

## East Timorese in Australia: Affective Relations, Identity, and Belonging in a Time of Political Crisis

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This article considers the relationship between the East Timorese diaspora and its homeland. More specifically, it explores how a group of East Timorese exiles living in Melbourne, Australia, who left East Timor or were born in exile from the time of the 1975 civil war up to the end of the Indonesian occupation of the territory in 1999, was affected by the 2006–2007 political conflict in East Timor. The article considers how past diasporic practice established the East Timorese community in Melbourne as a largely homeland-focused community and how the subsequent centrality of the discourse of home exposed the exiles to the political events of 2006–2007. Through an analysis of Pierre Bourdieu's (1977) notions of habitus and practice, the article explores how the crisis affected the exiles' sense of self, community, and nation, and how it led to a process of negotiation whereby the notions of the homeland and exilic longing were muted through a gradual movement away from the translocal sphere. The article represents a contribution to the discussion of diaspora as process, condition, and consciousness; that is, diaspora as a dynamic, culturally and politically reflexive group that mediates between and negotiates competing pressures of multiple homes, cultures, and social domains. It sheds light on issues related to political mobilization, peace, and conflict, and the role of reciprocity, trust, and emotions.

**Keywords:** East Timorese Diaspora; Emotions; Habitus; Political Unrest; Translocal Practice

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Dieser Artikel betrachtet die Beziehung zwischen der osttimorischen Diaspora und ihrer Heimat. Er untersucht, wie eine Gruppe von osttimorischen ExilantInnen in Melbourne, Australien, die in der Zeit zwischen dem Bürgerkrieg von 1975 und dem Ende der Besetzung durch Indonesien 1999 Osttimor verlassen hatten oder im Exil geboren waren, von dem politischen Konflikt 2006–2007 betroffen wurden. Aufbauend auf Pierre Bourdieu's (1977) Vorstellung von Habitus und Praxis analysiert der Artikel, wie die Krise die Wahrnehmung des Selbst, der Gemeinschaft und der Nation durch die ExilantInnen beeinflusste und wie sie zu einem Prozess der Verhandlung führte, durch welchen die Vorstellungen von „Heimat“ und Sehnsucht sich durch eine graduelle Entfernung von der translokalen Sphäre veränderten. Der Artikel stellt einen Beitrag zur Diskussion über Diaspora als Prozess, Bedingung und Bewusstsein dar; das heißt Diaspora als eine dynamische, kulturell und politisch reflexive Gruppe, die den Druck multipler Heimatorte, kultureller und sozialer Sphären aushandelt. Er wirft Licht auf Themen in Zusammenhang mit politischer Mobilisierung, Frieden und Konflikt sowie die Rolle von Reziprozität, Vertrauen und Emotionen.

**Schlagworte:** Emotionen; Habitus; osttimorische Diaspora; politische Unruhen; translokale Praktiken

## INTRODUCTION

[W]hen you look at it [the violence] from the outside – it's so sad, so sad. It's far too sad ... And all these kids, the burning stuff, what are they doing? What is the government doing? Where is the law? Where is the respect? Why are these kids burning stuff? Why, why is this happening?

In late April 2006, politically and ethnically motivated violence erupted in the East Timorese capital, Dili. Following the 2002 independence, the lack of significant progress on key socio-economic variables such as health, income, and employment had led to increased frustration and disgruntlement, particularly among the country's youth. While high youth unemployment, increasing poverty in rural areas, and falling per capita incomes were undoubtedly part of the mounting tensions of 2006, the proximate cause of the violence can be traced to the dismissal of 594 soldiers of the national army, *Falintil-Forças de Defesa de Timor-Leste* (F-FDTL). In January 2006, the dismissed soldiers, known as 'the petitioners', had complained about unfair treatment of soldiers from the western part of the country, citing grievances such as limited opportunities for promotion, poor service conditions, and abusive discrimination by officers from the eastern part of the country. Their complaints were dismissed and, when their problems remained unresolved, they deserted. Refusing to accept their subsequent dismissal, the petitioners' protests became increasingly vocal. As the crisis escalated, they were joined by other East Timorese who sought to use the situation to convey discontent with the government and the impoverished situation of the country, as well as youth gangs who expressed rivalries and hostility across the east-west axis. With the security forces in conflict and with battles among several street gangs spreading across the capital, the East Timorese government called on the international community to restore order. At the same time, the Prime Minister, Mari Alkatiri, was under increasing pressure from all sides of the political spectrum – including members of his own party (*Fretilin*). Alkatiri resigned on 16 June 2006 and, after Parliament's appointment of the independent candidate José Ramos Horta as the country's interim prime minister and the establishment of a new UN mission, a process of reconciliation and rebuilding began. The crisis resulted in the death of at least 37 people, the internal displacement of approximately 150,000 people, and the destruction of more than 14,000 homes and buildings in the capital (UN, 2006; UNDP, 2011; Vieira, 2012). It exposed unresolved ideological and strategic differences of the independence movement, as well as ethnic and regional divisions and limitations of institutional, political, and economic sectors. Economically, the crisis set the country back dramatically, leading to more unemployment and restrictions in the delivery of social and welfare services (UNDP, 2011).

Physically removed from the unfolding conflict, East Timorese living in exile watched the breakdown of national consensus with a sense of bewilderment and shock. As is suggested by the epigraph, the exiles struggled to comprehend the turn of events. How could the peace they had all fought for disintegrate so easily? Where was the unity? Where were their leaders? What were the motives of those fighting? The questions were manifold and the crisis caused a sense of ambiguity, which triggered yet another set of questions related to association, belonging, and the sense of

self. While none of the exiles had anticipated that independence would be without challenges, the 2006–2007 political crisis and the subsequent breakdown of national consensus were beyond their expectations. The thought of East Timorese fighting East Timorese, of East Timorese people themselves causing suffering and pain to the nation's young and old, had been a distant fear, for many too surreal to consider a possibility. In contrast to the Timorese in East Timor, many of whom were aware of the tensions that led to the conflict (Silva, 2010), the exiles' engagement with local social dynamics in East Timor were in general restricted to the level of the family and they received relatively little information about the complex dynamics that underpinned simmering social conflicts, political tensions, and symbolic battles at the local level. Explanations of the crisis, which included native theories such as social envy and corruption, arrogance of political leaders, and lack of recognition of past suffering (Silva, 2010, pp. 109–110), as well as consideration of socio-political, socio-cultural, and socio-economic factors were thus employed in hindsight.

This article does neither analyze the causes of the crisis, nor the exiles' explanations or rationalizations of the events. Rather, it focuses on how the exiles experienced the crisis, the affective response triggered by the conflict, and the subsequent questioning of identity and belonging. The article, which forms part of the project 'East Timorese in Melbourne: Community and Identity in a Time of Political Unrest in Timor-Leste' (Askland, 2009), is based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted within the East Timorese community in Melbourne during the time of crisis.<sup>1</sup> Based on an understanding of diasporic communities as dynamic, culturally and politically reflexive groups that mediate between competing pressures of multiple homes, cultures, and social domains, I explore how the exiles' experiences of the crisis form part of an ongoing process of negotiation, where cultural codes, values, meanings, and expectations shape the dynamics of their post-independence identities in intricate ways. I take as my starting point the observation that concern for family and friends at home is a continuous issue facing refugees and exiles (Varvin, 2003, p. 16), and that news about violence and unrest can be associated with intricate and complicated feelings of anxiety, fear, guilt, remorse, disappointment, and loss. There is no uniform or simple answer to how conflict, violence, and unrest in the homeland affect exile and refugee communities; rather, the particularities of the refugees' flight, the nature of their exile, the specific character of the conflict, and variation in cultural and moral discourses may provoke diverse reactions and manifest in individuals' lives and exile communities in different ways.

Placed within the discipline of social anthropology, this article is indebted to phenomenology, particularly the phenomenological tradition that focuses on worldly

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1 The paper is based on eight months of ethnographic fieldwork conducted with the East Timorese community in Melbourne in 2006–2007, as well as two months fieldwork in Dili in the period between March and May 2006. The fieldwork incorporated research strategies such as participant observation, including neighborhood studies, engagement with various organizations, and participation in community events; semi-structured interviews; and discussions with non-Timorese individuals in key roles associated with the community, such as community workers, youth workers, and members of various solidarity organizations. For the Melbourne part of the fieldwork, a total of 56 East Timorese were formally interviewed; the number of individuals who informed the study is, however, much higher due to the nature of the fieldwork, which incorporated informal conversations with community members in their homes and at community events.

existence (over transcendental essence) and embodied practice (over pure form). In line with phenomenological thinking, I try to grasp social processes through the phenomenology of individual experience, and the social world – local and translocal – of the exiles is conceived of as constituted through a dialogue between the self and their environment(s). With Pierre Bourdieu's *Theory of Practice* (1977) as a theoretical point of departure, I explore the conjuncture of the individual subjective experience and the more objective frames within which this unfolds.<sup>2</sup>

The article is divided into four main parts. First, I present a brief outline of the East Timorese community in Melbourne and explore how a notion of reciprocity formed part of the establishment of the community as a homeland-focused diaspora. Understanding the exiles' reactions to the crisis and its implications on diasporic practice requires recognition of their past histories and imagined future; the exiles' experience of and reactions to the political conflict are closely connected to their hopes and expectations of independence and the community's history as a highly transnational homeland-focused diaspora. This is followed by an exploration of how the exiles were exposed to and how they experienced the crisis. I thereafter consider the exiles' affective responses to the conflict before, in the final section, presenting the theoretical analysis of the affective responses and the associated process of negotiation of identity and belonging.

#### EAST TIMORESE IN AUSTRALIA

There is some uncertainty about the size of the East Timorese community in Australia, though estimates suggest that the number of individuals born in East Timor – estimated at 9,320 – and their descendants total between 15,500 and 20,000 (ABS, 2006; Askland, 2009, pp. 25–26). The majority of the East Timorese in Australia arrived in the period between 1975 and 1999 as political refugees in a diaspora born of catastrophe – a brief civil war between the political parties *União Democrática Timorense* (UDT) and *Frente Revolucionária de Timor-Leste Independente* (Fretilin), followed by the Indonesian invasion and occupation of the territory. Most of the departures were traumatic and coerced, and the suffering of the occupied homeland exerted a powerful influence on the community. Subsequently, the diaspora grew as a “community of co-responsibility” (Werbner, 1998, p. 12), which, through political mobilization and material gestures, maintained and remained part of East Timorese long-distance nationalism (Wise, 2006).

The majority of refugees, together with many second-generation youth, participated in a protracted political campaign aimed at national liberation and, throughout the occupation era, the diaspora played a central role in the campaign for self-determination. The political struggle drove, directly or indirectly, social and cultural activities and lay at the heart of the exiles' collective imagination. Through efforts to educate the international community about the tragic plight of East Timor, for

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2 While much could be said about the relationship between Bourdieu's theory and phenomenology, this is beyond the scope of the article. For the purpose of the discussion presented here, it is sufficient to note that Bourdieu's 'theory of practice', despite its inherent criticism, is highly dependent on phenomenology. For in-depth analyses of Bourdieu's critique and the alignment between his theory of practice and phenomenology, see, for example, Endress (2005), Throop & Murphy (2002), and Lau (2004).

example political campaigns, humanitarian fundraising, and aesthetic performances of cultural identity, the East Timorese refugees tied themselves to the suffering of their family and friends in East Timor and experienced it themselves as participants of the liberation struggle. The actions of the people living in exile maintained a level of diplomatic pressure on international power brokers and ensured that the East Timorese people's cause was not forgotten. At the same time, the political campaign and the sense of imagined community on which it rested provided a means by which the refugees could participate in and maintain important social relationships and alleviate feelings of loss and guilt associated with their flight.

Because of the political campaign, the East Timorese exile community developed as a highly homeland-focused community, and the community emerged largely unified and coherent. The community was, however, never a homogeneous group and, behind the unified front of resistance, ethno-linguistic, generational, political, and socio-economic differences existed. Within the overarching community, there are smaller 'sub-communities', including the 'twin communities' (Thatcher, 1992) of the Timorese Chinese and the *mestiço*<sup>3</sup>/indigenous Timorese, the political groupings UDT and Fretilin, and the group of young 'modern Timorese' who are committed to the preservation and regeneration of East Timorese culture and cultural identity. In conjunction, the diaspora is today marked by the divergent experiences of those who were politically active throughout the Indonesian occupation of East Timor and those who refrained from participating in the campaign. Whereas those who were intimately involved in the resistance movement had vested interests, motivations, and hopes for independence, those who did not engage in the independence campaign demonstrated greater openness to change and were not affected by the intense emotional proximity between East Timor's independence and the image of self. In this article, I focus on the narratives of a group of first- and second-generation East Timorese who were actively involved in the resistance struggle and who, throughout the occupation years, imagined exile as temporary displacement. These groups, which cross the ethnic and political sub-groupings of the community, are united by the similarity of their exile identities and the political campaign. Throughout the occupation years, they intertwined their exile identities with the symbols of home and return (Wise, 2004, 2006), and – at a higher level of abstraction – a moral order of reciprocity. Before continuing the discussion, a brief note on the logic of reciprocity is required, as it forms part of the East Timorese cultural framework.

### The Logic of Reciprocity

The logic of reciprocity is central to East Timorese sociality (Askland, 2009, pp. 127–129; Fox, 1993; McWilliam, 2005), and notions of exchange and a dualistic organization of the world are prominent across the East Timorese landscape. A fundamental epistemological orientation exists which provides, as Andrew McWilliam (2005) observes, "a focus for the articulation and celebration of connections that bind individuals and households within an historical and symbolic unity" (p. 32) and connect people to a 'historico-mythic' past. Moreover, as he argues in a separate article

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3 The term *mestiço* refers to people of mixed Portuguese and Timorese ancestry.

about the Fataluku community of East Timor, “[a]ncestry, the mythic origins of settlement and the memorialised spatio-temporary trajectory of the clan provides an enduring basis for contemporary social practice and claims to resources” (McWilliam, 2007, p. 363). This notion of origins and conceptions of precedence is characteristic of most Austronesian societies and is frequently paralleled with an idiom of exchange (Fox, 1996a, 1996b). In eastern Indonesia, such conceptions often feature with dyadic categorizations or a dual organization of social and cosmological elements (Fox, 1989; Traube, 1980, 1986; van Wouden, 1968). Cultural and social icons are ordered according to a system of complementary categories; that is, they are classified into pairs of opposites such as male/female, elder/younger, above/below, outside/inside, heaven/earth (Fox, 1996b, p. 132; Soares, 2003, p. 34; Traube, 1986, p. 4). The symbolic dyadic scheme represents various realms of experience and forms part of social institutions, ritual practice, and myths.

East Timorese anthropologist Dionísio da Costa Babo Soares (2003) argues that “traditional thinking regarding dual categories might have some influence on the way the political forms of expression and explanation of life processes among the East Timorese are formulated” (p. 35). According to Soares, the dual category of the past and the present/future has become particularly pervasive in post-independence East Timor and in the East Timorese people’s portrayal of struggle. Through this dualism, the East Timorese engage the past as a source to explain, classify, or predict contemporary events and possible future events (Soares, 2003, pp. 38–39). It implies an idiom of reciprocity and exchange, through which the social order (as well as the balance between the cosmos and the living world) is sustained.

The cultural code of reciprocity and the associated notion of morality run through the East Timorese society and form part of the East Timorese people’s perceptions, explanations, and rationalizations of post-independence realities. Elizabeth Traube (2007) and Kelly C. Silva (2010) have shown how the notion of reciprocity and a sense of a failure on the part of the nation to fulfill expectations of reciprocity underpinned the political crisis of 2006–2007. I have argued elsewhere (Askland, 2009, 2014) that the logic of reciprocity is also relevant in understanding the East Timorese exiles’ post-independence practice and their rationalization of contemporary events. Despite their detachment from traditional belief systems, cosmology, and social life, the East Timorese living in exile have retained the notions of morality and the dualistic complex of East Timorese society. This is demonstrated by their responses to the political crisis and their (subsequent) negotiation of boundaries, belonging, and, ultimately, identity.

### EXPERIENCING THE CONFLICT

At the time of my fieldwork, the exiles remained bewildered and emotionally confused as to why and how the peace could have been broken so easily. They asked questions like the following: How could their leaders and their people allow things to go this far? How could they let go of the peace that they – the people – had sacrificed their lives for? Why was there no interference to ensure that suffering and trauma did not again become the reality of the Timorese people? As these questions remained unanswered, the exiles were left with a sense of hopelessness and emptiness. These

emotions were expressed in both formal conversations between the study participants and myself and in more informal interactions at family and community events. They illustrated an intense emotional connection between the exiles' selves and the homeland, and manifested an emotive void in which their past and imagined future were confronted by the new reality introduced by the crisis.

The distress experienced by the exiles has to be seen not only in relation to their past ventures and imagined futures, but also to their present situations, which – in most circumstances – were shaped by their position in the translocal sphere.<sup>4</sup> Whereas only a minority of the exiles repatriated after independence, the majority continued to engage in translocal activities. This typically included receiving and sharing information from and with friends and family in East Timor, remittances to family members at home, and a continued engagement with and concern about East Timorese politics and culture. Some of the exiles also reclaimed property left behind at the time of flight; others bought land in East Timor considering the possibility of a future return 'home'. With property and family in East Timor, many of these individuals experienced the crisis in a direct manner: Some received threats to their family and property in East Timor and others' houses were attacked and burned to the ground. Many have family and friends who were forced to leave their homes and seek refuge in camps around Dili or with relatives in other districts. Although these camps would protect their loved ones from any immediate threat of violence, the exiles remained concerned about their situation due to the poor living conditions in the camps and the disruption that the violence caused to their families' lives. Limited and often contradictory information fueled people's concerns for family and friends, and they were often left in a state of panic as they received news about violence but were unable to contact their loved ones; either because they had fled to areas without phone coverage or because Dili's phone network had broken down.

The direct exposure that many of the exiles had to the crisis is exemplified in Chen's story.<sup>5</sup> Chen is a fifty-year-old Timorese Chinese man who has visited East Timor numerous times after he left the country in 1976. Following independence, Chen started to consider moving back to East Timor in order to start a small business. Reflecting upon the logic of reciprocity, he explained that "I wanted to contribute to East Timor, and I thought that I could do so by creating my own business". He continued, that "it would create employment and help stimulate the economy. Of course, I hoped to get a small profit, but this was only secondary, it was because I am East Timorese that I wanted to do this. I wanted to give something back." Chen had planned to return to East Timor for six years, sacrificing his prospective earnings in Australia and leaving his wife and children in Melbourne; but after the crisis he reconsidered his plans. As he explained, "I was willing to sacrifice a lot, but my own safety, my own life – I don't think so".

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4 I adopt Greiner and Sakdapolark's (2013) definition of 'translocal' and 'translocality' as a description of "socio-spatial dynamics and processes of simultaneity and identity formation that transcend boundaries – including, but also extending beyond, those of nation states" (p. 373). As a term, translocal(ity) refers to phenomena that involve mobility, migration, circulation, and spatial interconnectedness that may exist within and beyond national boundaries; it refers to "simultaneous situatedness across different locales" (Brickell & Datta, 2011, p. 4).

5 Pseudonyms are used throughout this article.

Chen's perception of the risk involved in moving to East Timor was largely influenced by his experience of the crisis, as mediated through his family in Dili. Speaking about the crisis, Chen appeared quite distressed and upset. With an empty look in his eyes, he told me how one of his brothers was forced to flee and seek asylum in Australia on humanitarian grounds.<sup>6</sup> His brother, half Chinese and half 'Easterner', had been threatened by local gangs, as well as by a senior commander of the police:

[W]hen the police chief knows [that my brother had travelled to the East] and he ring him and threaten him, saying 'you involve with Lorosae [Easterners], you be careful'. So that's why my brother was scared and wanted to come to Australia. With the local, he say that with the local, not, not, you know, [this] happens all the time, but with the police chief he started to worry and also there were a few people, Timorese young people who said, they threatened him and said 'I'm going to rape your, I'm going to rape your daughter'. So when all this happened, my brother said that, how can we stay here? You know, that's why he came ... they have a small clothes shop in there, so people came and they asked for money and they threaten him and also they throw rocks all the time in the night.

Chen explained how the crisis brought back terrible memories about the invasion and occupation. The distress, fear, and worry that he felt were further exacerbated by the uncertainties connected to the crisis: What was really happening? Who was behind the violence? What would happen next? These concerns echoed in the narratives of other participants who emphasized the hardship of not knowing what was happening at any given moment and the inability to help. They expressed feelings of helplessness and hopelessness, restlessness and numbness, often coupled with a sense of guilt due to what they perceived as their privileged position as members of a second national community, earned by their flight from East Timor.

During the Indonesian occupation, emotions such as these underpinned a sense of migration guilt, which added force to the exiles' translocal practice during the occupation years. Australian anthropologist Amanda Wise (2004), who did research with the East Timorese diaspora in the period between 1998 and 2002, argues that many of the protest events of the resistance struggle "appeared to represent spaces in which East Timorese refugees were able to participate in strategies of intensification" (p. 27). Drawing on Ghassan Hage's (2002) concept of migration guilt – that is, guilt resulting from the inability of exiles to participate in, and share, the faith of the family, community, or communal group that "provided them with [the] gift of commonality" (p. 203) – she explains how the sense of guilt experienced in the face of the suffering of those who remained in East Timor "translated into a desire to participate in the political struggle" (Wise, 2004, p. 27). The sense of migration guilt underpinning the political mobilization of the diaspora reflects the logic of reciprocity discussed previously. Considering the continued relevance of the logic of reciprocity to the exiles'

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6 There is no official information available about the number of East Timorese who have sought asylum in Australia as a consequence of the political crisis of 2006–2007. I was told by community workers who were intimately involved in the cases of East Timorese refugees that ten people sought asylum on humanitarian grounds. According to Chen, his brother's application for protection was approved by the Refugee Tribunal in 2007.

translocal activity, it could be expected that the feelings that emerged in the shadow of the political crisis of 2006–2007 would lead to the reappearance or enhancement of migration guilt and its associated practices. However, while an initial intensification of feelings of guilt materialized, this did not translate into translocal practices. Rather, there appeared to be a decrease in translocal activism in the aftermath of the crisis. At the time of my fieldwork, the exiles were, as is suggested in the following quotes, increasingly moving away from the translocal sphere: Plans of future return were discarded; people were cautious about participating in fundraising activities, withdrawing both material and symbolic support of community activities; and East Timor was left out of many of the exiles' plans for the future.

And then the problem start, everybody just feel numb. They feel numb. And when I see, and sometimes I end up with some people in the street or in the shopping center and they say 'my hope is gone. I have no more hope. I stay here it doesn't matter. I hoped to go to East Timor, but I stay here' ... For me, [the crisis] affect me a lot because I always think that my kids would go back to East Timor ... Now they all think no more security to go. Better we stay here. It affects me a lot ... I think more than the invasion.

We used to do fundraising, but at the moment people are a bit disappointed. The community, I don't know what happened with the other groups, but the one that I am representing now are really badly disappointed. Because they said, 'We're helping'. For what? To be destroyed again? That's why they, they think now, we're sort of like in intermission. They are watching ... They want to help. But then we said, and people, suddenly everything happen, with all the things that has been happening, maybe we send it there and then the container will stay at the port for two-three years, and then they rampage everything to go in and after that ... it's just better we wait and see until things settle to help in different ways.

The crisis instigated a limited response from and within the community. With the exception of a few public forums, none of which were organized by East Timorese community organizations, there was no communal response to the crisis. The forums, which reflected a discourse removed from the affective domain of the exiles, were dominated by Australian people concerned about the development in East Timor and representatives of civil society organizations, and only a small number of East Timorese attended. The sense of disengagement propounded by the lack of participation in communal events and the reduction in material and symbolic support suggest a gradual diminution of indebtedness and guilt. Understanding the disengagement and limitations of material and physical responses require further exploration of the exiles' affective reactions to the events and how these relate to the logic of reciprocity. This will be explored next.

### AFFECTIVE RESPONSES

Community members were deeply saddened and disappointed by the turn of events. Reflecting on the years of occupation – the suffering of the East Timorese people, their own suffering, the sacrifices, and the hard work for freedom and peace – they felt a loss and found it difficult to comprehend the situation. They articulated a range of feelings including anger, frustration, sadness, and concern. They felt angry because of the senselessness of the violence; frustrated because of the lack of responsibility shown by the political elites;<sup>7</sup> sad because of the continued suffering that the violence brought on their people; and concerned about how the violence might affect their family, friends, and the future of East Timor.

The political elite's perceived lack of willingness to reconcile and the subsequent spiral of violence led to feelings of embarrassment and shame. Discussion within the Australian media and among Australian politicians, academics, and everyday Australians on the question of whether or not East Timor was presenting as a failed state (Askland, 2009, pp. 152–155, 175) fuelled these sentiments, which compounded concern about the reactions of the international community and the worry that the fight for independence would be seen as a fraud. How could they defend their right to independence when people were fighting among themselves? How could they claim a right to democratic self-governance when the political elites engaged in infighting, corruption, and nepotism and when a state of anarchy reigned? How could they defend the nation that they fought for when the unity on which it rested was threatened by regional feuds and divisions?

We had a once-in-a-life-time opportunity and if we didn't take advantage of this thing – you know last year [2006], April and May, that was the most painful to look at. I feel embarrassed. I feel worse. People say, 'hey, you are Timorese, you are killing each other!'. I feel embarrassed. They say that, sort of in joking sense, but I feel it very heartfelt, this is really much, much more than a joke or a comment. I feel a lot deeper than that ... Before it was easier. When you go against somebody else it was easier. You have someone to yell at. We are fighting a harder battle right now. In a sense it is a battle where you don't have directions ... who are we going to scream at? No enemy. Different directions. You can't blame one leadership, you can't blame the government. You can't blame the politicians. It's harder than before right now.

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7 The crisis triggered much criticism of the East Timorese political elite, several of whom spent the occupation years in exile. It is worth noting that the exiles focus their critique of the political leadership on the role of Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri, President Xanana Gusmão, and former guerrilla leaders such as Francisco Guterres (Lu'Olo) and Taur Matan Ruak, none of which were former members of the Melbourne diaspora. Their criticism follows party lines, with Fretilin supporters questioning the role of Gusmão in the lead up to and during the crisis and UDT supporters focusing on the role of the Fretilin leadership, in particular Alkatiri and Guterres. In contrast, politicians who had spent the occupation years in Australia, such as Estanislau da Silva and Emilia Pires, were seen by many of the exiles (particularly UDT supporters) to be the key for East Timor's future and it was suggested that they would play a role in changing the political culture of the country.

The feelings of shame and humiliation furthered a process of othering (Said, 2003, p. 332), which had been initiated after independence. The declining levels of translocal activism and the increased emotional distance resonating in the exiles' narratives are expressions of the exiles' movement away from the translocal sphere. Paradoxically, these actions and the attempts to restrict or reduce the emotional intensity of their relationship with East Timor are in themselves depictions of the strength of their affective relations with the nation; they are responses to intensely felt emotions rising from the symbolic proximity of the former refugees' image of self and their lives in exile to the discourse of home, nationhood, and ancestry.

The feelings of anger, sadness, frustration, and embarrassment indicate the continued relevance of the logic of reciprocity and the exiles' ongoing engagement in a collectivist discourse that underpins East Timorese communal life. The emotions signal the presence of a social bond; the events matter to the exiles because of their enduring social, cultural, and historical association with the community. According to Scheff (1990), the "primary social emotions" that convey such social bonds are pride and shame. He argues that "pride is the sign of an intact bond; shame a severed or threatened bond" (p. 95). The feeling of pride arises from conformity to exterior norms and the subsequent reward of others' respect, admiration, and esteem. Shame, on the other hand, is a result of the non-conformity to exterior norms and the subsequent loss of deference (Scheff, 1990; Velayutham & Wise, 2005, p. 37). The political crisis represented a breach of the norms to which the East Timorese nation and its people were expected to adhere and, through the Australian media's portrayal of the events and the public discourse about the crisis, the exiles experienced decreasing support and esteem for the young nation. The crisis represented the nation's failure to comply with its obligations towards the community set by the moral code of reciprocity and the social discourse of communalism (Askland, 2009, pp. 75–76, 127–129; Silva, 2010; Traube, 2007). This moral discourse posed expectations that – due to the suffering and sacrifices of the East Timorese people in the name of independence – the nation would compensate those who fought for its existence by ensuring peace and prosperity (Traube, 2007). It is in the shadow of the nation's failure to comply with the idiom of exchange and reciprocity that the social bond between the exiles and the East Timorese nation is renegotiated and transformed (Askland, 2009). In the following section, I will explore this process of negotiation and the paradox of the exiles' ongoing engagement with the discourses from which they attempt to distance themselves.

### **AFFECT, IDENTITY, AND NEGOTIATION OF BOUNDARIES**

Reflecting on the ambiguous and dynamic nature of exile, Wise (2006) states that "individuals, communities, homelands, and countries of refuge are always situated within and in relation to a changing grid of circumstances and power relationships" (p. 7). Intensely felt experiences of changing circumstances, which engage the individual through its involving and affecting effect, can lead to a renegotiation of boundaries, identity, and belonging. According to this, we can expect the 2006–2007 crisis, due to its affective implications, to inform the continuous process of negotiation and transformation of boundaries of belonging. As illustrated above, the exiles showed,

at the time of my fieldwork, a physical distancing from the translocal sphere and an effort to emotionally detach themselves from the discourse of the homeland. These are practices underlying the East Timorese exiles identity and belonging. How, then, does the crisis affect identity and belonging?

An exploration of Bourdieu's (1977) theory of practice and his argument about the reproduction of habitus can help illuminate some of the processes at stake. In contrast to identity, which can be defined as "a reflexive construct or experiential modality through which one knows oneself and claims recognition" (Leve, 2011, p. 513), habitus refers to the principles of generating and structuring practices and representations that produce and reproduce identity "through particular dispositions and structures of perceptions which are associated with a sensory environment" (Askland, 2007, p. 240). It is acquired through primary socialization in childhood and adolescence, but is continuously reproduced and transformed, building on, or responding to its past conditions (Bourdieu, 1977). It embodies the individual's personal history, including her or his social location (class, ethnicity, gender, etc.), and is constructed through the individual's practice within specific cultural, social, and historical contexts. As such, it reflects the collective history of the group (or variety of groups) to which the individual belongs as well as the individual's biography.

According to Bourdieu (1990), the reification of habitus will protect it from "crises and critical challenges by providing itself with a milieu to which it is as pre-adapted as possible" (p. 61). It makes "systematic 'choices' ... among the places, events and people that might be frequented" (p. 61), ensuring its reproduction and the creation of meaning and practice through familiar fields and a known milieu. However, to presume that individuals can refrain from potential discordance between the subjective dispositions and the objective structures that form their habitus is problematic. People may be exposed to situations in which they have no such 'choice'; they may be forced to move from their known milieu – as is the case with refugees and asylum seekers – or political or social circumstances may change to such an extent that the social world loses its familiarity. Bourdieu (1977) makes reference to such 'crises' when he argues that,

[t]he critique which brings the undiscussed into discussion, the unformulated into formulation, has as the condition of its possibility objective crisis, which, in breaking the immediate fit between the subjective structures and the objective structures, destroys self-evidence practically. It is when the social world loses its character as a natural phenomenon that the question of the natural or conventional character (phusei or nomo) of social facts can be raised. (pp. 168–169)

Such crises bring the embodied assumptions underlying identity and practice into the sphere of consciousness. Faced with the reality of the political crisis, the East Timorese in Melbourne experienced a personal and communal crisis in which they were forced to question the character of their social world. While the crisis had only limited, if any, impact on the exiles' everyday practice, it manifested itself in the translocal sphere in which the exiles' social worlds of home and exile meet, and in the affective dimensions that are integral to their conception and experience of self. This was particularly evident in their emotive response to the crisis, which indicated

a heightened awareness of the subconscious classifications that guide their practice and a heightened reflexivity about their situation and position within the translocal sphere.

Although the development of habitus forms a significant part of Bourdieu's theory, his framework remains vague on the question of how this process takes place, let alone the role of emotions in the generation of habitus. In general, Bourdieu (1977) argues that habitus is "laid down in each agent by his earliest upbringing" (p. 81), and he emphasizes the notion of field, capital, and practice, particularly as it relates to significant others. It can be argued that this emphasis on the role of primary socialization incorporates a notion of emotions, as emotions and affect are central to the primary world into which a child is born. Indeed, as Rew and Campbell (1999) argue, "the domain of family and kinship ... contributes centrally to the emotional salience of identity" and the family "provides the context, the models and the means by which key understandings regarding personhood, selfhood and individuality are learned and internalised by children" (p. 17). Through gradual accumulation of experience, children develop a sense of identity, personhood, and selfhood; that is, they develop an internal mental representation of self as well as a cultural or collective representation that reflects their positioning within social realities (Rew & Campbell, 1999). Emotive behavior and affective expressions manifest in the interactive pattern between a child and her or his significant others and mobilize a defined sense of association and belonging. Accordingly, the process of primary socialization not only equips the individual with cognitive abilities, skills and competence, capital, knowledge, and meaning; it also bestows an experiential dimension onto the habitus in which emotional expressions engender beliefs, attitudes, and desires that motivate and guide social participation and practice. As part of the habitus, emotions guide practice and subsequently form part of its development. Inherent in this argument is the possibility of affective experiences leading to change, negotiation, or transformation of the habitus.

The intensely felt (negative) emotions evoked by the political crisis in East Timor caused a disruption between the participants' subjective dispositions, their experience of self, and the social world to which they relate. Whereas emotions form an intimate part of individuals' daily lives, not all affective experiences will cause experiences of disruption or change; the *intensity* of the emotions resulting from the crisis is what put the conventional character of the exiles' social worlds at odds with each other. Bourdieu (1984) acknowledges that people may be affected in various ways and to different degrees by similar events depending on their position within physical space and variance in social distance. Drawing on this point, Hage (2002) contends that,

[a]n intensely experienced reality is not the same as a 'hard hitting' reality. Intensity has more to do with the extent to which the reality is involving and affecting ... An intense reality is primarily an intense *relation* where the person's engagement in reality contribute [*sic*] to construct its intensity. (pp. 193–194)

I have argued that East Timorese discourses, particularly those of reciprocity, national unity, and freedom, form a central part of the exiles' perception of self, commu-

nity, and nation. The engagement with East Timorese discourses and their influence on the exiles' habitus (specifically the habitus of those who were active in the political struggle for independence) denotes the intense nature of this relation. Rather than resulting from physical closeness, the intensity of the relation results from the affective and symbolic proximity of East Timorese discourses and their intimate, often subconscious, presence in the exiles' being-in-the-world. The involving and affecting character of these discourses is evident in the emotional responses outlined above. The emotions – anxiety, worry, concern, anger, sadness, disappointment, embarrassment, guilt, and shame – are signs of the exiles' interest and involvement in East Timor and the presence of East Timorese discourses in their lives.

In relation to shame, Elsbeth Probyn (2004b) proposes that “[s]hame is our bodies' way of telling us that we are interested ... [it] is intimately involved in the passions of interest” (p. 225). Reactions to shame, she contends in accordance with Nietzsche, will reflect a type of self-transformation,

[s]hame compels a rethinking of how we conceptualize the everyday as it is lived. Shame ... dramatically questions taken-for-granted distinctions between affect, emotion, biography, and the places in which we live our daily lives ... Shame rips the everyday out of its habitual stasis: its sentencing within the present. (Probyn, 2004a, p. 328)

However, is the disruptive consequence of shame restricted to this particular emotion? Probyn (2004b) herself observes that it is hard to delineate “where one emotion ends and another starts. Anger and rage can be closely tied to shame, attempting to displace the more painful feeling of shame. Shame can also bleed into sorrow” (p. 225). Considering the indefinite boundaries of particular emotions, their interconnections and relatedness, I suggest that the potential for self-transformation is not restricted to the emotion of shame, but translates to other intensely felt emotions such as embarrassment, sorrow, anger, and guilt. In the case of the East Timorese exiles, these emotions emanated as a result of the public exposure of what the exiles perceived to be a shortcoming or failure of the East Timorese nation. It was not an affective reaction resulting from the exiles' personal impropriety or their violation of a moral code or personal standards (which, as June Price Tangney and colleagues (2008) explain, are often seen as incentives of shame and guilt), but rather a response resulting from their association with a community that they saw as failing to meet the expected standards and conventions bestowed upon it by independence. They felt exposed by the events in East Timor and were concerned with what others would think of their country and of them as East Timorese. It directly affected the core of their self-imagination, and the social threat embedded in the crisis forced them to react.

A primary source of the negative emotions exhibited by the participants was a desire for social inclusion, resulting from a central need to belong (Tangney, Miller, Flicker, & Barlow, 2008). These emotions will normally produce a “somatic temporality, where the future of being again interested is felt in the present pain of rejection” (Probyn, 2004b, p. 239). Probyn's words suggest that, despite the pain experienced in the moment of emotional disruption, there is an underlying interest in a continued

relationship through which shame (and other intensely felt emotions) will make interest matter again. But, in the wake of the 2006–2007 crisis, the East Timorese exiles' narratives and translocal practice suggested otherwise. The temporary rejection of East Timorese discourses was evident within their practice, and they were moving away from the translocal sphere. This does neither mean that they will not return to a greater level of translocal activity in the future, nor that the East Timorese sphere will not regain its affective intensity. The muting of their East Timorese connections signifies a continued presence of East Timorese discourses; their rejection or muting is in itself an action that results from the presence of these discourses.

### CONCLUSION

I have argued that many of the East Timorese living in Melbourne were strongly affected by the 2006–2007 crisis – despite their physical distance to East Timor. Those who had family and friends in East Timor, or who owned property in Dili, were affected in a very direct way; many experienced their families being subjected to violence or being forced to flee their homes, and some had their properties looted and burned. It was, however, in the affective, translocal realm that the crisis manifested most strongly and, while the crisis had limited (if any) impact on the exiles' social fields of everyday practice, it forced them to question the character of their social world. This, I have argued, has to be understood in relation to the exiles' positioning within two parallel social worlds that exist independently of one another and in light of the integral role of the translocal sphere and affective dimension to the exiles' perception, conception, and experience of self.

The crisis precipitated a radical ambiguity in the exiles' pre-existing refugee identities. It challenged perceptions of the past and the very foundation on which the exiles had imagined themselves and their community of belonging. Shocked and embarrassed by the events, many expressed bewilderment and confusion as to how the unity of their people could dissipate so easily. Complicated emotions of hopelessness and helplessness, concern, sadness, disappointment, anger, and frustration intermingled, and many articulated a sense of loss of trust in the nation and its leaders. These intensely felt negative emotions caused a disruption in the exiles' subjective dispositions, their experience of self, and in their social worlds. People felt exposed by the events and – with their identities so intimately woven into the narratives of resistance, heroism, and reciprocity – it affected the core of their self-imagination. Consequently, many adopted a conscious strategy of increasing the emotional distance between themselves and the East Timorese sphere. Through a process of othering, the exiles increasingly defined themselves beyond – even in opposition to – the East Timorese nation. These processes were visible in people's withdrawal from the translocal sphere and an apparent disinterest in East Timorese affairs. The boundaries of belonging were shifting, yet, through the act of rejection and withdrawal, the notion of East Timoresehood remained part of the exiles' identity and sense of self; the rejection or muting of their East Timorese connections was an action that resulted from the affective and involving character of the East Timorese discourses upon their exile identities.

The process of othering and the exiles' movement away from the translocal sphere illustrate how migrants and diasporas renegotiate a sense of identity in relation to the cultural precedents and socio-political realities of home and exile. Migrant and diasporic identities are fluid and notions of home and away, here and there, before and after, us and them, change over time. Thus, while the most recent crisis in East Timor resulted in a temporary muting of the exiles' East Timorese connection, this does not mean that they will not return to greater levels of translocal activity in the future. Through their habitus, East Timorese cultural precedents continue to underpin the exiles' practice and, with vested interests in East Timorese discourses, East Timor remains part of the ongoing process by which they conceptualize and negotiate their experience of multiple belongings.



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