian New Zealand identities on New Zealand screen through examining cultural production of Asian diasporic communities in the last decade.

As noted above, there is a long-standing emphasis on the role of representation in constructing identities (Gilroy, 2013; Grossberg, 2009; Hall, 2013). This adheres to Stuart Hall's idea of identity as a 'production' and underlies the significance of identifying and examining both questions of cultural identities and the critical role representation plays in re-constructing them. Diasporic cultural production can define the ways in which the cultural identities and social lives of diasporic actors or subjects should be understood and imagined: in this scenario, the power of representation when in the hands of diasporic people becomes crucial, as it can discover, shape and reconstruct cultural identities. As Hall (1992) suggests, representation has "a formative, not merely expressive, place in the construction of social and political life" (p. 253-254). Hall's (1990) discussion of the ways identity should be understood in diaspora is especially significant in indicating the importance of those cultural practices and modes of production wherein diasporic individuals start making images of themselves and telling their own stories without the intervention of the 'Other':

> […] instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent, we should think, instead, of identity as a 'production', which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation. (p. 222)

Particularly in the processes of diaspora, production of identity through the power of representation is decisive because it revolves around 'giving voice' to diasporic subjects, experiences and narratives that have previously gone unheard, thereby allowing for the discovery of hidden and uncharted territories that have gone beyond an individual's past, original history, place and culture.

'Production' (Hall, 1994) also entails a sense of constant (re)creation of new identities that emerge within diasporic social experience and conditions. Understanding production as 'constituted … within representation' generates avenues and platforms for negotiating migrants' connections and relationships to their new home, their diasporic communities within the host society, and their imagined ancestral homelands. The construction of diasporic cultural identity here refers to something that does not already exist and once it does, nonetheless changes

alongside the history, location and culture of a new place and also the imagined ancestral land. In the case of diasporic people and their creative production, their access to the power of representation, and ability to produce their own versions of reality and life – referring here to the means of 'production' of identity – empowers and enables them to imagine the ways they would like to be perceived and understood in the host society. In this scenario, diasporic people are ideally represented by diasporic authors: those who, in fact, may share similar migrancy, (non)assimilationist or integrationist experiences, and have had to undergo similar complex processes of maintenance and negotiation of cultural identity.

Inscribed within the idea of diaspora, therefore, is the theoretical notion of the diasporic author who speaks to diasporic experiences and stories of displacement, and their various meanings at psychic, geographical, spatial, affective, and cognitive levels, within different historical periods and contexts and with regard to different peoples, cultures and societies. Diasporic cinema as a popular and dominant form of diasporic cultural production has offered an account of a new state of mind and diasporic consciousness where diasporic subjects and identities are reconstructed. Hall (1990) addresses this concept:

> We have been trying to theorize identity as constituted, not outside but within representation; and hence of cinema, not as a second-order mirror held up to reflect what already exists, but as that form of representation which is able to constitute us as new kinds of subjects, and thereby enable us to discover places from which to speak. (pp. 236-237)

Following the lead of Hall and others, my research project conceptualises identities that are constituted against the backdrop of the mainstream identities on New Zealand screen. Asian diasporic film in New Zealand brings to the fore new kinds of stories and subjects and creates a new arena from which migrants can speak to the society, a utility of narrative media in providing a public forum for discussing cultural diversity. This empowerment, indeed, shapes the core of diasporic cinema.

Diasporic Cinema, Diasporic Filmmakers, Diasporic Film

The inauguration of diasporic cinema and film occurred in the 1990s in response to the boom of migration, diaspora and postcolonial studies. Since then, "film studies has witnessed a surge of publications on diasporic cinema, film and media cultures" (Berghahn, 2010, p. 157). Having the concept of diaspora at its core, diasporic cinema, film and media cultures are grounded on the experience of artists who have migratory backgrounds or have experienced displacement and dispersion (Desai 2004; Marchetti 2006; Marks, 2000; Martin, 1995; Naficy 2001). Hamid Naficy (2001) developed and called this large and diverse category of films 'accented cinema' because of the "displacement of the filmmakers" (p. 4). Naficy (2001), in *Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking*, theorizes 'accented cinema' based on a detailed examination of films and filmmaking practices within exilic and diasporic communities in the US and Europe in the 1980s and 1990s. He identifies the emergence of 'accented cinema' as when, in the postcolonial era, "exilic, émigré, diasporic, refugee, ethnic, and transnational filmmakers, [started] working in the interstices of social formations and mainstream film and culture industries of the West" (Naficy, 2012, p. 113).

Naficy's 'Accented Cinema'

The word 'accented' in accented cinema is borrowed from linguistics and refers to a different accent or pronunciation of the new language by migrants as foreigners or being from a different social, cultural or educational background. However, the meaning of 'accent' goes beyond language and becomes a mark of character and identity in the concept of accented cinema. By the term 'accented', Naficy refers to films that share certain features –'an accent' – which make them different from the dominant and mainstream cinema. The 'accent' emanates "not so much from the accented speech of the diegetic characters as from the displacement of the filmmakers, their interstitial and sometimes collective production practices, and the stylistic attributes of their films" (Naficy, 2012, p. 113). The 'accent' enters every aspect of the film text and filmmaking. Naficy discusses various dimensions and structures of accented filmmaking and films, from the filmmakers' backgrounds and locations to the films' visual style, narrative, and themes. Naficy's

identification of markers of such films suggests a different grammar for understanding, interpretation and analysis of these films, which is packaged and presented in the word 'accented'. The 'accent', therefore, plays like a category, a genre of films associated with geographical displacement or "deterritorialized locations" (Naficy, 2001, p. 23). Naficy's book focuses on film texts, their stylistic and aesthetic attributes, thematic and narrative preoccupations as well as the creative production processes of making accented films. He defines his goal as being to "direct attention to a new and critical imagination in the global media: an accented cinema of exile and diaspora and its embedded theory of criticism" (Naficy, 2001, p. 8).

Many accented films, especially exilic films, are typically highly ideological and political, which makes them different from the dominant cinema (the Hollywood style) which is mainly "intended for entertainment only, and thus free from overt ideology or accent" (2001, p. 23). Accented cinema comprises different types of cinema made by (1) 'exilic' filmmakers, (2) 'diasporic' filmmakers, and (3) 'postcolonial ethnic and identity' filmmakers who live and work in countries other than their country of origin (Naficy, 2001).[36]

Exile means abandonment with no return. There are two types of exile; internal and external. According to Naficy, the filmmakers of internal exile develop an authorial style that can be traced in their tremendous constraints, torment, restrictions, and deprivations. Internal exilic filmmakers prefer to stay at home and fight from there, even if they have a choice to escape. Their films narrate these fights and their identities. Situating themselves at home grants them the advantage of having impacts because they live in close relationship with what is happening at home. If the exilic filmmaker moves to the West – thereby placing him/herself in external exile – the desired impact is much less because in the diasporic context the filmmaker has freedom to speak and express his/her ideology. However, it must be mentioned that in the Western context, there are diverse voices competing with each

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[36] For the sake of limited space in this chapter and also to avoid confusion, I intended not to discuss specific examples of films within these three categories, as there are discrepancies even among filmmakers within each category in terms of matters related to their originating countries, the host countries, the means of production, personal ideologies, etc.

other. In the cinema of diaspora, exilic filmmakers are those principally in external exile, "individuals or groups who voluntarily or involuntarily have left their country of origin and who maintain an ambivalent relationship with their previous and current places and cultures" (Naficy, 2001, p. 12). Exilic films, as one type of accented cinema, are, therefore, characterised by their overt and covert political nuances.

In contrast, the other two groups of filmmakers, 'diasporic' and 'postcolonial ethnic and identity' filmmakers, Naficy says, centre more on "plurality and performativity", as their work is articulated "less in narratives of retrospect, loss and absence or in strictly partisanal political terms" (Naficy, 2001, p. 14). Diasporic identity entails a "horizontal and multisited" relationship with not only the homeland but also the host society and culture. This is unlike the exilic identity whose relationship with their original home is "vertical" and primary, and less apparent than their relationship with the host society (Naficy, 2001, p. 14). Diasporic filmmakers maintain a long term ethnic consciousness and distinctiveness about their cultures, customs, and traditions from the original homeland. This makes them nurture a collective memory of an idealised homeland. There is an emphasis on the relationship to their original homeland in various manifestations in their films and practices.

The 'postcolonial ethnic and identity filmmakers' embody to some extent the characteristics of both diasporic and exilic filmmakers. This group of filmmakers can be distinguished from diasporic and exilic filmmakers for their "emphasis on their ethnic and racial identity within the host community" (Naficy, 2001, p. 15). Their films deal with conflicts between ancestral relations, ethnicity and bloodline in the new environment. Naficy describes their distinctions this way:

> […] exilic cinema is dominated by its focus on there and then in the homeland, diasporic cinema by its vertical relationship to the homeland and by its lateral relationship to the diaspora communities and experiences, and postcolonial ethnic and identity cinema by the exigencies of life here and now in the country in which the filmmakers reside. (p. 15)

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'Postcolonial ethnic and identity' films portray ethnic people who have recognized the need to adapt and integrate with the host society. Naficy (2001) writes that there is less emphasis on their bonds with the original homeland and they have totally accepted their hyphenated identity. I would link Naficy's three categories to the New Zealand context and focus on the emergence and presence of a group of films whose diegesis centres upon migration and diaspora within the overall polity of New Zealand society and cinema.

Characteristics of Accented Cinema

Naficy (2001) categorises the following components for accented cinema. They have emerged from the commonalities he has explored in the filmmakers' practices and also the film texts:

1. Visual style
2. Narrative structure
3. Characters/Actors
4. Subject matters/Theme/plot
5. Structures of feeling
6. Filmmaker's location
7. Mode of production

Looking at the components and characteristics of accented cinema, accenting is evident in three key areas: (a) the filmmaker ('location'), (b) the film text ('visual style', 'narrative structure', 'subject matter/theme/plot', 'characters/actors'), and (c) film production ('modes of production'). Naficy assigns a particular role to the author of accented films because "filmmakers are not just textual structures or fictions within their films; they also are empirical subjects, situated in the interstices of cultures and film practices, who exist outside and prior to their films" (2001, p. 4). 'Empirical subjects' refer to the stories and experiences of the filmmaker and his/her life in the form of autobiography that is rendered visually in the film.

There is evidently an emphasis in Naficy's concept on the ways that the filmmaker's migratory background across several boundaries and deterritorialised locations

affect various aspects of the cinematic productions and text. Accented cinema describes the work performed by such filmmakers whose experiences and lives as a result of their displacement make their films distinct from the mainstream or dominant cinema. Their films render aesthetics and narratives of displacement working in artisanal production modes (p. 4). Accented films are aesthetic, imaginative, and creative responses to the filmmaker's experience of displacement and migration. Therefore, one significant aspect in identifying whether a filmmaker (or a film) falls into the category of accented cinema is to look at the filmmaker's background and history of displacement. In relation to the filmmaker's migratory background, other characteristics should be taken into account such as the (various) location(s) where the filmmaker have resided, his/her (deterritorialised) experiences and migrant life, his/her relationships with the original homeland and culture, ethnic diasporic communities, and the host society and culture. Although diasporic filmmakers come from various backgrounds and cultures, work in diverse contexts under different conditions, and have their own unique style (as well as personal ideology) in translating a reality or a thought into a filmic narrative or screen text, they share an 'accent' which may not exist in other (non-diasporic) films, such as mainstream Hollywood films, Second or European art cinema, Third Cinema, and World Cinema.

In addition to the significance of the filmmaker's location, Naficy (2001) wishes to demonstrate that the 'accent' affects and shapes the "deep structures" of the films (p. 23). The deep structures of the film consist of the components, features and characteristics of the film style and the screen narrative. Originating from culturally diverse contexts, accented films cannot be monolithic by nature in terms of the language of the film and the cultural features that shape and inform their narrative and style. In terms of mise-en-scene, accented film texts share a prolific use of real locations rather than studio settings, particularly the landscape of the home and host countries and societies. The exteriors convey a sense of immensity, places that signify travel, journeying, transition, and border crossing such as terminals, borders, seaports, trains, bus stations, hotels and motels, and tunnels (and also objects related to those places such as suitcases and passports). The interiors covey a sense of claustrophobia coded with ethnic and cultural nuances, often displaying the fetishized objects and icons of the homeland and the past. Accented films are less

driven by "action than by words and emotions" (Naficy, 2001, p. 290). In diasporic films, the narrative structure is driven by memory and past histories within a multi-voice and multi-lingual structure. Recurring dominant narrative structures of accented cinema, according to Naficy (2001), are epistolary, autobiographical and journeying. Narrative is inscribed by juxtaposing elements that signify comparisons between places, times, cultures, and societies, and also contrast between "public history with personal memory" (p. 290). The intricacies of discontinuous time and space, use of flashbacks, fragmented stories, characters who are lonely, alienated and living alone as outcasts and outsiders, as well as lack of closure, are among other features of this genre. The use of native music both diegetic and non-diegetic, a voice-over narration spoken often by the directors or their replacements, and deliberate asynchronicity between time, sound, and image are the features of screen sound in accented cinema. Accented films address the paradoxes of exile, migration and diaspora, and the negotiation of difference and belonging in communities.

Naficy (2001) defines the accented mode of film production as the "rhizomatic organism that produces and facilitates the consumption of exilic and diasporic films" (p. 44). The metaphor of the rhizome evokes a sense of rootlessness (a concept inaugurated by Deleuze and Guattari, 1986) in diasporic film production which is its distinctive characteristic as compared with mainstream filmmaking practices. Diasporic films are often non-commercial, artisanal and collective in their production. Chiefly, they do not follow the conventions of funding, production, storytelling, distribution, exhibition and spectator positioning in the mainstream mode of production. The mode of production in accented style consists of two main forms: the interstitial and the collective modes. The interstitial mode of production is essentially based on Homi Bhabha's (1994) notion of the articulation of difference: "interstitial moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of "difference' [...] [as] minorities translate their dominant designations of difference – gender, ethnicity, class – into solidarity that refuses both the binary politics of polarity" (pp. 269-270). Naficy (2001) discusses five main characterises for the interstitial mode of production (pp. 45-62):

1. The financial provision under which production operates;
2. The multiplication and accumulation of labour in contrast with the division of labour as normally practiced in post-industrial production mode;
3. Multilinguality of the filmmakers, the crew, the stories and the audiences they address;
4. A convoluted process of production; and
5. Length of time to distribute and exhibit the films.

The collective mode of production in accented cinema refers to the various forms of ties and collaboration that relate the diasporic filmmakers to other filmmakers, festivals, cinematic collectivites, as well as to their diasporic communities. The connection to the ethnic community may result in the communities playing the role of funding agencies and resources for this type of filmmaking. This type of collaborative filmmaking is often related to a broad mandate of promoting ethnic media culture which might bring diasporic filmmakers into conflict with their attributed communities, as they face "multiple demands and expectations' (Naficy, 2001, p. 65). In an article in Chapter 5, I have examined the interstitial and collective modes of production in relation to some examples of Asian New Zealand film, finding some divergences from Naficy's model.

Diasporic Cinema Studies

The assumption that any films that are made by ethnic people whose background is associated with migration and exile sit under the category of accented cinema seems to be a sweeping statement. However, the majority of the films made by such filmmakers do share aesthetic sensibilities and thematic concerns that classify them as 'accented cinema'. In accented cinema, the peculiarity of the sub-categories of exilic, diasporic and postcolonial ethnic films is "based chiefly on the varied relationship of the films and their makers to existing or imagined homeplaces" (Naficy, 2001, p. 21). There are several terms which reflect or share similar concepts to accented cinema: cinema of diaspora, diasporic cinema, minority cinema, migrant cinema, cinema of periphery, intercultural cinema, transnational

cinema, multiplex cinema, multicultural filmmaking, ethnic films, cross-cultural films, and cross-over cinema.

It is evident that the particularity of exilic films differs from the other two categories of accented cinema – 'diasporic film', and 'postcolonial and ethnic film'. The exilic experience carries deep resonances in the life of émigrés which are translated into film narratives and themes. Exilic preoccupations differ from those of diasporic (inclusive of postcolonial and ethnic) consciousness, because exilic films are primarily informed by the original homeland which is now lost and absent, its memories, commemorations, and sometimes its current realities. The impact of immigration is often expressed via memory-pictures of the homeland, themselves filtered through trauma, calamity and nostalgia. In other words, exilic filmmakers do not move away from the ghettos in which they initially find themselves through forced migration and its associations. There is an emphasis on the act of filmmaking as a political intervention, commitment or strategy to utilise exodus, political, nostalgic, and religious narratives which centre on their native land.

Referring to the cause of displacement and its interiority in their Western sojourn, 'diasporic' and 'postcolonial and ethnic' filmmakers diverge from exilic filmmakers in their relationship with the homeland. If we take into account Brah's (1996) notion of diaspora in which the cause of migration becomes significant in conceptualising diasporic experience and life, the cause of migration can be almost anything for both the 'diasporic' and 'postcolonial and ethnic' filmmakers – except forced exodus and exile, which is primary in the case of exilic filmmaking. For instance Desai (2004), in conceptualising the transnationality and queering of South Asian diasporic film, argues that we need different frameworks for analysing the contemporary diasporic formations of South Asian migrant subjects, because their modes of displacement vary from the traditional diasporas resulting from slavery. Therefore, it is my contention that the 'diasporic film' and 'postcolonial ethnic film' in accented cinema can merge into one category as 'diasporic film' (which has the combined characteristics of Naficy's both categories), due to their commonalities and also the blurred lines in terms of their relationships to the homeland and host land. In fact, numerous scholars who have researched and written about this type of film and filmmaking (and may have not referred to them using the categories of

'accented cinema'), have utilised the generic term of 'diasporic film' or 'diasporic cinema'. It seems that even for Naficy, 'exilic and diasporic filmmakers' are the overarching categories as the title of his book suggests – *Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking*. It is also interesting that while he uses the terms 'exilic cinema' and 'diasporic cinema' throughout his book, he never uses the concept of 'cinema' for 'postcolonial and ethnic identity' filmmakers and films. Furthermore, there are several overlapping terms used for such films that have emerged or originated from migratory and diasporic rudiments and components, either in terms of the (screen) maker/author or the (screen) text (I will discuss this further below). Therefore, against the backdrop of the central premise of this research and the thesis structure, I have no intention to theorise the distinctions between such categories in this thesis. Hence, it is important to note that the term 'diasporic cinema' is primarily used in this thesis to refer to the films created as a result of the filmmakers' diasporic experience and conditions, as well as films which embody diasporic subjects and stories – inclusive of both Naficy's categories of 'diasporic film', and 'postcolonial ethnic and identity film'.

Diasporic cinema branches out from the formative roots established by various strands of postcolonial discourse, from Edward Said's proclamation of Orientalism and representations of exoticism, and also Homi Bhabha's concepts of nation and narration. Naficy also relates the emergence of 'accented cinema' to the postcolonial era when filmmakers' preoccupations in terms of aesthetic sensibilities and thematic concerns were shaped by their situations of living in the interstices of social and cinematic formations. The publication of John Sinclair and Stuart Cunningham's (2001) *Floating Life* in the same year as Naficy's (2001) *Accented Cinema*, and also Laura U. Marks's (2000) *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses* and Scott McKenzie and Mette Hjort's (2000) *Cinema and Nation* a year before that, may have been a coincidence but imply a concerted effort in the early 2000s to raise questions around the creation, production, distribution, and reception of groups of films that elicit confusion and reconfiguration in the paradigm of national cinema (see, for example, Berghahn & Sternberg, 2010; Dennison & Lim, 2006; Khoo, Smaill & Yue, 2013; Simpson, Murawska & Lambert, 2009).

Accented cinema shares several characteristics with Third Cinema.[37] The notion of the Third Cinema emerged in the 1960s mainly through an essay entitled "Towards a Third Cinema" (1968) written by two Argentinean filmmakers, Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino, who described *a type* of cinema intended to raise awareness about social reality in observational and interactive mode. As "[an] expression of a new culture and of social changes […], an account of reality and history" (Willemen, 1994, p. 182), "the principal characteristic of Third Cinema," Gabriel (1982) wrote, "is not so much where it is made, or even who makes it, but rather, the ideology it espouses. The Third Cinema is that cinema of the Third World which stands opposed to imperialism and class oppression in all their ramifications and manifestations" (p. 2). Shohat and Stam discussed diasporic films as 'a final circle' of their classification of Third Cinema. They wrote:

> [This category is] somewhat anomolous in status, at once 'inside' and 'outside,' comprising recent diasporic hybrid films, for example those of Mona Hatoum or Hanif Kureishi, which both build on and interrogate the conventions of 'Third Cinema' […] the forced or voluntary exile of Third World filmmakers has led to a kind of diasporic Third World cinema within the First World [where] filmmakers have in part discarded the didactic Third Worldist model predominant in the 1960s in favor of a postmodern 'politics of pleasure' incorporating music, humor, and sexuality. (28-30)

Accented cinema shares the oppositional and anti-imperialist ideologies of Third Cinema and also the specific investment by independent filmmakers. Naficy (2001) argues that even though the formulation of accented cinema is "less polemical than the Third Cinema, it is nonetheless a political cinema that stands opposed to authoritarianism and oppression" (p. 30). At the core of accented cinema lies the significance of the 'diasporic author' and his/her 'displacement', while Third cinema films can be made anywhere by anyone. Naficy (2001) argues that accented cinema, as the cinema of displacement, "is much more situated than the Third

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[37] *Rethinking Third Cinema* by Anthony R. Guneratne and Wimal Dissanayake (2003), and *Rethinking Third Cinema: The Role of Anti-colonial Media and Aesthetics in Postmodernity by* Frieda Ekotto and Adeline Koh (2009) offer a variety of subjects, themes and approaches within the screen theories which seem to be not entirely based on the Third cinema in the 1960s.

Cinema, for it is necessarily made by (and often for) specific displaced subjects and diasporized communities" (p. 30). On the other hand accented cinema is often not overtly political (except for exilic cinema), possibly because the position of immigrants in host societies is usually too conditional for them to feel empowered to take the critical positions that Third Cinema exposes.

The aspect of 'interiority' as an acute sense of relation between the film and the filmmaker as a key characteristic of accented cinema is also inscribed in Fourth cinema, or Indigenous cinema. Fourth Cinema, as coined and theorised by the New Zealand filmmaker Barry Barclay (2003), makes an accented conceptualisation of film distinctive from the First (Hollywood), Second (art-house) and Third cinema (postcolonial, third world cinema). Barclay persuaded and supported Māori people to become filmmakers, rather than the subjects of film made by the Other. Fourth cinema emphasises "community inclusion and a reciprocity between the filmmaker and the filmed as well as the necessary modification of classical film techniques in the telling of Māori stories" (Murray, 2007, p. 89). It is not within the scope of this research to theoretically examine and discuss Fourth Cinema in relation to accented cinema and/or diasporic cinema.[38] However, it can be argued that Fourth Cinema is accented in terms of the film's ideological accountability in telling indigenous stories and the burden of representation, as well as the interconnection of the film to the community who shares the filmmaker's background and ancestral history. This relationship may, on some occasions, lead to the use of a 'collective mode of production' as also is the case of accented cinema.[39] One may think that these commonalities, however, cannot be supported if we take into account the epitome of accented cinema – the displacement of the filmmaker. Fourth Cinema may be accented since at the core of indigeneity is an acknowledgement of a form of displacement or being in 'diaspora space' (using Brah's (1996) notion of diaspora). Indigeneity is associated with "the concept of location in referring to peoples who have historically experienced enforced de-territorialisation, and often re-territorialisation, by white settler colonisers" (Mills, 2009, p. 1). The previous long-

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[38] I have developed a series of ideas for a draft in progress that focuses on this line of thought for a future research investigation.

[39] The collective mode of production will be discussed in an article in Chapter 5 as part of an argument on the modes of film production in Asian New Zealand filmmaking.

standing occupation of indigenous space accounts for an initial deterritorialisation or an alienation from land, culture and language (one form of disaporisation). In Fourth Cinema, therefore, the filmmakers have experienced displacement as at one point either in their history or that of other ancestors. Donna Awatere (1984) outlines this shift in *Māori Sovereignty*, looking at various dimensions of Māori life and identity in the past. At some point in their history, indigenous communities have faced forced dislocations, a form of exile in their own land. This displacement occurs less in terms of movement in space than movement within the social structure of the society from the centre to the periphery, from the position of power to disempowerment.

Having raised these commonalities between the accented cinema and Fourth cinema, however, I surmise that the sense of being accented in filmmaking and the forces it serves and also shapes are rather different from that of Fourth cinema. Indigeneity often embeds a form of spirituality and cultural integrity that comes from being rooted in an ancestral land – a land which has never been abandoned and has always been home (for many centuries at least in the case of Māori). The characteristics of Fourth cinema emerge from this experience of rootedness and ownership (a form of 'accent'), rather than displacement and dispossession, which may have manifestly appeared within social, cultural, political, religious, linguistic and economic domains within one's own land.

Similar to accented cinema, the term 'intercultural cinema' is used by Laura U. Marks (2000) in *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses* to describe the work of those filmmakers who are considered as cultural minorities living in the West, such as recent immigrants from Asia (and the Middle East), the Caribbean, Latin America and Africa (p. 1). 'Intercultural cinema' originating from "the new cultural formations of Western metropolitan centres" is gradually becoming a "genre" characterized by "experimental styles that attempt to represent the experience of living between two or more cultural regimes of knowledge, or living as a minority in the still majority white, Euro-American West" (Marks, 2000, pp. 1-3). Drawing on the theories of Gilles Deleuze (1986) and Henri Bergson (1988), the particular focus of Marks' work is on the ways that diasporic

filmmakers have depicted cultural memories through multi-sensory appeals. The focus of intercultural cinema is also the author and the text.

Accented cinema also shares likenesses with Deleuze and Guattari's concept of minor literature. Its root is parallel to their definition of 'minor literature' as "the literature a minority makes in a major language", and that "language is affected with a high coefficient of deterritorialization." Language in minor literature becomes a mode of discourse characterized by the "deterritorialization of language", "connection of the individual to a political immediacy", and "collective assemblage of enunciation" (1986, p. 18). As noted by Deleuze, Guattari and Brinkley (1983), "The desire to de-code or to deterritorialize seems particularly crucial for minorities who want to remain minorities and affirm perspectives that are not those of the culture they inhabit" (p. 13). This desire to imagine a cultural space in diaspora and the movement from nomad to a territory that occurs within this space is empowering for the minority creative authors working in any sector within the culture and creative industry.

Since the 1990s, several scholars in film studies have discussed the underpinning concepts of exilic and diasporic perspective and experience as the creative impetus for cultural expression and production. For example, Trinh Minh-ha's films, books and articles are informed by the cultural politics of representation as a result of her diasporic marginality. Even though her discussions are mainly based on the concept of gender, her ideas are rooted in the status and position of being diasporic and what it means with reference to representation (Trinh, 1991). Likewise, Kobena Mercer (1990) mentions that the "diaspora perspective" in Black independent filmmaking in the UK has a critical capability and possibility to "expose and illuminate the sheer heterogeneity of the diverse social forces always repressed into the margin by the monologism of dominant discourses" (p. 66). Similarly, Teshome H. Gabriel (1988) writes about black independent cinema as 'nomadic', as this cinema reflects the experience of marginalization and the state of deterritorialisation, looking back at African ancestors and roots.[40]

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[40] Other terms and concepts that can be placed in a dialogue with diasporic cinema include 'impure cinema' (e.g. *Impure Cinema: Intermedial and Intercultural Approaches to Film* edited by Lucia

In their seminal study on the Eurocentric and/or Western discourse of dominant media and film, *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media* (first published in 1994, 2nd edition in 2014), Ellah Shohat and Robert Stam problematised and interrogated the narrative and cinematic strategies, forms, and styles which have predominantly "privileged Eurocentric perspectives" throughout history, and emphasised the need to look at "alternative texts and practices" (p. 7). Combining discursive histories with textual analysis, they, therefore, focused on films and media which engage with multiculturalism, and debates concerning 'racism', 'colonialist discourse', 'the Third and Fourth Worlds', 'postcoloniality' and 'Eurocentrism' – amongst which there were several references to diasporic films – which were predominantly films about exile. Shohat and Stam also contemplated on the nature of 'cross-cultural spectatorship' in their final chapter "The Politics of Multiculturalism in the Post-modern Age" and argued that similar to the media texts which have been Eurocentric in cultural representations of minorities, film/media spectatorship can:

> shape an imperial imaginary […but] there is nothing inherent in either celluloid or apparatus that makes spectatorship *necessarily* regressive. The strong 'subject effects' produced by narrative cinema are not automatic or irresistible, nor can they be separated from the desire, experience, and knowledge of historically situated spectators, constituted outside the text and traversed by sets of power relations such as nation, race, class, gender, and sexuality. (p. 347)

Although a spectator for Shohat and Stram, like other (diasporic) cinema scholars, is a textual, an imagined viewer or audience (a theoretical proposition and not the actual/real viewer), their emphasis on a spectator as a racially and ethnically embodied and historically situated register or existence is valuable, particularly within film theories as they have often "elided questions of racially and culturally inflected spectatorship" (1994, p. 347). The audience reception of this thesis has

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Nagib and Anne Jerslev [2013]), and 'crossover cinema' (e.g. *Crossover Cinema: Cross-cultural Film from Production to Reception* edited by Sukhmani Khorana [2013]).

aimed to respond to this gap in the film scholarship within cross-cultural contexts (see Chapter 7 and 8).

Since the publication of Naficy's book in 2001, there have been sporadic changes in the global flows of migration, diaspora and multiculturalism, and also of communication and technology which have enhanced and invigorated an enormous diversity of diasporic creative practices in various host regions. Increasingly, the worldwide dispersal of media artifacts operates in parallel with the dispersal of human beings, and the steady growth of ethno-cultural diasporas (Karim, 2003). In other words, the main tenet of accented cinema as "liminal subjectivity and interstitial location in society and the film industry" (Naficy, 2001, p. 10), may not cover the depth and breadth of the multiplicity that exists in various aspects of film texts as well as filmmaking and cinematic practices across diasporas all over the world. If we deconstruct Naficy's model of accented cinema into its disparate components and attempt to identify them in various films and genres, we can effortlessly find many films that incorporate one or more features of accented cinema. In other words, the only cinema that is unaccented or without an accent is the dominant cinema, assumed to be Hollywood. On the other hand, if we take the main tenet and underpinning key point in accented cinema, which Naficy continuously places emphasis on, as the displacement of the filmmaker and his/her "liminal subjectivity and interstitial location in society and the film industry" (Naficy, 2001, p. 10), we find that, unlike other categories of cinema that are structured first and foremost based on the film, accented cinema comes to birth on the basis of its 'author' or the filmmaker whose migration and diaspora nurtures the film's diegesis.

Asuman Suner (2006) in "Outside in: 'accented cinema' at large" argues that the cinematic styles and thematic preoccupations of films discussed by Naficy as 'accented cinema' overlap with many examples of World Cinema that are also often categorised under national cinemas. Through looking at three film texts, Suner's observation and analysis suggest that "unless the mutual entanglement between exilic/diasporic filmmaking and national cinema is disclosed, the notion of 'accented cinema' will not be sufficiently able to realize its critical potential" (p. 363). What Suner's analysis does not take into consideration is the concept of

diaspora itself at the core of accented/diasporic cinema; it informs all aspects of the film and filmmaking process – from the filmmaker's state of mind and incentives, to the film's diegesis, to the film's exhibition, etc. Suner, for instance, argues that journeying as a thematic trope in accented cinema can be found in the narrative structure of numerous films from World Cinema and national cinemas. It is evident that at the heart of diaspora resides an image of a journey, but "not every journey can be understood as diaspora […] [D]iasporic journeys are essentially about settling down, about putting roots 'elsewhere'" (Brah, 1996, p. 182). Therefore, a journey in diasporic films is not a temporary sojourn we commonly refer to; it originates from the historicised journeys of people and communities. Similarly, the World Cinema directors' "troubled experience of belonging and cultural identity" based on Suner's analysis cannot be identified with the displacement, deterritorialisation and migratory background of diasporic filmmakers, their diasporic subjectivity and consciousness from which the films emerge. Problematically, Suner takes the concept of accented cinema as a series of disparate components and characteristics and attempts to identify *a few* of those in the three films she discusses as World Cinema. More fundamentally, I would stress the importance of considering diasporic cinema as a holistic concept where the components and features are moulded, cultivated and sustained by diasporisation and migration.

In a similar approach, Karina Nikunen (2011) agrees with Suner (2006) and argues that while the Swedish television series *Kniven i Hjärtat* (2004) "shares elements of Naficy's (2001) concept of 'the accented cinema' thematically and linguistically, the production of the series parts from Naficy's understanding of the accented as alternative" (p. 47). She emphasises that because *Kniven i Hjärtat* is produced by "the public service broadcasting company (SVT), [it] is situated in the mainstream media influenced by international television broadcasting, most evidently by the BBC" (p. 47). Like Suner, Nikunen separates the components of accented cinema and examines, for instance, the "depictions of loss and hope" as "accented themes", and "multilinguality [which] may appear as a minor detail [in accented cinema] [...] as a notable dimension of the theory" (Nikunen, 2011, p. 49). Furthermore, both Suner and Nikunen criticise Naficy's accented cinema for its overemphasis on 'author-biographical definition'. In addition to criticising Naficy's framework in

terms of both text and production, Nikunen "considers recognition by audiences as one of the essential dimensions in discussion of accented cultural texts", something which Naficy has overlooked (p. 58). Although she does not discuss the reasons and details underpinning the latter criticism, her reception study among migrant teenagers, who watched this TV series as one of the programmes discussed in their media studies classes, is valuable in terms of highlighting the cultural meanings migrant audiences make.

There are not many studies that have substantially researched and conceptualised a specific diasporic cinema. One early example is *Cinemas of the Black Diaspora: Diversity, Dependence, and Oppositionality* edited by Michael T. Martin (1995), which provides a survey of cinematic traditions, politics of screen, ideologies and representations, and film practices in the black diaspora in Europe, North America and the Third World. In a more recent publication on the black diaspora, *Contact Zones: Memory, Origin, and Discourses in Black Diasporic Cinema,* Sheila Petty (2008) examines the aesthetic and narrative concerns of the selected black diasporic films in relation to 'black diasporic concepts' such as "racism, globalization, hybridity, transnationalism and gender" (p. 7). Petty structures each chapter based on a close reading of the film under discussion, hoping to illuminate the complexities of the diversity of 'black diasporic experiences'. Rueschmann's (2003) *Moving Pictures, Migrating Identities* examines how cinema has imagined the experience of migration and displacement and cross-cultural identities. Another book that takes a particular direction in diasporic cinema studies is Jigna Desai's (2004) *Beyond Bollywood: The Cultural Politics of South Asian Diasporic Film*. Using a feminist and queer perspective, Desai explores the hybrid cinema of the 'Brown Atlantic' through a close reading of films in English from and about South Asian diasporas in North America and Britain. Desai looks at South Asian productions and demonstrates the centrality of cinema to the formation of South Asian diasporas in North America and Britain. Her aim is to theorise the gender, sexual, and racial formations of diaspora through the production, circulation, and reception of diasporic films.

One recent example of a study that has looked at a group of migrant and diasporic cinemas is the book *European Cinema in Motion: Migrant and Diasporic Film in*

Contemporary Europe edited by Daniela Berghahn and Claudia Sternberg (2010), which set out to study developments in the field of migrant and diasporic cinema in contemporary Europe over the last thirty years. Their research project is based on the premise that "migrant and diasporic cinema addresses questions of identity formation, challenges national and ethnocentric myths, and revisits and revises traditional historical narratives" (Berghahn & Sternberg, 2010, p. 2). *European Cinema in Motion* aims to explore the ways the periphery has impacted the centre. Their conceptualisation is in line with Shohat and Stam's seminal study *Unthinking Eurocentrism* (1994), which argues that "multicultural media studies constitute a critique of Eurocentrism" (p. 4). Berghahn and Sternberg argue that migrant and diasporic cinema in Europe have brought about what they conceptualise as "the World Cinema turn in European Cinema … [Their concept] move[s] away from the national to the regional and from models of centre and periphery to a more democratic world of cinemas" (pp. 3-4). By 'World Cinema turn', however, they do not mean to parallel diasporic cinema with World Cinema, as Suner attempted to do.

Within the Australasian context, the book *Diasporas of Australian Cinema* edited by Catherine Simpson, Renata Murawska, and Anthony Lambert (2009) looks at the diasporic cinematic tradition in Australia. Mainly through engaging with the film texts and representations (and in some instances with the filmmakers' biographies and perspectives), the book utilises the national focus of the concept of diaspora to examine diasporic cinema in Australia. Through its national framework focus (which is a common paradigm in discussions on diaspora), the book challenges prevailing ideas of Australian multiculturalism and the concept that it specifies, using the medium of film by diasporic and migrant communities. In another recent publication on diasporic cinemas in Australia, *Transnational Australian Cinemas: Ethics in the Asian Diasporas*, Olivia Khoo, Belinda Smaill and Audrey Yue (2013) explore the concept of Asian Australian cinema through three themes of history, policy and ethics. In this book, the authors continue to use the definition of Asian Australian cinema they provided in 2008 in *Australasian Studies of Cinema*: "a body of films produced by Australians working in Asia's film industries, by Australians of Asian descent and films producing images of Asians in Australian films" (p. 97; see also Khoo, Smaill & Yue, 2013, p. 12). Although in

their recent book, they undoubtedly enhance their discussions about the powerful presence of Asia in the economics of the region, the point that can be usefully raised with regard to their proposed definition is whether Asian Australian cinema still remains 'diasporic'. While they have emphasised that this cinema is "crucially, [...] a diasporic and thus transnational cinema" (2008, p. 97), films made by 'Australians working in Asia's film industry' may not necessarily be characterised as diasporic, given the filmmakers' (diasporic) affiliations and relation to the host country in which they reside and work – which is in Asia.

Within the Australiasian context, we also come across studies by Olivia Khoo on representations of Asians in several significant Australian films. Khoo argues that the cinematic encounter between Asians and Australians in these examples has ended in "the sacrifice of [the] Asian character" (Khoo, 2006, p. 45). In another article, she examines three Australian films as examples of "an emergent 'Asian Australian cinema'" in which "techniques of realism [are utilised] to build an authenticity of experience for spectators, unfamiliar with seeing portrayals of Asian Australian on screen" (Khoo, 2008, p. 141). Using similar textual analysis, Meg Johnston (2008) examines the concepts of 'whiteness' and 'otherness' through analysing "formal and narrative elements" in Clara Law's film *Letter to Ali*. In some other studies, there is also an emphasis within the textual or production analysis of diasporic films on the ways policy shifts in Australia have influenced Asian Australian filmmaking (Khoo, 2008).

In studies that have examined diasporic cinema – several examples of which discussed above – there is a tendency to place diasporic film always within a national framework and interpret it either with reference to nostalgic (be)longing for home and origin, or with the disjunctures and contradictions of the politically, socially and culturally displaced. More importantly for the direction this thesis has taken, we can observe a trend in such studies where scholars primarily focus on preoccupations with matters and discussions related to the aesthetic and stylistics features of the film *text*, and sometimes combined with discussion of the *filmmakers* and their perspectives, and to a lesser degree with *modes of production* and filmmaking practices. In addition to exploring the filmmakers and their renditions of displacement and displaced lives in the West and the ways their personal

experiences translate into the film and filmmaking practices, in such studies there are also references to consumption, spectators or audiences of diasporic film and cinema. The manner of such references, however, is limited to an assumed, idealised, or imagined spectator – a position inferred from a textual analysis alone (a good example is Khoo's studies). In other words, the 'spectator' or the film audience is only a theoretical proposition.[41] Naficy takes a similar approach to audiences in accented cinema, and also refers to "consumption of this cinema […] as mode of production for convenience" (2001, p. 40). I will discuss the literature on audience receptions of diasporic texts in the next section.

Receptions of Diasporic Films

In this section, I discuss the major reception and audience traditions and models, firstly to show from where I started thinking about understanding the reception of diasporic films, and secondly to identify and discuss the areas I am interested in exploring with regard to diasporic films in this thesis. Considering a variety of approaches, models and traditions, I have been provoked to focus on (and develop) a concept of the diasporic film audience from a pragmatic theory of meaning, following the lead of diverse theoretical traditions which are based on one key principle: "meaning is not inherent in the film signs or texts themselves, but is constructed by spectators in accordance with context-dependent conventions" (Gripsrud & Lavik, 2008, p. 455).

Major Debates in Reception and Audience Studies

The major debates in media audience studies have occurred in four major areas: 'being audiences', 'theorizing audiences', 'researching audiences' and 'doing audience research' (Nightingale, 2011).[42] Looking at the range of audience and reception studies (see Bertrand & Hughes, 2005; Butsch & Livingstone, 2014;

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[41] The term 'audience' and its conceptual equivalents such as 'viewer', 'reader', 'spectator', and also the idea of consumption, can refer to different groups in different contexts within audience reception studies.

[42] These are the main four sections in Nightingale's book.

Hansen & David, 2013), we find that there are two broad kinds of audience research undertaken. The first approach, commonly described as institution research, is when the audience researcher gathers knowledge for large-scale communication institutions about people's habits, tastes, beliefs and dispositions. This approach enables media corporations to target certain audience groups and also provides useful knowledge for advertisers and broadcasters (see Arvidsson, 2011; Napoli, 2011). The second kind of audience research centres on the contemporary interest in the interpretive [43] activity of the audience (Stevenson, 2002), as different audiences' perceptions of media messages could be radically different from the meaning intended by their producers. There are many approaches within the interpretive paradigm: media effects research, which discusses what measurable effects media have on the audience or what media does to audiences; George Gerbner's cultivation theory in the 1970s and its account of how media effect can distort an individual's ideology; Hall's encoding and decoding model and David Morley's (1980) 'active audience model' which focuses on the interpretive capacity and viewing contexts of the television audience; John Fiske's research on the pleasures of popular culture (1989); Sue Turnbull's 'Imagining Audiences' (2010); Ien Ang's research on watching *Dallas* (1985), and Gray's study (1999) within a framework of feminist theory and audience studies (focusing on women's pleasure in watching soap operas and romance).[44]

Studies which have focused on *film and TV audience/viewer[45]* have been embedded and incorporated in various forms and structures in the above audience research paradigms and approaches. For instance, within the first major kind of audience research, there are many studies which look at audiences as a market and investigate the demographic composition of the audience for a film or television programme by looking at the film's box office or television ratings in different local and international locations. Examples include the BBC's ratings of soap opera and

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[43] The second kind of audience research derives from James Carey's (1989) idea – the 'interpretive turn' in audience research.

[44] Another approach is 'uses and gratifications research' such as 'fan culture' which focuses on what people do with media (e.g. Jenkins, 1992).

[45] In this research, I use the terms 'viewer' and 'audience' in my discussions of the reception of diasporic films. The term 'spectator' is avoided for its long-standing connection to the theories of film as textual form.

women's viewing patterns, or surveys conducted by large companies such as Nielson and Arbitron on the size and socio-demographic breakdown of radio and television audiences, which are used to decide whether primarily to set advertising rates, or continue to make a programme and what narrative or ideological direction to take in the future. The large-scale, multi-country, long-term research undertaken by the global marketing agency now called Y&R (see http://www.yr.com/) came up with the audience classification system, for instance.

The earlier debates on the film audience go back to the time of the dominance of screen theory and textual analysis, in which film was primarily a textual form. One focus has been on the ways in which the viewer begins to be drawn into a particular relationship with the screen through screen style and aesthetics. This was a result of contributions made by bringing psychoanalysis to film studies. The Marxist perspective on film as a potent medium for changing people's way of thinking has been dominant, and focuses on the ways film can direct the audiences to perceive the world in certain ways. An approach developed by the Neo-Marxist theorist, Louis Althusser (1970) in his essay 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses' (known as Apparatus Theory) has been used in understanding the ways the audience is interpolated or 'hailed' by the text through identifying with specific textual elements and consequently through becoming its main 'subject'. The key aspect in these approaches is that the audience or viewer is always imagined and treated as a generalised textual construct, rather than empirically or ethnographically approached and investigated.

One prevalent and enduring film audience research approach is based on the social context within which the reception of films takes place. The emphasis on the inter-textual context is, therefore, concerned with the ways in which films are framed for audiences. This approach originally comes from the 'social turn' in audience research, which directed attention away from the film text in Film Studies towards the conditions of cinema/film-going itself (Mayer, 1948, cited in Christie, 2012, pp. 17-18; see Barker & Brookes, 1998; Staiger, 2000). Investigating the activities of audiences in the place where film is watched can offer a compelling analysis within a social context (see Jancovich, Faire & Stubbings, 2003; Lealand, 2013).

A further series of major debates takes place within the ethnography of film audiences, involving work that examines audiences' own accounts of their relationship to film (e.g. Murphy, 2002; Nightingale, 1996; Peterson, 2008). "The term 'ethnographic' gives the work connotations which include cultural, community-based, empirical, and phenomenal" (Nightingale, 1996, p. 113). This group of studies can be categorised under a Cultural Studies approach (e.g. Hall's encoding/decoding model) in audience research, which has been utilised by numerous scholars as a way of analysing and understanding audiences' responses to a film/screen text. One example of this approach is to look at responses to a text by focusing on local, small-scale and discrete groups of people who share some social or political formations. Within a Cultural Studies approach, audiences are conceived of in two main ways: a) audiences as 'citizens' where the main questions concern 'agency' – who has power over the dissemination of information within society?, and b) audiences as 'consumers', where the main questions concern 'pleasure' – how is taste formed and desire satisfied by a commercial media industry? (Bertrand & Hughes, 2005; Hansen & David, 2013). In the Cultural Studies approach, the analysis centres on the audience's behaviour both as an individuated viewer and as a collective of people. The focus in this approach is to better describe and understand the viewer's responses to the film. Therefore, the importance of particular life experiences and the social attitudes viewers bring with them to the viewing experience become important.

Reception Studies and Diasporic film

As so far discussed, there are many concepts and approaches that can be employed to understand media and film audiences (see Morley, 2006). Couldry (2006) reminds us that in any audience research, "accumulating evidence about how people read or engage with this or that text is not, by itself, enough unless it contributes to our understanding of how they act in the social and personal world, with or *without* reference to media" (p. 188). In my research, audiences are approached as citizens, not as commercial units, and are analysed within culture-society-identity perspectives. Therefore, from a broader perspective, I place this research under one of the four impetuses for empirical research into audiences which focuses on the

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questions that can be usefully formed and discussed about 'culture, politics and identity'. This approach "examines how the media might frame public understandings and citizenship *and* how people use media texts and objects in negotiating interpersonal power relationships or developing identities, pleasures and fantasies" (Kitzinger, 2004, p. 169). As Kitzinger notes, defining the impetus behind certain research questions assists in reflecting on the aims of a specific audience research project and the perspective(s) from which the audience is being approached. It is important to note that the primary concern of this study is the reception of the text and not the context and place of viewing.

In the 'cultural turn' within Screen/Film Studies, which occurred some decades ago, "film no longer stands as a body of textual materials or a particular signifying practice. It stands instead as a locus of sociocultural history or a site for the examination of sociocultural change" (Turner, 2008, p. 282). Given my interest in conceptualising Asian New Zealand films as manifestations of social-cultural change in New Zealand society and nation, the audience in my research is approached as a site for socio-cultural meanings in relation to both the changing face of New Zealand society as a culturally diverse nation, and the ways in which audiences' interactions and understandings of textual depictions of themselves correlate with the various characteristics of diasporic films. Diasporic films vary in their political, creative and social aims, communicative strategies, media technologies, the conditions which give rise to their production, their positionings as commercial or non-commercial enterprises, professionalism, and lifespan. Diasporic media and film are not "necessarily radical, but fulfil for their audiences a fairly significant social and political role […] They are both locally and globally produced and consumed by diasporic and migrant groups" (Baily, Cammaerts & Carpentier, 2007, p. 63). This, however, does not mean that diasporic audiences are the targeted audiences for diasporic films, or the only groups who watch, listen to or interact with them.

As already explained, I had no intention of measuring or classifying the audiences of Asian diasporic films in New Zealand, since whether those films have reached New Zealand audiences or not largely depends on the distribution and exhibition of the films and constraints and challenges in their production. Indeed, diasporic

audiences may represent, in some instances, a minor sector of the overall audiences such as the consumption of the film *My Wedding and Other Secrets* (Liang, 2011) among European New Zealanders. Thus, the question that interests me is based on the interactions and encounters that occur between the diasporic film and the diasporic audience; the viewing experience becomes an opportunity for the audience to engage with the cultural and social meanings and significance of the films, with which she/he finds affinities and kinship, both sharing the experience of displacement and diaspora. I take as my premise that the ways diasporic films – through their depiction of diasporic perspectives, narratives and experience in New Zealand – can resonate with the diasporic audience's imaginary constitute essential dimensions of these diasporic cultural productions. Furthermore, they also fulfil for diasporic audiences a significant social and cultural (and perhaps political) role (see Baily, Cammaerts & Carpentier, 2007). Thus, I found it paramount to consider diasporic audiences' understandings, perceptions, and position-takings with regard to Asian New Zealand film. Diasporic audiences' concomitant meaning-makings around the film texts not only manifest an understanding of migrant and diasporic people's lives and experiences in this society, but also reveal the ideological nuances and meanings that diasporic films may convey within a wider context of the society.

Diasporic Audiences

Although debates about media's role and media representation in immigrant nations continue, the complexities of media consumption of diasporic communities have given rise to foregrounding questions which move beyond the national and cultural boundaries of both the host society and its diasporic communities. Stuart Cunningham (2001) has provided a conceptual model for the diasporic audience,[46] which describes diasporic audiences as occupying 'public sphericules', which are narrowcast media environments. These discrete audience formations constitute "ethno-specific global mediatised communities [… which] display in microcosm elements we would expect to find in the public sphere" (Cunningham, 2001, p. 134).

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[46] Cunningham's idea of the diasporic audience is based on the work Arjun Appadurai (1996) and Todd Gitlin (1998).

They are perceived as "social fragments that do not have critical mass" within the host nations' media environments (ibid).

These public 'sphericules' are not always formed around diasporic media. In fact, diasporic communities for the most part consume homeland and transnational media which may not be characterised as having diasporic content or produced by diasporic media producers. The question that arises here is that how homeland media orientation of diasporic communities may affect their sense of integration into their host societies. Considering the cultural practices of diasporic communities are commonly seen as "a struggle for survival, identity and assertion" (Cunningham, 2001, p. 136), the lack of representation of diasporic communities in public sphere of host societies such as New Zealand have implications around the ways research on diasporic audiences should be approached. This was the path my reception study of Asian New Zealand films aimed to pursue and explore.

In a recent publication, *Audience Research Methodologies: Between Innovation and Consolidation*, Cola and Brusa (2013) suggest, that "The changes occurring in societies require media researchers to turn their attention to ethnic minority groups as audiences" (p. 107). One such group of ethnic minority audiences comprises of diasporic communities, whose complex relationship with and consumption of media of varied origin potentially sheds light on the place and significance of media in contemporary everyday life. As Harindranath (2006a) also points out, while studies on the role and content of media and the public sphere in multicultural democratic societies continue "to make very significant contributions to the on-going debates [...], the audience perspective remains relatively under-explored in such studies" (par.1).[47] The current literature on ethnic minority and/or diasporic audiences is dominated by discussions of aspects of migrants' media consumption in relation to the media produced in their homeland, the host country or by resident members of the diaspora, or within larger transnational and global media

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[47] Harindranath's (2003) critique of Tamar Liebes and Elihu Katz's (1991) popular study of cross-cultural readings of *Dallas* has identified a problem in audience research working within cross-cultural contexts: the problem lies in reducing audience respondents to their ethnic identities. The work of Harindranath (2000, 2005, 2009, 2012) has informed a research proposal which I developed last year, focusing on both ethnic and non-ethnic audiences of New Zealand's screen media. This project will be pursued after the thesis is complete.

frameworks (Aksoy & Robins, 2000, 2003; Christiansen, 2004; Cunninghame & Sinclair, 2001; Gillespie, 2003; Karim, 2003; Kolar-Panov, 1997; Naficy, 1993; Robins & Aksoy, 2006; Serberny, 2000).

Existing scholarly work on media and migrant audiences approaches viewers in diaspora in several different ways, reflecting the rather broad field of investigation currently evident within media reception studies. Of particular note is the intense concentration by two groups of Belgian scholars who have conducted studies of news media perceptions among diasporic and ethnic minority groups of Turkish and Moroccan descent in Flanders (Devroe, 2004), and the consumption of diasporic film and cinema audiences among Turkish and Indian migrants in Antwerp (Smets, Vandevelde, Meers, Winkel & Bauwel, 2011, 2012). Other scholarship in this area includes Robins and Aksoy's (2006) study of transnational television viewing among migrants of Turkish origin in Britain, Malik's (2013) research on the effect of film on cultural identity and community among diasporas in the UK, Oh's (2013) study of second generation Korean American fans of Korean (homeland) transnational media, Budarick's (2013) investigation into the complex nature of the relationship between Iranian-Australians and their consumption of Iranian media and the global Iranian diaspora, Georgiou's (2006) study of media consumption amongst Greek/Greek Cypriot communities in London and New York City and the roles of diasporic media in the construction of identity and community, and Athique's (2011) investigation of both mainstream and diasporic audiences, highlighting the consumption of Indian films among diasporas in Australia. Another notable reception research which took place within a diasporic context is Marie Gillespie's (1995) ethnographic study of television consumption among diasporic Punjabi youth in London. Linking their consumption practices to cultural change and identities, she argued that "the media and cultural consumption – the production, 'reading' and use of representations – play a key role in constructing and defining, contesting and reconstructing national, 'ethnic' and other cultural identities" (p. 11). Gillespie (1995) conceptualised "ethnicity in the sense of array of strategic positionings in the field of differences, and [as] a dynamic concept of culture" (p. 207). Overall, the literature of diasporic groups and the media have explored the links between their use of media and the collective identities of such groups.

Important as these studies are, I believe that it is also essential to focus on the complex relationship that exists between the diasporic text and the diasporic viewer, and to approach the migrant audience member as "someone who can reflect on his or her experience of and position in society, of 'being oneself'" (Cohen, 1994, p. 65). Based on the available literature, it is evident that little attention has been paid to the complex relationship between diasporic audiences and their interaction with diasporic films in meaning-making. In this research, I am particularly interested in migrant and/or diasporic audiences' *modes of engagement* with diasporic films, as a way of examining and understanding what these audiences think of these films and representations and the narratives they offer. I argue that the ways the audiences engage with such cultural products can provide us with social and cultural trajectories of their understandings of themselves in their new society. Furthermore, to establish a relationship between the diasporic subject, the author and the text in conceptualising Asian New Zealand film, I found it imperative to understand the strategic positionings deployed by the respondents, in which diasporic subjects or migrants engage with diasporic films. In diasporic cinema, this linkage has primarily been defined and conceptualised in relation to the diasporic author and the text, but not the audience. It is this absence in the scholarship that my research seeks to address.

To research the engagement of (diasporic) viewers with diasporic films, I conducted a qualitative, reception-centred empirical investigation, which will be explained in the next chapter: The Research Methodology.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology

This research set out to develop the concept of Asian New Zealand film, working from the premise that it is necessary to include inquiries into the modes of film production as well as film reception as part of a broader investigation into the meanings and messages of diasporic films. The thesis is, therefore, structured based on a tripartite methodological approach focusing on the three phases in the creation of cultural and social meanings – 'production, text, and reception'. This chapter presents the research paradigm and design for the thesis, data sources and methods of data collection. The thesis is based on a 'PhD with Publication' scheme, and therefore the methodological considerations of the research have been partially attuned to matters related to the placement of the articles for publication. The structure of the thesis as PhD with Publication will be further discussed in the final section of the chapter.

Guba and Lincoln (1994) define a research paradigm as "a set of *basic beliefs* (or metaphysics) that deals with ultimate or first principles. It represents a *worldview* that defines, for its holder, the nature of the "world", the individual's place in it, and the range of possible relationships to that world and its parts" (p. 107). The purpose of a paradigm is to assist us in understanding an event, issue or phenomenon in a systematic way so that it can become more understandable. In a similar vein, Bogdan and Biklen (2007) describe a paradigm as "a loose collection of logically related assumptions, concepts, or propositions that orient thinking and research" (p. 24). There are generally five main paradigms in social sciences and media related research: Positivist and/or Post-positivist, Interpretivist, Systems and/or Transformative, Critical Theory, and Pragmatic and/or Functionalist (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006; Weerakkody, 2009). The research paradigm of this thesis follows the overall approach of a systematic exploration, observation and inquiry, analysis, generalisation and prediction. The purpose of my study is to explore, examine and understand various aspects of a group of diasporic filmmakers and their films in New Zealand cinema and society. In attempting to capture the depth and breadth of the films, filmmakers and their realities as well as film viewers' multiple experiences and understandings of such films, this study resides

within the interpretivist paradigm, and to a lesser degree within the critical theory paradigm. The basic principle of the interpretivist paradigm is that we obtain knowledge through interpretation of human subjects and action. It is based on an epistemological perspective of constructionism that defines reality as socially constructed and asserts that there is probably no coherent objective reality, or that there is a reality separate from our perceptions but these structure our understanding of it (Mertens, 2010). The interpretivist paradigm:

> sees the social world or human experience as different from the natural world (in common with the critical paradigm, and as opposed to the systems traditions) [and] argues that this difference is due to the human capacity for reflection or the ability to look at themselves as in a mirror or through other peoples' eyes. (Weerakkody, 2009, p. 27)

The interpretivist paradigm used in my research assumes that filmmakers, films, and viewers as meaning-making bodies may make different meanings of the same event, issue or phenomenon because of the complex and nuanced relationships that may exist between them; their cultural differences as a person or a group, the differences that exist in terms of agency, and the relationships they develop with one another and in different contexts.

The paradigm of critical theory or critical inquiry is used when the researcher examines data collected in order to understand the ideologies and power relations in the society or a given situation. The researcher aims to point out "what is wrong or unfair with them, and who benefits from the current situation, and tries to make positive changes in society to benefit everyone, especially those who are powerless, marginalised and negatively affected" (Weerakkody, 2009, p. 29). The researcher also needs to be aware of the viewpoint of those who are involved in the research project and to voice their concerns and predicaments. Though I did not intend to place the research within the critical inquiry paradigm, the nature of the research in being based on diaspora theories and, therefore, revolving around topics of race, ethnicity, class, gender, migrants, minority groups, and related concepts embedded a critical paradigm which indirectly or directly foregrounded a critical reflection on the representation and visibility of the Asian diaspora and their cultural production

and expression in New Zealand. It is important to note here that the research had no intention to make generalisations that certain groups of people, cultural products and practices are marginalised or peripheral. Placing the research within an interpretivist paradigm and to a lesser degree the critical inquiry paradigm helped reveal the values embedded in the New Zealand social structure and also assisted me to look into the realities, experiences, and themes that emerged from the data and to observe various aspects of them, without needing to make judgements and evaluations.

The research design was initially formulated based on the overall research method of grounded theory. The grounded theory method does not rely on making a hypothesis at the beginning of the research; rather it starts with collecting data through a variety of methods. From the data collected for this research, the key points were identified and marked with a series of codes, such as community, self, multiculturalism, cultural negotiation, religiosity, etc. The codes were categorised into similar concepts through a constant comparison of key points. Then, the relationships between categories emerged, which became the basis for the creation of the concepts (Bryman, 2008). The following is a diagram that illustrates the initial research design of this study in 2011 before taking up the PhD with Publication model. The structure of the research design has not changed in the course of the study; however, based on my analysis and also research findings, some components of the 'Conceptual Paradigm: Asian New Zealand Cinema' has found more importance with regard to diasporic audiences. These components will be discussed in Chapter 8 through a synthesis of some of the findings of the five articles and one book chapter this thesis has presented, particularly in relation to the theoretical literature in Chapter 3.

Figure 4. 1: *Research design in 2011*

Case studies are considered an appropriate mode of reporting in the qualitative research paradigm. Crowe et al. (2011) define a case study as "a research approach that is used to generate an in-depth, multi-faceted understanding of a complex issue in its real-life context" (para. 4). This thesis did not employ a case study approach as where, for instance, the researcher looks into a particular case thoroughly and does an in-depth analysis of the case to explore the underlying concepts, and then also compares or contrasts this case with other cases within the research project (Gerring, 2005; George & Bennett, 2009). The structure of the thesis within a PhD with Publication scheme, as well as considerations relating to the placement of the articles in various journals and books, encouraged me to employ a case study approach more centrally *within* the discussions of each article and based on the article's own central inquiry, and to a lesser sense in the overall structure of the whole thesis. The individual case studies were shaped around the main tropes that emerged from the research data, with the aim of capturing multiple realities and experiences of the current body of Asian New Zealand film. The thesis particularly shaped discussions around three main recent feature films and their filmmakers from the three substantive Asian diasporic communities in New Zealand (Chinese, Indian and Korean). From the Chinese community I selected *My Wedding and*

Other Secrets (2011), written and directed by Roseanne Liang; from the Indian community I chose *Apron Strings* (2008), co-written by Shuchi Kothari and Diane Taylor and directed by Sima Urale; and from the Korean community I used *Desert* (2010), written and directed by Stephen Kang.

This research assumes a 'circuit of communication' or 'circuit of culture' between the author/maker, the text, and the viewer as the basis of its methodological framework. The model of the 'circuit of communication' (Johnson, 1986), or Hall's 'encoding and decoding model' and 'circuit of culture' (1980), signifies that meanings are created at every moment of the circuit – "production, circulation, distribution/consumption, [and cultural] reproduction" (Hall, 1980, p. 128). Meanings are never truly fixed, and are "always being negotiated and inflected, to resonate with new situations" in relation to various processes that may be involved in the cultural transmission of meanings (Hall, 1997, p. 10). The 'circuit of culture' suggested in the seminal book *Production of Culture/Cultures of Production* (1997) emphasises that meaning-making should be understood as "a model of dialogue. It is an ongoing process" (p. 10). In Cultural Studies, one major entry point of this model of dialogue is 'text', which refers not only to the written word, but to "all practices that signify"; in other words, the generation of meanings is embedded in images, sounds, objects, narratives, and activities or in forms of representation (Barker, 2008, p. 11). Meaning is thus collectively produced – hence, it is a conversation (discourse). This means that whilst an event might occur in 'reality', it has no (defined) meaning outside of representation:

> Representation is the production of the meaning of the concepts in our minds through language. It is the link between concepts and language which enables us to *refer* to either the 'real' world of objects, people or events, or indeed to the imaginary worlds of fictional objects, people and events. (Hall, 1997, p. 17)

Media representations are part and parcel of the circuit of communication. In other words, representations (the system of representation or discourse) is constitutive of meaning. Therefore, reality is always subject to the arena of representation. In this

way and according to the communicative circuit, representation creates meaning through the interaction of three elements:

1. the conscious production of the message;
2. the language system within which the message operates; and
3. the 'conceptual maps' in the minds of the receivers of the message (Hall 1997, p. 18)

The circuit of communication in the case of a film, for instance, incorporates the productive processes involved in writing the script and making the film, which are influenced by numerous internal and external constraints and the personnel involved, and so on. Then we have the film text itself – a symbolic representation through images, sound, narrative and words; then the consumption of the text by viewers who may come from different backgrounds and life experiences, who bring all that into their viewing experience, interaction with, and understanding of the film, and also finally the integration of those meanings into individuals' private lives, moments and stories. Then the cycle begins again and people's daily lives, moments and stories provide the raw materials for a new film. In any form, structure or context, diasporisation can affect different stages and components of the circuit of communication and adds to the nuances, complexities and distinctions of the relationships between maker, text and viewer. The thesis, therefore, is presented in three parts: in the first instance, the focus is on filmmakers and film production (diasporic authors); secondly, the film text (diasporic texts); and thirdly, the film viewer and reception (diasporic viewers).

Filmmakers and Filmmaking

The first part of the thesis engages with the filmmaker and filmmaking, the idea of speaking to the diasporic experience as a cultural producer, who the Asian New Zealand filmmakers are, and what is the nascent body of Asian New Zealand film. Scholars have highlighted the significance of examining "the circumstances from which a film has emerged" in studying cinema (Smith, 2010, p. 69). Therefore, the first part of the thesis also discusses issues related to the filmmaking practices of

these filmmakers and concerns related to economic resources, financial constraints and funding, the New Zealand film industry's and government's policies, and their political and social adherences. This study mainly pays attention to the Asian New Zealand filmmakers' perspectives and experiences, and the discourses they use when they talk about their filmmaking practices in New Zealand. Taking into account the main tenet of the theoretical framework of the thesis that Asian New Zealand films are diasporic, embodying characteristics of migrant cinema or 'accented cinema' (Naficy, 2001), I explored, examined and discussed how the two modes of production in 'accented cinema' – the interstitial mode and the collective mode – play out in the production processes of Asian New Zealand films.

This research uses the qualitative research method of semi-structured interviews to collect data from the filmmakers/directors/writers and the key members of (multicultural) film production from the New Zealand film industry – such as the New Zealand Film Commission (NZFC), the main film organisation and government body funded by the New Zealand government – as well as the relevant major private film companies which have produced Asian New Zealand films. Semi-structured interviews were employed to understand the filmmakers' perspectives on various aspects of their films, and also on the Asian diaspora in New Zealand in general. In addition, the secondary data include relevant information about selected films and filmmakers, such as film reviews and commentaries, and documents related to film production such as published materials available for public use by the NZFC, the NZ Film Archive, NZ On Air and Creative NZ. A range of materials available in newspapers and magazines, on websites, and other internet sources and documents provided by New Zealand film councils/institutions were also examined, as they provided the latest information on the topic.[48] Having in mind the concept of a relationship between the diasporic film and the displacement of the filmmaker within diasporic cinema, I was also interested in understanding the filmmakers' relationship to their film and its story. Therefore, the filmmakers' opinions, values, motivations, perspectives,

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[48] Because of the scarcity of these films and lack of documentation, it was not possible to retrieve the information from the early stage of scriptwriting and application for funding to post-production, exhibition and distribution. For this reason, I had to mainly rely on information from the interviews and secondary documents.

recollections, memories and experiences as members of the Asian diasporic community in New Zealand and as members of the New Zealand film industry were solicited.

The sampling method for interviews with the filmmakers, writers and producers conducted as the first part of the methodological framework was purposive sampling (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). This was for the reason that the participants were drawn from a targeted group of people in the film industry in New Zealand. As one type of non-probability sampling within qualitative research, in purposive sampling the sample size can be small and selected before and/or during the research process (Sarantakos, 2005). I conducted interviews with three groups: a) filmmakers/directors/writers, b) officials from the New Zealand film industry, and c) film producers or key members of the film companies/studios. The participants were interviewed once, with each interview lasting for 30-50 minutes, and they were audio-recorded with the participants' permission. The table below summarises the number of semi-structured interviews conducted and the names of the participants within the domain of film production involved in this research:

Table 4.1
Participants for the film production study

Types of participants				
Filmmakers/ directors/ writers	Asian New Zealanders of Chinese descent 1. Roseanne Liang 2. Helene Wong	Asian New Zealand filmmakers of Indian descent 6. Shuchi Kothari 7. Mandrika Rupa	Asian New Zealand filmmakers of Korean descent 9. Stephen Kang 10. Kiyong Park	New Zealand filmmakers that have portrayed Asian communities in their films Nil
Officials from the New Zealand film industry (such as NZFC)	3 & 4. Two participants from NZFC involved in cross-cultural production or the selected films in the category of Asian New Zealand cinema			
Producers and key members of the film companies/ studios of production	5. One participant from South Pacific Pictures [related to production of *My Wedding and Other Secrets*]	8. One participant from Nomadz Unlimited	11. One participant from Curious Film [related to production of *Desert*]	Nil

Some notes on the data collection procedure that involved the interview method are appropriate here. Interviews with participants allow researchers to gain in-depth knowledge of the subject matter and clarify issues pertinent to their research. They also allow researchers to continue with follow-ups and clarifications (Marshall, 2011). Interview types vary based on the types of questions use, which may be structured, semi structured or unstructured (Weerakkody, 2009). For the purpose of this research, semi-structured questions were used to ensure flexibility and coverage of all the important aspects of participants' views. Semi-structured interviews are appropriate when the researcher is interested in a specific topic area and is informed about the aspects and directions of the topic. The questions in this type of interview must be open-ended and should be posed to all the respondents. However, the researcher can customise the questions based on the role of the interviewee or participant in the research project. Employing semi-structured interviews provided me with the freedom and flexibility to add other questions depending on each respondent's characteristics and circumstances. This type of interview also allowed me to draw comparisons between respondents and to include additional questions to query the topic in more depth by asking the participants to further expand their answers.

Participants for the semi-structured interviews were selected based on their relevance to the topic of this research and the selected films. In the interviews, they were asked to respond to a series of semi structured questions as well as to make comments on the questions which could reflect their position in relation to the topic. They were contacted using their email addresses, and my PhD supervisors were able to facilitate contacts in some cases. Participants for interviews were invited through an invitation letter/email, or by personally meeting them to obtain their agreement to take part in this research. Then, the interview time and place was decided based on each participant's convenience and mutual agreement. Participants would read the Information Sheet (see Appendix III) and complete the consent form, which was available in two copies (see Appendix IIII) – one copy for the participant, and another was kept by me. If a potential participant did not agree to be interviewed, I would ask them to suggest other suitable participants if possible via email. In this case, the participant was swapped with other appropriate candidates for the interviews. Any follow-up took place via informal

email/conversations where necessary, and based on the participant's willingness and convenience.

Qualitative interview questions are of three types: descriptive, structural and contrast (Weerakkody, 2009, p. 168). In the interview protocol for the semi-structured interview in this research,[49] I employed the three types of interview questions collectively. Descriptive interview questions aim to find out respondents' opinions by asking them to provide a general description using their own words. "Guided grand tour" or "task-related grand tour" questions as well as "experience questions" are two types of descriptive questions. In a 'specific grand tour' question, the respondent is asked about one aspect of the topic. In an 'experience question', a respondent is asked to "recall something he or she remembers that is related to the topic under discussion" (Weerakkody, 2009, p. 169). 'Structural questions' are those seeking specific information about an area or a topic that the researcher is interested to know more about and study. 'Contrast questions' focus on making contrasts between two aspects of the topic where respondents are asked to comment using their own words (Weerakkody, 2009, p. 170). The collective protocol of interview questions helped me to compare the same points across a series of interviews to find out what they mean for different participants or informants.

A record of all the communications through the interviews and any subsequent informal email correspondence was collected. Considering the multicultural aspects of this research (it has ethnic minority informants), and that every participant's opinions count in research, it was possible that I would encounter participants who speak another language. It may be noteworthy to mention that all my interview participants could speak English and there was no need to employ an interpreter in any of the interviews.

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[49] Weerakkody (2009) explains that "postmodern interviews" should be employed if the research is based on a critical theory paradigm (pp. 181-182). This type of interview is different from other types of qualitative interviews because it aims to give voice to marginalised participants and allow them to tell their stories.

The information collected from the interviews related to film production, exhibition and access to the films as well as some historical and statistical accounts related to migration, titles of institutions and dates, which were cross-checked to ensure their accuracy.

Film Texts

The second part of the thesis examines films as texts using textual analysis and studying representations as textual generations of meaning; what specifically the narrative and subject of the film tells us about the distinctiveness of the articulation of the diasporic experience in and through film. Naficy (2001) and other scholars in diasporic cinema studies place an emphasis on the importance of the film's content, which emerges from and embodies the filmmaker's diasporic experience in accented cinema. The objects of analysis in this research comprise feature films, short films, documentaries, television series and web-series originated from, directed or written by New Zealanders of Asian descent, as well as New Zealand films which portray the Asian diasporic experience and life in New Zealand. These filmmakers were identified in the first part of the project, and their films were tracked down and collected through purchasing the DVDs if available in the market. As some of these films have been poorly distributed and are not available for the public, the filmmakers were contacted to make a request for a copy of the film for the purposes of academic research. Fortunately, I managed to collect a representative sample of film texts for analysis. The following is a list of films identified at the time of the research from which the case studies were selected and discussed in different articles. The selection of films was based on the basic characteristics of the diasporic film:

Asian New Zealand films that portray Chinese in New Zealand
Footprints of the Dragon, 1994 (an episode in *An Immigrant Nation*, a TV documentary series), directed by Helene Wong. [Producer: Vincent Burke]

My Wedding and Other Secrets, 2011 (feature), directed by Roseanne Liang, co-written by Roseanne Liang and Angeline Loo. [Producers: John Barnett and Paul Davis]

Flat 3, 2013 (web series), written and directed by Roseanne Liang. [Producers: Roseanne Liang, Ally Xue, Paulina Lau, and JJ Fong; Co-executive producer: Kerry Warkia]

Banana in a Nutshell, 2005 (documentary), directed and written by Roseanne Liang. [Producer: Roseanne Liang]

Take 3, 2007 (short film), directed and written by Roseanne Liang. [Producer: Owen Hughes]

The Love, 2014 (feature), directed by Li Xuan

Asian New Zealand films that portray Indians in New Zealand

Clean Linen, 2007 (short film), directed by Zia Mandwivalla, written by Shuchi Kothari. [Producers: Shichi Kothari and Sarina Pearson]

Naya Zamana (*Modern Times*), 1996 (short film), directed and written by Mandrika Rupa.

Taamara/Sangam (*The Joining of Two Peoples*), 2002 (documentary), directed by Mandrika Rupa.

Inheritance: A Lament, 2006 (documentary), directed by Mandrika Rupa.

Curry Munchers, 2011 (feature), directed by Cristobal Araus Lobos, written by Padma Akula. [Producers: Ravi Kambhoj, Aunanda Naaido, Rajendaran Naidu]

Apron Strings, 2008 (feature), directed by Sima Urale, Co-written by Shuchi Kothari and Dianne Taylor. [Co-producer: Shuchi Kothari; Producers: Angela Littlejohn and Rachel Gardner; Executive producer: Trevor Haysom]

A Taste of Place: Stories of Food and Longing, 2001 (documentary), directed by Susan Pointon. Written by Shuchi Kothari. [Producer: Sarina Pearson; Executive Producer: Shirley Horrocks]

Fleeting Beauty, 2005 (short film), directed by Virginia Pitts, written by Shuchi Kothari. [Producers: Shuchi Kothari and Sarina Pearson]

Poonam, 1994 (documentary), directed by Jade Furness, Mandrika Rupa and Lisa Sabbage, written by Mandrika Rupa. [Producer: Athina Tsoulis]

Laxmi, 2000 (short film), directed and written by Mandrika Rupa. [Producer: Keith Hill]

Hidden Apartheid: A Report on Caste Discrimination, 2011 (documentary), directed by Mandrika Rupa. [Producer: Virginia Garlick and Mandrika Rupa]

Asian New Zealand films that portray Koreans in New Zealand

Moving, 2011 (documentary), directed by Kiyong Park

Eating Sausage, 2004 (short film, 15min), directed and written by Zia Mandwivalla. [Producer: Annelise Coulam]

{Dream} Preserved, 2005 (feature), directed and written by Stephen Kang. [Producer: Stephen Kang]

Desert, 2010 (feature), directed and written by Stephen Kang. [Producers: Matt Noonan and Leanne Saunders]

Blue, 2011 (short film), written and directed by Stephen Kang. [Producer: Tara Riddell; Co-producers: Matt Noonan and Leanne Saunders]

Mixed diasporas or Pan-Asians

A Thousand Apologies, 2008 (TV series), directed by Roseanne Liang, Angeline Loo, Zia Mandviwalla and Sarina Pearson; written by Shuchi Kothari, Roseanne Liang, Tarun Mohanbhai, Sunil Narshai and Chris Payne
[Producers: Rachel Gardner, Shuchi Kothari, Sarina Pearson and Philip Smith]

Asia Downunder 1994-2011 (TV series), directors include: Milda Emza, Bharat Jamnadas, Amy Wang, Jeff Avery, Jason Moon, Riyaz Sayed-Khaiyum, Pushpa Jabin, Stephen Chu. [Producer: Melissa Lee]

Both Worlds 2012-to date (TV series), directed and written by Dane Giraud. [Producer: Julia Parnell][50]

Film Reception

The third part of the thesis consists of a qualitative, reception-centred empirical research effort. To research the engagement of viewers with diasporic film texts, I conducted a series of focus groups and interviews. Secondary data for the third part also included the participants' profile questionnaires and any form of response to

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[50] In the production of *Both Worlds* and *Asia Downunder*, several writers, directors, and producers have been involved, some of whom have been acknowledged here.

the films such as film reviews, reports written on films, and viewers' comments on films sourced from the films' official websites (if available). The focus groups and interviews were intended to elicit viewers' opinions in terms of what messages a particular film conveys to them, the ways the film shapes their understanding of diasporic experience and migrant life as depicted in the film, and their reactions to the issues raised in the film about Asian diasporic experiences, life and realities in New Zealand.

In this research, audience members' community memberships and the elements of their social and cultural location are held to be important, since audiences are diverse in nature within today's multicultural New Zealand society. Robert Stam (1999) states that "The culturally variegated nature of spectatorship [partly] derives from the diverse locations in which films are received, from the temporal gaps of seeing films in different historical moments, and from the conflictual subject-positionings and community affiliations of the spectators themselves" (p. 232). Harindranath (2009) problematises media audience studies within cross-cultural contexts – such as Leibes and Katz's work – where 'race' has become "a defining category", because they suggest that "certain ethnic groups watch particular programmes and films that then contribute to the maintenance of a collective identity in those ethnic groups" (p. 216). It is, therefore, imperative to recognise in the contexts of diaporas the historical and social positionings of the audience as composed of heterogeneous groups whose identities are constantly in the process of formation (see Hall, 1992). My audience analysis takes into account the links between film reception and diasporic audiences as social groups and presents, examines and discusses audience responses as nuanced multiple social and cultural positionings in relation to the selected diasporic films they watch. In other words, rather than emphasising their racial/ethnic differences in my analysis, I have focused on the ways audiences engage with and make sense of diasporic films.

The recent emergence of films by New Zealand filmmakers of Asian descent can create in the course of time new categories of audiences in developing multicultural New Zealand society. This study identifies two broad audience groups for Asian New Zealand cinema: a) Asian New Zealand viewers of Asian New Zealand cinema, and b) the majority or mainstream audience (non-Asian New Zealanders,

namely Pākehā, Māori and other diasporic/ethnic New Zealand viewers). This distinction was used to help structure the composition of the participants for the audience reception component of the research.

As the first category of audiences is not homogeneous, I conducted three focus groups, one with each of the three main communities of Asian diaspora in New Zealand –Chinese, Indian, and Korean. The choice of focus group division was thus allied with the three main Asian diasporas in New Zealand, as well as with the rationale that the three main groups of Asian New Zealand filmmakers are originally from these three Asian ethnicities. The fourth group includes non-Asian New Zealanders, who are actually the second category of audiences in the division that was presented above.

Considering my preliminary results and after building up early interpretations of the data, and also with reference to the limited existing theoretical and conceptual work on diasporic film audiences (which became apparent in the course of reviewing the literature), I decided to let the research take a deeper leap into this area. Therefore, in addition to the first round of data collection for the third part of the research, which included conducting focus groups, I subsequently conducted a series of interviews with the film viewers individually. Further data collection sometimes occurs "in research within a grounded theory framework" as there can be "an interplay between interpretation and theorising, on the one hand, and data collection, on the other" (Bryman, 2008, p. 372). My strategy was not to re-interview the same participants as in the focus groups, but to enlarge the data pool by approaching new participants. I used the same range of questions that I used for the focus group sessions, with added nuances and dimensions that emerged from my preliminary interpretation and analysis. The further collection of data enhances the depth and breadth of research in many ways. The collection of further data helped me to tighten my specification of the research questions, particularly in terms of diasporic film audience research inquiry. Each focus group involved at least five participants from the selected community. The table below summarises the focus groups and interviews for the film reception study of this research:

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Table 4.2
Focus group and interview participants for the film reception study

Types of participants in the focus groups		Films for discussion
Diasporic communities	1 Focus group & 3 Interviews: from the Chinese community in New Zealand	*My Wedding and Other Secrets* (feature)
	1 Focus group & 3 Interviews: from the Indian community in New Zealand	*Apron Strings* (feature)
	1 Focus group & 3 Interviews: From the Korean community in New Zealand	*Desert* (feature)
Mainstream audiences	1 Focus group & 3 Interviews: from New Zealanders (randomly chosen from mainstream New Zealanders)	*My Wedding and Other Secrets* (feature)

The focus group method was employed in this research in order to collect data on reception (Bertrand & Hughes, 2005; Hansen & David, 2013). Focus groups can provide information on audience members' opinions and attitudes on the topic, in this case Asian diaspora and Asian New Zealand film. In the audience research component of this thesis, I expected the process of recruitment to be challenging when working with diverse ethnic groups, as one have to make in-roads to the communities. Therefore, in this research convenience sampling was used to recruit individuals. Later I realised that being a migrant myself was an advantage and partially the fact that I was not from any of the communities involved. In the case of participants with a migratory background, the only qualifying criterion was that they had to have New Zealand Permanent Residency, a status which highlights their official 'belonging' to the nation as part of the New Zealand population and which is preliminary within the paradigm of diasporic research inquiry. In my research, the participants were recruited through their local societies in the Hamilton/Waikato region of New Zealand, such as the Migrant Resource Centre, the Korean Friendship Society, SHAMA Hamilton Ethnic Women's Centre Trust, the Indian Cultural Society (Waikato), the NZ Chinese Association Waikato Branch, the Waikato Chinese Community Centre, and the Waikato Korean Society. I also attended certain events and conferences organised by institutions which are relevant to ethnic communities, such as the 'Ethnic A Conference' (2012) in Hamilton and the 'Ethnic A Conference' (2013) in Auckland. I also personally approached the chairperson/president of various societies to seek their help in recruiting participants. In one instance, I requested to attend a function in order to tell people

about my research and invite them to participate. Another strategy used in recruiting participants was to request to have an item about my research and my contact details placed on the association's newsletter, so those who were interested in participating could contact me. Using the same method of convenience sampling, participants for the non-diasporic audience focus groups and interviews were recruited from among my own New Zealand networks, contacts and friends. The participants were invited to take part by sending an invitation via letter/email (see Appendix IV) or personally meeting them to obtain their consent. A copy of the selected film in CD/DVD format was provided for participants to watch prior to the focus group or interview meeting, which was held at a mutually agreed date, time and venue.

Each focus group consisted of 4 to 8 participants who discussed the focused topic. The sessions, which took 60-90 minutes, were moderated by me and were audio and video taped. The interviews were conducted on an individual basis and took 30-45 minutes. The adult participants who volunteered to take part from each community were relatively homogeneous in terms of age, race or ethnicity, level of education and professional status, which allowed the members to feel comfortable and free to express their opinions. There was no gender weighting of the sample and the resulting gender composition had a female bias (13 male and 21 female). The lines of questioning explored in the interviews and focus groups were directed towards the elaboration of issues foregrounded in New Zealand's diasporic films.

The main focus of this research comprises the communities of the Asian diaspora in New Zealand film and their issues and concerns. Thus, all participants, including those from the film industry, filmmakers/directors/writers and the film crew if relevant, as well as the participants in the film audiences/reception phase, whose background was from the main communities of Asian diaspora in New Zealand, were requested to complete a profile questionnaire at the time of the interview sessions and focus groups. The profile questionnaire provided some information on the participant's background and experience in terms of their country of origin and ethnicity.

The analysis of the audience reception data involved close and repeated reading of verbatim transcripts to identify dominant issues and themes, which were

categorised and coded. The sociological imagination (Mills, 1959) and the Composite Model of modes of reception (Michelle, 2007) were adapted as the main concepts for the analysis. The rationale behind the choice of these concepts will be further addressed in the preface to as well as the two articles in chapter 7. The lines of questioning explored in the interviews and focus groups were directed towards the elaboration of issues foregrounded in New Zealand's 'diasporic' films. The overall analysis of the audience data also involved systematic categorisation of relevant excerpts according to the distinctive categories charted by the Composite Model of modes of reception, as well as the major tropes that emerged in consideration of the concept of sociological imagination.

Ethical Considerations

This research was approved by the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS) Human Research Ethics Committee, at the University of Waikato in November 2011 (see Appendix II).[51]

The ethical considerations related to this research included:

Informed consent: All participants in this research were adults and their participation was entirely based on their informed consent. All participants were contacted through an invitation letter/email (see Appendices I & III) or an invitation in person. They were given detailed information about the research and the interviews/focus groups before deciding to participate. They received and signed the consent form on the day of the interview or focus group session. Before an interview or a focus group began, the interviewee or focus group participant was asked to confirm her/his agreement. Participants had the right to stop the interview, leave the focus group or decline to answer the profile questionnaire.

Confidentiality: The data and personal information collected for this study was kept in a secure place and the data used solely for the PhD thesis, journal articles/ book

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[51] Ethical issues related to this research have been considered at all stages according to: http://calendar.waikato.ac.nz/assessment/ethicalConduct.html.

chapters, and conference and seminar presentations. The data collected for this research were used in a respectful and confidential manner. No other purpose was implied or intended. The analyses, conceptualisations, findings or recommendations of this study were not considered likely to be harmful to any person or community with regard to gender, religion, ethnicity, political matters, beliefs and the like. In addition, any changes to the research process that deviated from what was outlined in the initial proposal were submitted for approval (e.g. I obtained approval for further data collection on audiences in the form of interviews from the FASS Ethics Committee, University of Waikato), and the research did not commence until ethical approval was granted.

Anonymity: Participants in the audience reception study remain anonymous. The data were coded and their names were omitted completely. Thus, the participants are not able to be identified in any reference made in the research. In the case of my interviews with the filmmakers/writers/directors, producers, and NZFC personnel, they were briefed that anonymity was difficult to preserve in this kind of research, and that their opinions and experiences would appear in academic writing.

Participants' right to decline: The participants were given the choice to withdraw their consent at any time for up to one month after the interview by contacting me directly, and could also contact my Chief Supervisor, Assoc. Prof. Geoff Lealand at the Department of Screen and Media Studies.

All the participants were briefed at the beginning of the study about the methods and procedures used for data collection. Participation in this research was totally voluntary and the participants were given the option to withdraw at any time. They received no compensation for participating.

PhD with Publication Thesis

This thesis follows the 'PhD with Publication' scheme and, therefore, presents a portfolio of several scholarly research articles which are interconnected and linked

to the central goal of this research: conceptualising Asian New Zealand cinema. All the articles were written during the period of my doctoral enrolment.

This PhD project was not originally intended or designed to be a PhD with Publication, but when the opportunity became available to take up that option, I was interested in adopting this scheme. Being already familiar with academic publication, I knew what publication would entail within the field of Humanities in terms of the duration of the review process as compared with Science, for example. Despite the challenges, this PhD model had certain advantages for me in helping to create a good research profile and also establish my areas of expertise while conducting the research. The publications included have allowed me to position myself within the conversations which occur around various aspects of the research's main subjects. The PhD with Publication model also includes opportunities to co-publish with supervisors and other scholars, which I welcomed in order to enhance the learning process in my PhD journey.

Thinking of various parts of the thesis as discrete publications and also working with others towards publication while maintaining the holistic structure of the thesis in relation to its central inquiry is challenging. I have welcomed the challenges through which I could develop my research and academic credibility. In the case of co-authorship, I have benefitted from the expertise and experience of my supervisors, Dr. Ann Hardy and Dr. Carolyn Michelle, and another scholar from Screen and Media Studies (University of Waikato), Dr. Adrian Athique. Unlike the experience of co-authorship with colleagues within the university environments, where working on the research project is 'shared' amongst research members in relation to various stages of the research project and funding, PhD with Publication research is entirely the candidate's project. In my project, the co-authors have played roles to varying degrees in different articles based on the areas of their research expertise and also based on the reasons I had in mind for inviting them to work on these three articles. The editorial work and content modification was also done in the natural course of supervision and advice as in the traditional PhD model. Therefore, in addition to the expertise they offered, they have enhanced the quality of the articles in terms of content editing and polishing, and I have certainly learned a great deal from their experiences. Throughout, my intention has been to develop

the articles in ways that fits best with the overall objective and structure of this research. The discussions I will present in my final chapter can further explain the ways I planned the arguments, particularly in the two co-authored articles in Chapter 7.

The co-authorship in PhD with Publication, by its nature, can only begin after analysis of the data is complete. It is then the candidate's choice to invite the supervisors or other scholars to work on writing on some of the themes and patterns that have emerged from the data. For instance, in analysis of my data, I found that 'food and culinary practices' – particularly in relation to women and some form of spirituality – emerged as a recurring theme in the body of Asian New Zealand films. I also found references to food and its implications within diasporic cultures in the commentaries of my respondents. The research expertise of my second supervisor, Ann Hardy, is 'media and religion' and I thought it would be best if we could work on a paper that focuses on the conflation of food, women and spirituality in relation to diasporic identities and cultures. Hardy's understanding of the theoretical implications of religion in relation to media was a great advantage in this experience.

Similarly, approaching my data on audiences, I was fascinated with the personalised stories of my participants and also the ways when at times their commentaries approximate or move away from the films' textual depictions. In the course of reading and identifying the relevant concepts and frameworks to analyse my data on the reception of Asian New Zealand films, I found Carolyn Michelle's Composite Model of reception offered an effective way of organising my data. The Composite Model offers a cohesive synthesis and extension of shared components and characteristics derived from various reception schemas propounded by audience researchers over the last few decades. I felt confident to have her as my co-author in the article which discusses modes of engagement that audiences adopt in their viewing experiences in the case of Asian New Zealand films (we later invited Ann Hardy to be part of this). The same approach was in the case of co-authorship with Adrian Athique. I knew Athique's articles about media audiences of global Indian films in the Australian context, and his focus on 'media audiences as sites of social imagination' (2005, 2008, 2011). I was interested in the utility of

the concept of social imagination particularly for researching diasporic film audiences in my study. Because of my previous research project (2008), I have always been fascinated with the concept of (diasporic) imagination, and wanted to see the ways I can understand and relate it to my current project. The idea of 'diasporic social imagination' came to my mind while examining the commentaries by my diasporic/migrant participants in the light of the social imagination, which I shared with Athique and became the basis of another co-authored article.

I found myself feeling a strong responsibility for the quality of the article in the case of co-authorship, which has enhanced my experience and expectations of myself as a scholar to a higher level. I also found it an important practical learning curve for me to practise writing for a particular angle or purpose and the ways that should reflect in my writing style, use of vocabulary, and also the way I lay out the arguments within the diasporic context of my research. For example, writing about spirituality in the article on 'food, women and religion' (co-authored with Hardy), for instance, would be rather metaphoric and sometimes poetic, compared to drafting an evidence-based piece of writing like the article on 'the modes of engagement' (co-authored with Michelle and Hardy), and different from more a subjective and theory-flavoured piece of writing driven by the empirical evidence as in the case of article using the social imagination (co-authored with Athique). Following the Requirements for PhD with Publication (updated in September 2014), I have also included co-authorship forms in the appendices (see Appendix VII).

In terms of structure, the thesis comprises one published book chapter and a series of research articles – already published, in press, under review or ready for submission to several international and highly-ranked journals in the field. The following three chapters of the PhD have been written up as articles which are presented in the thesis exactly as published materials – if already published – or else the most recent version of the articles are included. According to the Guidelines (updated in Sept 2014), Chapters 5, 6, and 7 are prefaced with a description of the contribution each article makes to the central research inquiry or focus of the project. The preface also explains how the articles are interrelated to the research as a coherent whole.

Following the lead of other scholars researching within the area of diasporic cinema would have involved writing articles presenting primarily textual analyses focused upon the cultural politics of New Zealand as a whole. This approach would have led me to submit all the articles to film journals, drawing on (or perhaps repeating) what others say but in the context of New Zealand. However, I deliberately decided to move beyond that approach and allow myself a valuable opportunity to contribute to the broader ambit of reception studies, and also demonstrate the significance of the diasporic audience within the conceptualisations of diasporic cinema studies.

Collectively, the articles within this thesis reveal a holistic approach to analysis, incorporating within the thesis's overall tripartite methodological approach explorations of the authorship and production of Asian diasporic films in New Zealand, insights into textual and narrative analyses, and in-depth analysis of reception, which challenges the tendency of scholarly works in this field to consider only one or two of these aspects within analysis – primarily production and text.

Chapter 5: Emerging Asian New Zealand Filmmakers

This chapter presents three publications – one journal article, one book chapter, and a working draft of a journal article – addressing the first part of the tripartite structure of the thesis: the diasporic 'author' and the context of production. These materials were written to foreground the emerging body of films in New Zealand that this research engages with and conceptualises as 'Asian New Zealand cinema'. The aim was to ensure that voices previously side-lined would have the chance to be presented as part of New Zealand cinema.

First is a book chapter that introduces the concept of Asian New Zealand film and filmmakers and discusses their diasporic features and preoccupations. The reasons for introducing my research through the *Directory of World Cinema: Australia and New Zealand 2* edited by Ben Goldsmith, Mark Ryan and Geoff Lealand are manifold. Placing the first publication in this volume in 2012 was an important step in this thesis as an official announcement of the inauguration of 'Asian New Zealand film' within New Zealand media scholarship. This book chapter was published in 2015. The series that Intellect publishes as the *Directory of World Cinema* is designed to attract a general readership and, therefore, has readers of diverse backgrounds, which demands that the writers avoid jargon and specialised terminology. Most importantly, placement of this publication in the second *Directory of World Cinema: Australia and New Zealand* (the first volume was published in 2010), also demonstrates a new arena in New Zealand cultural production – Asian New Zealand film – and raises critical questions around what constitutes contemporary New Zealand cinema at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

The second publication this chapter presents is a journal article which was written in the first year of this project and placed in a local journal, *The Communication Journal of New Zealand: He Kohinga Korero*. This article enhances the discussion which was started in my book chapter for the *Directory of World Cinema*, and poses some preliminary questions within diasporic film scholarship around the idea of periphery and centre (Naficy, 2001; Schohat, 1996) such as: Are Asian New

Zealand films peripheral? What is peripheral about Asian New Zealand films and filmmaking? Why is the sense of periphery important in ethnic/minority/migrant/diasporic media and film?

The third article this chapter presents includes a working draft that will be completed in the near future and focuses on modes of production of Asian New Zealand films using Naficy's two modes of production for accented cinema: the interstitial and collective modes. Examination of the processes of Asian diasporic film production in New Zealand and identifying their distinctions with Naficy's examples will put forward questions such as: To what extent is the film production process affected by the disaporisation of the filmmaker, and with what consequences? Are interstitial and collective modes of production applicable to non-diasporic filmmaking practices in New Zealand and what does this mean for the New Zealand film industry?

Book Chapter: Emerging Asian New Zealand Filmmakers in New Zealand Cinema

Zalipour, A. (2015). Emerging Asian New Zealand filmmakers in New Zealand cinema. In B. Goldsmith, M. Ryan & G. Lealand (Eds.), *Directory of World Cinema: Australia and New Zealand 2* (pp. 311-319). Bristol, UK: Intellect.

EMERGING ASIAN NEW ZEALAND FILM-MAKERS IN NEW ZEALAND CINEMA

Since the arrival of Chinese immigrants with the nineteenth-century Gold Rush and Indian immigrants soon after them, New Zealand has become the home of many Asians from various parts of that vast continent. The Statistics New Zealand Census conducted in 2006 shows that Asians are one of the major ethnic groups in New Zealand consisting mainly of ethnic Chinese, Indian and Korean. There are also many immigrants from other parts of the world and Pacific Islanders who enhance the multicultural nuances of the New Zealand nation, despite New Zealand's officially bicultural policy implementation which privileges the relationship between Maori and Pakeha (European New Zealanders) in definitions of the nation's identity.

This 'multicultural' New Zealand has embedded several diasporas in its demographic composition.[1] One of the key elements in the formation of a diaspora or a diasporic community and its appearance in the demographic structure of a host country is through the immigrants' social, cultural, economic, educational and political practices. One of the main implications of this diasporic formation is the ability of migrants and their succeeding generations to be visible as a part of the creative and cultural production of the new homeland which enhances their involvement in social and political domains of the host society. In fact, some of the most creative sites for contemporary cultural production belongs to diasporic people where they 'are obliged to live together, struggle for space and speak across cultural languages' (Hall 2010: ix). The presence of the creative potential of diaspora is what Homi Bhabha (1994: 326) calls bringing 'newness […] into the world'. The cultural production of diaspora is, therefore, manifested in 'hybrid, syncretic and creolized cultural forms' as the result of intermingling and blending of cultural traditions (Hall 1989). Diasporic cultural products are more than mere recreations of traditions or a reproduction of social forms in a new place, because they are the creative product of experiences of living in a new place and conditions (Hall 1989).

The demographic shift in New Zealand's population and its increasingly multicultural composition especially in the largest city, Auckland, have also been reflected in the New Zealand film industry in the last decade. It is only recently that the members of the Asian diaspora in New Zealand have found a space in New Zealand cultural production and attracted public attention, such as Stephen Kang, the Korean New Zealand film-maker who received an award during Critics' Week at the Cannes Film Festival 2011 for his short film *Blue* (2011) and *My Wedding and Other Secrets* (2011), a romantic comedy feature directed by Roseanne Liang (a New Zealand-born Chinese) which reached number three in the New Zealand box office. Liang's and Kang's successes illustrate the public emergence of a new category in New Zealand cinema in which film-makers originating from the various Asian immigrant communities relate their own versions of life, experience and reality. This unrecognized but exciting body of work that I would call 'Asian New Zealand cinema',

can be defined as an emerging body of films including both works by New Zealanders of Asian descent and New Zealand films producing images of Asian diasporic people.[2] These works include features, short films, documentaries and television series produced in New Zealand in the last few decades. The New Zealand Film Commission Act (1978) defines 'a New Zealand film' as the one with 'a New Zealand story'. Asian New Zealand films are the film-makers' 'New Zealand stories' that reflect upon the Asian diaspora and migratory and diasporic experiences of living in New Zealand by expressing various dimensions of contact and relationships with the host society and culture as well as the deterritorialized conditions and lives of diasporic individuals and communities.

Being able to speak of an 'Asian New Zealand' arena is a relatively recent possibility. In the 1990s, there were only a few migrant New Zealand film-makers. Among them there were two women film-makers of Asian descent: Helene Wong and Mandrika Rupa. Helene Wong has been described as the first New Zealand woman who brought a Chinese perspective to the New Zealand screen. She worked as a Development Consultant with the New Zealand Film Commission, also on a variety of television dramas and short and feature-length films, including *Illustrious Energy* (1998), Leon Narbey's acclaimed feature about Chinese gold miners in Otago, and a documentary for television, 'Footprints of the Dragon' (Helene Wong, 1994), for the series *An Immigrant Nation* (1994–1996) screened on TV One. Wong's personal reflection on her film-making journey in New Zealand, best describes the forces behind the emergence of Asian New Zealand film-makers today:

> Obviously, the majority culture dominates when it comes to types of films to be made or types of stories to be told. [The] New Zealand film industry started in the late 70s and probably it took 30 odd years for Roseanne's film [director of *My Wedding and Other Secrets*] to be made. So for two decades the focus was really on 'white New Zealand stories', and then bringing in Maori stories and then Pacific stories and Chinese (Asian) stories. If you were like me [a Chinese] born in New Zealand, you wouldn't make films but you would be watching anything other than your own faces on the screen […] not only you would accept what you would be seeing, you never even considered along with a lot of generations, *being* a filmmaker. (Helene Wong, personal communication, 21 February 2012)

In the first *Directory of World Cinema: Australia and New Zealand* (2010), Harriet Margolis reminds us that 'One would not know about [New Zealand] multiculturalism, though, from New Zealand films made prior to this century' (290). *Illustrious Energy* (1988) directed by Leon Narbey and *Broken English* (1997) directed by Gregor Nicolas were the only two features which incorporate New Zealand immigrant stories and 'provided pre-millennial images that suggested New Zealand's national stories might include people other than Maori, Islanders and Pakeha' (Margolis 2010: 290). The shift in the demographic population of New Zealand towards becoming more culturally diverse, and its manifestation in New Zealand film in the last decade is a new trend which has been created through the emergence of Asian New Zealand talents. The Asian talents in New Zealand have dared to dream of being film-makers – a cultural space in which they are able to create their own images and tell their own New Zealand stories. This can also be conceived as a new development that contributes in making the multicultural dimensions of contemporary New Zealand society more widely sensed, acknowledged and recognized. The paucity of film-making practices and resources by Asians in New Zealand in the past can be traced in the factors that caused Asian migration to New Zealand, chiefly for trade, economic and educational reasons. These also explain Wong's description of and positioning as a film-maker in the early stages of her career and that film (cultural) production by members of a diaspora is

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influenced by a relationship between socio-political forces and trajectories of diasporic consciousness. Asian parents in New Zealand may not have considered film-making as an occupation for the future of their children and instead wanted them to be doctors, lawyers, accountants and engineers integrated into the host society (Helene Wong, personal communication, 21 February 2012), and their children would not, therefore, consider other ways to form and maintain cultural identities inherited from their ethnic ancestors. This latter progress refers to a developmental stage when members of a diaspora start interacting with the question of identity and visibility after overcoming their preliminary financial and social struggles for survival in the new environment. The outcome is a cultural product, 'a film' in this case, or what Naficy, the theorist of accented cinema,[3] calls the film-maker's 'performativity of identity' (2001).

The second figure in the 1990s of Asian New Zealand film-making, Mandrika Rupa, introduces herself as an independent film-maker and social worker who utilizes the medium of film for personal and social expressions. Rupa was born in Gujarat, India and emigrated as a child with her family from an Indian village to Newton Gully, Auckland in 1960 (Mandrika Rupa, 20 February 2012, personal communication). In most of her short films, notably Naya Zamana (Modern Times, 1996), Poonam (1994) and her recent documentary Hidden Apartheid: A Report on Caste Discrimination (2011), Rupa gives priority to the class and caste system, arranged marriage, hybrid identities and gender issues (particularly women) and focuses on the social dimensions of diasporic communities and the effects that a new home has on their lives. Women in Rupa's films present themselves in a struggle to be free from the claustrophobic confinements of their inner and ethnic community and its prescriptions for their behaviour and identity.

Unlike Rupa who turns her lens on the problems faced by Indian immigrants living in the West, and creates representations which bear explicit nuances of identity politics, feminism, critical nationalism and global humanitarianism, Shuchi Kothari's films allude to the simple difficulties of daily life for common people who happen to be living in their new adopted land. Kothari is metaphoric and poetic in representing diasporic consciousness and the social circumstances of migrant life in New Zealand. Shuchi Kothari, originally from Ahmedabad, India, is an example of a film-maker who has both 'settled' in New Zealand and has managed to make her presence felt in New Zealand public culture. Kothari moved first to the United States and then to New Zealand in 1997, where she works as a lecturer in the Department of Film, Television and Media Studies, at the University of Auckland. Kothari and Sarina Pearson established a production company Nomadz Unlimited in 1999 that aimed to foster projects that reflect their nomadic experience. Pearson also migrated to New Zealand a long time ago and since then been involved with several projects mainly in collaboration with Kothari. Kothari's output may be divided into three categories: one category consists of short film, documentary, feature and TV series or episodes that incorporate representations of diasporic experiences and feature the Indian diaspora in New Zealand. She has previously been associated with the short films Fleeting Beauty (2005) directed by Virginia Pitts and which Kothari scripted and co-produced, Clean Linen (2007) written by Kothari and directed by Zia Mandviwalla (also a New Zealand film-maker of Indian origin), and her most acclaimed feature Apron Strings (2008) co-written with Dianne Taylor and directed by Sima Urale, the renowned Samoan New Zealand film-maker. In her documentary A Taste of the Place: Stories of Food and Longing (2001) co-directed by Susan Pointon and produced by Sarina Pearson, Kothari interviewed women from various diasporas in New Zealand. This is the nature of the second category of her output which includes the projects relating to more than one diaspora where Kothari plays various roles cooperating with creative artists and outputs of other diasporic communities in New Zealand; for instance her role as the executive producer of short film Take 3 (2005), directed by Roseanne Liang (a New Zealand-born Chinese),

which focuses on tokenism experienced by three actresses of Chinese origin going for a New Zealand audition. The third category includes film projects which seem not to have diasporic subjects but show Kothari's professional and personal connection to her homeland India while settled in New Zealand, such as the feature *Firaaq* (2008) which she co-scripted. *Firaaq* is an Indian film about the victimization of ordinary people after the 2002 violence in Gujarat, India.

Being involved with more than one diaspora is one the fascinating characteristics of diasporic film-making in New Zealand. Zia Mandviwalla, a New Zealander of Zoroastrian-Indian origin made her short film *Eating Sausage* (2008) about a Korean family and their challenges of settlement and displacement in New Zealand. Her short film *Night Shift*, which brought her recognition in 2012 at the Cannes Film Festival, tells a story of a Samoan woman and her mundane life and struggles as an airport cleaner. Similarly, *Coffee and Allah* (2007), which is about an Ethiopian Muslim woman in New Zealand, was written by Kothari, an Indian New Zealand scriptwriter and directed by Sima Urale, a Samoan New Zealand director. Urale also directed *Apron Strings* which features the Indian diaspora in New Zealand. The series *A Thousand Apologies*, which was aired on the national television channel TV3 in 2005, is a good example of a group of minority artists working together, among whom were Shuchi Kothari, Roseanne Liang, Angelin Loo (also the co-scriptwriter of *My Wedding and Other Secrets*) and Zia Mandviwalla. It is a satirical comedy of the diversity of the Asian experience in the New Zealand context. This admirably collaborative film process and cultural capital investing exercise in diasporic film-making in New Zealand is a significant observation of the above occurrence. It seems that the cast and crew, scriptwriter, producer, director; every link in the film production chain who belongs to or identifies with a minority group in New Zealand, feels internally and emotionally related to a film that showcases a diasporic subject.

The film-maker most successful in reaching mainstream audiences in this emerging category is Roseanne Liang already known to New Zealand audiences and film industry through her first documentary *Banana in a Nutshell* (2005), aired on national television, and the short film *Take 3* which had its premiere at the 2008 New Zealand International Film Festival (NZIFF). Liang gained fame in New Zealand cinema in 2011 as the director and co-writer of *My Wedding and Other Secrets*, co-written by the Chinese New Zealand script-writer Angeline Loo, and produced by Paul Davis and John Barnett from South Pacific Pictures New Zealand.

My Wedding and Other Secrets was developed as a romantic comedy and extended version of Liang's documentary and has been selected for several festivals. It is a story of a Chinese New Zealand girl, Emily Chu (played by a New Zealand actress of Chinese extraction, Michelle Ang), when she has to decide between love for her Chinese parents and her love for a Kiwi boy, James Harrison (played by popular New Zealand actor Matt Whelan). The film portrays the first and second generations of the Chinese diaspora in New Zealand and the conflicts that may arise in maintaining and negotiating the traditions and customs of their original culture with that of the new country. Though targeted at mainstream New Zealand audiences, there are several moments in the film, which can largely be felt and internalized on an emotional level by diasporic people identifying themselves with such dilemmas, issues and identities. *My Wedding and Other Secrets* is positively involved with the question of cultural identity and construction of Chinese (Asian) New Zealand identities. It draws attention to a Chinese-looking girl who speaks with a Kiwi accent and behaves like a Kiwi girl; however, her diasporic consciousness provides an awareness of difference. This sense of difference may appear from a very early age as can emblematically be observed in the film's opening when Emily as a child declines to eat Weet-Bix – typical Kiwi fare – for breakfast. At the end of the film, Emily is shown having her Chinese breakfast while

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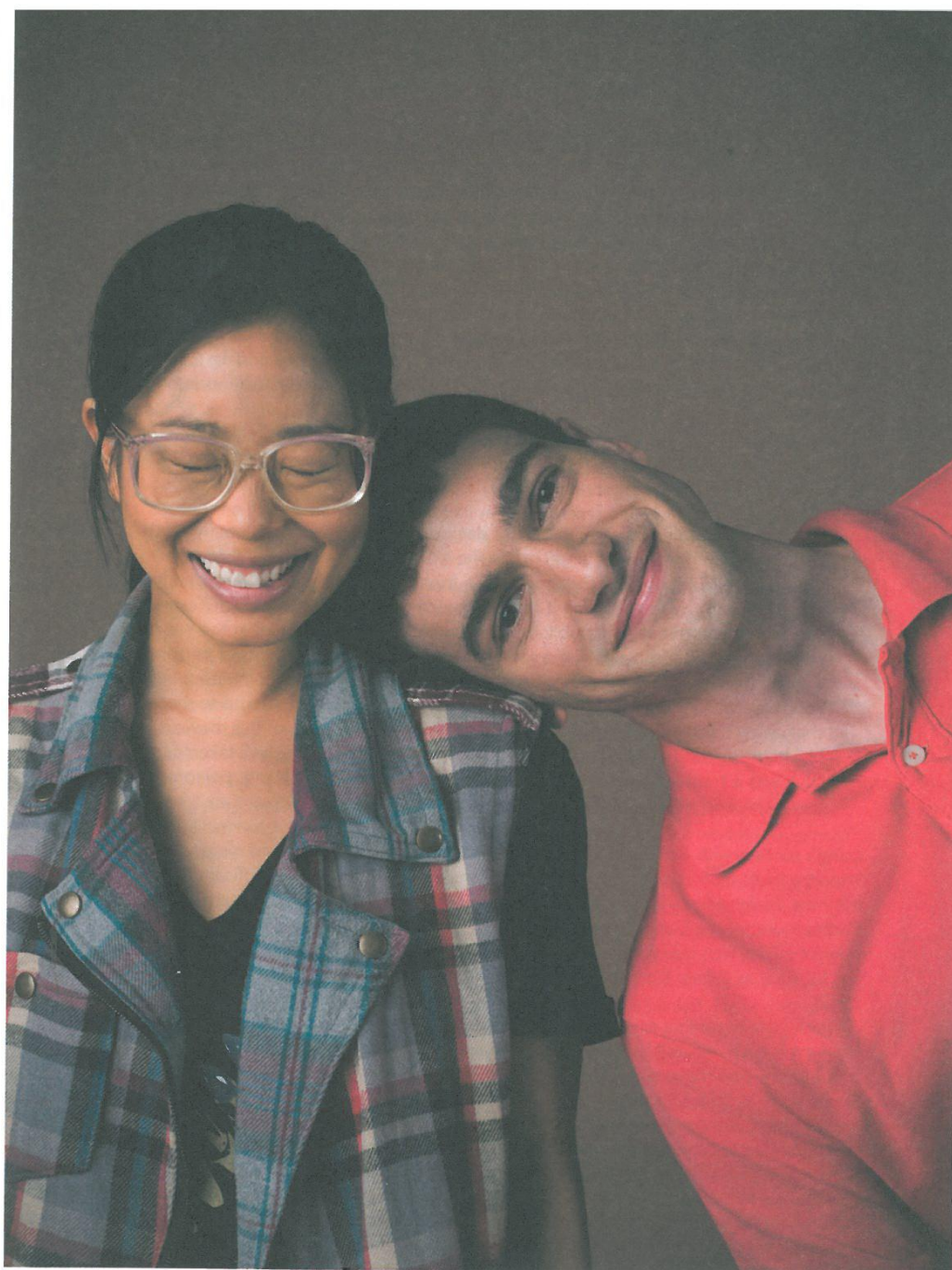
Emily and James in *My Wedding and Other Secrets*
(Roseanne Liang, 2011). Image courtesy of the director.

her Kiwi husband is enjoying his Weet-Bix at their home in Auckland. The sense of difference may also arise due to the language her family speaks at home, and the traditions they abide by. Emily's internal conflicts to decide to get married to her Kiwi boyfriend without her parents' knowledge, is an act or decision that Chinese culture (within the context of this film) would not approve such a girl to do. The film does not contemplate on how to reconcile the sense of difference and the ways it can be transformed to a harmonious whole, to feel belonging to two cultures. Nevertheless, it attempts to offer a unifying strategy through its narrative cliché of cross-cultural marriage and comedy genre. Embracing a charming romance summed up by the 'girl meets boy' structure, this film satisfies the audience through a happy ending (Zalipour 2011) – which initially made it compatible for a commercial and industrial mode of production.

Liang reminisces about her early experience of film-making in New Zealand and her thrill when she was approached by South Pacific Pictures to make *My Wedding and Other Secrets*:

> I really wanted to make something so I decided to turn the camera on myself and what that meant to me and I made the documentary *Banana in a Nutshell* […] I'd been talking about the project to a friend of mine, Alistair Kwun, and he said 'You really need to submit it to the New Zealand International Film Festival and then if you get in I will publicize it for you.' Amazingly, the film at the very early stages got accepted. In the screening of the documentary, lots of people wanted to share their own experiences that film had spoken to them about and John Barnett saw that. John Barnett of South Pacific Pictures strolls up to me, shakes my hand and says, 'Do you want to make a feature film of this movie? […] In production of *My Wedding and Other Secrets*, I was very well taken care of. It was a tremendously charmed process for me. (Roseanne Liang, personal communication, 2 March 2012)

Liang's success with *Banana in a Nutshell*, the universality of its story, and more importantly its market potential were the reasons for John Barnett, a significant figure in the New Zealand film industry, to approach the young Chinese New Zealand director. Furthermore, as per Liang's account, the film's cultural value attracted Barnett who has been involved with many successful New Zealand films which feature different cultural voices, such as *Whale Rider* (Niki Caro, 2002) and *Sione's Wedding* (Simon Bennett, 2012).

Not all the emerging moments in the history of New Zealand cinema which have been created by Asian New Zealand film-makers are as charmed as that of Liang. Some of the film-makers in this category are independent film-makers and their film-making is driven by the film-maker's search for financial support. The 'smallness, imperfection, amateurishness, and lack of cinematic gloss' (Naficy 2001: 45) in diasporic film-making are the forces that shape and influence some of the existing films within the category of Asian New Zealand cinema. In other words, these isolated film-makers live on the periphery of the New Zealand film industry and in the face of cultural, logistical or funding challenges, are nevertheless managing to make their presence felt in mainstream New Zealand film culture.[4]

One example of the employment of an unorthodox mode of film production by Asian New Zealand film-makers due to insufficient funding and budget is in the 2007 feature film *{Dream} Preserved* by Stephen Kang, a Korean New Zealand film-maker. Kang spoke of the process he adopted in making this film as a 'one-man-production' (Stephen Kang, personal communication, 18 April 2012). *{Dream} Preserved* was screened in 2007 as part of the Desktop Cinema: 8 Recent New Zealand Digital

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Features season. This film narrates the story of Mark and his fridge, which seems to be the only space he can claim – a place where he feels safe and has a sense of belonging. Mark's sense of loss, his ambivalent and unsettled life conditions, doing odd jobs such as standing in long queues at the New Zealand immigration office for other people, are portrayed in the story with an acrimonious tone that can be grasped from Mark's paranoid dreams and the open ending of the film – where he finds himself in a typical New Zealand field we saw at the start of the film. Kang's films deploy motifs of the struggles of immigrants to overcome their predicaments and obstacles of settlement in New Zealand through deterritorialization of identity, language, self and culture.

Kang, who is trying to find his voice in New Zealand cinema, has recently attracted local and international recognition with his short film *Blue* (2011). This occurred at the same time as the long awaited screening of his digital feature *Desert*, in the cinemas of Auckland. *Desert* was one of the low-budget moving-image projects which was supported by the final round of the 2009/2010 Independent Filmmakers Fund because it matched the IFF's 'emphasis on innovation, uniqueness and emerging talent' (NZFC 2010: 12).[5] While *Desert* did not manage to reach New Zealand audiences due to lack of distribution and screenings, it was nevertheless premiered at the Pusan International Film Festival in October 2010 and also selected as one of the three New Zealand films to screen in the Panorama section of the 14th Shanghai International Film Festival in June 2011.

Similar to Kang's previous feature, *Desert* is the story of unsettled conditions of life when the road taken does not promise a settled future, peace and security. Jenny, a young Korean girl living in New Zealand is baffled when she is left to fend for herself after being abandoned by her Kiwi boyfriend. The film cannot be called 'another' cross-cultural marriage but rather a journey to Jenny's mind and life when she has no one to count on in a foreign land; her Asian community also rejects her for the shame of getting pregnant to a westerner out of wedlock. *Desert* depicts the emptiness that one's soul can reach when the external sources are absent in a place where one cannot see many familiar faces.

Kang's New Zealand Film Commission (NZFC)-financed short film, *Blue*, produced by Tara Riddell, co-produced by Matt Noonan and Leanne Saunders, production of AKA Film and Curious Film, was the winner at the 50th Semaine De La Critique Grand Prix Canal and Du Meilleur Court Metrage Best Short Film at the Cannes Film Festival 2011. The short centres on a disillusioned character, Blue, a waiter in an Asian restaurant in New Zealand where he has to work hard to keep his job. He is depicted as being occasionally recognized from his popularity in a children's television show before migrating to the West; however, he is mostly ignored and forgotten now. Being reduced to a waiter, Blue symbolically can stand for many Asian artists who migrate to the West for better opportunities and are, indeed, left disillusioned about not being able to do what they have come for – art. Though *Blue* was shot in central Auckland, the film does not specify any particular country or nation for its protagonist, Blue, except that he is Asian (possibly Korean) and he is in a western country (possibly New Zealand). Kang describes Blue as representing anyone:

> A large number of immigrants here in New Zealand, make a living out of something that they have not done before. They start doing business in laundry, cleaning and restaurant in which they never had experienced before. This is because either they do not qualify in New Zealand to continue their original profession or simply due to the language barrier. (New Zealand Film Commission 2011)

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The financial and logistic limitations and cultural and social constraints faced by young Asian New Zealand film-makers have led them to respond creatively to their deterritorialized conditions. Asian New Zealand film should not be located in authorship per se, nor film production or audiences but in the interstices of the New Zealand film industry and the society. My aim was to foreground an emerging group of Asian New Zealand films and film-makers that have delineated important aesthetic, cultural, social, gendered and political complexities over the last decade. It is an attempt to speak of the untapped terrain of New Zealand film history and national memory. Asian diasporic New Zealanders' cultural representations and production of themselves and by themselves create a platform for a negotiation of relationships that exist or emerge and the identities that are constructed in a multicultural or cross-cultural context, the relationships that may have been taken for granted or overlooked not because they were not significant, but because they never claimed any public space.

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Notes

1. The contemporary notion of diaspora refers to a population who voluntarily or involuntarily have left their countries and resided in a new land. Currently, the Asian diaspora in New Zealand consists of three main communities: the Chinese, Indian and Korean.
2. This definition is based on the findings of my current research project on 'The Asian Diaspora in New Zealand Film: Conceptualizing Asian New Zealand Cinema' commenced in May 2011 at the University of Waikato.

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3. Diasporic film-making has been comprehensively discussed in Naficy's book: *Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking* (2001). Theoretically, I would rather use 'diasporic cinema' or 'diasporic film' here as a generic term that includes Naficy's three types of accented films (for further information on this, see Arezou Zalipour's forthcoming publications on diasporic film and audiences).
4. Another example of this in New Zealand film is Rupa's recent documentary *Hidden Apartheid: A Report on Caste Discrimination* (2011) which was made mainly based on her own budget and financial help from her friends who love films as a medium of social and cultural articulation (Mandrika Rupa, personal communication, 20 February 2012).
5. The IFF, formerly Screen Innovation Production Fund, is a partnership between the NZFC and Creative New Zealand which was founded to support independent film-makers in New Zealand.

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Journal Article: 'New' New Zealand Stories on the Periphery of New Zealand Cinema

'New' New Zealand Stories on the Periphery of New Zealand Cinema

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Abstract

In May 2011, TVNZ's ONE News congratulated the Korean New Zealand filmmaker, Stephen Kang, for the award he received at the Cannes Film Festival 2011 for his short film *Blue*. In March 2011, the romantic comedy feature, *My Wedding and Other Secrets*, directed by a New Zealand born Chinese filmmaker, Roseanne Liang, reached number three in the New Zealand box office. The success of these filmmakers illustrates the emergence of a new generation of New Zealand filmmakers who communicate stories and images which are imbued with the notions of diasporic experience and identity. These filmmakers have migratory backgrounds and are demographically members of the first, second, or third generations of the Asian diaspora in New Zealand. The centripetal approach of this article aims to move to centre stage these and other examples of emerging New Zealand filmmakers of Asian descent who are currently absent in the scholarship of New Zealand cinema. Drawing on their cinematic practices, traditions and texts, this article examines their 'new' New Zealand stories which seem to reside on the periphery of New Zealand cinema. The article will conclude with a discussion on various aspects of the sense of periphery in relation to some of the attributes of Asian New Zealand films. It is significant that despite diverse filmmaking practices, texts and traditions, the works of the Asian New Zealand filmmakers resonate with a solidarity borne of a shared experience of diaspora and migration.

Introduction

The Asian diaspora in New Zealand has a long history and over time it has become embodied in several domains such as trade and business, the medical and engineering professions and media. However, it is one of the youngest diasporic communities in the world in terms of diasporic cultural production. Historically, New Zealand was originally occupied by the indigenous Maori, and then became a homeland for British and European settlers under a formal partnership as laid out

in the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi. Later, New Zealand became home to a small number of Chinese and Indian migrants who started arriving in New Zealand in the late nineteenth century, despite the discriminatory racial policies of that time (Ip & Pang, 2005). Migration from the Pacific regions to New Zealand mainly occurred after World War II in response to a severe labour shortage in the country (Ward & Masgoret, 2008). Since the 1987 Immigration Act, which opened the skilled and entrepreneurial categories to attract professional migrants to New Zealand (Parliamentary Council Office, 2011), there have been a large number of immigrants from Asian countries, mainly ethnic Chinese, Indian, and Korean, shaping the three main communities of the Asian diaspora in New Zealand. The last Statistics New Zealand Census shows that Asians are now the largest ethnic group (9.2%) after Pakeha and Maori (16.9%) (Statistics New Zealand, 2006).

Of particular interest to this article, the Asian diaspora has also recently been manifested in New Zealand through film and filmmaking practices. In May 2011, about two minutes into the television broadcast of TVNZ's ONE News, the Korean New Zealand filmmaker, Stephen Kang, was congratulated for the award he received during Critics' Week at the Cannes Film Festival 2011 for his short film *Blue* (ONE News, 2011). In March 2011, the romantic comedy feature, *My Wedding and Other Secrets*, directed by a New Zealand born Chinese filmmaker, Roseanne Liang, reached number three in the New Zealand box office (Onfilm, March 11, 2011). In May 2012, TV3 News announced that Zia Mandviwalla, a Kiwi filmmaker of Zoroastrian-Indian origin, was nominated for Cannes prize for her short film *Night Shift* (Onfilm, April 19, 2012). The success of these filmmakers illustrates the emergence of a new generation of New Zealand filmmakers who communicate stories and images which are imbued with the notions of diasporic experience and identity. These filmmakers have migratory backgrounds and are demographically members of the first, second, or third generations of the Asian diaspora in New Zealand.

Considering these emerging talents in New Zealand film in the last few decades, it is useful to reflect on why Asian films and filmmakers have previously so long been absent from New Zealand screens, and why this change is happening now. Is this simply on account of the changing demographic composition of New Zealand and the shift towards a more multi-cultural society? What is 'Asian New Zealand film', and who are 'Asian New Zealand filmmakers'? What are the themes of their films and what do these themes imply about the filmmakers' practices and their New Zealand stories? Drawing on theories of diasporic filmmaking, this article addresses these questions by presenting an overview and analysis of Asian New Zealand films in the New Zealand context. The wider research, on which this article is based, attempts to investigate the impact of the Asian diaspora on the film

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industry, society and culture in New Zealand. For the purpose of this article, I will define 'Asian New Zealand filmmakers' as New Zealanders of Asian descent, who have been involved in making New Zealand films. Their films are based on various aspects of diasporic experience and life in New Zealand, and primarily involve images and stories of Asian communities and individuals living in this country. Their work includes features, short films, documentaries and television series produced in New Zealand in the last few decades.

New Zealand Stories on the Periphery

In the contemporary context of world diasporas and transnational communities scattered in the West, the notion of periphery does not evoke a hierarchical relationship anymore, since the minority or the marginalised can be subsumed by the centre or majority in various ways. Scholars believe that "many new films from the periphery subvert traditional hierarchies of location, as they come from, and/or are set in, places traditionally deemed remote, dependent, subaltern, minor, small, or insular" (Iordanova, Martin-Jones & Vida, 2010, p. 7). One example of the film from the periphery encompasses diasporic films and their filmmakers. Using a centripetal approach, this article aims to foreground the emerging body of Asian New Zealand films and their filmmakers, and wishes to ensure that the voices previously side-lined will have the chance to be recognized as part of New Zealand cinema. The chief concern of this article is to concentrate on their 'new' New Zealand stories which seem to reside on the periphery of New Zealand cinema. It will then conclude with a discussion on the sense of periphery in relation to some of the attributes of Asian New Zealand films.

New Zealand's filmic history may be best recognized by the films of the mid-1990s such as *Once Were Warriors*, *Heavenly Creatures* and *The Piano*. Among published books and articles written by scholars of New Zealand cinema such as Ian Conrich, Stuart Murray, Geoff Lealand and Duncan Petrie, references to Asian New Zealand filmmakers are non-existent. In the Australia and New Zealand edition of the *Directory of World Cinema* (2010) edited by Ben Goldsmith and Geoff Lealand, there is a short section on 'multiculturalist New Zealand films' in which Shuchi Kothari, a New Zealand filmmaker of Indian descent, and her films are introduced as a representative of multicultural filmmaking in New Zealand, accompanied by brief references to films by Roseanne Liang, a New Zealand director of Chinese descent. In another volume on the history of New Zealand women filmmakers, *Reframing Women: A History of New Zealand Film* (2000), Deborah Sheppard introduces several immigrant women filmmakers and provides a short account of their films. Two other Asian filmmakers were among those featured: Mandrika Rupa and Helene Wong. In the following, I offer an expanded discussion of the

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films and experiences of these New Zealand filmmakers as based on my current research project and also discuss examples of other emerging Asian New Zealand filmmakers in the 2000s.

Helene Wong, a third generation Chinese New Zealander, has been described as the first Chinese woman to bring a Chinese perspective onto New Zealand screens (Chinese in New Zealand Website, 2001). Wong, a graduate of Victoria University (Wellington), has worked in various sections in the New Zealand film industry as Programme Manager for Television for New Zealand on Air, the jury of the Asia-Pacific Film Festival in Auckland in 1996, a member of the Board of the New Zealand Film Commission from 2000-2006, and a former Chairperson of the Board of the Moving Image Centre. She has also worked in the Public Service for nine years, including a period from 1978-80 in the Prime Minister's office as social policy adviser to Sir Robert Muldoon. After completing her studies in theatre in the United States in 1983, she returned to Wellington and became involved in both the practice and administration of the dramatic arts, working as an actor and theatre director before moving into film and television in the mid-1980s. After two years as a Development Consultant with the New Zealand Film Commission, she became a freelance script consultant, working on a variety of television dramas and short and feature-length films, including *Illustrious Energy* (1987), Leon Narbey's acclaimed feature about Chinese gold miners in Otago, and *Footprints of the Dragon* (1994), a documentary for the television series *An Immigrant Nation*. Following her early attempts at filmmaking, Wong is now a full-time writer and occasional actor, and is currently writing a memoir on Chinese New Zealand cultural identity (H. Wong, personal communication, Feb 21, 2012).

Wong's *Footprints of the Dragon* (1994) is a documentary in which a New Zealand filmmaker of Chinese origin is looking at Chinese families and their concerns about life and settlement in New Zealand in the 1990s. The significance of this film lies in its ground-breaking as one of the first attempts to document Chinese New Zealand life and identity. The documentary consists of a series of interviews with three ethnic Chinese families: the Kwoks, originally from China with the fifth generation born in New Zealand in the 1990s, and two Taiwanese families as more recent arrivals. The documentary encompasses an interior structural comparison which exemplifies the distinction between the types of issues that newcomers may encounter and the concerns of those who have been here for a few generations. This distinction can be grasped in the stories that unfold in the course of Wong's interviews.

In *Footprints of the Dragon* (1994), the notions of home-seeking journey and alienation are shown to be more salient for the newcomers; as revealed, for

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instance, in the poetry written and recited by the Taiwanese writer, Catharina, who has come to New Zealand with her husband and two children through the business migration category. Catherina has become the breadwinner of the family by writing articles and columns for a Taiwanese magazine, because her husband is out of job in New Zealand, having not succeeded in following his passion in the ceramic industry here. To maintain her job, Catherin has to travel to Taiwan regularly to visit the editor of Taiwanese magazine, and this straddling between two places has exacerbated the confusion of living in a new place and her sense of belonging. Catharina shows this feeling in her poetry which evokes a growing and profound sense of in-betweenness that emanates from their unsettled settlement.

The Kwok family, on the other hand, demonstrates a far more settled and stable condition in the diasporic New Zealand landscape. After living here for five generations, members of the Kwok family have managed to establish themselves in the New Zealand context as they have proper jobs and live a comfortable life. However, their memories of diasporic life from the turn of the century to the present time manifest a trajectory of challenges. In the interviews, members of the Kwok family talked about their ancestors when faced with the $100 poll tax for Chinese migrants, their own experiences of racism and anti-Asian sentiment, and the predicaments of finding jobs, dimensions of being different from the majority such as having an 'accent' or racial features, and being treated as second citizens by White New Zealanders. These are just some of the many issues this documentary addressed. The second Taiwanese family also raised similar issues of which finding employment seemed to be the most challenging one to deal with.

From the Indian diaspora in New Zealand, films made by Mandrika Rupa, an independent filmmaker and social worker, take a more personal approach to depicting migrant life in New Zealand. Some of Rupa's ancestors have a hundred year history in New Zealand, but Rupa emigrated as a child with her family from Gujarat in India to Newton Gully, Auckland in 1960 (M. Rupa, personal communication, Feb 20, 2012). Rupa was introduced in Sheppard's book in relation to her short film, *Naya Zamana (Modern Time)* (1996), which Rupa wrote and directed, produced by Liz Stevens and filmed by Leon Narbey. Except for a review of this film in Sheppard's (2000) historical study of women filmmakers in New Zealand, there appear to be no other references to Rupa and her films in the academic and filmic scholarship locally and internationally.

Rupa has been described as a filmmaker whose "artistic sense has developed out of a personal need to explore the social implications of immigrant communities and the effect of the new country upon them" (Pasifika Styles, 2012). As an independent filmmaker, Rupa has partially sponsored some of her own films (M.

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Rupa, personal communication, Feb 20, 2012). Her films describe cultural traditions in transition and its subsequent complexities and confusion created in diasporic identities. Rupa's radical film on diasporic sexual identity, *Naya Zamana* (*Modern Times,* 1996), was supported by the NZFC. The film is a narrative drama that set in Auckland and tells the story of a young Indian woman from a working class family, and the conflicts and pressures that raise from her family's efforts to secure an arranged marriage. Before *Naya Zamana,* Rupa made her first film, *Poonam,* in 1994, which is probably the first Indian New Zealand film in the history of New Zealand cinema.

Poonam is a documentary that focuses on the life story of three women of Indian descent in New Zealand in the 1990s and the tensions that existed within their families. Their migrant parents were concerned about maintaining their original culture in the new home, and the ways they could transfer them to their children. The interviews with the three women express the resulting consequences and conflicts of cultural maintenance and hybridity in diaspora. The film relates the real stories of living in-between two cultures, where hybrid identities are formed in the course of these women's struggle for integration and adaptation to the new environment. Rupa's second short film, *Laxmi* (2000), supported by the Screen Innovation Production Fund, is a narrative drama which renders a version of Indian diasporic life in 1942 wartime New Zealand when soldiers from the United States were stationed here.

Rupa's films demonstrate a significant aspect of diasporic filmmaking in which the filmmaker's past life and history nurtures the film's diegesis. This is evident in *Taamara/Sangam* (*The Joining of Two Peoples,* 2002) which offers us a historical account of the ways her Indian ancestors encountered Maori people of the land, their culture, beliefs and lifestyle in the early 1900s. Rupa's father married a Maori woman, and so Rupa's life was internally linked to Maori culture, which has remained in her personal memory and reflected later in her films. Rupa says of this film: "'Taamara' is a Maori word, [which means 'sangam' in the] Gujarati language, [referring to] joining of two people, and that's a documentary I made about my family who came to New Zealand a hundred years ago. My family were nurtured and looked after, became a family with Maori, the people of the land" (M. Rupa, personal communication, Feb 20, 2012).

Taamara/Sangam focuses on the likenesses that Indian migrants and indigenous Maori discovered in interacting with each other, which led them to relate to each other at that time. The merging of Indian and Maori cultures has been manifested in various ways in New Zealand, and understanding and acknowledging that is a move towards appreciating the country's cultural diversity. Research on Indian-

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Maori identities conducted by Edwina Pio in 2008 and supported by the NZ Ethnic Affairs Office and Auckland University of Technology (AUT) is a good example of such efforts. In another historical/visual documentary, *Inheritance: A Lament* (2006), images of Rupa's extended family and clan shot in India are featured. The film recounts the family's 100 year old history of settlement in New Zealand and their relationships with Maori as well as New Zealand Europeans. This visual documentary focuses on the New Zealand born descendants of this clan when they returned to their Gujarat village to explore their Indian roots (Mandrika Rupa's Official Website, 2011).

Establishing a cathected connection to the original culture and homeland and its various manifestations and associations as they appear in the lives of diasporic subjects is one of the characteristics of diasporic films (Naficy, 2001). This feature is particularly configured in various ways in the act of cultural production based on the artist's vision and personal worldview, which recurrently affects the style and form of the cultural product. We can occasionally see that, as in the case of Rupa, the film is imbricated with the filmmaker's personal vision of life, social, cultural and humanitarian activities and values. Rupa's social work has informed her films and connected her to her Indian origin and the people of her ancestral land, India. This is predominantly encompassed and reflected in her recent human rights documentary, *Hidden Apartheid: A Report on Caste Discrimination* (2011), which tells the story of many Indians who have left India since the early 1900s seeking freedom from the caste system and its inherent prejudices. *Hidden Apartheid* represents the narratives of caste discrimination outside India, among Indian diasporic communities in the West. The film presents interviews, documents and images about Indians and their deep fear of the emergence of caste inequality and the potential effects and consequences of its practices among Indian diasporic communities.

Another figure in Asian New Zealand filmmaking is Shuchi Kothari, originally from Ahmadabad, India, who migrated to New Zealand in 1997. Films originated by Kothari primarily reflect her preoccupation with family issues and relationships. In an earlier short film, *Clean Linen* (2007, written by Kothari and directed by Zia Mandviwalla), Kothari tells the story of Raj, a nine year old Indian boy who lives with his family in New Zealand. Raj and his sister Renu do some household chores for their mother every day, and secretly watch their Dad's adult videos. *Clean Linen* is a story of growing up and its curiosities, discoveries and fears. Kothari's feature *Apron Strings* (2008, directed by Sima Urale, the renowned Samoan New Zealand filmmaker) also portrays family relationships but this time with an emphasis on the New Zealand multi-cultural environment in Auckland. *Apron Strings* is not a migrant story but it represents dimensions of living in New Zealand

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as a member of the Indian diaspora – a story about a Sikh family living in South Auckland. The film is structured around the lives of three women: two Indian sisters: Anita – a television cook show host, Tara, an owner of a curry house – and Lorna, a middle-aged European New Zealander who owns a business selling cakes in the same neighbourhood.

The story opens with Michael, Anita's son, walking into Lorna's cake shop to invite her to participate in an interview for his university project entitled 'What are the changes in this neighbourhood?'. When he goes to Lorna's shop to do an interview for his project, Lorna, who seems to be disturbed by the growing appearance of migrants in the area, says: "I don't really see a single face anymore, Vietnamese, Indians, Islanders...". Michael also wants to interview Tara who has a Curry House in the same neighbourhood, but he has another plan which is related to his past – Michael is searching for his ethnic roots. So his university project is an excuse for him to meet his mother's sister, Tara, and reconnect with the Sikh part of his family he has never known. Michael's diasporic identity is manifested in his personal need to search for the part of his self-identity, his Indianness. He manages to get a job in Aunt Tara's restaurant without revealing his real identity. Friendship grows between the two and Tara takes Michael to various community gatherings as well as religious and ceremonial functions held by the Indian community in that neighbourhood, from watching a Bollywood film in a community film screening cinema to performing Puja in a Gurdwara (the place of worship for Sikhs). Anita, is aware that her son, Michael, works at her sister's Curry House and spends time with Tara, but she does not approve of this. Anita left her parents' home many years ago after she got pregnant out of wedlock and that was, of course, a dishonour and shame to her family. This incident affected Tara's life as she was about to get engaged, but the groom's family did not want her after they got to know about Anita's pregnancy. After their parents died, Tara changed her parents' fruit shop to a Curry House and stayed in the same neighbourhood. Tara, who has been living with this impression all her life that: "I really wanted to get married; my sister came back pregnant. We were judged for what Anita did; our parents were ashamed", overcomes the blinkered attitude and dour values of her ethnic past in the final scenes of the film. She accepts Anita and her son, Michael, into the home she inherited from their parents in South Auckland.

One of the most intriguing features of *Apron Strings* includes its narrative structure which is based on a parallel story going alongside the Indian family's story, offering a more direct representation of interaction between the diasporic and the majority. Lorna's family also goes through several phases: Lorna's prodigal daughter, Virginia, returns from England pregnant; she hurts her mother by abstaining from eating her English home-made cooking and baffles her with

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seaweed flakes and macrobiotics. Lorna's thirty-something son, Barry is the shame of the family, a slacker with massive debts, who knows nothing except gambling and drinking away his mother's cash. Barry also hurts his mother more than anything else by running away to Tara's Curry House every night for dinner; a cross-cultural encounter that occurs through food.

Similar to *Apron Strings*, in which culinary practices and food become a means of connection between Indian Tara and Kiwi Lorna and Barry, in many films written by Kothari, the entire spectrum of diasporisation revolves around the essence and politics of food. In a short film scripted by Kothari and directed by Virginia Pitts, *Fleeting Beauty* (2004), the metaphor of food appears to narrate the colonised history of the Indian subcontinent. *Fleeting Beauty* features an Indian immigrant, Seema (Nandita Das) telling the stories of the ancient spice trade and Europeans in search of pepper by creating maps with spices on her Pakeha lover's back. The film lyrically and metaphorically illustrates the moment of decolonisation which occurs through a migrant woman's touch and imagination. *A Taste of Place: Stories of Food and Longing* (2001), a documentary written and produced by Kothari and Sarina Pearson also builds on the essence of food and the ways it implicates inclusion and exclusion in a diasporic context. This documentary combines interviews with members of diasporic communities as they prepare and share food, with sections of commentary from Kothari as presenter about her own life and thoughts. The participants are women immigrants and also refugees from a variety of ethnicities, who are unequivocally display in their traditional attire preparing a dish from their homeland in their new home, New Zealand, talking about how it feels to live here.

Apart from Kothari as a more known figure in the Asian New Zealand filmmaking arena, films by Kothari's pupil at the University of Auckland, Roseanne Liang, are probably the only ones so far to have managed to reach mainstream New Zealand audiences. Liang, a Chinese New Zealand filmmaker, has several short films, a documentary and one feature in her current profile. Liang began her career as a filmmaker with *Banana in a Nutshell* (2005), a documentary which was aired on national television. Liang particularly excelled in New Zealand cinema in 2011 as the director and co-writer of a feature film, *My Wedding and Other Secrets* (2011) – a rom-com extended version of her documentary *Banana in a Nutshell* – which was produced by Paul Davis and John Barnett, funded by South Pacific Pictures and the New Zealand Film Commission. Liang most recently made, *Flat 3* (2013), which is an online web-series, can be considered a move from the traditional film market and industrial mode of production to using social media websites such as Youtube in the New Zealand creative industry.

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One of the features of diasporic filmmaking is the capability of the film narrative to fabricate hyphenated identities that emerge in the context of the host society. Except for the films introduced as Asian New Zealand film, such identities have been absent from the New Zealand screen productions. *My Wedding and Other Secrets* depicts construction of several aspects of Chinese New Zealand identity and portrays how it may differ for the first and second generations of the Chinese diaspora in New Zealand. *My Wedding and Other Secrets* (2011) centres on Emily's (Michelle Ang) love story and her cross-cultural marriage, and the reactions she receives from her parents. The film is a depiction of "the multi-layered process of adaptation and change that is variously challenged, welcomed, or ignored by people in diaspora" (Zalipour, 2011, p. 117). The film comments on the ways Emily's internal assimilation as the second generation of Chinese (Asian) diaspora in New Zealand conflicts with her parents' ethnicisation as members of the first generation of diaspora in this country. Emily's New Zealand education and upbringing, her Kiwi accent, a sense of independence and individuality in making decisions and encountering life challenges – especially as a woman – are some of the attributes of her hyphenated identity. The attempts made by Emily's parents to maintain their Chinese culture and traditions and the conflicts that arise in doing so shape some of the aspects of first generation diasporic identity.

In addition to the Indian and Chinese diaspora in New Zealand featured in films by Kothari and Rupa, as well as Wong and Liang respectively, there are instances of narrating Korean New Zealand stories in New Zealand film such as the short film *Eating Sausages* (2004, directed by Zia Mandviwalla). *Eating Sausages* is about the migration of a Korean family and their displacement and unsettlement in New Zealand. This short film centres on the early stages of migration of a Korean couple and a series of internal and external conflicts that arise when the Korean wife, Su Jung, decides to explore the new culture and environment. She befriends the neighbours who take her along to their weekly swimming lessons and this creates changes which disrupt the routine of the house. Metaphorically implied in the title of the film, serving sausages at the table by Su Jung alongside the traditional Korean dinner, emblematically alarms her husband of something threatening; he fears losing their Korean culture, customs and values. Su Jung, who deliberately and carefully enjoys exploring a new language, a new home, neighbourhood and friends, one morning finds herself locked in their New Zealand house by her husband. She is portrayed in the last scene sinking in the bathtub as the water overflows in their New Zealand house, leaving the audience with an open ending if she has committed suicide. The film's ending powerfully creates a juxtaposition of her being locked in the house and a sense of freedom she has already experienced

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through the metaphor of floating in the water – referring to the swimming skills she has developed in her New Zealand life, an opportunity offered by the new environment.

In {Dream} Preserved (2006), a digital feature written and directed by the Korean New Zealand filmmaker, Stephen Kang, Mark, a Korean migrant, struggles to find a space to feel safe in his new environment. Lonely, alienated and isolated, Mark finds refuge in a fridge where he sleeps every night. The claustrophobic space of the fridge symbolizes a safe zone where he feels protected against the threatening and unknown surroundings to which he struggles to connect. Kang's films encapsulate the interstitial elements of diasporic films in various ways. His characters live on the periphery of the society where their invisibility is ignored and they have to find or make their own destinies. In {Dream} Preserved, the fridge represents a frozen space of immobility, a threshold to an interstitial space as a result of living in diasporic conditions. The interstitial space consists of an inevitable dwelling and participation he has to experience after migrating to New Zealand. Mark knows well that he cannot continue to reside on the threshold for very long. A sense of not belonging to the host society and feelings of confusion, in-betweenness and alienation are characteristics of interstitial spaces. Interstitial conditions of characters affect their cultural and social identities in many ways. In {Dream} Preserved, they are manifested in Mark struggles with his work visa condition and also issues which are related to the early stages of migration; this is a stage when attending to the vital needs of life for a migrant overrides other aspects of identity construction, cultural concerns and attempts for (in)visibility and integration.

Similarly, Kang's second feature, Desert (2010), also engages with the challenges of migration and its initial motivating factors of finding a job, connecting to a community or family, and settlement. Jenny, a young Korean girl living in New Zealand, is baffled when she is left to fend for herself after being abandoned by her Kiwi boyfriend. The film cannot be called 'another' cross-cultural marriage but rather comprises a journey to Jenny's mind and life when she has no one to count on in a foreign land; her Asian community also rejects her for the shame of getting pregnant to a Westerner out of wedlock. Desert depicts the emptiness one's soul can experience when external sources of support are absent in a place where one cannot see many familiar faces.

Senses of the Periphery

This article relied on the contemporary notion of diaspora as it refers to scattering of a people either voluntarily or involuntarily from their homeland and the process

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of settlement in a new land. The diasporic condition entails a combination of challenges and changes in various aspects of social, cultural, political, and economic life and identity of diasporic people. Asian New Zealand films variously depict the developmental stages of these changes and challenges for diasporic individuals and communities in their adopted land. The New Zealand stories of these films may be the stories of many diasporic people who have chosen New Zealand as their new home – experiences of displacement, deterritorialisation and integration. The centripetal approach of this article aimed to move to centre stage a group of films and filmmakers that are currently absent in the scholarship of New Zealand cinema. Despite diverse filmmaking practices, texts and traditions, the works of these Asian New Zealand filmmakers resonate with a solidarity borne of a shared experience of diaspora and migration. More importantly, their films have potentiality to (re)construct diasporic identities as part of New Zealand nation.

The article also demonstrated that these New Zealand films and filmmakers incorporate peripheral attributes in several senses. They are peripheral in terms of the nature of their New Zealand stories. The tangential situations of diasporic characters of these films define them as being socially, culturally and occupationally on the margins of New Zealand society – living as a migrant and also a member of ethnic minorities can probably be seen most of these films. The character's peripheral positioning is also due to the little public claim diasporic subjects or actors make on the majority as their status of outsiders also confers invisibility. In the case of Liang's *My Wedding and Other Secrets*, the periphery can be defined primarily in terms of its characters and narrative, even though it was positively targeted at mainstream New Zealand audiences and its cinematic production was also financially and logistically supported by an important New Zealand film production company.

The article also showed that the peripheral aspects of Asian diasporic films often go beyond the film narrative, characters and subjects, and manifests themselves in the modes of film production, exhibition and distribution. Kang's films, like some of Rupa's self-funded films, are examples of peripheral films in terms of the mode of film production, distribution and exhibition; their film productions mainly consist of low budget and experimental filmmaking practices. Kang describes the financial and logistic limitations he encountered in the process of making his films, working with the low budget and a lack of skilled crew and cast in a "one-man-production" paradigm, where he had to be entirely multifunctional (Stephen Kang, personal communication, 18 April 2012). His experience reminds us of perseverance and enthusiasm of many other emerging talents on the periphery of New Zealand cinema, who may have not yet been recognized, but strive to represent and narrate New Zealand stories of diasporas, despite the considerable

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financial, logistical, cultural and social challenges encountered in the process. In my overall research project which is still on-going, I have identified many of these young Asian talents who are part of the New Zealand creative industry in the realm of arts, literature and visual culture; they will come to the limelight in the course of time.

In addition to the peripheral elements in the process of cultural production, being part of the minority groups in New Zealand may indirectly ensue the peripheral positioning of the Asian diasporic filmmakers in New Zealand as they originate from diasporic and migrant communities. The peripheral position of Asian New Zealand filmmakers can also be related to their emerging presence in the film industry, which has occurred only over the last few decades and also their current smallness in number. These peripheral senses, however, do not imply that the periphery is always marginalised. On the contrary, it promises recognition of talents that may have not made tangible claims of the New Zealand public culture and space. As also reflected in the methodological exercise of this article – borrowed from Iordanova, Martin-Jones, and Vida (2010) – the fundamental point is whether the periphery will be a new centre in New Zealand cinema in the future.

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Journal Article: Interstitial and Collective Filmmaking in New Zealand: The Case of Asian New Zealand Film

Abstract

Asian diasporic film is an emerging phenomenon in New Zealand and it is only recently that members of diasporas have started getting involved in making films about their experience and life in New Zealand. This article focuses on the modes of production of Asian New Zealand film within the context of the New Zealand film industry and society. It first takes a broad view of the process of New Zealand filmmaking, emphasizing the characteristics of 'a New Zealand film' and then asks: how far is the filmmaking process affected by the disaporisation of the filmmaker? I focus on the means of production and distribution of Asian New Zealand film using Naficy's conceptualisation of the two modes of production in diasporic cinema: the interstitial and the collective. This article contributes to the scholarship of (diasporic) film production in New Zealand and opens up new ways of thinking about the effects of the underlying relationships that can be developed to facilitate diasporic filmmaking as a potential benefit to the economy, and also as a way to respond to the increasing cultural diversity of New Zealand audiences.

Keywords: New Zealand film; diasporic cinema; production; diaspora; identity; migration

Introduction

Scholars have argued that diasporic cinema is chiefly located on the margins of dominant film cultures in terms of production, distribution and reception, and therefore, diasporic filmmakers have to struggle with problems of access and recognition – particularly in 'small nations' where distribution of resources and funding are more restricted (Hjort 2005; Higbee and Lim 2010; Iordanova and Martin-Jones 2010). The local and international success and contributions of the filmmakers of Asian descent in New Zealand despite the challenges and constraints they may face, as well as the inextricable interrelationship of their films to contemporary New Zealand society, provide interesting examples to explicate and extrapolate diasporic modes of film production in New Zealand cinema. This article

explores some of this work as examples of the interstitial and collective modes of production that for Naficy demarcate diasporic filmmaking – or what he terms as 'accented cinema'. This emerging flow of films, which depict some aspects of migrant and diasporic life in New Zealand, instantiate diasporic filmmaking in the New Zealand context. This nascent body of films has been identified as 'Asian New Zealand film' as their diegesis are primarily 'based on various aspects of diasporic experience and life in New Zealand, and primarily involve images and stories of Asian communities and individuals living in this country' (Zalipour, 2013, p. 3) Asian New Zealand film is an emergent phenomenon, made and/or consumed within a migratory experience of displacement and diaspora which in a broader sense reflects manifold social realities of contemporary New Zealand as whole. This article focuses on the production of Asian New Zealand film within the context of the New Zealand film industry and society. Asian New Zealand film includes both works by New Zealanders of Asian descent and New Zealand films producing images of Asian diasporic people (Author 2013, forthcoming). In the last decade, they, and a handful of other diasporic filmmakers, present alternative world views, identities and cultures in the dominantly Europeanised New Zealand cultural and social arenas. The development of diasporic/ethnic characters, images and stories as domiciled cultural productions of the host country indicates the increasing complexity of social and cultural identities at a national level (Gillespie 1995; Cohen 1997; Dayan 1999; Karim 2003).

In terms of how we might understand the emerging realities of film production in New Zealand in the case of Asian diasporic filmmakers, it is useful to take a broad view of the process of New Zealand film production and then asks: How far is the film production process affected by the disaporisation of the filmmaker? This article, therefore, first provides a conceptualisation of New Zealand filmmaking, emphasizing the characteristics of *a New Zealand film* as well as some information on New Zealand's major funding agencies. This will be followed by a discussion of the two main modes of diasporic filmmaking: the interstitial mode and the collective mode (Naficy 2001). I will then examine and discuss these two modes in relation to Asian New Zealand films. The article aims to contribute to the scholarship of (diasporic) film production in New Zealand and opens up new ways of thinking about the effects of the underlying relationships that can be developed

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to facilitate diasporic filmmaking as a potential benefit to the economy and also a way to respond to cultural diversity among New Zealand audiences. I hope these discussions remind the New Zealand culture industry and media policy makers of the opportunities that can be created in Asia, as well as global and transnational markets, through showcasing these diasporic films.

Asian diasporic film in New Zealand: the research context and method

New Zealand is officially described as a bicultural society with Māori (the indigenous people) and Pākehā (European settlers) as two major cultures; however, this small nation is now effectively multicultural in respect of its ethnic structure, cultural diversity and overall population, having many migrant groups living in its urban areas (Brunton 2015; Friesen 2008; Smeith and Dunstan 2004; Spoonley 2013; Spoonley and Bedford, 2012; Ward and Masgoret, 2008). New Zealand's cultural diversity has recently been reflected more visibly in various media environments, from New Zealand cinema and film to arts and literature. One of the early manifestations of New Zealand's multiculturalism was through films such as *Broken English* (Gregor Nicolas 1997) and *Illustrious Energy* (Leon Narbey 1988), which for the first time incorporated New Zealand immigrant stories, suggesting that 'New Zealand's national stories might include people other than Māori, Islanders and Pākehā' (Margolis 2010: 290). The importance of film/media in reflecting increasing New Zealand's cultural diversity has been discussed by local scholars (Pearson and Kothari 2007; Kothari, Pearson and Zuberi 2004; Voci and Leckie 2011; Fresno-Calleja 2011; Author 2013). Taking into account the power of media, New Zealand *Race Relations in 2011* identified 'Diversity in media' as one of the ten top priorities for 2012, as a way of "improving representation [and] recognising the changing demographics of the NZ audience" (2012: 6).

Asian diasporic film is an emerging phenomenon in New Zealand and it is only recently that members of diasporas have started getting involved in making films about their experience and life in New Zealand. The manner of production, distribution and public reception of Asian New Zealand films varies. Therefore, as part of a larger study of the Asian diaspora in New Zealand film, this article employs a case study approach and examines several examples of these films and their production practices. In the late 1990s, there were only Helene Wong (from a

Chinese background) and Mandrika Rupa (of Indian origin) in this group. Among the more recent figures is Roseanne Liang, a New Zealander of Chinese background, who has several short films, the documentary *Banana in a Nutshell* (2005), and a feature in her profile. Her *My Wedding and Other Secrets* (2011), co-written with Angelin Loo (a Chinese New Zealand writer), is the story of a New Zealand girl of Chinese origin and her parents, portraying dimensions of the intergenerational conflicts and identities in diaspora. *Apron Strings* (2008) is a New Zealand feature that tells the story of two Indian sisters alongside a Kiwi family, co-written by Shuchi Kothari, a migrant originally from Ahmedabad in India, and Diane Taylor, a Pākehā New Zealand writer; the film was directed by Sima Urale, a Samoan New Zealand director. Examples of Korean diasporic stories in New Zealand include the features *{Dream} Preserved* (2006) and *Desert* (2010), both written and directed by Stephen Kang, a New Zealander of Korean background. Kang appeared at the Cannes Film Festival 2012 with his short film *Blue*, which brought him success representing the New Zealand film industry.

Migration and experiences of displacement and the challenges of re-settlement have been represented by many diasporic filmmakers. Asian New Zealand films are diasporic in many respects, embodying characteristics of migrant cinema (e.g. Grassilli 2008) or 'accented cinema' as Hamid Naficy (2001) terms it. Given my interest in understanding the modes of production of these films, in this paper I explore how the characteristics of the typical production modes in 'accented cinema' play out in production processes adopted by Asian New Zealand filmmakers? A range of materials will be used in my discussion including a series of interviews with various personnel involved in the production of Asian diasporic films, and secondary documents related to New Zealand film production.

The New Zealand filmmaking paradigm
The concept of 'a New Zealand national cinema' can only be identified from the late 1970s, when 'an independent production sector began to emerge led by a new generation of ambitious young filmmakers who wanted to create cinematic fictions that would tell different kinds of New Zealand stories' (Petrie 2010: 68). The role of this independent production community was significant, as their campaign to encourage the government to allocate financial support for filmmaking paved the

way for the establishment of the New Zealand Film Commission (NZFC) (Petrie 2010; Dunleavy and Joyce 2011; Horrocks 2011). The NZFC was established in 1978 as "a government constituted and funded body with the responsibility for assisting the development of a local film industry" (Conrich and Murray 2008: 2). The NZFC Act of 1978 stated that the main premise of a New Zealand film is to have 'a New Zealand story', although the inception of film production occurred as a result of the New Zealand government's interest, hope and investment in the film industry as a source of revenue making with a high potentiality to generate new employment opportunities (Petrie 2007; Dunleavy and Joyce 2011).

The NZFC Act of 1978 mandates that the NZFC has the power to decide whether a film should be financially supported: 'The Commission shall not make financial assistance available to any person in respect of the making, promotion, distribution, or exhibition of a film unless it is satisfied that the film has or is to have a significant New Zealand content' (NZFC Act 1978: 7-8), and therefore accordingly 'will be certified as a New Zealand film' (NZ Film Certification). The three major criteria of the NZFC Act of 1978 include: a) film subject, b) locations where the film is made, and c) nationalities and places of residence of any 'persons who […] are to take part in the making of the film […], own the shares or capital' or hold the film copyright (2005). These criteria are in line with the perceived values and benefits that the film industry can bring to New Zealand, according to the current NZFC's Statement of Intent 2012-2015:

> Our existence means New Zealand stories, talent and landscapes are celebrated at home and showcased to the world. This is an important part of our evolving national identity, and also underpins a sector which brings significant benefit to the economy. (7)

The three key words drawn from NZFC's Statement of Intent – 'New Zealand stories', 'national identity' and 'economy' – shape the underpinning structural forces that have formed New Zealand film production to date. Considering these and also drawing on the NZFC's concept of a New Zealand film, therefore, I argue that current New Zealand filmmaking paradigm manifests four primary realms: (a) Jacksonian filmmaking, (b) transnational filmmaking, (c) NZ-domiciled

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filmmaking, and (d) intermittent filmmaking. I shall further explain these below. The purpose of my conceptualisation here is to provide a broad view of New Zealand filmmaking in order to locate Asian diasporic filmmaking within it, having in mind the complexities that the concept of 'a New Zealand film' may convey. The New Zealand filmmaking paradigm also helps to explore how far the filmmaking process is affected by the disaporisation of the filmmaker in the New Zealand context.

The international direction New Zealand film production has taken since the 1980s (Dunleavy and Joyce 2011) and its impact on the film industry became more invigorated with the globally oriented filmmaking of Peter Jackson and his trilogy fantasy adventure films *The Lord of the Rings* (2000-2003) and *The Hobbit* (2012-2014), as well as New Zealand filmmakers who shifted overseas to make films. Jackson's efforts have directly affected New Zealand film by placing it in a global filmmaking paradigm. Geoff Lealand (2011) discusses Jackson's impacts on both the New Zealand State and film production through a description of 'Jackson's journey from New Zealand cult director to global filmmaker' (259). The 'Jackson Effect' has permeated numerous domains: New Zealand now is the focus of global filmmaking in terms of its extraordinary landscape, infrastructure, source materials and cheap labour. Jackson's success has also helped stimulate the growth of tourism in New Zealand by making the Hobbiton Movie Set in Matamat, as a tourist destination for film fans and travellers. Jacksonian filmmaking, therefore, can best be described in economic terms, rather than cultural and national terms. According to the NZFC's concept that a New Zealand film must bear 'a significant New Zealand content', films within Jacksonian filmmaking cannot be described as a New Zealand film because they do not offer audiences – whether local or international – a New Zealand story, content, images, history, locations, and accent, because *The Lord of the Rings,* for instance:

> is based on the fictional work of a British academic who drew strongly on Nordic and other European myths and legends […] The films were produced, funded, marketed and distributed by an American production company (New Line Cinema), the leading actors were British and

American, and the production equipment and hardware were all imported' (Lealand 2011: 261-262).

The identities *The Lord of the Rings* constructed are not a reflection of New Zealand people, society and culture. Can then 'the use of local landscapes make these New Zealand films [when] such geography provided only *templates* for settings' of the story? (Lealand 2011: 262).

Not globally oriented in their practices, another group of New Zealand filmmakers –such as Robert Sarkies, Harry Sinclair and Gayelen Preston – have continued to make NZ-domiciled films for local audiences since the late 1990s through customary budgets mainly provided through NZFC funds. Their films reflect aspects of New Zealand national and cultural identity and holistically incorporate the attributes of a New Zealand film; such films epitomise *NZ-domiciled filmmaking*. They typically have low box-office returns but receive critical reviews, and are regarded as representing New Zealand national cinema. Some of them may do quite well locally, and also get to travel across borders, earning international recognition and audiences – such as is the case of *Whale Rider* (Niki Caro 1992), *The World's Fastest Indian* (Roger Donladson 2005) and *Sione's Wedding* (Chris Graham 2006). Though the public profiles of some NZ-domiciled filmmakers are more subdued compared with those working at a global level, some of these filmmakers have brought new perspectives and critical success to the New Zealand film industry (Dunleavy and Joyce 2011; Pivac, Stark and McDonald 2011).

The international recognition of particular New Zealand films as well as the reputation their individual directors have gained through international exposure opened new roads to New Zealand *transnational filmmaking* and co-production. Their careers already launched via their early films in New Zealand, some NZ-domiciled filmmakers move on to Hollywood production, experience of overseas film studios, or involvement in co-production. Transnational film is a form that has cut across many geographical, social, and cultural boundaries, and consequently its 'national and cultural prevalence is no longer discernible because its creation is shaped by the confluence of many different cultural identities' (Berghahn 2010: 157; see also Higson 2000). The transnational in film takes place not only within

the narrative but in 'the production process, across film industries' (Higbee and Lim 2010: 18). It is, therefore, complex to identify examples of transnational filmmaking as 'a New Zealand film' when applying NZFC's criteria. For instance, Christine Jeffs's second and third features: *Sylvia* (2003) and the independent film *Sunshine Cleaning* (2008) are examples of transnational filmmaking but may not be considered New Zealand films. Jeffs, who now lives in Auckland with her partner John Toon, made her debut feature, *Rain* (2001), a good example of NZ-domiciled filmmaking: it was shot in a location around the Mahurangi Peninsula on the eastern coast of New Zealand's North Island, is based on a story about a New Zealand family on the verge of divorce, and the main cast were primarily New Zealand actors. Furthermore, the film was funded by NZFC. Widespread critical praise for *Rain* and Jeff's appearance at Cannes attracted international attention which led to her transnational filmmaking experience of *Sylvia* and *Sunshine Cleaning*. Different in many ways to *Rain*, both films have nothing much to remind the audience that there are New Zealand films they are watching. *Sylvia,* a British drama based on Sylvia Plath's biography, was shot in England, America and New Zealand, starring American and British actors. *Sunshine Cleaning* is an off-beat comedy shot in New Mexico, which stars American/Hollywood actors du jour Amy Adams and Emily Blunt. It tells the story of an American family and shares some of the producing team of *Little Miss Sunshine,* based in the United States.

It is evident that transnational filmmaking has generated solid outcomes for New Zealand filmmakers, though not necessarily producing New Zealand films and not under the aegis of the country's film industry. In some cases, nevertheless, operating through transnational workforces has enabled the production of New Zealand films, such as Vincent Ward's *River Queen* (2005), as I shall explain further. Ward, who initially made his mark in New Zealand, shifted overseas to make films in more established film centres. Ward returned to New Zealand and made *River Queen* (2005) through the Film Fund – a strategy implemented by NZFC and the government in order to attract some of the major names in New Zealand film back from their overseas bases. The Film Fund is 'a mechanism to bring back the diaspora of filmmaking talent to make genuinely New Zealand films not blockbusters' (Stark 2011: 293). The film narrative takes place in New Zealand in 1868 during Titokowaru's War between local Māori and New Zealand colonial

forces, tapping into a strong historical and national storyline and content. Though *River Queen* is a New Zealand film, it incorporates several transnational elements in terms of its production: it was shot in New Zealand and England, and the main cast were from several nationalities (being New Zealand, British and Canadian).

The fourth group of practices within the New Zealand filmmaking paradigm are widely diverse and intermittent in terms of their practices – this I term as *intermittent filmmaking*. Such films and their filmmakers may not appear in popular New Zealand film books but some may receive brief attention in reviews and film festivals' reports and summaries, and some may even be recorded by the NZ Film Archive. These emerging directors, writers, and cinematographers are located in the interstices of the film industry and make (or contribute to) shorts, documentaries, educational videos, digital features, digital video arts, and TV programmes. They apply for small funding opportunities available here and there and make experimental, independent, and low-budget films. They probably shift to the other three filmmaking realms when opportunities arrive. Examples show that shifting between the four realms within the New Zealand filmmaking paradigm mainly depends on available funds through local, international and transnational liaisons. Jackson's first feature *Bad Taste* (1987), for example, was produced with little funding from NZFC and Jackson 'self-funded the project and shot it in weekends with the help of friends' (Dunleavy and Joyce 2011: 88). The characteristics of intermittent filmmaking will be further explored through the examples of Asian New Zealand film.

Within the New Zealand filmmaking paradigm, there has always been a continuing effort to maintain a national cinema by the film industry. Drawing on the NZFC's emphasis on maintaining a 'national identity' through filmmaking, the recent shift in New Zealand's demographic composition, which is 'becoming more Asian' (William 2013; Statistics New Zealand 2013a), demands certain considerations for this growing ethnic group as part of the nation. Such considerations will enact the wider questions of migrant belonging and integration that characterize participation in the national culture as a whole. Smith opines that 'a close State relationship to the film industry [in New Zealand] suggests that institutionalised notions of nationhood and national identity inform many of the funding decisions behind a

feature film' (2010: 130). Within the rhetoric of national identity and cultural expression, we can observe a favourable investment climate and provision for 'work[ing] with Māori and Pacific Island content and themes, [and that the NZFC can] provide funding directly to Te Paepae Ataata as an alternative development pathway for Māori filmmakers' (Funding 2014). Such statements of active reinforcement and support documented as policy and/or guidelines cannot be observed on any occasions in relation to other ethnic, migrant or diasporic groups in New Zealand. Pitts (2008) reports that 'in the first seven years of the 2000s, Asian peoples have been virtually absent from NZFC-funded dramatic features […] predicated on a perception that western viewers are reluctant to engage with Asian cultures' (201). Nonetheless, there have been healthy signs in recent years, of two State-funded features as well as small amounts of funding for several shorts made by Asian New Zealanders that attempt to represent a wider range of social and cultural experiences. At present, there is not any cultural policy or special provision in NZFC for the production of images and narratives of evolving migration and diaspora for New Zealand audiences (NZFC 2012, pers. comm. 19 April). The only existing consideration is that if NZFC receives an application which has ethnic content, they will invite relevant consultants on a temporary basis to be on the funding panel (Wong 2012, pers. comm. 21 February; NZFC 2012, pers. comm. 19 April).

The 'accented' modes of production

The inauguration of diasporic cinema, film and media goes back to the 1990s in response to the boom of migration, diaspora and postcolonial studies (Berghahn 2010). Having the concept of diaspora at its core, diasporic cinema, film and media cultures are grounded on the experience of the artists who have migratory background or have experienced displacement and dispersion (Martin 1995; Marks, 2000; Naficy 2001; Desai 2004; Marchetti 2006; Naficy 2014). The concept of 'accented cinema' developed by Hamid Naficy (2001) calls this large and diverse category of films 'accented cinema' because of the 'displacement of the filmmakers' (4). By the term 'accented' he means films that share certain features –'an accent' – which are different from the dominant and mainstream cinema. The 'accent' emanates 'not so much from the accented speech of the diegetic characters as from the displacement of the filmmakers, their interstitial and sometimes

collective production practices, and the stylistic attributes of their films' (Naficy 2012: 113).

The emergence of 'accented cinema' goes back to the postcolonial era when 'exilic, émigré, diasporic, refugee, ethnic, and transnational filmmakers, [started] working in the interstices of social formations and mainstream film and culture industries' (Naficy 2012: 113). According to Naficy, accented films are highly ideological and political, which makes them different from the dominant cinema (the Hollywood style) which is mainly 'intended for entertainment only, and thus free from overt ideology or accent' (2001: 23). Since the publication of Naficy's book in 2001, there have been changes in the global flows of migration, diaspora and multiculturalism, which have enhanced and invigorated an enormous diversity of diasporic creative practices in various host regions. In other words, the main tenet of accented cinema as 'liminal subjectivity and interstitial location in society and the film industry' (10), may not cover the depth and breadth of the diversity that has emerged in various aspects of filmmaking and cinematic practices in diasporas all over the world. Having that in mind, in this article the terms 'migrant cinema' or 'diasporic cinema' are interchangeably used to refer to the films created as the result of the filmmakers' diasporic experience and conditions, as well as films which are about diasporic subjects and stories.[1]

Naficy defines the accented mode of film production as the 'rhizomatic organism that produces and facilitates the consumption of exilic and diasporic films' (2001: 44). The metaphor of the rhizome (inaugurated by Deleuze and Guattari, 1986) evoking a sense of rootlessness in diasporic film production is a distinctive characteristic as compared with the mainstream filmmaking practices. Diasporic films are often non-commercial, artisanal and collective in their production. Chiefly, they do not follow the conventions of funding, production, storytelling, distribution, exhibition and spectator positioning in the mainstream mode of production. For Naficy, the mode of production in accented style consists of two main forms: the interstitial and the collective modes. The interstitial mode of production is essentially based on Homi Bhabha's notion of articulation of difference in which "minorities translate their dominant designations of difference – gender, ethnicity, class – into solidarity that refuses both the binary politics of

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polarity binary politics of polarity or the necessity of a homogenous, unitary oppositional 'bloc'" (1994: 270). Naficy (2001) discusses five main characterises for the interstitial mode of production (45-62):

1. The financial provision under which production operates;
2. The multiplication and accumulation of labour in contrast with the division of labour as normally practiced in the post-industrial production mode;
3. Multilinguality of the filmmakers, the crew, the stories and the audiences they address;
4. A convoluted process of production; and
5. Length of time to distribute and exhibit the films

The collective mode of production in accented cinema refers to the various forms of ties and collaboration that relate the diasporic filmmakers to their communities. This connection may result in the communities playing the role of funding agencies and resources for this type of filmmaking. This type of collaborative filmmaking is often related to a broad mandate of promoting ethnic media culture, which might bring diasporic filmmakers into conflicts with their attributed communities, since they may face 'multiple demands and expectations' (Naficy 2001: 65). The next two sections present an investigation of these two dominant modes of production in relation to the corpus of Asian New Zealand film.

The interstitial mode of production

One major aspect in the interstitial mode of production in diasporic cinema is the film's financial provision. This refers to 'the multiplication or accumulation of labour' where directors often act in certain roles to manage and control the budget and the overall project, which differs from the post-industrial mode, the studio system mainstream film production (Naficy 2001: 48). Stephen Kang, a New Zealand filmmaker of Korean origin, took responsibility to run the whole project in the making of his first no-budget digital feature {*Dream} Preserved* (2006) in New Zealand – which he called a 'one-man-production': 'I shot it. I edited. The actors and actresses were all my friends. We basically did the whole film during the weekends and public holidays or after work' (S Kang 2012, pers. comm., 18 April).

To control the budget in his second feature, *Desert* (2010), he had to employ a similar one-man-production strategy and develop a feature out of a fourteen page script and let the spontaneous acting and direct sound and dialogue lead the film's diegesis. He sought assistance from his Korean acquaintances to be the cast and crew and he played multiple functions of different stages of the film's production. Here, Kang talks about the process of making *Desert*:

> Making *Desert* wasn't commercial at all. I'm sure it was not based on a common approach of making film either. It was shot on a very small budget from Creative NZ.[1] There was not a proper script; I made ten pages of script like a story line. Based on that, I got the funding. Without a proper script they don't usually fund so it was the last project [when] they did something like that. My approach was to have non-professional actors, and let them talk and act spontaneously. It was a very small amount of money; it was money that [meant] you could make a short film only. But we managed to shoot the feature in fourteen days. Every line was improvised and what they're saying is based on what they felt on that day. It was not professional. It was very hard. I met very good people, who were willing to support that idea; that 'experiment' I would call it. (S Kang 2012, pers. comm., 18 April)

Kang's experience offers an example of the unstructured process and experimental nature of filmmaking that is in practice in New Zealand. The passion to make films despite the challenges and constraints such filmmakers face can be construed as a commitment 'to tell stories'; stories that Kang thinks needed to be told (S Kang 2012, pers. comm., 18 April). As the first representations of the Korean diaspora in New Zealand, Kang's films both present tales of displacement, uncertainty, and the predicaments and obstacles encountered during settlement in a new home. His films have a minimalistic aesthetic in which experiences of deterritorialisation of identity, language, self, and community as a result of living in diaspora are inscribed in all aspect of the film's chronotope.

The filmmaking experiences of Mandrika Rupa, an Indian New Zealand filmmaker, manifest similar financial exigencies in terms of fragmentation of the division of labour. In an early film representing Indian-Kiwi hybrid identity, *Poonam* (directed

by Mandrika Rupa, Jade Furness and Lisa Sabbage 1994), Rupa was involved in several other roles as the voice-over narrator, actor, researcher, and script writer in addition to the main role of director. Her daughter, Mandy Rupa, also appeared in several scenes of the film to represent the generational complexities inherent in diasporic identities. To finance her recent documentary *Hidden Apartheid: A Report on Caste Discrimination* (2011), Rupa and her family had to sell their properties and sought the financial support of their friends and acquaintances in New Zealand and overseas to cover some expenses and labour (M Rupa 2012, pers. comm., 20 Feb).

Kang's and Rupa's experiences of making films whose diegesis centres upon diasporic lives and identities in New Zealand, share many features with the interstitial mode of production: a non-commercial film story, limitations of the available budget, non-professional actors, considerations in recruiting ethnic actors, not having a cohesive crew, unusual length of film production, and unorthodox decision making. It is equally true that in a non-diasporic context in New Zealand, new Kiwi filmmakers often struggle with similar types of issues. Julia Reynolds, for example, a Waikato filmmaker who has a few short films in her profile, started making her first 45-50 minute feature, *Shepherd 2154,* on a low budget in 2011. She was recently persuaded by her producer to push forward funding, through an Indiegogo fundraising campaign, hoping she would be able to keep the production running. She says: 'I almost gave up. I thought this is absolutely impossible and completely insane. No one can do this on this budget' (Lewis 2013: 21).

It is evident that not having access to adequate financial resources in diasporic filmmaking brings about certain consequences, one of which is the undetermined duration of the film production (Naficy 2001). Kang refers to this point with regard to the stages of production of his short film *Blue,* which brought home *Critics Week Canal Plus Grand Prix* for best short at Cannes Film Festival 2011. Unlike making his first feature with no budget, Kang managed to receive a small amount of funding for *Blue*: 'The fund came from Creative NZ and NZFC. I wanted to make a short film. The production company that I am working for [Curious Film], were willing to help me, the crew were doing it for free. It took a year and half to finish it because we didn't have enough money' (S Kang 2012, pers. comm., 18 April). Rupa made

similar points about *Hidden Apartheid*: 'I didn't have enough money to make it. Usually you have to work little bit and pay the bills and work a little bit and carry it on. It takes ages to make a film that way' (M Rupa 2012, pers. comm., 20 Feb). On an ad hoc basis, the production process may take only a few weeks, as in the case of Kang's feature *Desert*. The unusual length of film production can also be seen in the case of new Kiwi filmmakers, such as Reynolds's *Shepherd 2154* which has taken five years and is not completed yet. The length of time taken Mike and Rosemary Riddell to make their first film, *The Insatiable Moon* (2012), is another example of an unconventional film production process: 'it took five weeks of shooting, six weeks of post-production and eight years of pre-production' (Calder 2010).

One characteristic of the production of diasporic films is the use of non-professional actors, which sometimes helps to save on the budget. Diasporic film narratives primarily incorporate ethnic character, and therefore diasporic filmmakers may face some difficulties in finding ethnic actors within the host context – particularly considering the mise-en-scene, and multilingual stories. In fact, the lack of availability of ethnic actors is a vital challenge for the diasporic film's diegesis in New Zealand. Liang, Wong, Kang and Kothari point out that films which feature ethnic stories in New Zealand have to employ early career actors or those who are totally new to acting.[3] Recruiting ethnic actors in the case of diasporic films sometimes provokes the filmmakers into becoming creative in their choices within the filmmaking process. Zia Mandviwalla (a New Zealand writer and director from an Indian background) and Virginia Pitts (British producer) had to find ways to deal with their new actors when making their short film, *Eating Sausage* (2004). This short film tells the story of a Korean couple, Su Jung (Soo Ae Park) and her husband Kim (Chui Young Chung), who recently migrated to New Zealand: the wife is experiencing the culture and language of the new place, while her husband is frightened that their Korean culture, tradition and lifestyle may be disrupted in the new environment. Pitts found it challenging to work with non-professional ethnic actors in *Eating Sausage*. She says: 'Park and Chung, both of whom were new to acting, simply refused to play the sex scene as it would spell social suicide for them in their cultural milieu [...] the loss was made easier by the realisation that there were more subtle and clever ways to depict the loveless-ness of the characters'

marriage' (Pitts 2006: 143). Similarly, Kothari spoke of the difficulties in casting her short film *Coffee and Allah,* as it involved migrant characters. *Coffee and Allah* revolves around a Somali refugee woman as a member of the Muslim community in New Zealand. Kothari said it was not easy to find a Muslim woman willing to play this role: 'You have to make in-roads into the community and do it on their terms, otherwise you can't moan that these stories aren't being told' (Oxenham 2007).

As State-funded projects, Liang's *My Wedding and Other Secrets* and Kothari's *Apron Strings* offer examples of Asian New Zealand films working *within* the mainstream film industry. Liang was approached by South Pacific Pictures to make her first feature, while *Apron Strings* was funded by New Zealand funding agencies. Their production processes primarily share one characteristic of the interstitial mode of production: the multilinguality of the filmmakers, the crew, the stories and the audiences they address, which may facilitate intercultural communication among the diverse production team (Naficy 2001). Later, Liang could not receive any further funding for the ideas she had, and so 'turned to the 100% local independent web series *Flat 3* with zero funding' (2013, pers. comm., 15 August). This web series, which is distributed on Youtube, is a popular comedy based on the daily lives of three young Chinese New Zealand women flatmates in Auckland, and has attracted attention from audiences locally and internationally. NZ on Air funded *Flat 3* to receive NZ$100,000 for its third season that will be completed in mid-2014. According to the production team of *Flat 3*, they have planned to expand their stories to include the stories their audiences share with them (2013, pers. comm., 15 August).

As discussed so far, some examples of Asian New Zealand filmmaking practices bear several similarities with the interstitial mode of production. Migrant or diasporic cinema has been predominantly associated with the effect of the liminal and interstitial location of the diasporic artists in culturally and socially diverse environments, where making images is often laden with the politics of representation (Hall 1999; Naficy 2001; Marks 2002; Brah 1996; Grassilli 2008). In the case of Asian diasporic filmmaking, however, the ideological and political nuances of such practices and the ways in which screening 'difference' is nurtured

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and motivated by the artist's diasporisation were not overemphasised. The interstitiality, therefore, occurs more in terms of the means of production and is less explicitly associated with ideology and the politics of representation. In other words, the articulation and translation of the 'dominant designations of difference – gender, ethnicity, class' (Bhabha 1994: 269) as the primary traits of minority and diasporic cultural production, though intensely visible in Asian diasporic films in New Zealand, seem not to be the only driving forces behind their production processes. The impetus behind Asian New Zealand filmmakers vary, such as wishing to give voice to a diasporic experience, personal/creative articulation, or merely expressing a professional vocation or aspirations of becoming a filmmaker, or a combination of these.

The collective mode of production

The collective mode of production has a strong bearing on any form of ethnic collectives, from those involved in small media arts that have been gathered based on friendship and collegiality, or communication networks to larger collectives such as formally operated organisations, institutions and festivals. Ethnic collectives 'working in media can bring about social and attitudinal change, especially by countering the negative stereotypes' of hyphenated identities such as Asian America or Asian Australian (Naficy 2001; Cunningham 2000). An early example of ethnic collectives in the US is Visual Communications (VC), founded in UCLA in 1971 as a non-profit organisation with a mission to counter negative stereotyping of Asian Americans. It managed to gain support from various funding sources, and 'has operated collectively, with its members involved in deciding on projects, writing grant proposals, and producing and exhibiting films' (Naficy 2001: 64). VC later expanded their activities from making films from an Asian American point of view to supporting the production and exhibition of such films.

One of the characteristics of VC which made it different from other similar foundations with similar practices and missions was 'the intimate vertical and horizontal ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and national ties that ethnic collective members must maintain with the community, or communities, they serve' (Naficy 2001: 64). At the core of diaspora lies an inherent relationship with an ethnically defined community (Cohen 1985; Anderson 1991; Clifford 1994). In the case of the

diasporic filmmaker, the attachment to a community may lead to a collective mode of production – referring to the various forms of ties and collaboration that link the diasporic filmmakers and their communities and that may result in the communities playing the role of funding agencies and resources. There does not seem to be a recognised body such as VC for Asian diasporic filmmakers in New Zealand, and consequently the collective mode of production has not yet coherently been practiced, particularly at the level of financial sourcing.

In the context of diasporic cultural production, the notion of links to a diasporic community should be approached from two perspectives: the diasporic author/filmmakers and the diasporic communities themselves. The nature of such connections is, indeed, complex:

> Having faced historical discrimination, hostility, and stereotyping, ethnic communities are highly sensitive to how they are represented by both outsider and insider filmmakers. They often feel protective and proprietary about their 'images,' sometimes even defensive – all of which forces accented filmmakers either to accede to the community's self-perception and demands or to take an independent path at the expense of alienating the community and losing its support (Naficy 2001: 64-65).

The interviews I conducted with several Asian diasporic filmmakers in New Zealand showed a sensitivity (to varying degrees) towards being linked or ascribed to any particular ethnic community, even though this should by no means be construed as the denial of their ethnic backgrounds, roots and identities. The formal attachment of the filmmaker to a diasporic community seems to be an unlikely concept in current Asian diasporic filmmaking practices, but may become a real possibility in the future. What does the filmmakers' detachment from their respective diasporic communities tell us about Asian diasporic films and the Asian diasporas in New Zealand? Is the sense of detachment, because Asian diasporic films are still small in number, and have not yet gained recognition among New Zealand audiences, particularly ethnic communities? Establishing ties and links between diasporic communities and their artists can facilitate cultural productions and aptly address the growing cultural diversity of New Zealand society. Migrant

filmmakers in Brussels, for instance, use different opportunity structures to produce films using any form of 'social, human and cultural capital' sources available for them; they are well aware of their multifocal positions as 'subjected to different cultural policies' which were strongly depended on to which 'community they want to belong' (Saeys 2009: 1).

Looking at diasporic communities as part of opportunity structures for migrant film production (Naficy 2001; Malik 2013), the film's diegesis and the representations it offers play an imperative role in the realisation of such supports. The types of stories and images a diasporic film showcases are significant for the ethnic/diasporic community as they are attributed to them through their shared discourse, origin and cultural backgrounds (Georgiou 2006). My interviews with audience members from the main Asian diasporic communities in New Zealand – Chinese, Indian, and Korean, at the time the research was conducted – revealed the different approaches and perspectives they developed in relation to Asian New Zealand films. The financial assistance and support a community can provide for their respective filmmakers/artists was not a topic that arose from their discussions. The proprietorial sense about their images was evident to varying degrees in the referential readings they adopted in response to representations these films offered (Author, 2014). For instance, the participants of Indian background expressed their discontent with certain representations in *Apron Strings*: 'They only show Indians as owners of a curry shop and Asians in general as having bakeries and takeaways. They don't show Indians as professionals, many of these Asians living here are professionals. We don't see that anywhere [as screen representations].' I concur that the collaboration as well as support provision from the diasporic community, as evident on the collective mode of production, partially depends on the ways these communities view screen images and narratives of diasporic life and experiences.

Although the collective mode of production in the form of collaboration with the diasporic community has not yet been practiced among Asian diasporic filmmakers in New Zealand, their filmmaking practices is collective in the sense that individuals who have become involved with depicting more than one diaspora. For instance as noted above, Mandviwalla, from an Indian origin made *Eating Sausage* (2008) about a Korean family. Her short film *Night Shift*, which brought her

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recognition at the 2012 Cannes Film Festival, tells the story of a Samoan woman and her mundane life and struggles as an airport cleaner. Similarly, *Coffee and Allah* (2007), a Somali Muslim story, was written by Kothari, from an Indian origin, and directed by Sima Urale, from a Samoan background. Urale also directed *Apron Strings*, which features the Indian diaspora in New Zealand. *A Thousand Apologies*, which was aired on the national television channel TV3 in 2005, is a good example of a group of diasporic artists working together, amongest whom were Shuchi Kothari, Roseanne Liang, Angelin Loo (also the co-scriptwriter of *My Wedding and Other Secrets*) and Zia Mandviwalla. It is a featured satirical comedy, and sketches the diversity of the Asian experience in the New Zealand context. In this admirably collaborative film process and cultural capital investing exercise, the cast and crew, script-writer, producer, director, every link in the film production chain who belongs to or identifies with a diasporic/minority/ethnic group in New Zealand, feels affectively and cognitively related to a film that showcases the diasporic subject and space.

Distribution and exhibition

Ethnically diasporic film collectives, if already formed in a given host context, can also help support the circulation and exhibition of diasporic films. Many films in the category of migrant or accented cinema have limited distribution venues and some of them do not get to 'travel beyond the borders of the producing nation, making access to them difficult. Some films can be obtained from non-English sources […], but are generally not subtitled in English' (Naficy 2012: 115; Grassilli 2008). My interviews with Asian diasporic filmmakers and members of diasporic audiences in New Zealand imply that Asian New Zealand films have largely not reached their diasporic audiences in New Zealand. For films such as *My Wedding and Other Secrets* and *Apron Strings,* which underwent a mainstream mode of production as State-funded projects, exhibition and circulation were accordingly assured; whereas, the distribution of Kang's feature as a low budget production indicated a different route:

> When I [Kang] first showed *{Dream} Preserved* to a few distributors, there was only one person who was interested in distributing this film. The distributor explained he thinks no one would be interested in *the story*. Same

thing happened to *Desert* as well. No distributors were willing to invest in such a non-commercial film. (S Kang 2012, pers. comm., 18 April)

Kang's account here reveals the dilemma for diasporic filmmakers involved in low-budget productions within the interstitial mode, where they sometimes try to find ways to promote their own work at local venues by touring exhibitions around New Zealand or at centres and galleries elsewhere. Rupa has managed to screen her films at exhibitions in the US and the UK. Her short film *Laxmi* was part of *San Francisco International Asian American Film Festival* which was held in San Francisco, Chicago, and New York; it also featured in the *Permanent Collection at MoMA* (New York); was screened at Cambridge University, UK (Mandrika Rupa's Official Website 2011). Furthermore, the Internet and social media are often the main distribution and exhibition channels for films on a low budget. In a seminar presentation on her web series *Flat 3* (2013, pers. comm., 15 August), Liang emphasised the ways access to filmmakers and their films is much easier via the Internet as they can have their own website and can link themselves to the diasporic and global networks.

Furthermore, film festivals provide another way of reaching audiences as they seek a wide network of cinephiles and also offer useful sources of distribution and reception for diasporic films. For instance, there are numerous festivals for diasporic films within the context of the US and Europe, focusing on the independent film practices. In contrast, 'The non-competitive New Zealand festivals do not act […] as facilitators of the film industry' in the way many European and Australian film festivals do (Dunleavy and Joyce 2011: 227). At the exhibition circuit and international presence at film festivals, the film's diegesis occasionally defines locations wherein they should be presented. The Busan International Film Festival, as Asia's largest film festival, has screened two of Asian New Zealand films, including *Desert* and the short film *Eating Sausage* in 2011. *My Wedding and Other Secrets* screened at the Asian American International Film Festival, which caters for diasporic and/or accented cinema. Such examples remind us that the film narrative and diasporisation of the filmmaker can expand the distribution outlets for the film. The complex facets associated with diasporic film such as for whom the film is made and whom the film addresses, can be

conceived as an advantage for diasporic films – which potentially have multiple audience groups due to the multiplicity they offer in terms of story, language, representations, and style – a reflection of having shared roots in several lands. Their advantage is in having both niche and multiple audience groups at the same time, as well as the viability of diasporic films which can simultaneously be categorised under world cinema, transnational cinema, global film and several national cinemas (See Dennison and Lim 2006; Simpson, Murawska and Lambert 2009; Berghahn and Sternberg 2010; Khoo, Smaill and Yue 2013). These characteristics give diasporic films potentiality and access to markets overseas across several platforms, on the basis of their ethnic and cross-cultural components and/or ideological and political messages under the art-cinema banner. In the interview I conducted with Kiyong Park, a filmmaker working in South Korea who came to New Zealand to make a documentary – *Moving* – about Korean New Zealand families living in Christchurch during the major earthquake in 2011, Park spoke of a group of Chinese viewers who came up to him after a screening of at a festival in China and said they could identify with the film at several levels, even though the film is not about Chinese. They related the Korean New Zealand story of dislocation and turmoil to their own lives and said that they 'have lived abroad and they know what it means to lose everything you have made with lots of sacrifice in a new home' (K. Park 2012, pers. comm., 16 April)

Conclusion

As a result of waves of migration and displacement on various scales and an enormous increase in the communication mobility of people, the changes that occur within and beyond nation-states continuously impact on film and media practices, products and institutions. This article has considered the ways in which the Asian diaspora engage the New Zealand film industry and society. As one of the dominant art forms as well as popular culture for New Zealanders, film, has indisputably been one of the most powerful ways of asserting and expressing New Zealand cultural identity (Dunleavy and Joyce 2011). The notion of 'cultural identity' is now in the process of reconfiguration, given the noticeable increase in the number of migrants in New Zealand, as evident in the latest 2013 census. This article examined the various modes of production of Asian New Zealand film, and also pointed at

opportunity structures that can be developed to facilitate the means of screen production of diasporic/ethnic culture in New Zealand society.

In the examples discussed within the New Zealand film production paradigm, I have observed heterogeneous systems of funding, distribution, and practices from inception to consumption. Emerging as a migrant or diasporic filmmaker in New Zealand, therefore, is a complex process of articulation of difference in the interstices of an industry and society in which the passion to tell stories has created multiple filmmaking practices across several disjunctures. This article has aimed to describe the volatile trajectory and inconsistent process of film production in the case of Asian New Zealand film, and showed the range of experiences Asian diasporic filmmakers have had in the production of their films. Some of these are characterised as an ad hoc, improvisational, amateurish practice, contingent with numerous peripatetic experiences, as with Kang's *{Dream} Preserved*. These activities are examples of intermittent filmmaking within New Zealand film production paradigm. Some others such as Liang's *My Wedding and Other Secrets* and *Apron Strings*, which went through a mainstream production route, resemble the NZ-domiciled filmmaking paradigm.

Endnotes

1. Diasporic cinema here is inclusive of Naficy's diasporic and identity films, and excluding exilic.
2. In addition to and sometimes in collaboration with the NZFC, NZ on Air as well as Creative NZ are another two funding agencies in New Zealand which mainly support programmes for television, radio and arts.
3. Recruiting non-professional actors is an issue that any early career filmmaker on low-budget production may also face.

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Chapter 6: Cultural Identities and Narratives

This chapter presents one article (in press) on the conflation of food, women and religiosity which was co-authored with Ann Hardy.[52] This article examines and discusses the nuances of diasporic identities through the films that represent the Asian diaspora in New Zealand, using the films of the Indian diaspora. One recurring theme in Asian New Zealand film, food and cooking, is taken as the basis of the argument in the article, but with a different premise to that of two articles already published on food narratives in New Zealand scholarship (see Chapter 2). This article examines the ways diasporic identities are shaped within the nexus of food, women and religion. It builds on the analysis of the conflation of food and religiosity with reference to women in the film narratives, and also looking at the women filmmakers involved in making these narratives, their diasporic background, perspectives and preoccupations. More fundamentally, in alignment with the thesis's goal to bring the diasporic audience to the discussion of the diasporic film, this article discusses responses to the selected film by a primarily female audience from the same diasporic group as depicted in the film's diegesis.

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[52] Please see Appendix VIII for the letter of acceptance from the editors.

Journal Article: Women, Religion and Food: Indian Diasporic Film in New Zealand

Abstract

Settling into a new society and to be accepted in an unfamiliar culture, it can be helpful to minimize the difference between one's self and the existing inhabitants, while, to gain visibility, it is typically advantageous to retain, and to present, an intriguing degree of difference. This article looks at how the combination of religion and food forms a convenient representational nexus for both of those goals. It focuses on the films originated by Shuchi Kothari, a member of the Indian diaspora and one of several Asian female filmmakers bringing new textures to the New Zealand screen. Her films deal with food as a medium for both intercultural engagement and the support of self and group identities through connections with religiosity. The effect is that the interplay of food and religion is posited as being of significance in exploring dimensions of diasporic identities. However while the conflation of food and religiosity may be important in the film's diegesis, that does not ensure the same result for its audiences. In this article, we are also interested in exploring the ways in which a primarily female audience from the same diasporic group interacts with the film's reflections on culture and identity.

Introduction

Settling into a new society and wishing to have a visible presence in that new environment are goals that require differing performances of the self. To be accepted in an unfamiliar culture it can be helpful to minimize the difference between one's self and the existing inhabitants, while, to gain visibility, it is typically advantageous to retain, and to present, an intriguing degree of difference. This article, which looks at how the combination of religion and food forms a convenient representational nexus for both of those goals, is drawn from a New Zealand study investigating the role that diasporic filmmakers play in public culture. It focuses on the film *Apron Strings* (2008, directed by Sima Urale) originated and written by Shuchi Kothari, a member of the Indian diaspora and one of several Asian female filmmakers bringing new textures to the New Zealand screen.[i] *Apron Strings* is Kothari's first feature but she has previously been associated with two other projects, the documentary *A Taste of the Place* (2001, directed by Susan Pointon), and the short film *Fleeting Beauty* (2005, directed by Virginia Pitts) that also deal with food as a medium for both intercultural engagement and the support of self and group identities through connections with religiosity. The responses of members of the Indian community to the experience of viewing the film and the issues it raises round out our study into this developing area of mediated public culture.

Food enjoys profound symbolic meaning in *Apron Strings* where, as the metaphorical title implies, it is primarily associated with female characters and nurturing relationships: furthermore its specific connotations are related to aspects of the cultural and religious identities of the women in the film. The effect is that

the interplay of food and religion is posited as being of significance in exploring dimensions of diasporic identities. However while the conflation of food and religiosity may be important in the film's diegesis that does not ensure the same result for its audiences. In this article, we are also interested in exploring the ways in which a primarily female audience from the same diasporic group interacts with the film's reflections on culture and identity. What does it prompt them to talk about, what negotiations do they undertake in constructing their own sense of self after several years in a new cultural environment?

Within the frameworks of Women's Studies and Diaspora Studies both internationally and in New Zealand, women's labour---domestic and non-domestic--- has been viewed in different ways (e.g. Brah, Braziel and Mannur, Campt and Thomas, Badkar et al.), some of which emphasize the portability, yet low value, of domestic skills in transnational flows of people in a globalized labour force. One of the characteristics of the New Zealand situation is that those in diasporic communities have voluntarily migrated for making a better life, rather than arriving through forced migration. This elective situation provides different opportunities and sometimes, greater value, for the skills that women have cultivated. For instance, there are women like Kothari and Rupa who have gathered the means to make films in diaspora. On the other hand, some women have parlayed their cultural resources, such as a distinctive approach to religion and the creation of food, into a form of beneficial engagement with the host society. As *Apron Strings* shows, such endeavours are not without their own risks, but can result in the leveraging of status in their own communities into influence in the host country. Researching real life incidents of the negotiations that diasporic women make around these resources,

therefore, requires theorisation of a number of factors in relation to material culture, mediation and religion.

Theoretical Context: Religion, Mediation and Material Culture

A contemporary means of understanding relationships between religion and media is to see religion itself as a process of mediation between the individual and 'others' – whether they be far-distant, unknowable others (gods), moderately distant others (strangers or members of another community) or proximate others (members of one's own community). The means by which we relate to those others, whether they be symbolic and representational: for instance traditional forms of written and audio-visual media, or more directly embodied processes of communication such as the sounds and gestures of ritual, are also forms of mediation which place different types of identity in relation to one another and offer the conditions for building (sacred) communities, even when they do not resemble a traditional 'congregation' or religious movement (Maffesoli; Meyer and Moors; Meyer). A parallel approach is to follow Luckmann (1990) in understanding different types and degrees of mediation as offering opportunities for different levels of 'transcendence'---'great' (concerned with divinity), 'medium' (going beyond one's individual identity through relationship with others) and 'minor' transcendences (temporary alterations in one's normal consciousness through factors such as emotion or distraction).

Although there are still those who seek the great transcendence promised by religion, most of the experiences with which late-modern individuals concern themselves operate at the levels of medium and minor transcendence. A diasporic

individual for instance, being no longer in the broadly homogenous culture of her birthplace, will likely be aware of the greater difficulty of finding self-transcendence through collective identity in a new society. However, watching an engrossing film can function as an act of transcendence, taking one 'out of one's self' at either a minor or medium level, depending on whether it is a solitary activity or watched and discussed with others. Depending on the context, preparing and eating food can also provide pleasure experienced either as individual, as collective and community-building, or even as facilitating great transcendence (for example, Holy Communion in some Christian traditions). Understanding food as a medium that plays a role in religious behaviour is part of the move towards investigating what Birgit Meyer and her colleagues call 'material religion'; the embodied, effervescent means by which individuals and groups facilitate transcendence (Meyer and Moors; Meyer). Just as the blessing and sharing of bread and wine is the central sacrament in Catholic and Anglican Christianity and Lent is a period of gustatory restraint, so too do the other major religious traditions alternately sacralise and restrict food. For instance, in Islamic traditions, certain foods are sacred and are usually offered at religious festivals where they are considered a blessing for the dead to reduce their pain and suffering. Other foods, such as dates, are popular during Ramadan and Eidilfitri (the celebration of the last day of Ramadan). Limitation of food in the form of fasting is also closely connected to Muslim faith, since during the month of Ramadan Muslims do not eat and drink during daylight hours. The link that exists between fasting and not committing any sins during this month is an example of the complex interactions between food and religious customs and principles. Hinduism and Buddhism have a similar range of material practices around ingestion and offering of foods with particular symbolic meaning,

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including in Guajrati Hinduism, the belief that deities can actually partake of the food offerings made to them (Wood). In Sikhism the Gurdwara, for instance, is more than a place of worship; it is the source of "assistance, food, shelter and fellowship"; preparing meal and eating together is an assertion of social equality in *Langar* (the community kitchen) where men and women irrespective of their class, race, caste and gender are involved in cooking for the community (Singh 80-88).

Such practices are easily understood as being overtly 'religious' but material practices dealing with food are also particularly suitable for being incorporated in the less formal and often interculturally translatable, contemporary transcendence systems known as 'spiritualties' (Van der Veer; Guadeloupe). A spiritual system will likely draw on elements---concepts, iconography, practices---from a pre-existing religion but is also likely to combine them with aspects of other religious or secular systems: it may be as small-scale as an individual template for negotiating the lifecourse, or it may be a system shared by hundreds or thousands of others. The latter possibility is especially open when nascent spiritualties are shaped in alliance with commodity culture so that sharing the concepts and/or physical resources of a spiritual system becomes a revenue-earning proposition. When members of a traditional religion are trying to adapt to a new culture a transformation in the direction of 'spirituality': an abstraction and maintenance of some of the principles of the religion, combined with a loosening of customary practices of observance, is one of the routes that adaptation can take.

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Religion and Culture in Diaspora

With other more basic survival factors such as finding housing, employment and becoming competent in another language at the forefront of first-generation migrants' needs, religion is a less crucial cultural factor that can be treated differently as people settle into a new environment. Nevertheless, in the minds of citizens of the host country certain ethnicities, especially Asian and Arab ethnicities, may be inseparable from assumptions about religious identities. In a diasporic context, behaviours around religion are therefore sensitive and available for re-construction as they can be a signifier for migrants' identity, ethnicity and origin. Taking the definition of ethnicity as a classification of humans on the basis of cultural differences, such as language, nationality, customs, culture or religion (Erikson), Hall's (1992, 1997) notion of the creation of new ethnicities and new identities as a result of diaspora and multiculturalism can explain this process of re-construction. The notion of diasporic identity is conceptualised by the ways the cultural identities of diasporic individuals are constantly being transformed and redefined as they explore and experience new similarities and differences with the cultural and social characteristics of the host country.

The re-construction of religion, as with other cultural forms such as clothing and appearance, marriage customs and food practices, can take many shapes. The so-called 'fundamentalist' forms of religion take the shape of enthusiastically performing religious and cultural customs as they are remembered in ideal forms from one's country of origin. On the other hand, living in a different society can be an opportunity to repudiate a religious form that has become onerous or unbelievable, or religion can be temporarily put in the background if one is too busy

with practical matters of adaptation. By the time a second generation of a diasporic community reaches maturity enough resources may have been accumulated for religious facilities to be built and religious customs re-established, perhaps in modified form. In most of these situations women, as much as religious leaders in public environments, play a crucial part, typically from a base in domestic environments. Here again, due both to the fact that food communicates ideas connected to ethnic identity (Xu; Mannur), and due to the imbrication of culinary practices and religious customs, food is also likely to figure in these activities of reconstruction.

Women and the Maintenance of Culture

The assignment of the responsibility for the everyday maintenance of culture in diasporic situations to women is common. It is explored for example in David Morgan's work in media and religion on the 'lure of images' (2007) where he analyses popular treatises on late nineteenth and early twentieth century domestic life in America to demonstrate how women from the Jewish diaspora[ii] were urged to make the most of the material possibilities of their new country by forging well-provisioned homes. The imagery that circulated among Jewish consumers presented a vision of plenty---plenty of food, comfort, family and material forms for celebration---celebrating an ideal that many Jewish families had not enjoyed before immigration. If religion was not always of primary importance to immigrants in America, it became so in one way or another for many, as a rediscovery of their Jewish identity in a new world (Morgan 121).

Straddling at least two cultures, women in diaspora are constantly trying to find a balance between their homeland culture and what the new environment offers. Martin Wood (2008), in an article on the Gujarati diasporas in England and New Zealand, also writes about the maintenance of religious food customs in the new environment, looking especially at the phenomenon of ritual food offerings apparently being consumed by the deities (murtis) whose images reside in the shrine rooms of Hindu temples. While Wood's analysis is not gendered descriptions of the event carry the implication that the creation of these offerings is a female activity:

> At the Swaminarayan mandir, they put the Annakut there and they did arti every half an hour. The food was arranged in whole blocks and decorated very well. Then they see that there is a bite from one of the meal that God prefers. A bite was taken from a meal and God has taken that bite. The word spread very fast, and the woman who prepared that meal got to know. (Bhindi, qtd in Wood 345)

In the sociological field there are several other studies that have focused on Indian women and their ongoing adaptation to New Zealand culture and society. For instance, according to a study by Pio (2005) becoming more conscious of their ethnic identity and seeing it as an obstacle to successful integration, Indian women migrants come to the conclusion that they have to make changes in their daily habits and life, from food and food preparation to hairstyle and attire. However, such adaptations can also provoke a sense of loss for previous aspects of identity and, in general, studies show that, over time, members of Indian communities manage this situation by demonstrating a 'Kiwi' identity outside in their public life and an Indian identity in the privacy of their homes (Bandyopadhyay).

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Another study suggests this maintenance of a private Indian identity is reinforced by the fact that immigrants tend to have most contact with other Indians rather than with New Zealanders and that the relationship of many diasporic individuals with the host society is limited to the working environment (Pio). Migrants wishing to preserve aspects of their culture therefore often congregate in each other's homes where space is devoted to socialization, including the celebration of seasonal and religious festivals; they cook together and share their original food. This space is also a platform where they negotiate various values, experience of living in the new society, matters of adaptation and integration: "Food is culture, and each society reflects its cultural orientation, but sometimes also its regression, in its handling of foodstuff and meals" (Classen 316). The creation of communities through the collective self-transcendence of cooking traditional food, especially for religious rituals, reduces fear, anxiety and feelings of not belonging, but it can also establish barriers to visibility and participation in wider society. Furthermore, the examination of the experiences of migrant women through practices around food is an accessible method to present information about one social group to another. This is evident in a New Zealand research done in the field of cultural geography by Robyn Longhurst and Lynda Johnston where they observed women cooking and talking about their lives: "They talked over food preparation, cooking and eating they focused on how they *feel* living in Hamilton" (Johnston and Longhurst 2).

Becoming Visible through Filmmaking

Shuchi Kothari, an immigrant filmmaker of Indian origin from Ahmedabad in Guajarat, is an example of a woman who has both 'settled' in New Zealand and has managed to make her presence felt in public culture. She has done this by explicitly reflecting on the issues that also interest us---media, religion, culture and gender. Kothari moved first to the United States and then to New Zealand in 1997, where she works as a teacher of scriptwriting in the Department of Film, Television and Media Studies. A Hindu, she has increasingly come to see food as linking her to family and culture, and as both differentiating her from the people of her host country and also as being one of the vectors for relationships with them. An earlier short film, *Fleeting Beauty* directed by Virginia Pitts, which Kothari scripted and co-produced, specifically explored this concept of facilitating relationships through food in an erotic sense by depicting a woman constructing a map in spices on her lover's back. Kothari's preoccupation with food and cooking in her films reflects her nomadic experience of leaving India, then America and now living in New Zealand. Making film by women and about women is part of the "women's need to articulate, nourish and defend and identity that imbues their lives with meaning. [Films] are a response to women's need to literally make their own meaning and share it with one another across space and time" (Virmani 233; Cameron). To make films she collaborates with other women, for example with Sarina Pearson; together they established a production company Nomadz Unlimited that aimed to foster projects that reflect their nomadic experience.

The themes of integration into a new community balanced with the maintenance of old identities are intertwined in *A Taste of Place: Stories of Food*

and Longing, the personalized documentary which Kothari and Pearson made for New Zealand television in 2001. The documentary combines interviews with members of diasporic communities as they prepare and share food, with sections of commentary from Kothari as presenter about her own life and thoughts. A majority of the food-makers are women and the pleasures of female collective work are repeatedly emphasized: Kothari is filmed helping in the preparation, an activity which makes her nostalgic for the four generations of women who live in her family home in Ahmedabad. In New Zealand the participants talk about the difficulties and satisfactions of life in New Zealand: in the process touching on the many issues addressed when searching for a taste of home.

> Being an immigrant means always leaving something behind, it's the price you have to pay. Food didn't mean so much to me until I left India to live in America 10 years ago and then suddenly it became a way of remaining connected to home, or a lifestyle, or a world of flavours that I had left behind. So I am constantly carrying things back and forth. But like my grandmother's pickles some things don't travel, they are perishable, so you have to let go and adapt. That's what immigrants do, isn't it?

The overall tone of the documentary is secular, but it is a secularity imbued with the material spirituality outlined above, concentrating especially on the medium, collective transcendence involved with the sharing of food, while also acknowledging the structures of religious ritual in the film's own structure. The first group of women encountered in the film led by Fou Gahuatama, a member of the mid-twentieth century influx of settlers from Niue, plus her friends and niece, are seen in a religious situation: the Polynesian Christian church service and the Sunday lunch of traditional foods which follows it: a senior woman is shown leading a

prayer of thanks before the meal, a prayer which includes an appeal for the children present to look after both their elders and their culture.

Later, *A Taste of Place* shows Eyerusalem Atalay, a restaurant owner in her homeland of Ethiopia, buying raw Ethiopian coffee beans from the one shop in New Zealand's largest city that stocks them and then roasting them over a brazier in her living-room. Through this scene the film makes the point that locating a source of supply for familiar ingredients is an urgent quest for most new migrants, with the unpalatable alternative the adoption of a new local diet. Conversely, as demonstrated in an interview with the prosperous owner of an Indian food-market, supplying food to either or both diasporic communities and members of the host country can be one of the most profitable of performances of cultural difference. Selling ethnic food can be an economic lifesaver when some immigrants, especially those without an English-language based education, find it almost impossible to locate employment in their new environment.

The other sequences---the elderly Chinese women who meet once a month to cook a dish from a homeland they have never lived in, the Dalmatian woman reminiscing about the scarcity of olive oil in New Zealand twenty years ago---are mostly stories of successful acclimatisation over a lengthy period, although they include instances of prejudice and humiliation (such as a child being reprimanded by a school bus driver for smelling of garlic) which underline Kothari's contention that 'there is always a price to pay' for demonstrating difference. The final sequence of *A Taste of Place* is located in a church hall, joining the acknowledgement of loss to the celebration of adaptation and survival. The hall is not being used for an actual religious service, but is a space large enough to accommodate the performance of diasporic community; in this case, New Year celebrations for the Ethiopian

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community. Eyerusalem has prepared hundreds of pancakes but some have been broken in transit: she is filmed dancing while Kothari's voice-over cites her saying 'you've got to make things complete out of incomplete'. The elegiac, sacramental tone of the documentary at this closing point is reinforced by Kothari's summarizing comments:

> Food is about longing and loss about adaptation and continuity. It is like memory, inside us evoking a taste of place that has nothing to do with where we are… I can't help but think all of us have one thing in common. We use cooking as a solution. We cook to remember what we want to remember, we cook to forget what once caused pain. We cook to celebrate who we are, no matter where we are. (Kothari)

Apron Strings the Film

The theme of 'cooking as a solution' repeatedly and overtly emerges in *Apron Strings* (2008), where women take the central role in the film narrative, interact through their differences, and reconcile their family divergence through the medium of food and cooking. The film opens with three intercut sequences of food being prepared. The first cook we see, a woman dressed in the clothing, jewellery and make-up of a festive 'Indianness,' is Anita, a television cook show host. Recently returned to New Zealand from two decades living in England, in private life she is thoroughly Europeanised. In this context, however, highly visible as a stereotype of glamorous Asian beauty, she is performing difference as a means to participate in the New Zealand media economy. The elaborateness of her appearance is echoed by the next sequence of a European wedding cake being painstakingly decorated.

The cook here is Lorna, a middle-aged European New Zealander who owns a business selling cakes in a neighbourhood that she thinks is being overrun by immigrants. Lorna says: "I don't really see a single face anymore, Vietnamese, Indians, Islanders … that shop in the front is a curry house now … it was a fruit shop before". The context of the film is then set from the beginning as a cross-cultural milieu with food and cooking as the focal point.

The third cook is Tara, Anita's estranged sister and proprietor of a small restaurant, a 'curry house', located in Lorna's neighbourhood. Tara also wears Indian clothing but it is workwear, simple clothing for a busy woman who is cooking jellabies in bubbling oil. Of the three, Tara is depicted as being most at one with her life and her work, maintaining the Sikh culture that is hers and Anita's inheritance. Religion is a central part of that inheritance: there is a small shrine on the wall of Tara's kitchen, with images of a deity, a Sikh guru and nearby, garlanded memorial photographs of her parents. Tara prays at this shrine every morning before starting work. In fact, most of the scenes featuring Tara have a religious or spiritual component that involves her transcending self-interest to help others. She is the most religious character in the conventional sense where religiosity is defined by practice and observance of principles and tradition. She attends the gurdwara, or temple, regularly and hosts an inspiring community celebration for a couple who have been married for sixty years. Not only does she make offerings to the gods, she also makes offerings of food and chai to visitors and neighbours, including, most controversially, to Lorna's wastrel son, Barry, who prefers Tara's cooking to the meals made by his mother. Barry is a gambling addict whose duplicitous attempts to get money from his mother to repay his debtors almost destroys his mother's business, but throughout the film Tara is steadfast in her courteous service

towards him, even when he does not have money. Tara helps to maintain the diasporic community in the inward-looking sense outlined above but paradoxically, she is also the one who makes the most effective connections with people outside the community, by genuinely living out her religious principles. The contrast between her community-embedded integrity and the sophistication but ungroundedness of her sister is underlined by a scene where Anita rails against being asked to cook on a set decorated with a hotchpotch of Hindu and Buddhist statues, but goes ahead and does it anyway.

Lorna, the European New Zealander, shows no evidence of faith, except a partially misplaced trust in family (whereas her son betrays her, her mother and her daughter---the ones who eat with her---are a source of support in the end). Her use of food with her son explores the emotional dimensions of food---how it is used to serve and sustain but also to bind and control other members of one's family and social circle. Barry consumes her food (without giving anything in return) but also rejects it as he prefers another 'taste'. The importance of food in serving and creating family bonds, emotion and relationship is extended to the forging of cross-cultural and multicultural connection. Shuchi Kothari refers to this point in an interview, calling Barry 'the most multicultural character' in the film (S. Kothari, personal communication, March 19, 2011) whereby he achieves this identity through practices of eating. This is an indication of the preliminary sense of integration that can emerge through a sensuous pleasure of food.

Since almost every scene in the film shows people making or eating food it is impossible to examine all the different meanings attached to it. Nevertheless one contrasting point is worth making: all the women in the film have negative emotions around relationships or lack of them. Lorna's problems with Barry are the most

evident, but Anita struggles to connect with her son Michael, who turns to his aunt Tara in his search to understand more about his ancestral culture, while Tara herself is sometimes sorrowful about the fiancée who was lost to her when her family was disgraced by Anita's extra-marital pregnancy (with Michael) twenty years before. Food for these women is not only a source of income but also a means for releasing some from their deep emotional resentments: these are visualised in many close-ups showing hands kneading, mashing, stirring and chopping. At the heart of the story food is a medium for delving into the two Indian sisters' past and culture to bridge the fissures that exist for them across the time and space of the present. Barred from a future she imagined for herself of having a family and husband, Tara has to shake off the past and forgive her sister, ethnic culture and the universe for deciding a different fate for her.

The nexus between her cooking in the Curry House, her hidden wound and her sense of religion/tradition brings about an adjustment in her sense of self-transcendence. Having never forgiven Anita for bringing dishonour and shame to the family, Tara overcomes the blinkered attitude and the dour values of her ethnic past in the final scenes by accepting Anita and Michael (who has transgressed her values by telling her he is gay) into the home she inherited from their parents. Through a metaphor of preparing an Indian ethnic food 'samosa', *Apron Strings* rejoices at the power of food in releasing one out from the constraints of one's self: when Tara rolls out pastry, it is as if her past and the miseries associated with it are being processed one last time; she pinches the pastry with both hands and folds it into a cone shape so that it is completely sealed---old apron strings have to be cut loose to be able to embrace the present. At this situated moment of the film, transcendence takes place and helps her to levitate beyond the boundaries of her

usual self. Subsequent scenes that portray Tara sharing the aged brandy belonging to her father that she has preserved during those years of diasporic loneliness; covering Anita with an Indian designed blanket; serving her chai the morning can be construed as forgiveness---a form of self-acceptance which is manifested in the diasporic context of the film as a solution to recognising and forging new connections.

Probing into the past that they find difficult to face, all these three women manifest and transcend their present, difficult, emotions, actions and reactions through food preparation and consumption. They manage to surpass their usual selves subconsciously to experience the ephemeral transformation they need in order to survive, develop and look into the future in this diasporic/multicultural setting. In a reflection of the intercut sequences of the beginning *Apron Strings* finishes with two sets of people harmoniously drinking tea in separate locations: Lorna, her daughter and her mother taking English tea from a delicate, flowered tea set and Anita, Tara and Michael sipping chai from metal cups. The gross cross-cultural consumption of Barry has been banished for now and multicultural synthesis postponed in favour of distinctive ethnic communities; post-colonial English and diasporic Indian. Similarly, the individual versus group problematic has been resolved in favour of group cohesion rather than any one individual. However, the proceeding conflicts over food and identity have ultimately purified both situations (the mise-en-scene signifies this through muted sound and golden lighting) embuing these largely female groupings with a spiritual robustness that favours future success.

Focus Group Participants' Responses to *Apron Strings* and their Lives in New Zealand

A communal viewing of a film about food and its place in both the maintenance and crossing of boundaries between diasporic individuals and various 'others' in an urban New Zealand location, directed or written by a filmmaker of the same diasporic group, is therefore an event which offers multiple platforms for negotiating social, cultural, emotional and (religious) spiritual connections to a new country. From the focus group sessions with the members of the Indian diaspora in New Zealand rich data on the interlacing of food, women and religion emerged. The Indian audience group had the opportunity to watch a New Zealand film that portrays their own community in New Zealand and is directed or written by a filmmaker of the same diasporic group---Kothari's *Apron Strings* in this case study. Sometimes the discussion related to specific moments from the film, but more typically an initial comment of that type would lead to general reflections on the participants' own identities as members of the Indian community in New Zealand. The participants were male and female adults from different background and levels of education but all are originally from India, working and living in New Zealand as their new home.

The focus group discussants did not fully accept the nature of representations of the Indian diaspora in New Zealand as filmed in *Apron Strings*; specifically they noted that the film fails to reflect the diversity of Indians and their issues and lives, referring to the variety of Indian dialects, languages, customs, religious beliefs, etc. Associating Indians with the stereotypical figure of a curry shop owner and not portraying professional Indians living in New Zealand was

another reason for some discontent. However, Tara's piety and maintenance of tradition also seemed to represent an ideal that the focus group participants felt compelled to measure themselves against. Tara, was called "a better Punjabi lady [compared with Anita]" or "a fully Indian" woman by the focus group participants. This description was associated with her portrayal as 'religious' in the film and that to be religious means to be sacrificing, home-centred, and subservient as an Indian woman according to the focus group's responses. At the same time, one female discussant highlighted that "there are not many Taras living in New Zealand these days and those Indian women have moved on from that traditional sense". The condescending tone in the participants' views talking about Tara signifies the disparity that they think exists with respect to Indian women and the practice of religiosity in real life in New Zealand compared with the one portrayed in the film. They agreed that in real life somebody like Tara would face stronger pressure to adapt to the Western culture of the host society.

Certain themes with respect to the connectivity between religion and food appeared in discussions of the focus group participants. An Indian woman who is working in the education industry describes the strategy of religious intervention she has employed as a form of adaptation to her new context:

The religion has not changed from my heart. I'm still the same person I was in India, the same religion. Certain things are not practically possible when you live in here. In India I don't eat on Fridays. In India when I get back from work my mother used to keep the food ready, so fasting is something easier. But in New Zealand we can't continue certain things. For instance on the full moon day we fast. My mum calls me and ask 'did you fast?' and I have to say 'No' because it's not practically possible.

Does this comment imply that diasporic Hindus or Sikhs in New Zealand are following a different trajectory with regard to performativity of religion compared to Indians living in India? We suggest that the connectivity between food and religion consolidates diasporic identities and affirms not only religious beliefs, but also evinces a strong sense of continuity in relation to the homeland (India in this case), which becomes apparent above when the female discussant's immediate sense of religion is to link it to the limitation of food and its associations. Nevertheless, in new environments, certain limitations in terms of culture and society of the new place, make it impractical for migrants to follow certain religious practices. In other words, migrants follow the main principles of religion but they do not necessarily perform the religion the way they could do back in their homeland. It is deemed that the experience of living in interstitial cultural zones offer new choices in (not)performing religious principles and customs.

Still, collective transcendence occurs at various levels with respect to food's potency and its presence in the religious life of diasporic communities. Maintaining religious faith and ways of living based on narratives of difference, otherness, adaptation and integration manifest themselves in the host society through culinary practices around religious festivals and eating ethnic food. A natural adaptation to a new environment may bring about a form of disengagement with the original religion as discussed earlier, while the re-engagement physically occurs in the involvement with religious rituals, activities and festivals where food plays a key role. One woman who serves as a social worker in New Zealand says:

> Religion has a lot of connection with food because for certain festivals there
> are certain things that we cook. Basically it's food. And we have been
> conditioned to prepare them in particular ways. When living in a new

home/environment, we learn from other Indians in the diasporic community as well. So we don't minus anything but we add on. Every festival has certain food connotations. I know from August onwards religious festivals start for me and whether I'm religious, spiritual or otherwise, it means on that day I cook those things and eat them.

This is an instantiation of our earlier concept of food as a significant medium that showcases diasporic ethnicity in the host society, and that food is also closely associated with certain religious customs and rituals and festivals in various faiths. Collective transcendence in diasporic contexts revolves around the individuals' involvement and willingness to participate and re-validate his/her religious experiences with people from their homeland. There was a consensus among the focus group participants that embracing religious customs in diaspora is largely mediated through food preparation and consumption during festival seasons. As another female discussant, a teacher, mentioned: "Food is very much connected to Indian religions. There are certain religious festivals in which the main activity is that you cook certain traditional food." This refers to the opportunities for food preparation and cooking which become possible during religious festivals in diaspora and the way they exemplify one's individual identity through relationship with others and creates a sense of belonging to the members of their own ethnic community.

Nevertheless, there are many cases where diasporic individuals are content with minor/everyday acts of self-transcendence and do not seek collective transcendence because they do not wish to be strongly connected to their ethnic communities. The shrinking influence of the mainstream religions and the expansion of lesser forms of transcendence in contemporary spirituality has a direct

connection to the adaptive re-establishment of ethnic identity that occurs in a new context. In fact, a move from religion to spirituality was the dominant concept in the focus group discussions which was not based so much on the film but on their own experiences of living in New Zealand. An Indian medical doctor who arrived when he was only seven years old was pleased with the way his parents chose to teach him spirituality instead of their ancestral Indian religion. He spoke of his family's religious tradition as conforming in the course of time to the principles of spirituality:

> After we come here [New Zealand], [we] thought that religion itself is quite unnecessary to a happy life. And what was formed was spirituality to really touch the spirit of not worshipping gods or idols but to look inward. We were quite fortunate to have that. But I know there are many families that have migrated and children follow exactly what they are doing. And for them religion is very important, it's an essential part of the identity. For them religion and culture are the same.

In contemporary multicultural societies, "established and traditional religions have lost their institutional importance for many people, while religious and spiritual beliefs have become more individualized" (Höpflinger, Lavanchy and Dahinden 617). The inclination to develop spirituality among diasporic individuals can be partly explained by referring to their level of adaptation and assimilation. Those who mainly interact with people from the dominant Western culture of the host country often have a modified sense of religion that takes the form of spirituality. However, this does not mean losing ethnic identity, nor their longing for their ethnic food. The westernization of diasporic individuals appears in various levels of adaptation and assimilation and that can be seen through repudiation of cooking and

eating of ethnic food. In the case of Anita, her Indianness is associated publically with Indian food but that public cooking is also a constraint she wants to escape: her performance of difference in the pursuit of visibility and influence stands in the way of personal satisfaction. However, it is part of the complexity of *Apron Strings* that is through her sister's cooking and offering of food as a spiritual act that Anita and her son Michael rediscover Indianness at a deeper and more secure level.

These crucial notions signal to us that food is much more than simple nutrition or even an emblem of ethnic identity; it is a significant medium that showcases diasporic people's ethnicity and religious customs in the host society. It is a gesture towards integration and(or) separation, self and collective transcendence, and belonging and unbelonging.

Conclusion

This article read food as a significant site of religiosity and spirituality where diasporic identity is continuously reconstructed in interaction with the characteristics of the host society and culture as well as through collective transcendence within the diasporic community. The particular viewpoint that Shuchi Kothari brings to *A Taste of Place* and *Apron Strings* draws our attention to women from several immigrant communities especially from the Indian diaspora. They used food to address challenges not only to alleviate the tense conditions of their family relationships but also to bridge cultural boundaries with the host society. The predominant assumption is that food, religion and their joint role in the maintenance of culture are the province of women in particular.

The article demonstrated that food is significant in diaspora for its ability to re-establish a visceral-intuitive relation to religion and origin. Community and family relationship maintenance through provision of food in film and in the lives of the Indian diaspora in New Zealand manifested instances where women used their culinary skills to create affinities between their family members, themselves and the neighbours aligned with them in a multicultural context. The article showed how food as an earthly pleasure can elevate people's souls by letting them feel, perhaps momentarily, the happiness of life, the beauty of belonging to a community. On some occasions, this involves the need to let go of the past and on other occasions, to celebrate it.

NOTES

The existing scholarship on the Asian diaspora in New Zealand film is extremely limited, mainly for the reason that New Zealand filmmakers of Asian descent have only recently become visible in the film industry. The overall research project, on which this article is based, aims to conceptualise Asian New Zealand Cinema. In fact, the current project is the only substantial research on this topic in the New Zealand context and focuses on cultural production of the three main diasporic communities in New Zealand, namely the Chinese, Indian and Korean.

1. Others include Zia Mandviwalla and Mandrika Rupa. For further information see Zalipour, Arezou. "Emerging Asian New Zealand Filmmakers in New Zealand Cinema." *Directory of World Cinema: Australia and New Zealand*. Eds. Ben Goldsmith and Geoff Lealand. Australia: Intellect, Ltd. Forthcoming.

2. The Jewish diaspora is an example of the most traditional type of diaspora which is based on dislocation of people as a result of a traumatic event. In this article, we take the contemporary sense of diaspora as referring to people who settle in a new country on a voluntary basis, for education, trade or a better life and future.

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Chapter 7: Reception of Diasporic Films

As part of this larger project on the Asian diaspora in New Zealand film, this chapter examines the ways New Zealand audiences of Asian descent engage with Asian diasporic films. In the two articles in this chapter, I configure some of the complex relationships between representation, identity and reception, paying close attention to the ways members of the diasporic audience in my study both invoke and resist – in their responses to Asian New Zealand films – the significance of cultural belonging, homeland orientation, nostalgia, and other relevant themes and topics occasionally depicted in the films' diegesis.

Furthermore, the two journal articles address a significant gap this thesis identifies in the scholarship on diasporic cinema/film in relation to the diasporic audience. I have been strategic in shaping the arguments and angles each article aimed to explore so that they can accumulatively serve my primary interest which was to explore the implications of diasporic audiences' responses to diasporic film within the wider conceptualisation of diasporic cinema – primarily in relation to the diasporic consciousness (and/or imagination). In the reception studies of this thesis, I did not want to seek to make large scale generalisations about specific cultural and diasporic identities on the basis of screen and media representations. As such, the detailed exposition and textual analysis of each film became less pressing for my purposes. What is critically important is that the central themes of these films set a particular terrain for discussion, from which my respondents speak. My primary interest was to look at how this process unfolded for the members of diasporic audiences, the bridging areas where meanings of the diasporic text meet the meanings diasporic audiences' make in their interaction with the diasporic film, and also the positionings diasporic audiences deploy in relating to some aspects of the diasporic life and experiences which Asian New Zealand films depict in the context of New Zealand society (see Chapter 8).

The first article in this chapter, co-authored with Carolyn Michelle and Ann Hardy, is 'Modes of Engagement among Diasporic Audiences of Asian New Zealand Film' which was published in *The Communication Review*. Focusing on the main

objective of the research as conceptualising Asian New Zealand film, in the course of analysing my data on audiences, I was driven to explore the meanings my respondents make in relation to the films, which centres on diasporic experiences and lives in New Zealand – how far they responded to the textual depiction, and how far they went beyond that. My interest in providing a solid understanding of the engagements between the diasporic viewer and diasporic cultural products, therefore, led me to investigate the underlying modes of reception adopted by my participants using Michelle's (2007) Composite Model of modes of reception.

In the second article, co-authored with Adrian Athique, 'Diasporic Films and the Migrant Experience in New Zealand: A Case Study in Social Imagination' (published in the *International Journal of Cultural Studies*), I took a relatively different approach in analysing receptions of Asian diasporic films. Here, I wanted to put the audience at the centre of investigation and move from the audience to the text, rather than to move from the text to audience as was the case using the Composite model of modes of reception (see Chapter 8 for further explanation on this). The second article is based on C. Wright Mills's pioneering conceptualisation of the sociological imagination (1959) – or widely used as 'social imagination'. In the course of reading Athique's articles about media audiences of Indian films in the Australian context, and his focus on 'media audiences as sites of social imagination' (2005, 2008), I was interested in the utility of the concept of social imagination particularly for researching diasporic film audiences in my study. I am very familiar with the wider literature on imagination published over many years (e.g. my own research on the creative imagination in texts, see Zalipour, 2007, 2008, 2010a, 2010b, 2011a, 2011b, 2014). My long standing interest in the nature of (diasporic) imagination also led me to think of the ways I could move from diasporic texts to diasporic audiences. I found the outward focus of Mill's sociological imagination provides a much more salient framework to engage with the 'imagination' which is largely or wholly derived from textual analysis of films/texts – as evident in the large body of literature on diasporic films in diasporic cinema studies. Furthermore, the internally focused approaches to texts favour individualised (interpretive) frameworks that have been applied to social (and diasporic) identity and its related concepts as available in the existing literature.

Journal Article: Modes of Engagement among Diasporic Audiences of Asian New Zealand Film

Modes of Engagement Among Diasporic Audiences of Asian New Zealand Film

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Modes of Engagement Among Diasporic Audiences of Asian New Zealand Film

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The formation of a diasporic community within a host society may be signalled through community members' creative contributions in the realm of cultural production. The ways in which diasporic audiences engage with diasporic cultural texts potentially offers social and cultural trajectories of their understandings of themselves as they negotiate their new environment. This article examines these trajectories, focusing on the ways New Zealand audiences of Asian descent engage with Asian diasporic films. It addresses three key questions: How do audiences' referential reflections on diasporic films intersect with and contribute to their diasporic journeys and perceptions of themselves in New Zealand society? What kinds of values and beliefs do diasporic audiences feel are important to affirm and negotiate, both within representations of diasporic communities and in their New Zealand-based lives? And what roles do diasporic films play in this ongoing negotiation process?

With worldwide migration happening on various scales and an enormous increase in the communication mobility of people, the changes that occur within and beyond nation-states continuously affect media and their audiences. In a recent publication, *Audience Research Methodologies: Between Innovation and Consolidation* (2013), Cola and Brusa suggest, "The changes occurring in societies require media researchers to turn their attention to ethnic minority groups as audiences" (p. 107). One such group of ethnic

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minority audience comprises of diasporic communities, whose complex relationship with and consumption of media of varied origin potentially sheds light on the place and significance of media in contemporary everyday life. The current literature on ethnic minority and/or diasporic audiences is presently dominated by discussions of aspects of migrants' media consumption in relation to the media produced in their homeland, the host country or by resident members of the diaspora, or within larger transnational and global media frameworks (Aksoy & Robins, 2000, 2003, 2006; Christiansen, 2004; Cunningham & Sinclair, 2001; Gillespie, 2007; Karim, 2003; Kolar-Panov, 1997; Naficy, 1993; Serberny, 2000). Existing scholarly work on media and migrant audiences approaches viewers in diaspora in several different ways, reflecting the broad field of investigation currently evident within media reception studies. Of particular note is the intense concentration by two groups of Belgian scholars, who have conducted studies of news media perceptions among ethnic minority groups of Turkish and Moroccan descent in Flanders (Devroe, 2004), and consumption of diasporic film and cinema audiences among Turkish and Indian migrants in Antwerp (Smets, Vandevelde, Meers, Winkel, & Bauwel, 2011, 2012). Other scholarship in this area includes Kevin and Robins' (2006) study of transnational television viewing among migrants of Turkish origin in Britain, Malik's (2013) research on the effect of film on cultural identity and community among diasporas in the United Kingdom, Oh's (2013) study of second-generation Korean American fans of Korean (homeland) transnational media, Budarick's (2013) investigation into the complex nature of the relation between Iranian-Australians and their consumption of Iranian media and the global Iranian diaspora, Georgiou's (2006) study of media consumption amongst Greek/Greek Cypriot communities in London and New York City and the roles of diasporic media in the construction of identity and community, and Athique's (2011) more globally based investigation of diasporic audiences, highlighting the consumption of Indian films among diasporas in Australia.

As important as these studies are, we believe that it is also essential to focus on the complex relation between the diasporic text and the diasporic viewer, and to approach the migrant audience member as "someone who can reflect on his or her experience of and position in society, of 'being oneself'" (Cohen, 1994, p. 65). On the basis of the available literature, it is evident that little attention has been paid to the complex relation between diasporic audiences and their involvement and interaction with diasporic films. In this reception study, we are particularly interested in migrant audiences' modes of engagement with diasporic films, as a way of examining and understanding what these audiences think of their own social and cultural realities in their new society. This research project focuses on the Asian diaspora in New Zealand film and examines the ways New Zealand audiences of Asian descent engage with Asian diasporic films.

Since the 1987 Immigration Act, which opened the skilled and entrepreneurial categories to attract professional migrants to New Zealand (Parliamentary Council Office, 2011), there have been a large number of immigrants from Asian countries, mainly ethnic Chinese, Indian, and Korean, shaping the three main communities of the Asian diaspora in New Zealand. The latest Statistics New Zealand Census (Statistics New Zealand, 2013) shows that Asians are still the largest ethnic group with an increase from 9.6% to 11.8% after Pakeha (74.0%) and Maori (14.9%). Even though New Zealand is officially described as a bicultural society, it is multicultural and multiethnic in many ways in respect of its ethnic structure, cultural diversity, and overall population. Scholars believe that New Zealand's increasing cultural diversity is a reality that cannot be ignored any more (Smeith & Dustan, 2004; Ward & Masgoert, 2008). Despite demographic and social change in New Zealand's composition, it is still difficult for members of the Asian diasporas to create a presence in the sphere of cultural production when faced with an official ideology that favors biculturalism: a set of negotiations between European and Maori peoples. The role of media is vital in the contemporary life and society, when being able to participate in the social and political life of a culture or the public sphere requires "access to the kinds of media which enable one to do so" (Turnbull, 2010, p. 67). The role of media in increasing Asians' visibility in New Zealand society and their incorporation in the imagined concept of nation is crucial at a time when multiculturalism[1] is emerging in this country.

Nonetheless, there have been healthy signs in recent years of media productions being made by Asian New Zealanders that attempt to represent a wider range of social and cultural experiences amongst the contemporary population. As such are the emerging Asian diasporic talents and voices of filmmakers such as Stephan Kang (of Korean origin), Roseanne Liang (of Chinese background) and Shuchi Kothari (of Indian descent). They, and a handful of other diasporic filmmakers, present alternative world views, identities, and cultures in the dominantly Europeanized New Zealand cultural and social arenas. As a key component of the large and broad media of diaspora, and more especially in light of their concern with identity and the multifaceted processes of being and becoming, diasporic films have been associated with political agency (see Naficy, 2001). It is important to acknowledge that the constructed realities depicted in diasporic films are generally extrapolated from the experience of migration and expatriation of the filmmaker; such experiences vary greatly from one person to the next, and are also contingent on the different social structures of the host countries. Thus, the ability of diasporic films to represent, in a political and social sense, the collective identities, experiences, and desires of a given diasporic

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[1]   The official ideology in New Zealand is biculturalism. Therefore, here, *multiculturalism* refers to "cultural diversity" or the multicultural situation, and not to multiculturalism as an ideology or policy.

community remains highly questionable, and such claims may be contested by other in-group members, as our research illustrates.

The overall project from which this article emerges focuses on the presence, formation, and appearance of a diasporic cinema understood or sensed in the host society through the diasporic subjects' participation in the creative industry and cultural production of their adopted land. More important, we emphasize that the ways diasporic audiences engage with such cultural products can provide us with social and cultural trajectories of their understanding of themselves in their new environment. Diasporic media can offer a platform for the multilayered dialogue between diasporic subjects and the host society. Not least, the emerging prominence of Asian diasporic film in New Zealand's increasingly multicultural society can present new "knowledge" about New Zealand's social environment, which can in turn become a platform for media researchers to analyze "people's acquisition and use of [this] knowledge" (see Couldry, 2006, p. 187).[2] It is within this research agenda that we situate our current research, in the belief that paying closer attention to the "new knowledges" produced via the production and reception of Asian diasporic film in New Zealand accords with a wide-ranging concept of media's involvement and effect on how the social world is constructed.

DIASPORIC AUDIENCE RESEARCH IN NEW ZEALAND

From a broader perspective, we place this research under one of the four impetuses for empirical research into audiences, which focuses on the questions that can be usefully formed and discussed about "culture, politics, and identity." This approach "examines how the media might frame public understandings and citizenship *and* how people use media texts and objects in negotiating interpersonal power relationships or developing identities, pleasures and fantasies" (Kitzinger, 2004, p. 169). In this research, diasporic audiences are approached as citizens, not as commercial units, and are analyzed within culture-society-identity perspectives. As Kitzinger notes, defining the impetus behind certain research questions assists in reflecting on the aims of a specific audience research project and the perspectives from which the audience is being approached. Having an interest in migrant experiences and narratives, therefore, we prioritized three key questions within the context of our overall research:

1. How do audiences' reflections on diasporic films intersect with and contribute to their diasporic journeys and perceptions of themselves in New Zealand society?

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[2]   Couldry (2006) identifies *knowledge* as one key focus of media research.

2. What kinds of values and beliefs do diasporic audiences feel are impor-
tant to affirm and negotiate, both within representations of diasporic
communities and in their New Zealand-based lives?
3. What roles do diasporic films play in this ongoing negotiation process?

In carrying out the research,[3] participants were recruited using convenience
sampling from the three largest Asian diasporic communities in New Zealand
at the time this research was conducted[4]—these being Chinese, Indian, and
Korean. Respondents from Chinese, Indian, and Korean ethnic groups were
invited to watch a film whose diegesis centered upon their own ethnic com-
munity in New Zealand. The selected films included *My Wedding and Other
Secrets* (2011, co-written and directed by Roseanne Liang), which was viewed
by participants of Chinese background; *Apron Strings* (2008, co-written by
Shuchi Kothari and Diane Taylor and directed by Sima Urale), watched
by participants of Indian origin; and *Desert* (2010, written and directed by
Stephen Kang), which was chosen for participants of Korean descent. The
films selected were the most recent diasporic feature films made by members
of the three relevant ethnic communities at the time the research took place.
The social and physical setting in which the reception occurred was not
the focus of this research, and hence it was entirely the participants' choice
where and when they viewed the film, and with whom. Each respondent was
provided with a copy of the selected film in DVD format and asked to watch
it before participating in the interview or focus group discussion, which was
usually held within two or three days of their viewing it. The research was
conducted by the lead author, who has a diasporic background but is not a
member of any of the ethnic communities with which this research engaged,
and thus occupied a relatively unique position as an insider-outsider (Dwyer
& Buckle, 2009; Kerstetter, 2012).

Qualitative data were collected through audio and video recordings of
semi-structured interviews and a series of focus groups with members of
each cohort. The participants who volunteered to take part were relatively
homogeneous in terms of age, race/ethnicity, level of education, and pro-
fessional status, and consisted of adults primarily from the first generation
of diaspora. There was no gender weighting of the sample and the resulting
gender composition had a female bias (13 male and 21 female). The lines
of questioning explored in the interviews and focus groups were directed
towards the elaboration of issues foregrounded in New Zealand's diasporic
films (see Zalipour, 2013). The analysis involved close and repeated read-
ing of verbatim transcripts to identify dominant issues and themes, which

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[3]   The primary concern of this study—as presented in the three research questions—is the reception
of the text and not the context of viewing.
[4]   Using interviewing methods and convenience sampling techniques is a common approach in
reception studies (see Bertrand & Hughes, 2005; Weerakody, 2008; Hansen & David, 2013).

were categorized and coded. Analysis also involved systematic categorization of relevant excerpts according to the distinctive categories charted by the Composite Model of modes of reception (Michelle, 2007).

Some brief notes on the conditions of filmmaking for the Asian New Zealand filmmakers whose work is used in this project seem beneficial here, to help contextualize the research. Asian diasporic film is an emerging phenomenon in New Zealand and it is only recently that members of diasporas have started getting involved in making films about their experience and life in this country. The manner of production, distribution and public reception of Asian New Zealand film varies: the films *Apron Strings* and *My Wedding and Other Secrets*, representing the Indian and Chinese diasporas respectively, emerged from a more industrial type of film production process; particularly in the case of the latter, which had a significant budget and an established film company behind it; compared with *Apron Strings* this film also had a better reception in New Zealand. Conversely, the film *Desert*, which focuses on the Korean diaspora, is a low-budget digital film, which also explains its low level of distribution and reception compared with the other two films (Zalipour, 2013).

In this qualitative research investigation, we used the Composite Model of reception (Michelle, 2007) to examine various modes of engagement with Asian diasporic films. Given our interest in the ways diasporic audiences engage with diasporic cultural products, we found the Composite Model to be useful in organizing the overall primary approaches various viewers adopt in the process of meaning-making when viewing media texts. The Composite Model offers a cohesive synthesis and extension of shared components and characteristics derived from various reception schemas propounded by audience researchers over the last few decades. It has been applied within a mixed-methods research programme focusing on modes of receptions of the reality game show *Rock Star: Supernova* (Michelle, 2009), James Cameron's 2009 feature film *Avatar* (Michelle, Davis, & Vladica, 2012), and more recently Peter Jackson's *Hobbit* trilogy.

The Composite Model charts four primary modes of audience engagement: transparent, referential, mediated and discursive. The definitions provided here are specifically relevant to this study's focus on audience receptions of diasporic films. In a transparent mode, viewers chiefly rely on intratext elements and information and the constructed storyworld as primary resources for meaning-making. In a referential mode, conversely, the text is approached from a comparative perspective based on an evaluation of its degree of consistency with viewers' understandings of an external reality and their real-world knowledge and experiences. In adopting this mode,

> viewers perceive the text as standing alongside the real world, and often make comparisons and analogies between that depicted reality and the world as they see it. In doing so they typically draw from aspects of their

own cultural milieu and existing body of experiences, observations, and knowledges to assess the accuracy of textual depictions of people and events and the version of reality presented. (Michelle et al., 2012, p. 111)

In a mediated mode, viewers are more distanced with regard to the text's meanings and content and their comments centre on the quality of production and aesthetic elements of the text. The central concern of those viewing in a discursive mode is giving "particular credence to the text's perceived attempt to communicate a particular message about the wider social world, and represent the viewer's response to that message," which can range widely from a hegemonic to a counterhegemonic oppositional perspective (Michelle et al., 2012, p. 112). In this investigation, we were interested in identifying the underlying modes of reception our participants adopted when interacting with Asian diasporic films, and sought to understand what these modes and the specific content of viewers' responses might tell us about their engagement with media representations of their communities, their migrant lives, identities, and experiences, and the nature of their encounters with mainstream society and culture in New Zealand.

APPLICATION OF THE COMPOSITE MODEL

The Composite Model is valuable in classifying audiences' responses and identifying the broad interpretive frames they adopt in interacting with a media text. Applying this model to our qualitative data on diasporic audiences of Asian New Zealand film reveals the clear dominance of the referential mode of reception over all the others. This finding leads us to reflect upon the underpinning causes and motivations for the types of readings embraced by our participants with reference to the three main research questions. In particular, it seemed important to understand how and why the dominant mode of reception in this study differed from that identified in studies that have employed the Composite Model to analyze receptions of other films and television shows viewed in different contexts. In a study of audience receptions of *Avatar*, a globally successful science-fiction fantasy film, a transparent mode of reception was found to be dominant (Michelle et al., 2012). Smets (2012) also incorporated the Composite Model in his analysis of *Ar Risalah*, "a religious film" which has been widely viewed by diasporic people in Antwerp, Belgium (p. 69), which he considers in relation to Islamic religiousness among the Moroccan diaspora there. Although it is unclear whether the participants in this study were interviewed with a specific focus on the selected film or "in general about film-watching and religion" as the author suggests (p. 80), the reception analysis presented towards the end of this article offers useful examples of the modes of engagement adopted by diasporic audiences. Smets identifies manifestations of the

transparent, mediated and discursive modes, but there is no mention of the referential mode of engagement (Smets, 2012).[5] However, two other studies applying the Composite Model found the referential mode to be the most common (see Davis & Vladica, 2010; Tager & Methee, 2014). However, both these studies found each of the other three modes to be substantially present as well.

In attempting to account for why the referential mode was so strongly prominent in this study whereas other modes appeared less frequently and most often in close association with a referential response, we postulate that it may be a function of diasporic film's inherently contestable (and often ascribed, rather than presumed) claim to represent the experience of a particular diasporic community. If so, we surmise the adoption of a referential mode of reception reflects the diasporic audiences' heightened attunement to questions of representation, political agency and citizenship in their new home, and their sense of investment in the nature of depictions of other diasporic community members; depictions that are always, at another level, simultaneously representations of them in their new homeland.

We observed, for instance, that our respondents across all three case studies did not draw heavily on intratextual resources in their interaction with these diasporic films, and thus did not tend to view these films in a transparent mode. Instead, the largest number of responses demonstrated an inclination to talk about their own life experiences in relation to the film's characters and events, and at certain moments placed themselves further away from the film's diegesis by telling their own personal histories and narratives. This practice of offering predominantly comparative reflections on diasporic films, we suggest, is indicative of a referential mode of reception, and we note also that such readings shifted, in some cases quite rapidly, into a negotiated or oppositional discursive mode. Our findings and results are, therefore, quite different to those of studies of *Avatar* and *Supernova*, both being examples of non-diasporic texts viewed by mainstream audiences. More surprisingly perhaps, our findings are also very different to those relating to the entirely diasporic reception context of *Al Risala*, where a transparent mode of reading was adopted by "both groups" (p. 78) of diasporic viewers in which they "relate to the film in a more close or subjective way and are more 'textually bound'" (Smets, 2012, p. 82). This suggests that there may be something about the nature of the texts themselves that stimulates such a response, since the major difference between *Al Risala* and the films used in our study is that *Al Risala* is not a *diasporic* film, in the sense of

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[5]   Looking at the examples of audience responses to the film *Ar Risalah*, which have been incorporated in Smets' article (2012) for another set of arguments rather than discussion of modes of engagement, we find evidence and instances of adopting a referential mode of engagement by the viewers in his study. However, there is no mention of the referential mode in the last few pages of the article where an application of CMR is presented.

attempting to capture something of the diasporic experience. Rather, it is first and foremost a *religious* film.

In our study, participants' occasional adoption of a transparent mode was mainly shaped through developing a sense of assessment and evaluation around certain characters in the films, using clues provided by the text itself as the main resources for understanding its meanings. For example, in the following excerpt relating to *My Wedding and Other Secrets*, a female participant of Chinese background interprets the migrant parents' attempts to maintain their original culture and tradition and the compromises they have to make in this process in their New Zealand life by referring to elements drawn from the fictional story-world itself:

> While watching the film I was thinking how come this family in the film come to New Zealand and their children grew up here and so they got three typical Kiwi girls not Chinese girls, but their parents still have ideas that Chinese should have traditional Chinese values in their mind. Then they realize that they cannot stick to it. They have to give up at the end and allow the girls marry a kiwi boy for instance. I really think that the parents cannot have the final say for their children marriage. Maybe in the past but not now.

This discussant understands the changes migrant parents have to make in their ways as a generational matter, using the film story and the evidence it provides as Emily's Chinese parents finally agree to her getting married to James, a Kiwi New Zealander.

Less frequently evident in the participants' readings of Asian diasporic films was the mediated mode, in which the participants referred to the quality of the film production, and stylistic or aesthetic elements. However, since the respondents adopting a mediated mode would often quickly commute to either a referential or discursive mode of engagement, examples of this mode will be brought to in the course of discussion of other modes.

We found that the largest number of respondents demonstrated an inclination to offer comparative reflections on diasporic films, which means a referential mode of engagement was the dominant mode adopted across all three case studies. The migrant participants collectively recognised that they were watching a migrant narrative, but simultaneously also a version of *themselves* and their New Zealand lives, and hence their central site of interest concerned whether that depiction corresponded to their own experience of reality as migrants in New Zealand. Often, our participants' active interpretation of the messages, representations and themes of the chosen diasporic films went beyond the film narratives and revealed their perceptions of diasporic life in New Zealand. Drawing on various pools of information, their responses reveal an inherent and strong relationship to their own encounters, histories, narratives and memories that bear some similarities but also important differences to the migrant experiences related in the film texts.

Among diasporic audiences, textual depictions are thus related to comparatively as "like" life, and more especially as like *their* life. Some audience reception studies have conceptualized audiences using rather terms, such as critical, creative, or active (e.g., Dahlgren, 1988; Johnson, del Rio, & Kemmitt, 2010; Liebes & Katz, 1989; Morley, 1980). In this study, the most appropriate attribution to more specifically describe the nature of these diasporic audiences' primary mode of engagement with the chosen diasporic texts is the term *referential*. Therefore, the following sections primarily focus on referential and to a lesser extent other modes of engagement across the three case studies.

Investigating the three main research questions of this research also leads us to examine more closely various pools of extratextual world information—which we refer to here as "referential knowledge" (Michelle, 2007, p. 202). In what follows, we discuss the distinguishing features of this type of knowledge, and seek to identify whether there might be specific forms and sources of referential knowledge that are characteristically drawn on by diasporic audiences. We illustrate and discuss the major tropes of referential knowledge as evidenced in this diasporic audience research, which we here conceptualize as *self-referential* and *community-referential*. Due to the unstable nature of our participants' mediated responses and the infrequent adoption of the transparent mode of reception, examples in which respondents commuted between these and a referential mode will be incorporated within the following discussion. It is important to note here that it is not within the scope of this article to examine and discuss all components and features of the Composite Model, but we will offer some useful insights that have emerged from its application.

REFERENTIAL KNOWLEDGES: CULTURAL AND SOCIAL RECOGNITIONS

The engagement of diasporic viewers with films that represent the social relations of migrants and their fragmented and multidimensional memories and histories of migration, multiculturalism and diaspora is a productive site for understanding the kinds of values and beliefs they feel are important to affirm and/or renegotiate, both within the realm of cultural representation and within daily life in their new home. It is this diasporic subject position that informed our viewers' responses to Asian New Zealand films; they interlaced their personal and shared diasporic knowledges with the film's diegesis, in a way that allowed them to construe and understand the locus of their own realities and identities. In this research, the referential knowledges of migrant audiences were manifested in discussions of the films in several ways.

One such way was when cultural recognition became the basis for a referential mode of engagement. In discussing *My Wedding and Other Secrets,* all the Chinese ethnic background participants commented on the textual depiction of Chinese customs and traditions, particularly in responding to Emily's character as the central protagonist. Emily is a New Zealand girl of Chinese origin who falls in love with a Kiwi boy (James) and marries him against the wishes of her Chinese parents. In one of their early meetings, she takes James to a Chinese restaurant in Auckland and gives him her favorite food, chicken feet. In commenting on this scene, one female participant interviewed said:

> The plot is very simple. I don't know who the director is but it is not a real life to me. I think the director just wanted to show the Chinese culture. I don't think the scene in the restaurant is believable at all: You take your boyfriend and ask him to eat chicken feet! That was weird. Chicken feet is a kind of food that we [Chinese] don't really eat let alone offering to someone important in the first meeting like that. I think chicken feet is just a normal food and not all Chinese even eat that. So it's not a Chinese food. I didn't like that at all. Also she has grown up in New Zealand so she must know everything about New Zealand culture and that the boyfriend may not like chicken feet at all.

This discussant draws from her own existing body of ethnic knowledge on Chinese tastes, etiquette and tradition to contest the accuracy of the purported cultural practices she could recognize in the film. Initially, we sense a distanced relation between the viewer and the film in which she disparages the film for its "very simple plot," but this mediated mode of engagement shifts immediately to a close assessment of the accuracy of the film's representation of "the Chinese culture" in New Zealand. The viewer's personal awareness of Chinese traditions means she is well placed to question the cultural reality the film depicts, based on her own background and identity as a member of the Chinese diaspora living in New Zealand. A Chinese male interviewee makes a similar point, this time in relation to Chinese lanterns featured in the final scene of the film and their meaning based on Chinese tradition. The final scene of the film shows Emily and James getting married, and the venue of the dance floor is decorated with white Chinese lanterns. Lanterns are a means of communication for Chinese families and the colors of the lanterns symbolize the desired emotional tone of the events that the family is involved with. A red lantern conveys "an event of marriage, or a birth in the family . . . [and] white represents death in the Chinese culture" (Lalwani, 2010, para. 4; Kiernan, 2008). This discrepancy between the fictional storyworld depiction and the extratextual reality of Chinese traditional practices was noted by our male respondent, who said:

> I liked the ending when they eventually become a couple. But I didn't
> like the lanterns. You know white lanterns hanging very high won't be
> accepted by Chinese in a wedding. Red lantern means there is a happy
> occasion and white lantern means there is something sad like a funeral.
> Since it shows a traditional Chinese family, I don't understand why they
> used white lanterns.

These examples illustrate the important ways that diasporic viewers tend to engage with the characters and narratives featured in diasporic films. While they are most certainly reading in a referential mode, diasporic audiences' engagements with diasporic films take a quite specific form, in that they centrally comprise assessments of *cultural authenticity*. This acute attunement to questions of cultural authenticity most likely stems from the close association between the diasporic viewers' own lives and experiences and those related by the film's diegesis. Our participants demonstrated this perceived relationship in their discussions by assessing the film against what they knew about their ethnic identity, homeland culture, its values and beliefs, and what all these things mean in relation to their New Zealand lives, society and culture. Such a relationship with the textual depiction also implicates the ways diasporic consciousness is linked to the past in form of cultural memories of the imagined homeland (e.g., Gilroy, 1995); not essentially in a nostalgic mode and through commemoration in this case, but selectively remembering and idealizing certain aspects of it.

This research suggests that a diasporic audience draws on his or her referential knowledges of aspects of migrant life, social awareness and ethnocultural competencies in approaching the film viewing experience and the concomitant meaning-making around it. The diasporic audience particularly has the means and the competency to contest, to assert their own beliefs and assumptions (for instance about what it means to be Chinese), to evaluate, and to renegotiate the diasporic content and concerns of a diasporic film by drawing on their special insight into cultural and social minutiae which the experience of mobility and migration has granted them.

Cultural insights and competencies originated from migrants' homeland lives and ethnic backgrounds were not, however, the only points of reference. Many participants demonstrated their awareness of social and family life in New Zealand and compared it with what they already knew about and had practiced in their homelands. Korean migrant participants in a focus group commented on issues raised by the film *Desert* by drawing on their own real-life observations and experiences of New Zealand society, remembering their own dealings with local immigration regulations, and of the struggle to find secure employment. The film *Desert* centers on Jenny, a Korean migrant, and the challenges she faces in settling down in New Zealand, particularly after she gets pregnant out of wedlock from a relationship with a Kiwi man, who then abandons her on their wedding day.

Jenny's limbo state as a migrant aggravates the desperation and alienation she experiences as an individual in a relationship with her Kiwi partner and during her pregnancy, creating more troubles in her settlement process in the new environment. Participants' discussions centered on Jenny's pregnant condition and whether she should think of keeping the baby, particularly given that according to a female respondent:

> [. . .] being a single mum is OK here. In New Zealand we all should adapt. She should face the problem and raise her child. It is not like Korea that having a child out of wedlock appears bad and unusual. In Korea it is a problem to be a single mum but in New Zealand it's OK. New Zealand support single mums a lot.

The other participants in the focus group agreed on this matter, and interrogated the veracity and expediency of such a possibility in New Zealand. One middle-aged male discussant noted: "she is not entitled to certain services in New Zealand. Does she have PR [permanent residency]?"; a female participant, who came to New Zealand several years ago, replied: "If she does not have a permanent residency, she can't get those facilities for single mums, can she?"[6] We can see that discussants' textual interpretations, sense-making and social commentaries were dependent on their diasporic and migrant life experience, which was at times intrinsically influenced by a comparative sense of being "here" (New Zealand) and not "there" (original country). The implicit message conveyed by their responses, in comparison to the film story, is that "here is better," on the basis of their observations of the real-life experiences of single mothers in New Zealand. However, the uncertainty about whether it would be better for Jenny to stay in New Zealand as indicated in their responses is at the same time attenuated by their recognition of the doubt and insecurity already experienced in their own settlement process, when one does not officially belong, which is evident as they refer to permanent residency as a form of belonging and thus, legitimation in claiming support from the State. The precarious position of being a migrant entails a distortion of old forms of belonging, often while the new place has not yet become fully shaped as its replacement. Amit-Talai (1998, p. 45) describes the migrants' dilemma as being caught "in the crossfire between structural pressures towards career and geographic mobility, on the one hand, and citizen entitlements still predicated on the assumption/principle of stable employment and residence, on the other hand."

In addition to what has been discussed so far and more broadly, participants across the three case studies revealed several additional sources of referential knowledge that informed their interpretations, including knowledge of language barriers, and general codes of social behavior as practiced

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6   Permanent residency is a legal status that individual needs to acquire in New Zealand.

in the homeland and sometimes in comparison with the New Zealand soci-
ety. In the case of these diasporic audiences specifically, it became clear to
us that the referential knowledges through which they made sense of the
diasporic film texts were largely affected by their diasporic consciousness.
The interpretive resources and competencies of respondents were charac-
terized by a tendency to identify with various aspects of the diasporic text
in a distinctive fashion, whilst having the resources to develop a compar-
ative sense of "here" and "there," and drawing also on their accumulated
sources of diasporic and ethnic referential knowledges. Such evaluations of
the believability and authenticity of the diasporic film (e.g., "I don't think
the scene in the restaurant is real") by diasporic audiences, drawing on their
pools of cultural competencies and authority, reminds us also of the notion
of verisimilitude in media representation.

Verisimilitude is "a property that a film is said to display if it convinc-
ingly depicts a world that is congruent with the audience's expectations
about what that world is like" (Kuhn & Westwell, 2012, para. 1). In answer-
ing a question about the ways the audience could connect to New Zealand
society through the film *My Wedding and Other Secrets*, a young Chinese
participant, for example, measured the film's realism through the lens of her
own experiences and life in New Zealand society and with New Zealand
people. Examples of this type of response went beyond the assessment of
representations based on cultural recognition, as discussed in earlier exam-
ples, and found new dimensions which explicitly focused on the realistic
elements of the diasporic film. This participant does not think the film overall
was a reflection of reality as she knows it:

> At the end of the film when Kiwi and Chinese mix because of the wed-
> ding; we see everyone is dancing so happily and the two cultures mix
> together. That's a dream; it is not reality. It's not a reality. I have friends
> and we talk about our lives here and situations we encounter here. The
> film is not the reality. It's more like a dream. I hope such things happen
> that way in reality in New Zealand. I hope Asians can be part of New
> Zealand society and community. I hope I can be part of that but it's not
> that easy.

The recurrent use of the phrases "It's a dream" and "It's not reality" and
similar remarks by other participants in discussions and interviews relating
to the same film reinforce one of our key arguments about the qualified and
complex relationship that these diasporic audiences developed (or already
possessed) with these diasporic texts during the viewing encounter.

Several participants in the other sample groups also assessed the realistic
elements of the films based on their perceptions and drawing on their own
personal experiences and social lives within the contested multicultural set-
ting of New Zealand, at times stating their hopes, wishes and expectations

as New Zealand people. In response to the film *Desert*, our Korean origin participants, for instance, developed certain positions on what it depicts about the diasporic life in New Zealand. In adopting a referential mode, the Korean migrants brought into discussions the realistic elements of the film *Desert* and compared them with their own experiences of migration and settlement in New Zealand. Three different interviewees (one male and two females) pointed out their appreciation of the film's realistic story and characters by saying: "it's a true story for Koreans"; "Very realistic film. Really realistic, Incredible!"; "I would know people like them in the real life." We define realism and the realistic in diasporic films as the correspondence between migrant and diasporic life and experience and that depicted in the film. We found that this sense of correspondence in the case of diasporic audience members primarily enhances a referential mode of engagement, in which the parameters imposed by textual decoding entice the viewer to reflect on their personal histories and memories.

Such a critical approach to diasporic representations is related to the dominant community ideologies of the group—a form of collective referential knowledge which informs the individuals' positions in regard to diasporic texts. Analyzing the various examples of referential knowledge presented earlier, it appears that the most compelling references are made in relation to diasporic audience members' personal stories about self and community in diaspora.

SELF- REFERENTIAL

The touch point of meaning making for the majority of respondents was self-referential, articulated through the lens of their own diasporic journeys and life narratives that are infused with hybridity and the multiplicity of their identities. We approached their references to the self as embedded "in the context of social, cultural and political life" (Elliott, 2003, p. 29) in New Zealand and also as manifestations of their diasporic identity—defining it as an entity constantly constructed or performed when moving across geographical borders and also between different social and cultural settings in the new environment. In this light, several themes emerged from the participants' readings of the films, underscoring an awareness of various aspects of the diasporic self and experience. We observed that certain incidents or characters in the film diegesis elicited an intense referential engagement which had the self as the point of reference. One illustrative example relates to the character of Michael in the film *Apron Strings* and his diasporic journey of looking for his roots and identity. Both the focus group and interview participants in the case study on this film talked about Michael in relation to their own lives in New Zealand, and in the process made various references to their homeland culture, India. Michael, an Indian diasporic, is on a quest

to rediscover his Indianness, a part of his identity that he has never had any contact with except through his mother, Anita. The film portrays Anita, ethnically Indian, but completely Westernized; her ethnicization is confined to the stereotypical roles that she plays as an Indian host on a New Zealand television cooking programme, costumed as an Indian princess. Michael's search for roots and routes also becomes more complicated in the film by his being gay, and the way this affects his relationship with his Aunt Tara who symbolically depicts Indian culture in this film—a sharp contrast with Anita's character. Michael's sexual orientation was the focus of many discussions, but our participants were unconcerned with understanding Michael as an Indian diasporic or as a gay man, nor were they concerned about evaluating the believability or cultural authenticity of his textual depiction. Rather, they drew on aspects of their own fragmented and multifaceted lifeworlds as a result of migration and displacement and expressed their fears and anxieties about the possibility that one of their own children might "turn out to be like Michael". While everyone else was nodding in consent, one female participant said: "In the future Michael could be one of our future generations or families and how are we going to accept that getting ourselves into that space?" This implicit idea of a forward-looking gaze was manifested in other focus groups and interviews, as if entrenched in their experience of something unsettling within their selves. This means through the process of interaction with diasporic films, participants imagined what concessions and accommodations they might have to make in their journeys to become settled in New Zealand. This became particularly explicit when participants occasionally expressed their opinions in the form of rhetorical questions and exclamations, perhaps indicating their uncertainties and trepidations about their future.

The generational apprehension of diasporic audiences in our study was not limited only to the matter of sexual orientation. In a Korean focus group the idea of a "forward gaze" was brought up in relation to the character of Jenny and the self as a migrant mother. One female participant expressed her concerns about her children going to a school at which they were exposed to boys and girls from different cultures and particularly to Pakeha New Zealanders or Kiwis:

> If my son comes and tells me he has fallen in love with a girl from a different nationality (a Kiwi girl most probably); what can I say? I would say "It's okay but think carefully first and then come and tell me." It's generally hard, two different cultures, languages, customs, behaviors, family values and many other things. They should date for a long time first and if they really like each other "only" then they should get married. Appearance is fine but inside is important. Imagine my husband and I are from the same culture, it is still so difficult to get along well, we argue etc. so I don't want my boy to have more problems. If we have

lived here for 50 years, then our mind would have become Kiwi, it was easier but not now.

A concerted attempt can be sensed in this response to convince herself that "it's okay but [they should] think carefully first" if this happens, because she does not want her "boy to have more problems." Here, we can see an element of dread and apprehension interwoven with the forward gaze that our diasporic participants developed in their engagement with the films that collectively take diasporic experiences as their central subject matter. In another example, a Chinese female participant referred to her "self" as a mother, thinking of the future of her "little girl" and the differing consequences "if she falls in love with a Kiwi boy or a Chinese boy."

A forward gaze was also refracted through respondent's thoughts about the necessity to creolize original and ethnic culture and traditions, beliefs and life principles. In the case study of cultural representations of the Indian diaspora, one female participant's remarks are exemplary:

> While you're watching the movie, you are just saying to yourself "you might face or fit the same type of life." Having a black babe was a real shock; it would have been for me in future, but it might happen to anyone. This gives you a space that you have to keep moving; you can't stick to your cultural ethnic stuff because you've come to New Zealand and you are in a multicultural society and this thing might happen to you in future. That's what was with me throughout the movie.

The particular incident in *Apron Strings* this discussant is referring to is related to the Kiwi family headed by Lorna, a middle-aged European New Zealander who owns a business selling cakes in a neighbourhood in South Auckland. Lorna thinks the appearance of the neighbourhood has changed because of the many immigrants living there now. Her prodigal daughter Virginia returns from England pregnant and shocks Lorna by giving birth to a black child whose father is anonymous. Alongside the Kiwi family, the film story also revolves around a Sikh family consisting of television cook show host Anita, her son Michael, and her sister Tara, the owner of a curry house. In the aforementioned excerpt, the respondent identifies with Lorna's experience and reflects upon her own possible future as a migrant mother. Such an incident is something that she expects "might happen to anyone" in this society and as an immediate solution to tackle such an incident if it should occur, she concludes that "you can't stick to your cultural ethnic stuff." This discussant's concerns about her future life exemplifies a general theme other participants also explicitly or implicitly referred to as they may face the same situation and consequently adopt the same strategy: "you can't stick to your cultural ethnic stuff." The psychological disjunction and attempted reconnection between the discussant's cultural self and identity and the (new) place

where adaptation should take place "because you've come to New Zealand and you are in a multicultural society and this thing might happen to you in future" embodies the core of diasporic experience. The forward gazes of our participants illustrate the way that for many migrants, the sense of self is consciously constructed through reshaping the self (the new self and/or diasporic self) in active engagement with an imagined sense of their future life in the new society and what that may entail.

As can be seen in the examples discussed earlier, individuals develop a framework for defining the self in connection with the routines and flows of their society and culture. The psycho-social interplay of images in diasporic films and the perceived self-image of diasporic viewers creates a constant dialectic in relation to which nascent aspects of one's identity may emerge and become temporarily the source of contemplation.

COMMUNITY-REFERENTIAL

An awareness of living within a group and being ascribed to an imagined collective, or having a sense of belonging to a community or (perhaps) the lack of such, are concepts that diasporic people encounter more tangibly and intensely than those who have not experienced dislocation and deterritorialization in real life. This section examines the references our discussants made to some of the complex historical, social and cultural dynamics within their diasporic communities, their relationships with other diasporic groups, and with mainstream New Zealand society. It can be inferred from participants' responses that community construction is one way of orienting oneself with the new surroundings while keeping a selective relationship with the immediate groups with whom you find some form of commonality or shared discourse. In diaspora, ethnic culture becomes entrenched in the community formation, which makes it challenging for the diasporic community to corral its members within the imagined borders of their collective. It also becomes challenging for those individuals who are unsure of the boundaries and associations involved in becoming attached to or part of a diasporic community. Such concepts emerged from the responses of participants in our three case studies in which the primary reference point was in relation to community, as encountered within their immediate life world.

Language barriers and limited means of communication was one of the themes that our participants raised in relation to community formation in diaspora. One female Chinese participant raised the example of a brief scene in the film *My Wedding and Other Secrets* in which a group of "Aunties" gathered in Emily's house for afternoon tea, while gossiping in Chinese, and eating Chinese food:

> I know some Chinese people have come to New Zealand because of their children and they can't speak much English. They didn't build up their career here. So they always cluster together like Aunties in the film. They had nowhere to go. They couldn't communicate and so no chance for them to understand New Zealand culture. It's really hard sometimes for them to mingle with New Zealanders. So that's one type of migrants living [. . .]; they are to be history. For the middle age people because they have careers they must have Kiwi friends otherwise they can't survive.

This expression of a basic community formation, a gathering that takes place mainly in migrants' houses and also on a larger scale in certain public places, was endorsed by many participants across the three cases. The commonalities upon which the imagined borders of diasporic communities are formed within the host society, based on our participants' perceptions, extend beyond language and location and involve religion or religious beliefs, ethnic backgrounds, a need to attach to some sort of community (particularly in the early stages of resettlement), and sometimes shared memories of the homeland as a reinforcing element. The respondents' talks highlighted the impact on everyday life of the concentration of diasporic communities within certain locales, citing the centrality of church and school among Korean communities, and more diverse locations such as private houses, arts centers and ethnic/migrant centers for the Indian and Chinese communities. The responses by Korean migrant participants, for example, showed that the association of the community with a particular location (church in this case) creates certain affiliations with regard to individual identities. Some participants in this case study expressed their dissatisfaction with these types of affiliation:

> Community here becomes more about the church community, so I'm not a kind of religious person so I don't want to join them, but at the same time I'd like to mingle with Korean people. So it's like a dilemma [because] to go to the community means to go to church and associate with those things.

Several respondents expressed their concerns about being part of their diasporic community, as it necessarily means becoming associated with a particular religion; if they are not religious or profess a different faith, or simply do not wish to be associated with a church because of personal reasons for example, they lose the attachment they could develop with others from the same ethnicity and origin. Consequently, they lose access to an important source of support they may want or need. One key point implied in this commentary and also in the responses of other participants is the intersection between the church as a place imbued with certain moral principles and ethical concerns, and the diasporic community as a collective of people with

shared experiences and backgrounds who mostly join together to seek support from others like them and to avoid becoming isolated in an unfamiliar environment. This means that religious conformity can serve in this process of symbolic community formation. As this comment also indicates, respondents adopting a referential mode of engagement can range quite widely in their reflections on the issues and themes addressed by diasporic films, and typically relate to the depicted life world in terms of its familiarity and personal resonance in relation to their everyday lives and existing body of referential knowledges. The aforementioned respondent's commentary on her real-life experiences within the Korean community seems somewhat disengaged from the specific nature and content of the film's textual depictions, but reflects a chain of thought and reflection that those depictions have inspired.

As discussed in this section so far, participants referred to various associations that are evoked as a result of being attached to a diasporic, ethnic or migrant community. There were also instances of a reversal in terms their approach in referring to community, where participants looked at the associations and overtones that diasporic community and group identity evoke among mainstream New Zealanders—which we suggest is indicative of a discursive mode of reading. In other words, they engaged with the propositional content of the film and brought to their discussions references to their own perceptions and observations of their New Zealand based-lives and commented on or posed questions about its current ideological basis. In response to the film *Apron Strings*, the focus group participants raised an incident in the middle of the film when Lorna (the Pakeha cake-maker) goes to Tara's Curry House to get the recipe for an Indian dish which she knows is her son Barry's favorite food. Then, she is shown in her kitchen struggling with spices and garlic in preparation of that dish, whilst being disgusted by the smell. One male participant endorsed:

> I actually found it very funny. How the white people, the white family, the mother (Lorna) always she has had this disgust for Asian people and how that came out in what she was saying. And you can see that as a very typical thing. They actually don't quite say what it is (that they don't like migrants being around); and they say "I don't like the smell. Have you smelled that?" She was really paranoid but it's very conceptual and this is the box they [White people] put people in, the Asian box or you know other ethnic labels.

The other participants expressed their assent on the matter raised earlier and shared their own thoughts and observations on how this perception of ethnic migrants among "white people" has affected them. One participant related this to the opening scene of the film where Lorna comments on the neighbourhood that she thinks is being overrun by immigrants: "Yes," she

[Lorna] said: "It's not the same anymore. I cannot recognize the people in the street." Another male discussant replied: "You could see in bits and pieces, her thoughts about Asians came out." Then they mostly talked about stories of humiliation and prejudice that they have experienced as being identified and grouped as "Asian" or "Indian," and talked about as though "they are all the same." Such critical engagement with the film's representation of the way diasporic group identity is portrayed and perceived by the majority in New Zealand take us back to the roles diasporic films can play in creating knowledge and awareness about New Zealand's shifting social and cultural composition. The emerging development of Asian diasporic film in New Zealand offers a reconfiguration of New Zealand society in terms of cultural and social identities. Making homes in the new environment, though discursively and temporarily, is at the heart of diasporic consciousness. One way of actualizing this endeavor by diasporic people is through the establishment or attachment to a migrant group in which symbolic community formation takes place through the creation of a sense of shared discourse and cultural solidarity. In addition to the notion of an imagined territorialization that occurs in any community formation, similar cultural values, beliefs and ideas are the factors that shape a diasporic community.

CONCLUSION

The emerging Asian diasporic films in New Zealand in the last few decades present other world views in the dominantly Europeanized New Zealand cultural and social arenas. The imaginative locality and people offered in diasporic media in New Zealand becomes an alternative to the already mediated New Zealand space and life both globally and within the country. Interacting with these new images and stories in diasporic films, which represent the narratives of diaspora in New Zealand and have been made by filmmakers from the same ethnic group, gave our participants an opportunity to relate to their self and community through these texts and reflect on their own life narratives, identities and also their place in the New Zealand host society.

Our interest in providing a solid understanding of the engagements between the diasporic viewer and diasporic cultural products led us to investigate the underlying modes of reception adopted by our participants using a case study approach. We found that the complexity of the interaction between the viewer and the text is associated with different aspects of the diasporic text itself, which speaks to the viewer's diasporic consciousness. Diasporic consciousness incorporates ambivalent attributes and shared discourse with the diasporic text. It was in this paradigm that viewers' responses shed light on their migrant lives, identities, and experiences, and the nature of their encounters with mainstream society and culture in

New Zealand. The diasporic audience's responses reflected their consequent acceptance or negation of the values and attitudes presented in the narratives of the film, and were strongly informed by their own life narratives, expectations and experiences. Their interpretive strategies manifested in the form of discussions and assessments of cultural recognition, authenticity and realism in the film stories, and also in the act of questioning the representational veracity of diasporic New Zealand films.

Fundamentally, this study showed that responses to films which were explicitly reflective of negotiating life in a new country encouraged a referential mode of engagement. The diasporic audience members could not lose self-awareness in interacting with the images and narratives that corresponded in one way or another with their own real diasporic life experiences, past memories, aspirations, values and wishes, even when—and perhaps more so—these radically differed. For this reason, the diasporic audience members were acutely aware of their status as viewers in a process of adaptive settlement, somewhere on the line between here and there. That as yet unsettled awareness, given voice in the focus groups and interviews, appeared to take the form of a constant recalibration of distances and approaches: between the characters and events of the texts and experiences in their own lives; between the past, present and the future; between possibility and reality; between their image of themselves and the ways they might be seen by people in their own communities, and the ways in which they have been seen, or hope to be seen, by the members of the host community. These kinds of recalibration necessarily involve reference to the real social world in which they are receiving the film, and hence the majority of their discussion draws on the referential mode of engagement.

In addition, the referential mode of engagement across the three case studies revolved around specific forms and sources called *referential knowledge* and its major tropes: self-referential and community referential. In adopting a referential mode of engagement, especially when the point of reference was the self and community, we could see that the discussions were one or more steps removed from the textual depictions. Therefore, invocations of the participants' diasporic selves were also frequently deployed in order to interact with the diasporic film. This means that the act of interpretation of diasporic films by a diasporic audience is, in effect, a form of social action in which we can search for answers to many complex questions around diaspora and media as well as self and community.

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Journal Article: Diasporic Films and the Migrant Experience in

New Zealand: A Case Study in Social Imagination

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Diasporic films and the migrant experience in New Zealand: A case study in social imagination

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Abstract

Drawing upon interviews and focus groups with Asian migrants, this article interrogates responses to 'diasporic' films that seek to represent multicultural experiences in contemporary New Zealand. We argue that these responses provide an effective demonstration of the operation of the 'social imagination', a discursive process that articulates the fundamental linkage between symbolic representation, community formation and social action. As our respondents narrated the personal meanings that they construct around ethnically specific media, they were compelled to describe known and hypothetical others, to elucidate symbolic and moral codes, and to reveal social empathies and anxieties. In this study, we found that discussions around migrant stories revealed a series of deeply personalised notions of self and place that were always situated in juxtaposition with externalised projections of community formation and the 'mainstream' culture. This dynamic reflects what can be conceptualised as the central preoccupations of a 'diasporic social imagination'. These responses, therefore, constitute a case study of social imagination at work in a multicultural context, underlining the utility of narrative media in providing a public forum for discussing cultural diversity.

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New Zealand is officially described, and effectively operated, as a bicultural nation guided by the Treaty of Waitangi. Nonetheless, this society of 4.5 million people also appears markedly multicultural and multi-ethnic at the beginning of the 21st century. European migrants and their descendants, referred to as Pakeha, constitute a broadening range of European cultures that go well beyond a singular British heritage. The Maori peoples of New Zealand are also now hosts to a large number of recent arrivals from across the Pacific region, giving Auckland the largest Pacific Islander population of any city in the world. Further, almost a quarter of Auckland's population is now classified as 'Asian', this itself being a catch-all term for a wide range of peoples and cultures covering half of the human species. As such, in considering the ethnic demography of contemporary New Zealand, many scholars believe that New Zealand's increasing cultural diversity is a reality that simply cannot be ignored any more (Smeith and Dunstan, 2004; Ward and Masgoret, 2008). Despite their growing physical and statistical visibility, however, it remains difficult for members of the Asian diasporas to create a significant presence in the vibrant sphere of cultural production fostered by a range of official agencies in New Zealand.

The relative absence of a substantive Asian New Zealand presence on-screen reflects not only the export orientation of commercial media productions towards the Anglophone world, including a close relationship with nearby Australia, but also the primacy of an official ideology that frames biculturalism as a set of ongoing negotiations between European and Maori peoples. Nonetheless, there have been healthy signs in recent years, of media productions being made by Asian New Zealanders that attempt to represent a wider range of social and cultural experiences among the contemporary population. Although their exposure within the media mainstream has been limited, these diasporic media productions are critically important, not least because the communicative sphere of media remains vital for effective public participation in contemporary life and society. In that light, we can argue that the role of media in increasing the visibility of Asians in New Zealand society, and their discursive incorporation in the national community, becomes crucial at a time when multiculturalism is evolving within the country.

Hybridity and difference in media consumption

Multiculturalism can be seen as an internal reorganisation of the national narrative in order to accommodate greater social, but primarily ethnic, diversity. Alternatively, it can be seen as part of a worldwide mosaic of human mobility fostered through migrations, mass communications and the wider field of globalisation. At either scale (or, indeed, simultaneously at both) the operation of media made and/or consumed within a migratory experience of displacement, pluralism and reorientation readily brings into question the post-Second World War wisdom that mass media have primarily national aesthetics that correspond with stable, and relatively homogeneous, national audiences (see Higson, 2000; Schlesinger, 2000). Increasingly, the worldwide dispersal of media artefacts operates in parallel with the dispersal of human beings, and the steady growth of ethno-cultural diasporas (Karim, 2003). In his influential analysis of the cultural dimensions of globalisation during the 1990s, Arjun Appadurai (1996) claimed that the new possibilities for worldwide – and enduring – consumption by migrants of media

artefacts addressing their own ethnic specificity heralded the formation of 'diasporic public spheres'. These putative social bodies are described as mobile post-national communities linked internationally through ethnic identification and electronic media (Appadurai, 1996: 22).

In Appadurai's reading, geographically stable national publics were likely to be subsumed by ethnic cultures flowing back and forth across the surface of the world, and maintained over the longer term by ethnically specific channels of communication. However, an influential earlier account of cultural identity among migrant communities by Stuart Hall argued powerfully for the inherent hybridity, reinvention and appropriation of the identities forged through the dislocated cultural practices of the migrant experience (Hall, 1990, 1993; Hall et al., 1996). Here, the maintenance by migrants of ethno-cultural connections with 'homeland' cultures is necessarily unstable, since cultural practices and identities are constantly reshaped by complex sets of proximate and long-distance social relations that involve both the new home and the old. Understood this way, diasporic cultures are not mechanisms for cultural maintenance and fixity, but are instead processes of becoming that combine strong personal experiences of both the universal and the particular in human societies.

Although debates about boundary maintenance and cultural fusion continue, the consolidation of the idea of a 'diasporic subject' in the humanities has logically given rise to the paradigm of 'diasporic audiences', denoting global constituencies for ethnically specific media (see Athique, 2011). In attempting to provide a suitable theoretical model for the diasporic audience, Stuart Cunningham, extrapolating from the work of both Appadurai and of Todd Gitlin (1998), has described diasporic audiences as inhabiting narrowcast media environments which are 'public sphericules'. That is, they are 'ethno-specific global mediatised communities' which 'display in microcosm elements we would expect to find in the public sphere' (Cunningham, 2001: 134). From the perspective of their host nations, however, they are 'social fragments that do not have critical mass' (Cunningham, 2001: 134). If we follow Hall's lead, however, we are encouraged to consider the overall mix of cultures represented in the media consumed within the community, and look for evidence of 'crossover' between the cultures, either in the texts themselves or in the exposition of programming choices by audience members (see Khorana, 2013). If we characterise the two available models in broad terms, then a diasporic media audience can *either* be considered to be engaged primarily with the transnational maintenance of a global ethnic culture, *or* beset by the challenges of combining different cultural streams within the national space. In either case, the cultural practices of diasporic communities are commonly seen as 'a struggle for survival, identity and assertion' (Cunningham, 2001: 136).

Unlocking the social imagination

It is worth reflecting upon the extent to which engagement with media cultures has come to be positioned as a matter of survival in contemporary societies. That is, we have to ask why the stakes are set so high in the entertainment rituals of everyday life? In a large part, the answer lies in the massive investment in national media systems as socialising forces in the second half of the 20th century. With the coming of satellite television, playback

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formats and the worldwide web, this long-term investment in common media cultures has been forced to accommodate the rise of narrowcast media and niche audiences across the media spectrum and likewise across the social spectrum. At the same time, the steady relocation of non-European migrants into the developed nations has further highlighted the increasing diversity of national populations and the mobility of cultural forms, aided by a raft of new technologies. A further factor to consider is the predominance of a new understanding of cultural practices in everyday life as major sites of identity formation with political significance, as reflected by the 1960s notion that the 'personal is political' and by the rise of critical disciplines such as cultural studies. All of these have contributed to the impetus for a wide range of studies that focus upon the media usage of migrant populations, and the resulting configurations of social identity and their implications for managing diversity and assessing processes of assimilation or alienation (Gillespie, 1995; Cunningham and Sinclair, 2000).

The theoretical notion that has been most central to discussions of media reception for the past 30 years has been Benedict Anderson's (1991) concept of the imagined community. Anderson:

> famously posited the effects of media use upon the imagination as a transformative force in the socialisation of a modern community … [where] participation in the new mass audiences facilitated by the emergence of print media encouraged individuals to imagine themselves as part of larger and more abstracted social formations. (Athique, 2008: 26)

For textual researchers, it is this notion of a collective symbolic imagination that has allowed for the reading of cultural artefacts as allegorical renditions of identifiable societies or social groups. For audience researchers, those articulations are commonly aligned with an a priori social group whose collective subjectivity can be read off a sample of responses to media content. The notion that the social is imagined into being through performance has also been amenable to studies of media effect, since media consumers are considered susceptible to nation-building messages encoded into media artefacts (Athique, 2008: 26). The influence of this concept is referenced explicitly in Appadurai's account of diasporic publics:

> The world we live in today is characterised by a new role for the imagination in social life. To grasp this new role, we need to bring together the old idea of images, especially mechanically produced images (in the Frankfurt School sense); the idea of the imagined community (in Anderson's sense); and the French idea of the imaginary (*imaginaire*) as a constructed landscape of collective aspirations, which is no more and no less real than the collective representations of Emile Durkheim, now mediated through the complex prism of modern media. The image, the imagined, the imaginary – these are all terms that direct us to something critical and new in global cultural processes: the imagination as a social practice […] The imagination is now central to all forms of agency, is itself a social fact, and is the key component of the new global order. (Appadurai, 1996: 31)

Although Anderson's original explanation can be called technologically deterministic, it is much less so if we focus on the communicative content of the media rather than simply the existence of its infrastructure. Media technologies themselves may indicate the

potential, and even the inevitability, of modern community formation, but they cannot of themselves explain the *nature* of such communities. If an assumed connection between media consumption and communal identity is to be accepted, we should seek to better understand the nature of the imaginings which make such relations possible. On that basis, it seems quite perplexing that most of the subsequent research on 'imagined communities' has focused more or less exclusively on the latter part of that couplet (that is, on community). Arguably, what we should pay equal attention to is what this emphasis on *imagination* implies in the practical context of social research. Rather than a provocative equation of imagined affinities with the positivist doctrines of Durkheim, it is more immediately productive in this regard to turn to C. Wright Mills' (1959) pioneering conceptualisation of sociological imagination. According to Mills, the social imagination is the set of cognitive processes where two abstract concepts of social reality – the individual and society – are linked. Mills therefore defined sociological imagination as 'the capacity to range from the most impersonal and remote transformations to the intimate features of the human self – and to see the relationship between the two' (Mills, 1959: 8).

It is this capacity to interlace our position within society that allows us to identify and understand the relationship between wider social forces and our personal actions. In doing so, social imagination makes the lives of individuals both functionally plausible and meaningful, reminding us that identity is as much an external matter as an internal one. According to Mills, the concept of social imagination enables us 'to take into account how individuals, in the welter of their daily experience, often become falsely conscious of their social positions' (Mills, 1959: 5). For our present purposes, we will put aside the Marxist notion of a 'false' consciousness, because that obviously requires the imposition of an external judgement upon the social imagination of others. What we want to emphasise instead is the foundational premise – that imagination is not simply a device for the narration of abstract symbolic relations. Far from being narcissistic fantasy, the everyday operation of social imagination is fundamental for connecting humanity with the material world, providing the necessary terrain for collaboration in social behaviours. As such, an analysis of these imaginative processes as primary data is warranted, since they can be spoken and thereby offer us an opportunity to look at the way social imagination has shaped particular individuals, the ways in which they perceive the world around them, and how they seek to assess, influence and interact with it.

The application of the concept of social imagination in sociology is often inflected by the power relations between the research expert and the research subject. That is, a well-developed 'sociological imagination' can be associated more narrowly with the particular role of the sociologist, which 'requires us … to "think ourselves away" from the familiar routines of our daily lives' (Giddens, 2013: 5). Arguably, the real value of the concept is precisely the opposite, since the articulation of their own social imagination by research subjects takes us deep into their social experience and consequently reveals much about the embedding of symbolic and abstract relationships, both near and far, within the fabric of their everyday lives. Because the articulation of social imagination through language is a relativistic process, a measure of empathy becomes requisite for anticipating relationships and the consequences of social action. This, then, would appear to be the point at which imagination conjoins with community. Thus, when people say what they think about media narratives, they inevitably deploy a wider social

imagination that situates them in relation to the narrative, protagonists and the wider social context of their lives. Without a doubt, in contemporary societies, ethnic or political affiliations are powerful symbolic orders that shape the operation and articulation of this process. Nonetheless, we would argue that the function of social imagination is a much larger, but also more intensely personal, process that is worthy of consideration in its own right.

Theory in action

In order to demonstrate how a focus on social imagination has practical utility for audience research in media studies, we must return to the specific context of New Zealand and the empirical foundations of our enquiry. We employ the concept of social imagination here for the purposes of understanding audiences within a particular diasporic context. In presenting a range of commentary from respondents collected in relation to films that take migrant experiences as their central subject matter, we are naturally concerned with the relationship between the diasporic audience and the diasporic film. However, we also seek to emphasise that audience responses are not arbitrated solely by the positioning they adopt with respect to the diegesis of the film itself, but also by a wide variety of external referents that further situate their perception of themselves, society and the world. This is in keeping with our basic premise that audiences' responses to media text are expressions of their social imaginations and are influenced by their socially, culturally, politically, ideologically and geographically located selves. In the case of diasporic audiences specifically, it became clear to us that the interpretive resources and competences of respondents were characterised by a tendency to identify with various aspects of the diasporic text in a distinctive fashion. That is, their sense-makings, textual interpretations and social commentaries are necessarily affected by their diasporic (and self-conscious) sense of being 'here' and not 'there'.

Since the richness of reception studies rests in a large part upon the content provided for stimulus, some brief notes on the film content used in this project seem beneficial here. The selected films included *My Wedding and Other Secrets* (2011, co-written and directed by Roseanne Liang); *Apron Strings* (2008, co-written by Shuchi Kothari and Diane Taylor and directed by Sima Urale) and *Desert* (2010, written and directed by Stephen Kang). Asian diasporic film is a nascent phenomenon in New Zealand, and it is only comparatively recently that members of Asian diasporas have started to get involved in making films about their experience and life in the country (Zalipour, 2013). As one might expect, the manner of production, distribution and public reception of Asian New Zealand film varies. *Apron Strings* and *My Wedding and Other Secrets* emerged from an industrial mode of film production (particularly in the case of the latter, which had a significant budget and an established film company behind it). Conversely, *Desert* is a low-budget digital video production, attaining a low level of distribution and audience compared with the other two films.

My Wedding and Other Secrets is a textbook story of intercultural negotiation, where a Chinese New Zealand girl (Emily Chu) has to decide between love for her Chinese parents and her love for a Kiwi boy (James Harrison). The film clearly emphasises the generational conflicts that can arise around maintaining the traditions and customs of the

migrants' original culture alongside those of the new country. Centred instead upon New Zealand's Indian community, the film *Apron Strings* develops similar avenues of contemplation. The film presents parallel accounts of an Indian family alongside a 'Kiwi' family, exploring the various ways in which each member finds the courage to unleash the past. Anita, the star of an Indian TV cooking show, has settled in New Zealand with her son Michael. Michael decides to explore his 'Indianness' with the aid of his mother's sister, Aunt Tara. Tara runs a Curry House in South Auckland. In the same neighbourhood, Lorna, a Pakeha (European) New Zealander runs an old-fashioned cake shop and lives with her old mother and wastrel son, Barry (who prefers Tara's cooking to the meals made by his mother). The characters of *Apron Strings* clearly struggle to forge stable relationships within the diasporic and multicultural milieu. By contrast, the Korean New Zealand film *Desert* is rather different, in that it primarily focuses on the affective and material predicaments of Korean migrants in New Zealand. The narrative centres on Jenny, a young Korean girl, and her attempts to achieve a stable and integrated life after being abandoned by her Kiwi boyfriend.

In carrying out the reception studies, participants were recruited via convenience sampling from the three largest Asian diasporic communities in New Zealand at the time this research was conducted (Chinese, Indian and Korean migrants). Respondents were invited to watch the film whose diegesis centred upon the experiences of their own ethnic community. Each respondent was provided with a copy of the selected film (in DVD format) and asked to watch it prior to participating in a series of focus groups and interviews (held within two or three days of their viewing). The participants who volunteered to take part were relatively homogeneous in terms of age, level of education and professional status, and consisted of adults primarily from the first generation of diaspora. There was no gender weighting of the sample and the resulting gender composition has a female bias (13 male and 21 female). The research was conducted by the lead author, who has a diasporic background but is not a member of any of the ethnic communities with which this research enegaged. The lines of questioning explored in the interviews and focus groups were directed towards the elaboration of issues foregrounded in these (New Zealand's most recent) 'diasporic' films (see Zalipour, forthcoming).

Positioning the self

The expression of social imagination is a matter of position-taking, and consequently the starting point for the majority of respondents was the narrative positioning of the self, articulated through the trajectory of their own travels and life stories, and their significance as a framing of identity. Our 'loaded' sample of 'diasporic films' naturally prompted respondents to consider these narratives in relation to their own present situation as Asian migrants to New Zealand. Accordingly, the responses provided by participants indicated a high degree of personal identification with narratives and themes, typically expressed through a strong relation to their own lives and memories. Sometimes this was intended to express affinity for the experiences of protagonists in the text, and at other times the comparison was deployed in order to express a differentiation from their own experience. For many of our participants, the social construction of a mixed (or 'hyphenated') identity was evident in their self-presentation. For example, a male participant from an

Indian background talked about the conflictive complexities of a hyphenated identity, implicating friends who also shared the same feeling:

> Because growing up in New Zealand, the people here, Kiwis, they view you as an Indian coming from India. So they assume that you behave just like one of them, and the Indians, they think that you don't quite fit the Indian bracket. You're more like a Kiwi. People like us actually don't fit in a neat box and that identity is neither here nor there. From that time I arrived in New Zealand till now that still hasn't changed.

Self-understanding was often constructed through the prism of generational distinctions within migrant communities. In order to position their own self and identity, the participants across the three case studies frequently referred to their children and parents, highlighting the ways that different diasporic generations inhabit the social and cultural dynamics of the new home. One discussant from Indian origin (whose parents migrated to the Middle East and then came to New Zealand to settle) reminisced about them to describe herself:

> [...] compare me with my mother and where I stand as a migrant, so my mother was very loyal to her Indianness but also wanted to deny her Indianness sort of like, she wanted to drive a car, she wanted to travel, she wanted to do this and that. She was also going to watch Bollywood films and take part in activities of the Indian community there. For her it was like 'I don't want to be that Indian. I want to be little bit western to show that I'm not Indian.' [...] As I grew up, there was a focus on being Indian, all that sort of stuff. As I grew up I wanted to have my own identity. [...] My mother in a sense rejected that [the Indianness]; my generation went back and looked for it and found it again, that is my language and culture. So I couldn't choose the language and culture I want my daughter to learn, now she is starting to see where she stands and wants to know as the third-generation migrant.

A female Korean participant said she migrated to New Zealand in 1998, but believes that, unlike her own children, she has not become a 'Korean-New Zealander': 'I'd like to call myself Korean [and] my kids would be "Korean New Zealanders", [...] I came here when I was 35 years old [and] people like me – we try to keep our origin.' This personalised hybridity is seen as being common among diasporic individuals (Hall, 1993). With their key generational distinctions, these comments demonstrate something of the complexity and trajectory of a partial assimilation. Ethnicity was, naturally enough, a major marker of selfhood but, at the same time, it was not the only point of reference. Responding to the film, *My Wedding and Other Secrets*, a Chinese female participant emphasised her positioning primarily as a mother, extrapolating the narrative to the future of her 'little girl' and the differing consequences 'if she falls in love with a Kiwi boy or a Chinese boy'. An Indian respondent also spoke of the dilemmas of motherhood, where her own escape from traditional expectations in India through a second partnership with a Kiwi was counterposed by a strong desire for her own children to marry suitable partners from 'back home'. Thus, for migrant parents across the different sample groups, there were mutual concerns over generational conflicts and the maintenance of their 'original' culture and traditions by their offspring.

More broadly, the participants across the three case studies articulated the 'split' dynamics of a 'diasporic self'. This positioning appeared to be fluidly constructed in resonance with many external factors in the new environment, always in relation to imagined others, and structured by the cleavage between two ideal types: the ethnic/diasporic and the majority/mainstream. It is notable in this particular context that the positioning of the 'majority' by participants was not structured by any clear distinction between Maori and Pakeha. Ethnic positioning could also be highly strategic. One respondent observed that some migrants 'capitalise' on their ethnic identity, while the groups as a whole tended to think of themselves as people 'who have not capitalised on' their Indianness, Chineseness, etc. Beyond the comparison of their own identity to the circumstances of the films' protagonists, our respondents would inevitably refer their own experiences to a broader scale of social reality that reflected contemporary New Zealand as a whole. In this sense, we found that the responses of participants provided useful evidence of the capacity to extrapolate individual circumstances to issues at the societal level. This aligns strongly with Mills' (1959: 3–24) original exposition of the sociological imagination at work.

The personalisation of place

The positioning of self and identity by migrants inevitably produces a strongly comparative sense of here and there. The awareness and experience of living across multiple locations clearly stimulates a need to conceptually relate self to a necessarily complex sense of place. This was true for first-generation migrants born in one country and relocated to New Zealand. It was also true for members of the second generation, who remained culturally associated with one ethnic culture but were reared and educated in New Zealand's particular ethnic and cultural framework. As such, the place of origin, though temporally and spatially at a distance, remains linked to migrants and their subsequent generations (Anthias, 1998; Baumann, 2000; Clifford, 1994). Naficy (2001) has noted the intense desire to return to the homeland in exilic films, arguing that in diaspora, home must be imagined, in order that it may be longed for, desired, returned to physically or ideologically re-produced within migrant communities. In our case studies, the sentimental memorialisation of homeland did not appear to be prevalent in the responses of the participants. Instead, responses tended to revolve around preoccupations with the ways a sense of belonging can be performed in various aspects of diasporic life. For example, in response to the film *Apron Strings*, an Indian female discussant reminisced about the time she migrated to New Zealand more than a decade previously. For her, migration was to free herself from the arranged marriage that was imposed on her by her family and community and she stated clearly that she would never think of return. This respondent's characterisation of the two societies, albeit somewhat contradictory at different points of the narrative, was dominated by an explicitly comparative sense of here and there. For example:

> Things are out of control here in New Zealand. Back home [in India] things are in control. For example, my son was 17 and New Zealand law says he can move out and stay on his own and get a partner. If it was back home, then no way he could move out and be on his own; he had to

> get married to someone that family has agreed. […] Society back home won't let you do that. Society defines these things. In this society rules and regulations are totally different. Here if my son leaves what I can do? In India the boy himself will not say it or do it because of the respect, because of the community, because of the shame.

Many participants referred to some aspects of original homeland culture that can be reconstructed or abandoned totally in New Zealand, stressing the ways the new place can offer diasporic subjects an opportunity to do so. Commenting upon the film itself, the same respondent noted that:

> You can't be the same person because you're breaking that shell – something Tara didn't even do [though she was in New Zealand]; even if you were in India, the same thing would apply. It's only that here you have more space of doing such a thing.

One Chinese discussant highlighted: 'I care about New Zealand because people here treat me so well and they are such kind and nice people as compared to many people in my city back in China.' The participants' candid comparisons of home countries with New Zealand indicated that everyday social relations were an important factor in defining the relative merits of relocation. Accordingly, the ethnic and cultural references to place were always qualified and complex, and therefore tended to undermine any simplistic notions of home as a nostalgic constant. Critical comparisons and trade-offs between cultural norms appeared to arise naturally, despite the backdrop of 'multiculturalism' which gives definitive weight to ethnicity in matters of self and identity.

In a majority of cases, the sense of place was constructed around the theme of 'here is better' as manifested in participants' position-taking on their New Zealand-based lives. These personal experiences naturally 'scaled up' to perceptions of national cultures as places of well-being. Reflecting this 'forward' gaze, the participants in our study articulated the notion of home primarily as a place that is left behind and not actively desired. This 'remembered' home appeared to be confined to familial relationships, as well as being the source of the components of their collective culture that remained central to the expression of their ethnic identities. These practices clearly had symbolic significance in their lived experience in New Zealand, but their memories of home as such were not factual or empirical recollections of place. These imagined geographies were deeply personalised and, in that sense, place was more a temporal than geographic reference. At the same time, the constant coexistence of New Zealand and 'back home' in their life stories encouraged broad comparisons that subsequently shaped their views of cultural and political geography. In that sense, their social imagination provides a vital process for linking the personal and global frameworks that determine the migrant experience.

Community formations

The axiom of community inevitably entails the juxtaposition of inclusion and exclusion in a new society, and this implicates various other concepts and issues built upon a close linkage between personal identity, political citizenship and communal culture(s).

In this respect, the participants' responses to these films displayed a general consensus on the central importance of diasporic communities to the migrant experience. Our participants talked about the invisible rules, boundaries, restrictions and sets of values that operate within a diasporic community. In functional terms, these diasporic communities are typically formed in settings where migrants congregated for religious and cultural activities. As such, a process of diasporic socialisation consequently takes place through the slightly artificial enactment of group-specific values and practices. In responding to the film, *Desert*, a Korean woman discussed the difficulties that can arise within such communities when boundaries are breached:

> It's a small Korean community in Auckland and through word of mouth people get to know her [Jenny in the film *Desert*]. It'll be quite hard to live there in such a small community once Korean people have heard your unfavourable news [her pregnancy].

Similarly, an Indian participant referred to the diasporic community as an 'inside world' with distinct stipulations: 'so getting pregnant out of wedlock is not right according to the inside world' (a comment on the film *Apron Strings*).

In everyday sociality, the essential need of attachment to some sort of community or collective in the diaspora was cherished by many participants. All Korean discussants expressed their empathies and anxieties about the sense of isolation and exclusion that diasporic subjects encounter in the new country and the role of community attachment as an immediate solution: 'If you come to a new place, you would want to make sure you have friends that you can rely on. When you get involved with activities in church you become part of that community.' Nonetheless, many participants hinted at a strategic balance in the level of attachment to diasporic communities and the dominant community ideology. On occasion, involvement in diasporic community formations was rejected outright. One Chinese participant rejected involvement with diasporic communities in New Zealand and criticised the role of government in this dynamic:

> New Zealand government needs to encourage Kiwi activities rather than ethnic and community activities all the time. I never go to Chinese meetings or festivals. Many of these ethnic activities are happening in a large scale in this society. I never go to such community events because I don't like these activities which highlight your ethnicity and make you look different. You are now in this country; if you wanted to be Chinese you should have stayed in China. [...] I don't know why the government creates so many associations for migrants. I understand they are interested in those cultures and want to see how they can contribute to the Kiwi culture. If that is the case it is good, but on the other hand it also enlarges the gap, because you identify these people as being different.

Taking an opposite line, one male Indian migrant saw New Zealand multicultural framework as benefitting his own diasporic community:

> I'm connected to Indian community in Hamilton. In New Zealand we don't have those kinds of harassment we hear about in other western countries because of following our own culture, which is great. So the Indian culture is quite strong here but our population is very small.

Community formation, by its nature, involves inequalities in access and struggles over establishing individuals' rights, the dynamics of participation and the group's broader social presence. Commenting on the role of media representations of diasporic communities in New Zealand, one participant embarked upon a criticism of a migrant parliamentarian's interventional strategies to obtain an MP appointment. This person was described as having utilised multicultural media in New Zealand primarily as a channel for personal visibility, and as having emphasised an attachment to their diasporic community in order to obtain a social and political position within the mainstream culture.

> I know [this person] is a Korean who was working on the programme *Asian Down Under*. She used media to become MP. The Korean community doesn't like her well because she used that position from a media person to become MP; it was easier for her to progress that way. I don't think she's really a right person to represent our community, Korean or even Asians. She says 'I'm Kiwi'. I can understand, but maybe the government, the president thinks that she is representing Asian communities and can pass our message to them, but I don't see she is really working for the community. She participates in multicultural shows but we can't see if she is really approaching in some real way to do something for our migrant societies in New Zealand.

The authenticity of and motives for ethnic representation are closely scrutinised within migrant communities. It is no surprise, then, that the challenges of community orientation are frequently exacerbated and intensified in diasporic contexts. While a few endorsed the importance of a long-term attachment to the diasporic community, it was also apparent that many of participants felt that the need to attach persists only in the early stages of settlement. One Korean female discussant attests to this by saying that: 'The first generation of Korean who came to New Zealand with their children probably with a patriarchal father and domestic mother, they would probably live in the community.' The implication was that diasporic communities are often 'bridgehead' formations, which play a lesser role in everyday life once migrants are settled. The generational dimension is also prominent here. Diasporic community organisations were seen as having less importance by the second generation, who have grown up with their Kiwi peers. Conversely, diasporic communities were seen by migrant parents (from their own point of view) as providing a useful remedial resource, ensuring a measure of cultural transmission to the younger generation alongside their broader socialisation in New Zealand.

Negotiating multiculturalism

Respondents in all of our sample groups adhered to the view that New Zealand media does not portray 'real New Zealand society' in terms of its ethnic diversity. A lack of genuinely or appropriately representative imagery of Asian migrants in New Zealand media was seen as reflecting a situation whereby:

> They think we are still a minority. It is the matter of population number and also influencing the Kiwi society. […] But still there are not many of us who work with Kiwis so can we say that we are living among Kiwi society?

When referring to the 'mainstream' of New Zealand society, participants in this study referred to an overarching concept of inclusion/exclusion in several ways. For some (but by no means all) respondents, language was seen a functional element that could hinder integration (to the extent that they endorsed language barrier as 'the biggest problem'). More broadly, however, the issue of 'cultural differences' was raised as a pertinent factor that directly affects opportunities for participation in the mainstream. Inclusion and difference were clearly fraught concepts used to reference a remaining gap between their own cultures and the 'Anglo' culture that is perceived as predominant in the New Zealand context. Despite such difficulties, respondents saw their engagement with the 'mainstream' culture as a primary measure of their success in establishing themselves in New Zealand:

> So I think because I've grown up here I established myself more as a New Zealander than as a Korean and it's easy for people to assume that I'm Korean and that means I can't speak English and things like that. I sort of try little bit harder to convince them that I'm just a New Zealander.

The importance of enhancing cultural awareness as part of the process of inclusion was highlighted by several participants. A Chinese discussant stresses a 'mutual' process of culturalisation as the pathway to create multiculturalism, noting that there is not 'much education for Kiwis to learn about the migrant groups living in their society'. A lack of understanding of Asian cultures, and of cross-cultural acceptance by Kiwis were frequent reference points in the discussions around the three films. One Chinese discussant explains that 'Some Kiwis have not had the chance to travel and so they have not experienced getting to know another culture and have cross-cultural experience.' Criticism was not merely a one-way affair, however. One female Indian discussant spoke her mind in the focus group by saying that:

> It's not that simple; we think they should accept us. We don't accept them either. How often we can accept their culture and say OK. My son brings his girlfriend home and lies down on the couch. This is something I never accept from their culture. We don't accept them as much as they don't accept us.

A successful multiculturalism was therefore also seen as being a responsibility for migrant communities and for individuals. As such, several participants reflected on the ways they (as migrants) can contribute to the Kiwi culture, society and people. One Chinese respondent, for example, stated that 'We should find the ways we can contribute to this culture.' One suggestion for achieving this began from investigating 'what I have in my original culture and how I can apply them to my current practice, life, work and identity in New Zealand'. One common belief held by respondents was that Asian migrants are serving the country in many ways and they should, therefore, be recognised as a major part of New Zealand society. Nonetheless, despite these criticisms, most of the participants held the view that 'New Zealand is moving towards multiculturalism'. For our purposes, what is most striking is that none of the film narratives made any explicit references to the status of multiculturalism in New Zealand, either as a set of policy structures or as a broader national trajectory towards cultural diversity. Rather, these

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were intensely personal stories that foregrounded cross-cultural relationships, adaptation and personal identity. Our respondents were nonetheless compelled to relate these narratives not only to their own personal experiences but also to the 'big picture' of social change. In that respect, diasporic films provided another framework for the level of political debate and self-reflexivity that Mills originally sought to encapsulate in his imaginative positioning of personal circumstances and broader economic conditions.

Conclusion

The engagement of migrant viewers with films that seek to represent the social dynamics within their own communities is a naturally fruitful site for launching a broader discussion around multiculturalism, diversity and sociability in New Zealand. In that sense, this article serves an empirical purpose by filling in a significant gap in our national media studies. The responses collected here and the strategic positionings deployed by our respondents demonstrate that reception studies of this kind are well suited to offer us fresh insights into the ways that 'minority' viewers relate to, and engage with, cultural products that take up the burden of representing their lives within the host society. However, there is also much of interest here that goes beyond the work of representation and its subsequent reception by samples from target audiences. The responses collated in this article furnish some pertinent examples of how a discursive engagement with 'social' narratives necessarily engenders a set of strategic position-takings by which participants articulate their relationships with various social formations as well as different forms of the self. As such, incorporating an awareness of the broader operation of social imagination into our work has been rewarding in terms of illuminating the nuances of position-taking that takes place in social studies.

Mills argued that the social imagination is what allows us to understand the relationship between our individual circumstances and large-scale social structures, and there is clear evidence here that our respondents were fully engaged in this process. By establishing a contextually located set of relationships between narrative protagonists, the self, intimates, strangers and broader social forces, each participant was able to offer a wide-ranging commentary on the sociology of migration and multiculturalism in New Zealand. Consequently, we are confident that reception studies continue to provide a useful means of 'putting people in the picture' and subsequently gaining insights into their empathic capabilities, and how this shapes their role as social agents. Since our study here is based on a very particular set of people, and the corresponding representations of their specific circumstances in New Zealand, we are also inclined to hypothesise about some central preoccupations that appear to shape a distinctively 'diasporic social imagination'. These responses, therefore, constitute a case study of social imagination at work in a multicultural context, underlining the utility of narrative media in providing a public forum for discussing cultural diversity. That is, since migrants have a common tendency to actively negotiate their positions in connection with the host society, we see common tropes emerging throughout the responses. These cumulative (rather than collective) articulations indicate a heightened consciousness of self, place and community, as well as the revealing some of the emotive interplay between being, becoming and belonging in their new situation.

Our sample of 'diasporic films' thereby provided a ready reference point for our respondents as they navigated the social complexities of those narratives in relation to their own life stories. This imaginative process had both a self-referential aspect (that we might call identity formation) as well as an external, social aspect (that we might call social identification). As such, the articulation of these inner and outer worlds by respondents allowed us to analyse something of the complex relationships, ever-changing identities and culturally laden flows that shape contemporary diasporic social life. These self-expressions, therefore, reveal the underlying notions that shape the respondents' expectations and understandings of the society they live in. Thus, our primary interest in engaging the social imagination of diasporic communities in New Zealand was well served in practical terms, while a broader concept of diasporic subjectivity (as a confluence of impressions and effects anchoring migratory experiences) offered us some intriguing ways to think of social imagination as both a political imperative and an everyday project in a multicultural society.

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Chapter 8: Theorising Diasporic Film in New Zealand

This chapter presents a conclusion to the discussions this thesis has initiated in conceptualising Asian New Zealand cinema through a series of scholarly articles. It brings together some of the features and components of Asian New Zealand cinema, and concludes these discussions by proposing the incorporation of the diasporic audience's relationship to diasporic film in the wider conceptualisation of diasporic cinema. This chapter also highlights possible points of departure for scholars wishing to take work in this area further, and some of my own working ideas for future research.

New Zealand cinema serves as the storyteller of this small nation, and has thus far been characterised as including Pākehā and Māori films, and to a lesser degree Pasifika films, which reflect aspects of New Zealand national and cultural identity, presenting 'a New Zealand story'. In light of this, my thesis at its initial stage engaged with the question of whether New Zealand cinema (or at a larger scale, New Zealand screen) reflects the actual diversity and changing face of the contemporary New Zealand nation. Has there been such a thing as 'Asian New Zealand film'? I began by exploring New Zealand's specificity as a growing multicultural society that incorporates many migrants and diasporic communities, and probing the changes and effects that the Asian diaspora has created in New Zealand screen culture – an emerging social and cinematic imaginary, an Asian New Zealand arena. Thus, my thesis was motivated by the ambition to foreground the concept of 'Asian New Zealand cinema' within academic consciousness, by means of a series of publications. In these I have focused on the ways the Asian diaspora has been manifested in New Zealand films (and TV shows) as sites of cultural production, paying close attention to the relationships between the diasporic author, text, and the viewer.

The changes that occur within and beyond nation-states unceasingly impact film and media practices, products, and institutions. The reality of diasporic film and filmmaking unsettles the corresponding relationship between the film of a particular nation-state and national identity. This thesis has engaged with an emerging flow

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of films which represent the images and stories of New Zealand's multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society on screen, primarily those made by members of the diasporic communities themselves. These New Zealand films (and TV shows), which depict some aspects of migrant and diasporic life in New Zealand, instantiate diasporic filmmaking in the New Zealand context. The preliminary definition I offered for the object of the research, 'Asian New Zealand cinema', has remained relevant throughout the research: an emerging body of films including both works by New Zealanders of Asian descent and New Zealand films producing images of Asian diasporic people. Theoretically, however, I have moved beyond this definition and delved into the areas of the relationship between the diasporic audience and the diasporic film within diasporic cinema studies. Asian New Zealand cinema is by no means a cohesive cinema, but it does consist of an increasingly significant group of cinematic productions in terms of presenting images and stories which are different from the dominant New Zealand Māori, Pasifika, and Pākehā screen productions. Conceptualising Asian New Zealand cinema has proven to be a challenging task, since it is an emergent phenomenon with only a small number of relevant films which themselves often span national and cultural borders in terms of the origins of the creative artist, cast and crew, themes, and narratives. Speculating about how Asian New Zealand cinema will develop in future depends on numerous conditions, as diasporic films emerge and continue to exist in the interstices of society and the wider media industries, taking into account that New Zealand cinema itself is a loose category, inclusive and inherently diverse.

By their nature several films identified and discussed in this thesis share characteristics with diasporic films made elsewhere. Many of these Asian New Zealand films have not made a large impact in terms of the numbers of people who have seen them. However, they can be described as significant in their portrayal of local experiences of diaspora and displacement within diasporic communities and, on a larger scale, New Zealand society. From a broad perspective, the international literature on diasporic cinema indicates that diasporic filmmakers have been perceived as responsible for offering counter-stereotypes and accurate (realistic) representations in a given multicultural and multi-ethnic context. In Britain, for instance, "cinema about life in diaspora by Asian filmmakers emerged within the politics of racism, colonialism and modernity" of the British nation-state (Desai,

2008, p. 211). These diasporic films were designated to challenge "the dominant cinematic images of Africa and Asia that bolstered tropes of empire such as primitivism, savagery, civilising mission and exoticism" (ibid.). In Australian cinema, Asians (migrants and their diasporic generations) had been portrayed through racist images, especially in the early years (e.g. Khoo, 2006; Khoo, Smaill & Yue, 2013). Nowadays Australian cinema incorporates a large diasporic cinema where filmmakers from migratory backgrounds have portrayed stories of displacement and life within a multicultural Australia through more than 500 films (Asian Australian Cinema, 2015).

In distinction to other immigrant nations, Asian New Zealand film did not seem to emerge in order to challenge already existing racist imagery or stereotypical stories and images of Asians on New Zealand screen. In fact, there has been an absence of this stage in the usual progression of filmic representations, as is evident in nations with large migrant populations. This absence of corrective imagery is essentially because there have been very few prominent screen images of Asians in New Zealand, nor much recounting of minorities' stories, nor marginalised and stereotyped Asians as viewed through the lens of the majority or the dominant screen makers. The generalised anti-Asian sentiments as evident in the New Zealand context – particularly in the past – have not been manifested through a medium such as screen media which for its representational affect could provoke, activate, or encourage a form of reaction or response among (migrant) audiences. This is to suggest that the origin of Asian New Zealand film seems to be *de novo*, whereas in Britain, Australia, or the USA it has been (and still is) a reactive endeavour (see Chapter 3). The initial incentives of diasporic filmmaking practices in other immigrant nations vary, but they mainly revolve around the diasporic filmmaker's structure of feeling as having been displaced and constituted politically and/or ideologically within a minority-majority social system; hence, filmmakers feel it is important to *respond* to the already existing images of themselves on screen. There are numerous geopolitical factors that contribute to or affect those incentives within each nation-state that can influence the emergence of diasporic screen productions, such as the history of migration, the size of the overall population and proportion of migrants and their succeeding generations, the socio-political climate, race-based discrimination and its social and economic

consequences, government's policies in dealing with migration and diversity, and many more. Looking at the New Zealand context, it is therefore plausible to say the *de-novo* situation of Asian New Zealand film lies in a relatively complex relationship between socio-political forces and trajectories of the diasporic consciousness, within both individual and collective circumstances, not least among them the fact that a large and sustained influx of Asian immigrants is relatively recent.

In the last 30 years, for instance, most migrants in New Zealand have "never even considered along with a lot of generations, *being* a filmmaker" (Helene Wong, personal communication, 21 February 2012). I suggest that the degree of visibility of migrant groups and individuals within the parameters of a national cinema (e.g. the emergence and development of Asian New Zealand cinema) need not be entirely explained by the comparable factors in migration histories, or the political and sociological conditions of the host society in relation to the issues of cultural difference and debates around diversity, democracy and multiculturalism. It is my contention that the decisions by members of diasporic communities to participate in the cultural production of their host nations can partially be explained by a diasporic state of mind, or a diasporic consciousness. The experiences of diaspora and displacement provoke *in the course of time* an awareness among diasporic subjects – a state of mind, a diasporic consciousness, which is simultaneously both individual and collective. Migrants and their succeeding generations begin to see themselves, or become *conscious* of who they are, where/when they variously position themselves either in relation to the individual self and their history, the society they have been living in previously, or within their new societies and diasporic communities (the ones they have been attached to, or to which they are ascribed). Diasporic cultural production springs from such an awareness or state of mind. Other factors affecting the emergence of a diasporic consciousness include the discursive formation of diasporic communities within the host society and the relationship of individuals to them, the idiosyncratic ambitions and motives of diasporic individual members, their states of mind as well as structures of feeling, a sense of solidarity as part of an ethnic collective, and the tension of residing within the interstitial spaces of the individual self, diasporic communities, and the host society (and perhaps also their transnational links to other diasporic communities

across the globe). In other words, although policy shifts in the areas of immigration and creative and/or culture industries (e.g. film industry) affect the development of diasporic cinemas in different host nations, the migrant/diasporic individual (and collective) states of mind or diasporic consciousness play a key role in initiating and fostering diasporic cultural productions – as the case of Asian New Zealand films manifest in the New Zealand context.

Diasporic cinema studies have variously demonstrated how films originating from different cultural locations can be read on the basis of their representations of social power, race, belonging, nostalgia, identity, and boundary crossing. Such studies have also shown that it is necessary for migrants (and their succeeding generations) to speak from *their position* within the world, their host society, and their diasporic (and transnational) communities. This thesis has focused on the presence, formation, and appearance of a diasporic cinema understood, or sensed, in the host society through diasporic subjects' participation in the creative industry and cultural production of their adopted land. More importantly, I have intended to emphasise that the ways diasporic audiences engage with such cultural products can provide us with evidence of social and cultural trajectories of their understanding of themselves in their new environment. Drawing on some of my findings in the reception study of diasporic audiences of Asian New Zealand film, I propose that it is illuminating to think that diasporic film as evident in the New Zealand context (and also in its contemporary sense) largely emerges from the diasporic consciousness of individuals and communities, and not entirely from the 'displacement of the filmmaker' as Naficy propounded and as other diasporic cinema scholars continue to utilise in theorising accented and/or diasporic cinema. This, however, does not mean to reduce the significance of 'author' in my conceptualisation of diasporic cinema.

Asian New Zealand Film: Key Constituent Features and Components

This section presents some of the key features and components of Asian New Zealand film in relation to the three main areas – text, filmmaker, and modes of production – that shaped Naficy's theorisation of accented cinema, and which have

been drawn on by many other scholars after him. Asian New Zealand films share several constituent components with accented cinema and/or diasporic cinema specifically in terms of textual features, as well as the interstitial mode of production. I will elaborate on these below.

With regard to the text, while Asian New Zealand films exhibit some of the 'subject matters', 'themes', or 'plots' that Naficy defines as components of accented cinema, such as 'homelessness journeying', 'family', and 'identity', Asian New Zealand films also display subject matters and themes which are not specifically described in Naficy's components of accented style, but can be found in several other examples of diasporic cinema, and evidently, with different levels of intensity and prominence in different films – for example, themes of food and cooking.

Food, cooking and culinary practices constitute focal subject matters in the body of Asian New Zealand film, and provide profound meanings within the film narratives. Indeed, food becomes a central motif in the cultural imagination of Asian New Zealand film and is configured in various expressive forms: for instance, in how issues of gender, ethnicity, origin, culture, and identity are imagined as well as how notions of belonging are affirmed, negotiated or resisted in *Apron Strings, Fleeting Beauty, A Taste of Place: Stories of Food and Longing*, *Eating Sausage*, and *Curry Munchers*. Food also appears and reappears in the film narratives as linking people and places or reminding them of the absence of that link as in *Desert* and *My Wedding and Other Secrets*. In *Desert*, ethnic food provokes an interrogation into whether integration is imaginable within the New Zealand's migrant-majority relationship and signifies a gap between the two cultures (or individuals) that may never be reconciled. Such distinctions proposed by the discourse of food are then alleviated in *Apron Strings* through the visceral power of food, where it, instead, creates in-roads into the unbridgeable distinctions between the two cultures, or as in *A Taste of Place*, the preparation and consumption of food designates and contributes to community kinship and family relationship maintenance.

Themes of family and position of women are interwoven into cooking and food in some of these films. In *My Wedding and Other Secrets*, family is given prominence while food serves as an identity marker in the construction of Asian (Chinese) New

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Zealand identities. In other Asian New Zealand films, women are specifically linked to food using their culinary skills to create affinities between their family members, themselves, and the neighbours aligned with them in a multicultural context. This offers physical ground for tolerance and acceptance – a form of spiritual transcendence – which is manifested in various forms in the diasporic context of the films as a means of recognising and forging new connections. Other recurring themes in diasporic cinema, such as marriage and generational conflicts, also appear in Asian New Zealand films where they invigorate sites for depictions of journeying identities. The emphasis in Asian New Zealand cinema on food might, through metaphor, indicates a stronger desire to be readily incorporated, less effortlessly integrated in the process of assimilation into the host society than is the case of some other territories. New Zealand seems like a more peaceful, less divided society in which that might be possible, considering the small number of population here.

Unlike many accented films, characters in Asian New Zealand film primarily have a tendency to think of 'here' (life in New Zealand) more than 'there' (their original land). They are depicted as striving to maintain contact with both the host society and their own diasporic communities, while the nostalgic look and home orientation which is common in diasporic films from other regions and nation-states are minimised in the body of Asian New Zealand film. Sometimes characters speak in their native language, but mainly the multilingual characters speak in the dominant language, English, with an accent. Cinematic encounters between Asians and New Zealand born residents are portrayed as tense and often confusing for both sides, but as being able to be resolved in the course of time. Within the narrative structure of Asian New Zealand film, *Desert*, *Dream Preserved* and *Eating Sausage* are storytellers of migration, while *My Wedding and Other Secrets* and *Apron Strings* are storytellers of identity. The migration stories in the corpus of Asian New Zealand film delve into the process of settlement, but do not go beyond basic survival factors such as finding housing, employment, permanent residency, and becoming competent in another language – all activities at the forefront of first-generation migrants' needs. Such films take up the challenges of critiquing New Zealand society as well as migrants themselves in the process of settlement and

inclusion, hinting along the way at the fact that opportunities for integration do not occur in a vacuum.

According to Naficy, another defining characteristic of diasporic cinema is the interstitial and collective modes of production and distribution. Here again, Asian New Zealand film both does and does not fit Naficy's framework. Asian New Zealand films have been made within a variation of modes of production conditioned by the social, cultural, historical, demographic, capital, and national regimes that regulate the processes of cultural production in New Zealand. Some of the social and cultural factors and constraints that have affected and shaped the non-cohesive film production of Asian New Zealand films include smallness, low intensity of diasporic individuals and communities in New Zealand (as a result of developmental stages of the diasporic consciousness), and the geopolitical conditions of New Zealand as located at the far end of the southwest Pacific Ocean, with resulting consequences for migration and the workforce. There are also two general factors that affect most New Zealand-based filmmaking: a lack of dedicated budget within the national film industry, and the political climate of New Zealand, which largely favours economic growth over investment in arts and culture.

The production processes of *Apron Strings* and *My Wedding and Other Secrets*, for instance, are neither interstitial nor collective in the accented sense discussed by Naficy. They are State-funded feature films produced by diasporic screen and media producers who work within New Zealand's national film industry. Their mainstream, albeit small-scale, mode of production suggests that the realities of screen production in the New Zealand context entail concerted efforts by emerging filmmakers to continuously negotiate the film funding structures available for all New Zealanders. Their production processes primarily share one characteristic of the Naficy's (2001) interstitial mode of production: the multilinguality of the filmmakers, the crew, the stories and the audiences they address, which may facilitate intercultural communication among the diverse production team.

Other examples of Asian New Zealand filmmaking practices bear a number of similarities to the interstitial mode of production (see Chapter 5). I have identified several commonalities between the interstitial mode of production in Asian New

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Zealand filmmaking with some of the contemporary filmmaking practices in New Zealand. This has also led me to raise questions 'how far is the filmmaking process affected by the disaporisation of the filmmaker?', and 'Is New Zealand filmmaking itself significantly interstitial in terms of modes of production?' (see Chapter 5).

The volatile trajectory and inconsistent process of film production in the case of Asian New Zealand film and the small number of outputs has not allowed for coherent filmmaking collectives to emerge, referring to one aspect of the collective mode of production. Likewise, the collective mode of production in the form of collaboration with the diasporic community, another sense of the collective mode of production, has not been concretely practiced in Asian New Zealand filmmaking, conceivably due to the emergent nature of cultural productivity amongst the Asian diaspora in New Zealand, as well as the emerging status of diasporic consciousness among migrant communities, which retards a sense of shared solidarity and desire for cultural expression. Nonetheless, Asian New Zealand filmmaking practice is sometimes collective in the sense that several individuals have become involved with more than one diaspora. This means that even though Asian New Zealand filmmaking manifests, to some extent, a collective effort, it does not arise from a shared collaboration or 'conjoined membership' with their respective diasporic communities as part of opportunity structures for migrant film production in New Zealand.

Thus a lack of the collective mode of production in the case of Asian New Zealand films leads me to postulate that politicisation – another principle in Naficy's framework – has not actively and strongly been inserted at the point of production of these films. According to Naficy (2001), the imbrication of exile and politics in accented cinema exceeds its *content* (text), or its *autobiographical overtones* (author); "it [also] involves inserting politics at the point of the film's *organization* [modes of production] and *reception*" (p. 45, emphasis is mine). For Naficy (2001), inserting politics at the point of collective production means:

> working collaboratively and collectively and considering filmmaking to be a type of 'collective enunciation' in which filmmakers and audiences are conjoined by their membership in communities of address that consists of

émigrés, exiles, ethnicized, and otherized subjects […] If the postindustrial mode tends to situate the directors as manufacturers and the spectators as consumers, the accented mode's collective enunciation and reception potentially blur the lines that separate producers from consumers, corroborating the poststructural shift from the independent autonomous author to the readers as coauthors. (p. 45)

Politicisation gives rise to the formation of certain collectives – particularly in cross-cultural contexts – which although different from each other in their incentives, share similar political and ideological discourse. The collectives here refer to film collectives, as well as the community collectives within the filmmakers' diasporic communities (as a potential group of audiences for accented films or 'communities of address'), who can culturally and financially assist and collaborate with diasporic filmmakers. When Asian New Zealand films do not entirely arise from a collaboration between the potential (diasporic) audiences and the diasporic filmmaker (even though there is a form collectivity in the mode of production of these films), and that these films are implicitly political, it is plausible to say a collective sense of diasporic consciousness has not given rise to production of such films. In other words, the diasporic consciousness is still at an early developmental stage, in terms of both individual and communities within the New Zealand context.

Furthermore, Asian New Zealand film and filmmaking also diverges from Naficy's framework by not accentuating the author's political and ideological thoughts and agenda in diasporic filmmaking; an emphasis that is also evident in diasporic cinemas in other contexts (as well as Third Cinema). Although diasporic films have been associated with political agency (see Naficy, 2001) in light of their concern with identity and the multifaceted processes of being and becoming, not all diasporic films are political (see Chapter 3). Asian New Zealand filmmakers' ideological positionings within New Zealand society and particularly their own self-perception primarily as artists – as my data illustrates – override the ideological and political figure of the author in diasporic filmmaking. This, however, less manifestly prevails in Mandrika Rupa's short films and documentaries, some of them not set in New Zealand, due to her primary positioning as an activist/social

worker, which has affected her films' styles and content. Since other Asian New Zealand filmmakers do not overtly and primarily exhibit the "connection of the individual to a political immediacy" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1986, p. 18), nor the 'collective enunciation' prevailing in accented cinema, it is plausible to argue that these factors can affect (and reduce) the political and ideological weightings of a film's statement. It is important to acknowledge that the constructed realities depicted in diasporic films are generally extrapolated from the experience of migration and expatriation of the filmmaker; such experiences vary greatly from one person to the next, and are also contingent on the different social structures of the host countries. Thus, the ability of diasporic films to represent, in a political and social sense, the collective identities, experiences, and desires of a given diasporic community remains highly questionable, and such claims may be contested by other in-group members, as my research illustrates.

Politicisation also emerges from the condition of interstitiality that – according to Naficy – permeates many aspects of diasporic film, from the filmmaker's position in the host society and industry, to the film's diegesis and representations, as well as its mode of production. However, interstitiality in Asian New Zealand film occurs more in terms of modes of production and is less explicitly associated with ideology and the politics of representation. Likewise, the articulation and translation of the "dominant designations of difference – gender, ethnicity, class" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 269) as the primary traits of minority and diasporic cultural production, though visible in examples of Asian New Zealand film, seem not to be the dominant driving forces behind their production processes (see Chapter 5). This means that the ideological and political nuances of diasporic filmmaking practices and the ways in which screening 'difference' is nurtured and intensely motivated by the artist's ideology as a displaced subject were not, in fact, strongly emphasised in these films (except for those of Mandrika Rupa). This is evidence for the relative lack of overt politicisation of Asian New Zealand cinema. Rather, the motives for Asian New Zealand filmmakers also include attempts to give voice to an (diasporic) experience, personal/creative articulation, or merely to express a professional commitment to filmmaking, or a combination of these. By constantly reading diasporic films and filmmaking practices as sites of political statements, Naficy's theory of accented cinema proposes a primarily resistant cinema which cannot

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account for all contemporary examples of diasporic films, as evidenced in Asian diasporic films in New Zealand. Desai (2012) raises a similar point with regard to Indian British cinema, when she argues that "the locations of these films within multiple frames and complex relations of power" cannot be explained by Naficy's accented cinema, as "it tends to celebrate these films as texts of resistance in relation to dominant film cultures" (p. 210).

Other factors involved in there being fewer political Asian diasporic films in New Zealand – at the points of both the filmmaker's perspective and the collective production modes – include the government's support and investment in the development of arts and culture, and a sense of nationalism developed through cultural production such as film (a popular phenomenon during Helen Clark's premiership from 1999 to 2008), and more fundamentally the values of embracing diversity not only for the economic benefits it brings but also for contributing to cultural and social richness of the society.

It is also illuminating to think that the comparatively non-political activities of Asian New Zealand filmmakers and their filmmaking practices raise the question: to what extent have these films been made *through* the filmmaker's diasporic state of mind – the diasporic consciousness? In the context of Asian New Zealand film, the absence of a truly collective mode of production in filmmaking processes as well as a lack of 'collective enunciation' in which 'filmmakers and audiences are conjoined by their membership' indicate that for the diasporic communities in New Zealand, diaspora has not yet entailed a deep awareness or a consciousness which invokes a rhetoric of culture, self-affirmation, and (collective) cultural expression in contradistinction to the dominant Europeanised New Zealand society or the bicultural frameworks of politics and nation. Therefore, the emergence of Asian New Zealand films reflects an expression of the diasporic consciousness among Asian migrants and their succeeding generations in New Zealand, a diasporic consciousness at the early stages of its development among individuals and communities here.[53] It is also possible to say that Asian New Zealand films are

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[53] I believe there is a distinction between a development of a diasporic consciousness – within self/individual and community – and acting upon it, which may result in diasporic cultural expression and production.

creative/productive, rather than reactive/corrective, which means they are engaged in the construction of diasporic identities and stories rather than challenging identities as already conceived (mainly by the dominant group or majority).

In addition to the textual features, the filmmaker's history, and the modes of production, Naficy also refers to the consumption of diasporic film in theorising accented cinema, where he, in fact, only discusses the exhibition and distribution of films (see Chapter 3). The following section discusses some of the findings of my empirical reception study of the diasporic audiences of Asian New Zealand films, as already presented in the articles in Chapter 7. Here I take a holistic perspective of the diasporic audience and diasporic film, particularly with an attempt to discuss the diasporic audience within the theory of diasporic cinema – as evidenced in relation to Asian diasporic films in New Zealand.

Diasporic Audiences in Theorising Diasporic Cinema

Diasporic screen and media products can offer a platform for multilayered dialogue between diasporic subjects and the host society. Not least, the emerging prominence of Asian diasporic film in New Zealand's increasingly multicultural society can present new "knowledge" about New Zealand's social environment, which can in turn become a platform for media researchers to analyse "people's acquisition and use of [this] knowledge" (see Couldry, 2006, p. 187). The 'new knowledges' produced via the production and reception of Asian diasporic films in New Zealand can shed light on the ways diaporic screen and media productions can be invigorated within the fabric of New Zealand screen culture and society.

After the initial period of identifying and examining the corpus of Asian New Zealand films and their filmmakers, I became interested in the culturally and socially variegated nature of film spectatorship where we take into account "the desire, experience, and knowledge of historically situated spectators, constituted outside the text and traversed by sets of power relations such as nation, [and] race, […]" (Shohat & Stram, 1994, 2014, p. 347). I was drawn to understand the experiences of this 'historically situated spectator' who has experienced migration

and diaspora, and also the power relations that are caused by or derived from migratory experience, multi-cultural encounters, racial relations, national and self identity awareness, and community belonging (and other concepts within the whole spectrum of migration and diaspora). I decided to move 'outside the text', and therefore my intention became to explore what diasporic audiences' responses can tell us about the changes at a wider social and cultural level within the multi-ethnic and culturally diverse New Zealand society. My objective was not to find out who the primary audiences for these films are (as some are seen mostly by 'Kiwis'). I deliberately chose to focus on, and to provoke viewing from, people culturally more proximate to the filmmakers and the text in order to reflect on the characteristics and extent of diasporic consciousness.

My empirical reception study of Asian New Zealand film illustrated that the engagement of migrant viewers with films that seek to represent the social dynamics within their own communities is a naturally fruitful site for launching a broader discussion around multiculturalism, diversity and sociability in New Zealand. The thesis, therefore, serves an empirical purpose by filling a significant gap in New Zealand's national media studies. The responses collected, the strategic position-taking deployed by the research respondents, and the modes of engagement they adopted in relation to Asian diasporic films demonstrated that reception studies of diasporic films are well suited to offer us fresh insights into the ways that diasporic and/or minority viewers relate to, and engage with, cultural products that take up the burden of representing their lives within the host society. A layered web of themes emerged around tropes of positioning of the self, the personalisation of place, community formations, negotiating multiculturalism, social anxieties and empathies, a forward gaze, media representations of their communities, the nature of their encounters with mainstream society and culture in New Zealand, and the kinds of values and beliefs diasporic audiences feel are important to affirm and/or renegotiate, both within the realm of cultural representation and within daily life in their new home, New Zealand (see Chapter 7).

My broader (and future-oriented) intention in shaping investigations around the reception of Asian diasporic films lies in identifying the gap that exists in both

diasporic cinema studies and reception studies within cross-cultural contexts. As discussed in Chapter 3, the scholarship on diasporic cinema is primarily concerned with the filmmaker's individual history, migratory and deterritorialised experiences, as well as the means and modes of production, cinematic/filmic styles, narratives, and representations. Correspondingly, audiences and receptions have not featured prominently on the radar of diasporic cinema studies. There is, and has always been, a fundamental disconnect between film viewers and films in Screen Studies. Even though audience research has freed the text from the hold of textual analysis heralded by screen theory, within diasporic cinema studies, text-oriented meaning-making has persisted. Likewise, despite growing and compelling calls for audience research, work on the diasporic audience and cross-cultural contexts as well as continuing debates on the role of screen media in representing social and cultural diversity in multi-ethnic, multicultural and democratic states, "the audience perspective remains relatively under-explored in such studies" (Harindranath, 2006a, par. 1; except for Marie Gillespie, 1995 & Georgiou, 2006; see Chapter 3). This thesis has pointed out the centrality of the diasporic audience in diasporic cinema studies. The fundamental role that the diasporic film text and diasporisation of the filmmaker play in the conceptualisation of diasporic cinema presents a somewhat monolithic discourse of diasporic film in which the text is interpreted as a static object, rather than as an object of reception whose meanings are always shifting, emerging and negotiable. Naficy and other diasporic film scholars have not considered the complex relationships between diasporic texts and diasporic audiences as sites of meaning in their theorisation of diasporic cinema. In this thesis, I intended to move beyond the textual analysis of what diaspora and identity means (to an authoritative single interpreter) in the films, and to examine the roles and meanings of the films in diaspora through placing the diasporic film in dialogue with diasporic audiences.

Typically, the diasporic film becomes 'diasporic' primarily in relation to the diasporisation of its author, or what scholars have referred to as 'the displacement of the filmmaker'. Diasporic cinema studies have paid great attention to this principle in studying and interpreting diasporic screens/films. However, if we take out the centrality of the diasporic author and conceive of diasporic cinema as a series of disparate components and features, we find that the cinematic style,

aesthetics, narrative features, thematic preoccupations, as well as the (interstitial, and collective) modes of film production of diasporic film[54] overlap with examples of World Cinema or national cinemas (see Chapter 3). This means that a diasporic film, by nature, cannot be studied in isolation from its author's historical background and all the associations the filmmaker's diasporisation brings with it. The meanings and thematic preoccupations of the diasporic film are woven into the filmmaker's individual history and life (inclusive of his/her practices as a filmmaker), working and dwelling within the interstices of the host society. I do concur that the diasporic film begins with the author and that the author has a pre-existing connection to the film's diegesis. Diasporic filmmakers "are not just textual structures or fictions within their films; they are empirical subjects, situated in the interstices of cultures" who exist "prior to their films" (Naficy (2001, p. 4). Since this fundamental principle has been established in diasporic film studies, it is no wonder that the complex relationship between the film's diegesis and the diasporic audience – as the primary data of this research has warranted – goes beyond accidental similarities or identificational tags, or the absence of cues which may productively complicate audience responses, as may be the case for any other film. Despite my agreement with the necessity of the diasporisation of the filmmaker, it appears a logical supposition that, similar to the filmmaker's preceding connection to the film, the relationship between the diasporic film and the diasporic audience also exists prior to the viewing experience. This complex relationship – either between the diasporic filmmaker and the diasporic film, or the diasporic viewer and the diasporic film – is nourished by the *diasporic consciousness* which the filmmaker and the viewer collectively and individually – to varying degrees and with different levels of intensity – *share*: the shared discourses, knowledges, memories, images, stories, experiences, spaces, cultures, languages, and values, which have been affected or shaped by diasporisation. Diasporisation is powerful, and its effects change based on the generational distance from ethnic origins, cultural, political, social, affective and religious orientation towards the original homeland and culture, the experience of migration and displacement, and the integrationist and assimilatory tendencies of the migrants and their succeeding

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[54] I have discussed the ways the film production in New Zealand overlap some aspects of the interstitial mode of film production – which is a component of diasporic and/or accented cinema according to Naficy (see Chapter 5).

generations (in addition to the policy shifts and conditions of the host society in relation to migration and cultural diversity). The deep personal and collective connection diasporisation has to individuals' lives and community formations is sometimes mediated through recollection and creolization within the realms of social and individual daily lives. Within the diasporic filmmaker/text/viewer circuit of communication, diasporisation is mediated, I propose, through a creative and imaginative process that cannot be properly understood through too restrictive a focus on the filmmaker and on the text.

Naficy's notion of 'accent', which he says enters every aspect of the film text and filmmaking in diasporic cinema, arises from the displacement of the filmmaker and affects and shapes the 'deep structures' of such films. I propose that an 'accent' also emanates from the complex relationship between the diasporic film and the diasporic audience. In terms of the nature of this relationship, my research leads me to suggest that there is some *continuity* between the diasporic filmmaker's own experience of displacement and diversity, as articulated through the films they produce (and also the conditions in which the film is made), and experiences of displacement and diversity among diasporic film audiences; those experiences remain *differently* similar. While there are contiguous elements and processes involved in migration and settlement, migrants' journeys remain heterogeneous and idiosyncratic. The complex relationship between the diasporic filmmaker, film and the viewer I touched on earlier is an aspect of this continuity. It constitutes the dissolution of boundaries between the diegetic imagination and the viewer's imagination, whereby multiple concurrent streams of images and information collide, join, or are evoked, recollected and negotiated. 'Differently' implies, I postulate, an *imaginative process* where both the diasporic author and viewer are involved in the meaning-making process and signifying practices – it is *creatively* imaginative in the case of the former and *socially* imaginative in the case of the latter. For reception scholars, the diasporic audience is a set of 'public sphericules' in narrowcast media environments (Cunningham, 2001). For diasporic cinema scholars, the diasporic audience should constitute, I suggest, an extension of the filmic imagination. The intersection of these two constitutes, fundamentally, the area of investigation I will pursue in the future. I shall further explain my points by

drawing on the key findings of the reception studies of Asian New Zealand film, as well as my thoughts for future research.

In my study, the diasporic audiences' responses demonstrated an inclination to talk about their own life experiences in relation to the film's characters and events, and at certain moments participants placed themselves further away from the film's diegesis by telling their own personal histories and narratives. In investigating the ways diasporic audiences approach diasporic films in their film viewing experience and the concomitant meaning-making around it, I found that the *referential* mode was strongly prominent in this study; the mode within which the text is approached from a comparative perspective based on viewers' evaluations of the similarity between the textual depiction of the diasporic film and the real world as they live in it and perceive it. Other modes – transparent, mediated and discursive – appeared less frequently, and most often in close association with a referential response. In attempting to account for the predominance of this mode, I hypothesised that it may be a function of diasporic film's inherently contestable (and often ascribed, rather than presumed) claim to represent the experience of a particular diasporic community. If so, I surmise that the adoption of a referential mode of reception reflects diasporic audiences' heightened attunement to questions of representation, political agency and citizenship in their new home, and their sense of investment in the nature of depictions of other diasporic community members; depictions that are always, at another level, simultaneously representations of them in their new homeland.

Furthermore, the dominance of the referential mode of engagement in the case of diasporic viewers of Asian diasporic films in New Zealand also tells us about the diasporic viewer's primary resources for meaning-making. Diasporic audiences characteristically draw on specific forms of knowledge which are interlaced with accumulated sources of their personal, collective, and shared diasporic and ethnic referential knowledges: aspects of migrant life; social awareness and ethno-cultural competencies; knowledge of language barriers; and general codes of social behaviour as practiced in their homeland and sometimes in comparison with those practiced in New Zealand society. I propose that the referential knowledges which nurtured their sense making of diasporic films were largely affected and

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distinctively shaped by their diasporic consciousness. The experience of displacement with *all* its associations has "figured in the constitutions of diasporas and the reproduction of diaspora-consciousness" (Gilroy, 1994, p. 204). The practices of cultural productions in diasporas, diasporic screen texts or films in this case, constitute an instance of that reproduction. It is thus evident that the intersection between the diasporic viewer and the diasporic film resides in the diasporic consciousness they *differently* share and experience.

For the purposes of understanding audiences within the particular diasporic context of New Zealand, I also employed Mill's concept of social/sociological imagination. To some extent, my aim in adopting this concept was to demonstrate how a focus on social imagination has practical utility for audience research in media studies (see also Athique, 2008, 2011). However, more fundamentally, I was concerned with the social reality of the meanings that diasporic audiences make of diasporic films. In examining and analysing a range of commentaries from respondents collected in relation to films that take migrant experiences as their central subject matter, I also sought to emphasise that audience responses are arbitrated by (a) a variety of external referents that further situate their perception of themselves, society and the world, and (b) the positioning they adopt with respect to the diegesis of the film itself. I argued that audiences' responses to diasporic media texts are expressions of their social imaginations and are influenced by their socially, culturally, politically, ideologically and geographically located selves. I postulated that the interpretive resources and competences of respondents were characterised by a tendency to identify with various aspects of the diasporic text in a distinctive fashion. That is, their sense-makings, textual interpretations and social commentaries were necessarily affected by their diasporic consciousness of being 'here' and not 'there'.

In my conceptualisation, the diasporic audience's relationship with the diasporic text is not based on the audience-text dialectic as in the case of Third Cinema, in which the film encourages audiences to actively participate and reflect on questions or political content put forward by the film through its unconventional style, narrative, and aesthetics. Although Third Cinema's emphasis on film's politicisation is shared by accented cinema, the audience's relationship with the text

(Wayne, 2002) has not been actively underlined in the model of accented filmmaking. For Third Cinema, this relationship is encouraged and deliberately planned in the course of the filmmaking process in order to "allow […] the audience to engage with the film's political statement" (Harindranath, 2006b, p. 103). In accented cinema, however, politicisation of the film does not constitute a self-conscious political project, although according to Naficy (2001) "no other cinema is so intimately political, even though it may not be about politics" (p. 94). This emphasis on politicisation lends credence to the view that diasporic films provoke readings which are predominantly oppositional, particularly for diasporic audiences who share the experience of displacement and diasporisation with the film's content as well as the filmmaker. This was, however, not the case in my empirical research on diasporic audiences of Asian New Zealand films. Oppositional readings were not prominently significant, and appeared as part of the participants' personal narratives in their encounters with the films.

The two approaches I employed in understanding diasporic films and audiences demonstrate, among other things, that there are commonalities or dissonances between (a) diasporic audiences' sense-making, textual interpretations and social commentaries, and (b) the thematic preoccupations and narratives of diasporic films. When we begin to understand the shared communicative content of diasporic film (symbolic representation of cultural artefacts), and its capacity to create an imaginative process through which diasporic audiences can articulate the way they perceive the world around them, the society they live in, how they assess, interact with, and influence it, a measure of empathy becomes requisite for articulating their responses or the expressions of their social imagination (see Chapter 7). In a broad sense, empathy takes place against the background of self-experiencing, and provides emotional insight into others' experiences (such as the members of one's community, whether this be an imagined, ascribed, or real/physical community). In the course of expressing their responses in my case studies, a sense of empathy developed because of the affinities between diasporic audiences and diasporic films which take migrant/diasporic experiences as their central subject matter. Therefore, when respondents say what they think about diasporic films in close relation to their own personal narratives (as my data illustrates), they also relate empathically to the wider terrain of what it means to be a migrant in New Zealand society, for instance

(or other tropes that emerged from the analysis). In other words, they inevitably deploy a wider social imagination that situates them in relation to the narrative, protagonists and the wider social context of their lives in New Zealand. Thus, I postulate that the author's imaginative empathy with his/her film diasporic subject – or what Naficy theorises as 'structures of feeling' – is (both) passed on to and/or challenged (or perhaps enhanced) by diasporic audiences in the viewing experience. At the same time, diasporic audiences develop an imaginative empathy with the film's diasporic subjects with whom they share, as the commentaries of my participants suggest, a chain of memories and images of the past and more of present and future. Thus, rather than conceiving of structures of feeling as constituted only in production (author) and the product (text) – based on Naficy's framework – I suggest, we should also seek to situate structures of feeling in the diasporic audiences' articulation of the social imagination. I propose that by shifting the emphasis on structures of feeling from Naficy's preferred site of the author onto audiences, we can conceptualise the imaginative processes of viewing that shape the nature of their meaning-making and engagement with diasporic films. Such a conceptualisation can also provide us with some insight into the characteristics of the (shared) diasporic consciousness from which diasporic film has emerged.

In the approach examining modes of engagement with diasporic films, I placed the diasporic film/text at the centre of the investigation and analysed diasporic audiences' responses to the text. In the second approach where I adopted the sociological imagination, I placed the diasporic audience at the centre of investigation and examined the social meanings of the texts where "audiences function as members of a socio-cultural community, which constraints their power as interpreters" (Harindranath, 2009, p. 31). In the latter approach, I was led to focus on responses which were the furthest step away from the text; moments of reception when the participants, I suggest, have tapped into their own individual diasporic consciousness, which is simultaneously collective. In the former approach, I was compelled to focus on responses which were contiguous to the text; those moments of reception when participants have tapped into the diasporic consciousness presented by the film, which is also shared by the filmmaker.

This concluding chapter has sought to lay out my broad arguments around the main topic of this thesis, Asian New Zealand film, but more importantly to synthesise (and further theorise) the discussions and findings which emerged from the scholarly articles this thesis has presented. Up to this point diasporic cinema studies have focused on the 'displacement of the filmmaker' as their focal point in interpreting, theorising and understanding diasporic cinema; this thesis proposes that understanding the diasporic film from the vantage point of diasporic audiences' responses should be incorporated in analysing and interpreting the diasporic film, as it opens up space for a different kind of diasporic cinema, one founded on the diasporic consciousness (and/or a diasporic imagination) distinctively shared by the diasporic author, text, and viewer. In addition to avoiding textual determinism, this approach to diasporic cinema also allows us to avoid putting the diasporic film within a national mentality or framework which continuously focuses on questions of nation, belonging and identity depicted in diasporic films. Diasporic audiences do more than be entertained (or not entertained) by the film content; they shape diasporic film cultures in their communities within the host society. They can potentially (even if they do not currently do so in New Zealand) structure collective modes of production for diasporic filmmaking, and contribute to the cultural and historical content of the film in the filmmaking process.

Suggestions for Further Research

This thesis has aimed, among other goals, to be a platform for foregrounding the importance of the production of diasporic screen culture (as well as other media and art practices) in New Zealand, as a means of responding to increased cultural diversity in the contemporary New Zealand context. In relation to further research, this inquiry can be expanded to discuss ways to facilitate diasporic filmmaking within other migrant/diasporic communities, the development of policies for diasporic filmmaking within the New Zealand film industry, and also perhaps improving the avenues for co-production that can be established with those Asian countries with which Asian New Zealand films share (a) some aspects of culture, referring to the original homeland of the film's subject/narrative (that is, China, South Korea and India), and consequently (b) audiences, as well as (c) other

diasporic cinemas across the world. These investigations might provide an anchor point to think of potential benefits that could be catalysed for New Zealand's economy, society, and audiences. This thesis can also be expanded by examining examples of diasporic visual arts and other diasporic media in New Zealand in an effort to recognise, acknowledge, and encourage diasporic cultural productions in this country.

I am keen to devote time and energy to the research avenues and opportunities this thesis offers for future projects. Some of my future contributions are in the form of short drafts that I have developed in the course of this thesis. They range from the discussions of this chapter to ideas that take Brah's notion of 'diaspora space' in Māori or indigenous filmmaking in New Zealand – the possibilities for bringing of (various groups of) audiences' responses to the theory of Fourth Cinema.

Some of my future contributions will be based on data and findings which were not able to be included in the published materials presented here, due to the need to strategically place articles in the process of constructing the thesis as a PhD with Publication. The PhD with Publication model does not exhaust the multitude of perspectives and insights that can be gained from the data. For instance, in future I intend to shape an argument around a comparison and contrast between responses by members of the diasporic audience and those of non-diasporic audiences, in order to excavate an understanding of the relationship between the diasporic text and the non-diasporic viewer. I plan to look at the ways non-diasporic respondents view multiculturalism and diversity in New Zealand through the diasporic lens of Asian diasporic film. Nevertheless, for this working draft, I will prioritise three questions: (1) What do the responses of my non-diasporic participants tell us about their understanding of living within a society in which the number of migrants and diasporic communities is increasing? (2) What do they value about the existence of diasporic films in wider New Zealand cinema? and (3) To what extent do their thoughts about multiculturalism agree or collide with the film's depictions? I am particularly interested in exploring the nature of meaning-making that takes place during their viewing experience and how that is different from or similar to what I have found with regard to the responses of my diasporic audiences.

This desire to imagine a cultural space in diaspora and to document (and image or imagine) the movement from a state of nomadship to the identity of inhabitants of a territory that occurs within this space is empowering for diasporic creative authors working in any sector within the culture/creative industries of their host societies. The entity of Asian New Zealand film, small, fragmented and tentative as it may be, manifests a cultural space in which migrants and their succeeding generations in New Zealand have been able to create their own images and tell their own stories. Seeking to contribute to New Zealand's public culture, such desires and endeavours can also be conceived of as a new development in contemporary New Zealand's society. By bringing diasporic films and diasporic audiences together in a genuinely diasporic understanding, I hope my thesis will provoke the growth of diasporic cultural productions in New Zealand towards a democratic and diverse screen culture.

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Appendices

Appendix I: Requirements for PhD with Publication

Requirements for PhD with Publication

▼ PREAMBLE

The 'PhD **with** Publication' is a hybrid thesis model which includes both published and unpublished material. It is a further option for those doctoral candidates seeking to develop skills in writing quality assured peer reviewed publications during their PhD enrolment. It is not an approach that will necessarily suit all candidates, all disciplines, or all supervisors, as it places additional demands on the candidate and supervisors to plan, prepare, and submit material for publication. Undertaking a PhD with Publication requires the support of the supervision panel normally from the point of confirmation of enrolment through to the thesis completion. It should be noted that the requirements for the PhD with Publication can vary by Faculty.

▼ REQUIREMENTS

- The PhD with Publication requires the candidate to present a thesis comprising typically between three and six research papers some of which have been published, while others may be under review or ready for submission. The exact number of publications included in the thesis may vary due to, for example, disciplinary expectations, the significance or major contribution of the published work, or typical length of publications in the field.
- Ideally, the PhD candidate should target international and highly ranked outlets for publication. The quality of the targeted publication outlets should be demonstrable through their being competitive and peer reviewed, the credibility they hold within the field, their impact factor and/or their inclusion in citation indexes. Candidates are most strongly advised against publishing in open source journals unless their credibility and thoroughness of processes can be substantiated.
- The research papers submitted as part of the thesis must be interconnected and linked to the specified PhD research project. That is, they cannot originate from a range of unrelated projects.
- The research papers must be written during the period of the candidate's doctoral enrolment; candidates cannot present material published prior to enrolment as part of the thesis.
- The submitted thesis **must** include chapters comprising (1) a thesis introduction which provides the contextual framework of the associated papers; and (2) a concluding discussion chapter highlighting the overall contribution of the published papers. Many disciplines might also consider it important to include separate literature review and methodology chapters, especially if these matters are not dealt with at length in the research publication chapters. It is important to note **this is not a PhD by publication** and that the inclusion of these unpublished chapters is vital to the production of an integrated and coherent thesis document.
- At the end of the introductory chapter to the thesis the candidate should outline the structure of the thesis indicating the chapters that have been written as papers for peer-reviewed publication and their current status (published, in revision following reviewers' comments, in review, to be submitted).
- Co-authorship of papers with thesis supervisors is acceptable, though the doctoral candidate will normally be the lead author and must have contributed the greater proportion of work on all of the papers.[i]
- If it has not been clearly stated in any other part of the document, the thesis must include as an appendix, a *Co-Authorship Form* for each research publication included in the thesis, which details the contribution of all the named co-authors, the percentage of their contribution, and the parts to which they contributed in

terms of research and/or writing. Each *Co-Authorship Form* should be completed at the time each paper is completed and ready for peer review by the PhD candidate. These forms are available from the Postgraduate Studies Office website.

- The inclusion of publications in a thesis does not alter the University's examination processes. Examiners are required to examine the thesis as a whole. They are at liberty to disagree with the findings in a published paper and to require revision to published work.

▼ RECOMMENDATIONS

- Published papers can be presented in the thesis exactly as published. Some publishers do permit PDF reproduction of the article for use in a PhD with publication, though the PhD candidate must gain permission to reproduce the work in the thesis and include a statement that such permission has been granted.
- In those cases where a journal or other publication outlet does not allow exact reproduction of the paper in PDF format, it will be necessary to produce the paper in an alternative document format. If a research paper is still under consideration for publication the most recent version of it should be included in the thesis.[ii]
- Suggested format of the thesis (may be adjusted by Faculty to meet their norms)
  - Chapter 1: Introduction and overview of the thesis
  - Chapter 2: Literature Review
  - Chapter 3: Methodology
  - Chapter 4-7 (or higher): actual reprint of publications or chapters comprising material submitted for publication or prepared for submission.
  - Chapter 8 (or higher): Synthesis and conclusions
  - References not otherwise already included in the research publication chapters. Published papers should retain their reference sections.
  - Appendices: To include statement where authorship contribution is confirmed by candidate and co-authors and *Co-Authorship Form*.

▼ CONCLUSION

The PhD with Publication aims to promote the candidate's development of publishable scholarship which is subject to rigorous peer review as well as the timely public dissemination of research findings. This model of thesis also seeks to support the candidate developing their professional credibility as a scholar among their peers through publication.

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[i] Exceptions to this can occur in those disciplines or journals where authors are expected to be listed alphabetically.

[ii] Candidates are advised that when reproducing a manuscript under review with a journal or other publication outlet, to ensure that tables, figures and any graphics, for example, are included at the appropriate point at which they would appear in the final publication, rather at the end of the document. This will ease the readability of the document for the examiner.

Updated September 2014

Appendix II: The Ethical Approval

Philosophy Programme
School of Social Sciences
Faculty of Arts and Social
Sciences
Te Kura Kete Aronui
The University of Waikato
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Hamilton 3240
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THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

Arezou Zalipour
Associate Professor Geoff Lealand
Dr Ann Hardy
Dr Carolyn Michelle

Screen and Media Studies
School of Arts

13 October 2011

Dear Arezou

Re: **FS 2011-48 Asian Diaspora and Film: Conceptualising Asian New Zealand Cinema**.

Thank you for submitting your revised application to the Committee. I have reviewed it and am satisfied that the changes you have made address the points of concern raised. I am therefore providing you with formal ethical approval.

I wish you well with your research.

Kind regards,

Ruth Walker
Chair Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee.

Appendix III: Participants in the film production study

Introductory Letter/Email & Information Sheet, Semi-structured interviews

School of Arts – Screen & Media Studies
Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences
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The University of Waikato
Private Bag 3105
Hamilton, New Zealand
Phone +64 7 838 4543
Fax   +64 7 838 4767
www.waikato.ac.nz/film/

PhD Researcher
Arezou Zalipour
Screen and Media Studies
Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences,
The University of Waikato,
Private Bag 3105, Hamilton 3240,
New Zealand.
Date………………

THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

Address of the receiver (the receiver may be a filmmaker, director, writer, producer, an official from the film industry, a member of film company/studio)

Dear…………………,

Invitation to participate to an interview on Asian New Zealand cinema

I am a PhD candidate at the Department of Screen and Media Studies, School of Arts, University of Waikato, conducting a research on Asian New Zealand cinema. The aim of my research is to study films that are about Chinese, Indian and Korean communities who live in New Zealand, and the filmmakers who are from these communities. This study focuses on the ways these films portray issues and concerns of these communities in New Zealand.

I would like you to assist me in my research by agreeing to be interviewed on my topic. The interview will be conducted by me and take about 30-60 minutes. I would like to tape our conversation and to transcribe it to ensure I have an accurate record of your ideas.

You will be asked to sign a Consent Form to confirm your agreement to an interview. This research has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of Waikato's Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences.

The outcomes of this research will be presented as a PhD thesis, and published in the form of a book and in academic journals and conference proceedings. The completed PhD thesis will be made available on the internet through the University of Waikato.

In agreeing to participate in this research you can:
1. refuse to answer any particular question, and to terminate the interview at any time;
2. ask any questions about the interview or the research during or after the interview at any point;
3. understand that anonymity is difficult in this kind of research, but your opinions and experiences will be confined in academic writing;
4. withdraw your consent at any time for up to one month after the interview by contacting me directly as in point 6 below;
5. take any complaints you have about the interview or the research to the University of Waikato's Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences' Human Research Ethics Committee (University of Waikato, Private Bag 3105, Hamilton 3240, New Zealand, or you can e-mail its secretary at fass-ethics@waikato.ac.nz);
6. contact my Chief Supervisor, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Geoff Lealand to get further clarification about the interview or the research at the Department of Screen and Media Studies (University of Waikato, Private Bag 3105, Hamilton 3240, New Zealand. Or you can e-mail him at lealand@waikato.ac.nz).

I will be contacting you in the next week to ask whether you are willing to be interviewed. If you agree, we will arrange a suitable time for the interview.

If you wish to contact me directly for further clarification on this matter please call me at 0220388523 or e-mail me at az22@waikato.ac.nz or arezouzalipour@gmail.com

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,
………………………..

(Arezou Zalipour).

Semi-structured interview Consent Form

School of Arts – Screen & Media Studies
Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences
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The University of Waikato
Private Bag 3105
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Phone +64 7 838 4543
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PhD Researcher
Arezou Zalipour
Screen and Media Studies
Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences,
The University of Waikato,
Private Bag 3105, Hamilton 3240,
New Zealand.
Date………………

THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

Arezou Zalipour

CONSENT FORM

I am undertaking research on Asian New Zealand cinema for my PhD thesis, conducting a research on Asian New Zealand cinema. The aim of my research is to study films that are about Chinese, Indian and Korean communities who live in New Zealand, and the filmmakers who are from these communities. This study focuses on the ways these films portray issues and concerns of these communities in New Zealand. This research has been given ethical approval by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of Waikato's Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

The tapes of the recorded interviews and the written transcripts will be kept in a secured place. My supervisors and I will be the only people who have access to them. These data and information will be kept for a maximum of five years after completion of the thesis for the purpose of publications and presentations. The personal information and the other data will be used only for the academic purposes and will be destroyed after five years of completion of the thesis.

The follow-up will take place only if necessary to further discuss your opinions. This will be in the form of informal conversations, email correspondence, or phone call, and based on your willingness, agreement and convenience.

In agreeing to participate in this research you can:
1. refuse to answer any particular question, and to terminate the interview at any time;
2. ask any questions about the interview or the research during or after the interview at any point;
3. understand that anonymity is difficult in this kind of research, but your opinions and experiences will be confined in academic writing;
4. consent to being audio-taped;
5. have the right to have the audio recorder turned off;
6. withdraw your consent at any time for up to one month after the interview by contacting me directly as in point 9 below;

7. take any complaints you have about the interview or the research to the University of Waikato's Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences' Human Research Ethics Committee (University of Waikato, Private Bag 3105, Hamilton 3240, New Zealand, or you can e-mail its secretary at fass-ethics@waikato.ac.nz);
8. contact my Chief Supervisor, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Geoff Lealand to get further clarification about the interview or the research at the Department of Screen and Media Studies (University of Waikato, Private Bag 3105, Hamilton 3240, New Zealand. Or you can e-mail him at lealand@waikato.ac.nz);
9. contact me directly on any matter about the interview or the research at 0220388523 or e-mail me at az22@waikato.ac.nz or arezouzalipour@gmail.com.

I have read and understood the Information Sheet, and agree to participate in this research.

 YES   NO   (please circle)

Signature: Participant……………………………………….

Date…………………………………………………………..

Appendix IV: Participants in the film reception study

Introductory Letter/Email & Information Sheet, focus groups/interviews

School of Arts – Screen & Media Studies
Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences
Te Kura Kete Aronui
The University of Waikato
Private Bag 3105
Hamilton, New Zealand
Phone +64 7 838 4543
Fax   +64 7 838 4767
www.waikato.ac.nz/film/

PhD Researcher
Arezou Zalipour
Screen and Media Studies
Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences,
The University of Waikato,
Private Bag 3105, Hamilton 3240,
New Zealand.
Date………………

THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

Address of the receiver (participants of focus groups/interviews)
Dear…………………,

Inviting participation in a focus group/interview on Asian New Zealand cinema

I am a PhD candidate at the Department of Screen and Media Studies, School of Arts, University of Waikato. The aim of my research is to study films that are about Chinese, Indian and Korean communities who live in New Zealand, and the filmmakers who are from these communities. This study focuses on the ways these films portray issues and concerns of these communities in New Zealand.

I would like you to assist me in my research by agreeing to be a participant in the focus group/interview on my topic. The focus group/interview will be conducted by me and take about 60-90 minutes. I would like to tape our conversation in the focus group/interview and to transcribe it to ensure I have an accurate record of your ideas. A copy of the film for discussion in the focus group/interview will be given to you prior to the focus group/interview meeting. I will be grateful if you can watch this. In addition, I will make arrangements for the group to watch two significant episodes of the selected film during the focus group discussion/interview.

You will be asked to sign a Consent Form to confirm your agreement to participate in the focus group/interview. This research has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of Waikato's Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences.

The outcomes of this research will be presented as a PhD thesis, and published in the form of a book and in academic journals and conference proceedings. The completed PhD thesis will be made available on the internet through the University of Waikato.

In agreeing to participate in this research you can:
1. refuse to answer any particular question, and to terminate your participation at any time;
2. ask any questions about the focus group/interview or the research during or after the focus group/interview at any point;
3. choose to remain anonymous and ask that anything that might identify you will not be included in any reports of this research;
4. withdraw your consent at any time for up to one month after the interview by contacting me directly as in point 6 blow;
5. take any complaints you have about the focus group/interview or the research to the University of Waikato's Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences' Human Research Ethics Committee (University of Waikato, Private Bag 3105, Hamilton 3240, New Zealand, or you can e-mail its secretary at fass-ethics@waikato.ac.nz);
6. contact my Chief Supervisor, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Geoff Lealand to get further clarification about the interview or the research if needed at the Department of Screen and Media Studies (University of Waikato, Private Bag 3105, Hamilton 3240, New Zealand. Or you can e-mail him at Lealand@waikato.ac.nz).

I will be contacting you in the next week to ask whether you are willing to participate in the focus group/interview. If you agree, we will arrange a suitable time for the focus group/interview.

If you wish to contact me directly for further clarifications on this matter please call me at 0220388523 or e-mail me at az22@waikato.ac.nz or arezouzalipour@gmail.com
Thank you.

Yours faithfully,

……………………..
(Arezou Zalipour).

Focus group/Interview Consent Form

School of Arts – Screen & Media Studies
Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences
Te Kura Kete Aronui
The University of Waikato
Private Bag 3105
Hamilton, New Zealand
Phone +64 7 838 4543
Fax   +64 7 838 4767
www.waikato.ac.nz/film/

PhD Researcher
Arezou Zalipour
Screen and Media Studies
Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences,
The University of Waikato,
Private Bag 3105, Hamilton 3240,
New Zealand.
Date………………

THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

Arezou Zalipour

CONSENT FORM

I am undertaking research on Asian New Zealand cinema for my PhD thesis. The aim of my research is to study films that are about Chinese, Indian and Korean communities who live in New Zealand, and the filmmakers who are from these communities. This study focuses on the ways these films portray issues and concerns of these communities in New Zealand. This research has been given ethical approval by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of Waikato's Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

The tapes of the recorded focus group/interview discussion and the written transcripts will be kept in a secured place. I will be the only person to have access to them. These data and information will be kept for a maximum of five years after completion of the thesis for the purpose of publications and presentations. The personal information and the other data will be used only for the academic purposes and will be destroyed after five years of the completion of the thesis.

The follow-up will take place only if necessary to further discuss your opinions. This will be in the form of informal conversations, email correspondence, or phone call, and based on your willingness, agreement and convenience.

In agreeing to participate in this research you can:
1. refuse to answer any particular question, and to terminate your participation in the focus group/interview any time;
2. ask any questions about the focus group/interview or the research during or after the focus group/interview at any point;
3. choose to be anonymous in this research except for the other fellow participants in the focus group/interview or the contact person(s) who has enabled your participation;
4. withdraw your consent at any time for up to one month after the focus group/interview discussion by contacting me directly as in point 7 below;
5. take any complaints you have about the focus group/interview or the research to the University of Waikato's Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences' Human Research Ethics

Committee (University of Waikato, Private Bag 3105, Hamilton 3240, New Zealand, or you can e-mail its secretary at <u>fass-ethics@waikato.ac.nz</u>);

6. contact my Chief Supervisor, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Geoff Lealand to get further clarification about the interview or the research at the Department of Screen and Media Studies (University of Waikato, Private Bag 3105, Hamilton 3240, New Zealand. Orr you can e-mail him at <u>lealand@waikato.ac.nz</u>);

7. contact me directly on any matter about the interview or the research at 0220388523 or e-mail me at <u>az22@waikato.ac.nz</u> or <u>arezouzalipour@gmail.com</u>.

I have read and understood the Information Sheet and agree to participate in this research.
  YES   NO   (please circle)

Signature: Participant………………………………………………………….
Date……………………………………………………………………………

Signature: Focus group facilitator/interviewer ……………………….
Date…………………………………………………………………………..

Appendix V

Semi-structured interviews with filmmakers and officials from the New Zealand film industry

List of questions/topics to discuss with filmmakers/writer/directors:

1) What changes have you noticed in New Zealand film production in the last decade with regard to films made by Asian migrants in New Zealand?

2) What do you think about the ways that Chinese/Indian/Korean communities have been represented in New Zealand films made by non-Asian filmmakers? How are these representations different from those made by New Zealand filmmakers of Asian descent? Can you explain using an example?

3) Do you think there is such a thing as Asian New Zealand cinema?

4) How do you think the film that you have been involved in as filmmaker/director/writer is a reflection of your life and memories? Is your film an autobiography? In what ways?

5) In your opinion, what are the characteristics of a diasporic film?

6) With reference to 'Asian New Zealand filmmaking', could you please describe projects that you have been involved with? Do you like your role be described in that way?

7) Can you tell me about the process of making this film?

8) What type of audiences did you target in producing your films?

9) Do you think there are any connections between your view of Asian minorities/migrants in New Zealand and your films?

10) How do you define your ethnicity? Do you think you are a member of the Asian diaspora (diasporic/migrant communities) in New Zealand? In what ways?

List of questions to discuss with the members of New Zealand film industry:

1) Do you think there is such a thing as Asian New Zealand cinema? What is your view on this? How do you define it?

2) What is the role of Asian New Zealand films within the broad category of New Zealand cinema?

3) Who do you think are the audiences for Asian New Zealand films?

4) What do you think are the reasons for the public emergence of New Zealand filmmakers of Asian descent? Why is it happening now?

5) Is there a place for funding of films made by ethnic minorities in New Zealand within the policies of NZFC, for instance?

6) What is you view on the recent success of New Zealand filmmakers such as Roseanne Liang and Stephan Kang in terms of being recognised in local and international domains?

7) Do you think that New Zealand film production encourages minority/migrant filmmakers in New Zealand to tell their stories? If yes, in what ways?

8) What are the challenges for young filmmakers in New Zealand?

Appendix VI

Focus group and interview discussions: film audiences

The following are the main topics or questions for focus group and interview discussions:

A. For the memebrs of diasporic communities:

1) What is your understanding of the central story in the film? Which parts of the film were more attractive? Can you bring any examples from the film?

2) To what extent do you think this film is a portrayal of reality?

3) Could you identify with the characters in the film? In other words, do you think you can relate to the characters as part of the Asian diaspora in New Zealand?

4) What sense of identity do you think the film is trying to portray with reference to Asian migrants in New Zealand?

5) Do you think the issues of Asian New Zealand communities that have been portrayed in the film are similar to issues that Asian people are dealing with in their real lives?

6) What messages do you think the film conveys?

7) Are there issues in this film relatable to non-Asian audiences? Why/why not?

8) Questions on Characters
   a. Tell me about the main character -
   b. What sort of person is he/she?
   c. How do you feel about him/her?
   d. Can you identify with him/her?
   e. Can you identify with her problems at all?
   f. Can you identify with any of the other characters in this film?
   g. What is it about them that you identify with?

B. For the members of non-diasporic audiences:

1) What is the most important issue that this film deals with, in your opinion?

2) Has this episode influenced the way you think about other ethnic communities?

3) Can you engage with the film?

4) Questions on characters

    a. Tell me about the main character -

    b. What sort of person is he/she?

    c. How do you feel about him/her?

    d. Can you identify with him/her?

    e. Can you identify with her problems at all?

    f. Can you identify with any of the other characters in this film?

    g. What is it about them that you identify with?

5) Has it influenced the way you think about immigration? In what ways?

6) What is your opinion on cultural diversity in New Zealand society? Do you support the idea of assimilation of Asian ethnic groups into Kiwi society? Do you think this film is trying to convey that message?

7) What roles do you think media can play in representing Asian people in New Zealand?

8) Have you heard about Asian New Zealand film/cinema/filmmaker?

9) To what extent do you think this film is made for an Indian/Korean/Chinese audience?

10) Is this film trying to tell you anything, what do you think? What message do you think the film makers are trying to get across?

11) Do you agree with that message?

12) What do you think about the stories and issues in the film with reference to Asian minorities/migrants in New Zealand?

13) Do you think New Zealand film institutions such as NZFC should foster the development of Asian New Zealand cinema? Why/why not?

14) What is your perception of minority groups in New Zealand? What is your opinion about New Zealand as a multicultural society?

15) What is your opinion about marriage between a Kiwi and a Chinese/Indian/Korean in New Zealand?

Profile questionnaire for New Zealand participants of Asian descent

a) Gender: Male / Female (please circle)

b) Age...

c) Country of origin:…………………………………...............................

d) When did you come to New Zealand?..

e) What is your native language?...

f) What is the highest level of education you have completed?

……………………………………………………………………………

g) Occupation:………………………………………………………………

h) How would you classify your ethnicity in New Zealand?

……………………………………………………………........................

i) How often do you go back to your home country? If you were born in New Zealand, how often do you go back to your parents/ancestors' homeland?

……………………………………………………………………………

Appendix VII

Co-Authorship Form

THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

This form is to accompany the submission of any PhD that contains research reported in published or unpublished co-authored work. **Please include one copy of this form for each co-authored work.** Completed forms should be included in all copies of your thesis submitted for examination and library deposit (including digital deposit), following your thesis Abstract.

Please indicate the chapter/section/pages of this thesis that are extracted from a co-authored work and give the title and publication details or details of submission of the co-authored work.

Nature of contribution by PhD candidate	Substantial analysis of data, drafting most of the paper & refining based on feedback, leading the development of
Extent of contribution by PhD candidate (%)	60% the article

CO-AUTHORS

Name	Nature of Contribution
Ann Hardy	Provision of theoretical model of Media, Religion & Culture, writing of proportion of text & editing *referee

Certification by Co-Authors

The undersigned hereby certify that:

❖ the above statement correctly reflects the nature and extent of the PhD candidate's contribution to this work, and the nature of the contribution of each of the co-authors; and
❖ in cases where the PhD candidate was the lead author of the work that the candidate wrote the text.

Name	Signature	Date
Ann Hardy	A Hardy	28/5/15

Co-Authorship Form

THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

This form is to accompany the submission of any PhD that contains research reported in published or unpublished co-authored work. **Please include one copy of this form for each co-authored work.** Completed forms should be included in all copies of your thesis submitted for examination and library deposit (including digital deposit), following your thesis Abstract.

Please indicate the chapter/section/pages of this thesis that are extracted from a co-authored work and give the title and publication details or details of submission of the co-authored work.

Chapter 7:

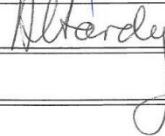|	
Nature of contribution by PhD candidate	Substantial analysis of data, drafting the paper & refining based on feedback, leading the development of the article.
Extent of contribution by PhD candidate (%)	75%

CO-AUTHORS

Name	Nature of Contribution
Carolyn Michelle	Refinement of theoretical interpretation (Composite model) + editing.
Ann Hardy	Discussion of relevance of model to the data + some minor editing

Certification by Co-Authors

The undersigned hereby certify that:
- ❖ the above statement correctly reflects the nature and extent of the PhD candidate's contribution to this work, and the nature of the contribution of each of the co-authors; and
- ❖ in cases where the PhD candidate was the lead author of the work that the candidate wrote the text.

Name	Signature	Date
CAROLYN MICHELLE		28/5/15
Ann Hardy	Hardy	28/5/15

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Co-Authorship Form

THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wananga o Waikato

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Please indicate the chapter/section/pages of this thesis that are extracted from a co-authored work and give the title and publication details or details of submission of the co-authored work.

Publication Details: 'Diasporic Films and the Migrant Experience in New Zealand: A Case Study in Social Imagination', *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 2014, DOI:10.1177/1367877914553725

Nature of contribution by PhD candidate	Primary Research (Focus groups/interviews), Data Analysis (pp. 6-14), Introduction (p. 2).
Extent of contribution by PhD candidate (%)	66%

CO-AUTHORS

Name	Nature of Contribution
Adrian Athique	Theoretical Section (pp. 2-6, from 'Hybridity and Difference' to 'Theory in Action')
Adrian Athique	Conclusion (pp.14-15)

Certification by Co-Authors

The undersigned hereby certify that:
* the above statement correctly reflects the nature and extent of the PhD candidate's contribution to this work, and the nature of the contribution of each of the co-authors; and
* ~~in cases where the PhD candidate was the lead author of the work that the candidate wrote the text.~~

Ths article was co-written as per details above (page references are to 'online first' published copy)

Name	Signature	Date
ADRIAN ATHIQUE		4 / 6 /2015

Appendix VIII

The letter of acceptance from the *Women's Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal*