CYBERSPACE AS EQUALIZER: OPENING UP LIFEWORLDS AND EMPOWERING PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE PHILIPPINES

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To all of you, I am forever grateful.

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ABSTRACT

PURPOSE
This paper seeks to understand and explain how cyberspace can be an equalizer and empower persons with disabilities (PWD).

FINDINGS
Using cyberspace, each of the PWD groups studied has found an alternative and additional stage for the “presentation of the self in everyday life” that overcomes stigma and manages impressions. Cases presented provide empirical evidence of PWD non-profit groups using social networking tools such as websites, blogs, Facebook and YouTube to manage social and professional relationships. Thus proving that cyberspace can facilitate agency through a virtual social identity that complements actual social identity.

To empower persons with disabilities and open up new lifeworlds, this paper submits three levels of engagement in the offline world that complements the online interaction previously outlined. First is through participation that proves Erving Goffman’s theory of ego alignment. The PWD must end isolation and be part of multi-agent action that may be in the form of education, training and any other form of human enterprise. Second is performance in both backstage (preparations) and front stage (actual work) area of operations. The goal of back and front stage performance is role fulfillment. Third is production, which is the intended byproduct of performance that can lead to empowerment. Good performance can lead to actor-audience consensus that is geared toward acceptance of the PWD, the presentation of himself and the work that he can accomplish. This can lead to encounters and subsequent production and reproduction of social structure and relationships, e.g. employer-employee relationships, donor-benefactor relations and eventually disability pride.

ORIGINALITY / VALUE
This article argues cyberspace can serve as tool for impression management for the PWD groups. On the micro level, the case studies presented herein, serve to initiate the formal chronicling of the history of disability in the Philippines. It aims to contribute to oriental and developing world disability discourse that is predominantly western. On the macro level, it seeks to apply Goffman’s theory of dramaturgy and social interaction in explaining the social behavior of PWD in cyberspace and its ‘net effect’ on the real world.

Keywords: disability, cyberspace, lifeworld, self, stigma and social interaction
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: ISSUE, CONTEXT AND THEORY

Accomplishment space or digital divide - which scenario typically depicts the quest of persons with disabilities in cyberspace?

A. Introduction: The Issue, Context and Purpose of the Study

Since the dawn of civilization, there has always been a clouded view of the “disabled” and for much of human history, knowledge about disability has been in the hands of the non-disabled people. While the global community has made several advances toward the recognition and protection of persons with disability during the 21st Century, including United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, perceived prejudices remain. In a 2009 perception survey conducted by the UK Government's Office for Disability Issues, researchers coined the phrase "benevolent prejudice" to describe the veiled responses of British participants. Benevolent prejudice is discomfort about negative comments made toward people with disabilities (PWD); mixed with views that disabled people as less capable; and discomfort with PWDs working in positions of higher authority (Staniland 2009). These perceptions serve as possible barriers to PWD integration and participation in society and potentially contribute to the age-old trend of poverty.

The Republic of the Philippines (RP) is a representative sample of this residual problem. While the 2000 national census revealed a PWD population of less than 1.2%, the Asia Development Bank believes these numbers under represent the magnitude of this population segment. A simple fact is that Filipino families do not readily register their disabled family members due to the “stigma” and thus data
collection is problematic (ADB 2002; NCSO 2005).

Enter the Information Age - the game-changer in overcoming the stigma for persons with disabilities through a virtual lifeworld, with or without government interventions. *Post 20th Century information technologies, I will demonstrate, are offering an interactive space that enables the disabled to be viewed first as a “person” before a “person with disabilities”, using the Philippines as a case study.*

This is not unfamiliar territory. Goggin and Newell (2003) first argued that the virtual world is a medium that equalizes status cues; where disabled can truly feel and be treated like human beings first (p.130). In the developed world, the Internet is perceived to provide opportunities “to feel included and in touch with the world, and make an impact in the world” (Pilling et al 2004). On Youtube, *China's Got Talent* 2010 winner Liu Wei has a video that has been viewed over 3.9 million times (Youtube, November 14, 2011). This indicates the public interest in the armless pianist and singer from Beijing. It demonstrates a visible effect of producing and reproducing performer and fan/admirer connections or socio-cultural relationships. For Liu Wei, it could it is an accomplishment space that could open up a lifeworld of a musical career. For the collective PWD, hits and forwarded links promote and enrich the disability culture in both China and the world. However, are these western or developed world conceptions valid in the developing world? Can cyberspace be an equalizer and open up the lifeworlds of PWD in developing countries?

In the Philippines, a growing number of workers with physical impairment and mobility problems have been getting education, training and employment via the information and communications (ICT) highway. People with disabilities are making their
presence known in the areas of art, music, sports, computer technologies and entrepreneurship using cyberspace tools such as websites, Facebook, Wikipedia and Youtube. This phenomenon is producing and reproducing new social relations between the disabled and non-disabled. It does not deny digital divide, but makes an argument based on facts that real cases have effectively addressed the issue with tangible results. Currently, there are no efforts from the perspective of Disabilities Studies to look into this important social phenomenon and translate it to wider empowerment of more Filipino PWD, but we may be able to begin the process by writing their stories.

This research is a foundational study on Philippine disability social construction and social interaction in cyberspace. It highlights the presentation of the self, performance and accomplishment spaces that are afforded in the virtual world to bridge physical, social and economic divides. Grounded on the theoretical discipline and methods of the sociology of disability, interdisciplinary, applied disability studies, and the historical and contemporary knowledge of the local context, it explores PWD cyberspace identity and socio-cultural relations and reproductions. Philippine disability history has never been officially documented and data is scarce, hence this study deemed to examine the physical and virtual (web and social network sites) environments of nine (9) PWD organizations based in urban and rural areas. Epistemologically, the discourse and body of knowledge, aim to inform and empower the disability rights movement as a contributor of society. The Philippine case tests the applicability of western (or developed) world theories to the developing and underdeveloped world contexts. It seeks to contribute to the non-Western conceptions of disability studies literature in contrast to the more predominant western concepts.
The dissertation proceeds to layout the methodological approach and present empirical evidence through the case studies examined and developed for this study. **Chapter II** outlines in detail the multi-method approach used in this study consisting of Qualitative Content Analysis using deductive use of selected sociological theories, interviews and case studies. Lastly, it discusses the limitations and significance of the study. **Chapter III** then provides the backdrop or context of the study through relevant literature on Philippine disability situation. It takes the investigative approach to answer: who is disabling and enabling disability in the Philippines? What is so disabling about the disability situation? How does disability policy and practice, disability rights movement and information communications technology all fit together to empower the Pinoy (Filipino) PWD? All these, given due consideration to the gaps of access, inclusion and quality reported by the Asian Development Bank in its Disability Country Report of 2005. In social interaction terms, this is the region of the performance of the study.

**Chapters IV to VI** provide a detailed review of the nine (9) PWD organizations representing all the major disability types (blind, deaf, orthopedically impaired and learning disabilities), as well as serving as training institutions and essentially centers of excellence for PWD cyber enabling initiatives. **Chapter IV** focuses on making the case for the blind with representative cases from the Adaptive Technology, Rehabilitation, Integration and Empowerment for the Visually Impaired (ATRIEV) and Resources for the Blind. **Chapter V** highlights innovations of educating the deaf with cases from the Manila Christian Computer Institute for the Deaf, International Deaf Association and Bohol Deaf Academy. **Chapter VI** presents the cases serving multiple impairments -
Tahanang Walang Hagdanan (House without any steps), Nova Foundation for the Differently-abled and Autism Society of the Philippines. I also included in this chapter the Autism Society of the Philippines. In the exposition of the case studies, I applied Goffman’s theories of dramaturgy and social interaction, while considering postmodernity and the new variables introduced by the digital economy to the social construction of disability and social interaction. Chapter VII focuses on the National Council on Disability Affairs, not as a non-profit organization, but as a PWD organization working to deliver information, communication technologies to the disability sector in the Philippines. In this chapter, I offered a Philippine Disability Framework that attempts to explain how to enable policy and practice in the Pinoy disability sector given the challenges of poverty, lack of awareness and lack of funding.

Chapter VIII brings in the summary of findings from qualitative content analysis and case studies. It presents summary matrices of qualitative content analysis using Goffman, Carling Jenkins and Hocks and Balsamos theories. Finally, Chapter IX closes with the conclusion and recommendations. It answers the research questions and provides frameworks and recommendations on how cyberspace can be equalizer and open new lifeworlds for PWD. It explains the issues of agency, performance and multi-agent action of Filipino PWD civil society using cyberspace. It offers theoretical development through updating Goffman's theories of impression management in the context of the virtual and global world. It also offers applications to the disability sector, the local culture and the developing world context exemplified in the Philippines case. It offers recommendations for the Pinoy (Filipino) disability movement to keep up the fight online and offline through continuing cyberspace engagements.
B. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

This section reviews related literature and studies that endeavored to paint a comprehensive picture of disability in the real and virtual worlds of people with disabilities. I found Erving Goffman’s theories of stigma, dramaturgy and social interaction most useful in exploring my topic of investigation, but I need to update it given the advent of the digital world, the global economy and the influence of postmodernity in disability studies.

In general, disability is a part of the human condition. Either temporarily or permanently, anyone can be affected by disability at any point in his or her life. Those who survive to old age will experience increasing difficulties in functioning. According to the World Report on Disability (2011), more than a billion people are estimated to live with some form of disability, or about 15% of the world’s population (based on 2010 global population estimates). Note that this is higher than previous World Health Organization estimates, which date from 1970s and suggested a figure around 10%. This is due to recent calculations: World Health Survey report of about 785 million (15.6%) persons 15 years and older live with a disability, while the Global Burden of Disease estimates a figure of around 975 million (19.4%) persons. The forecast includes growing numbers and diversified experiences of vulnerable populations of persons with disabilities (pp 262-265).

Disability experiences emanating from the interaction of health problems, personal factors, and environmental conditions vary greatly. While disability correlates with disadvantage, not all people are equally disadvantaged. Women with disabilities
experience gender discrimination as well as disabling barriers. The most excluded from the labor market are often those with mental health difficulties or intellectual impairments. Nonetheless, disability disproportionately affects vulnerable populations. People from the poorest quintile, women and older people have higher prevalence of disability. Those who have low income, no jobs or have low educational qualifications are at increased risk of disability (pp 262-265).

Overall, people with disabilities (PWD) share the same barriers with those in similar socio-economic conditions. They have poor health outcomes that makes them vulnerable to preventable diseases. They also have lower education achievements. Children with disabilities have lower rates of staying in school and of being promoted, as well as lower transition rates to post-school education. They are less economically active. They cannot always live independently or participate fully in community activities. They experience higher rates of poverty. Households with a PWD have higher rates of poverty than households without PWD members. As a social group and across settings, PWD have very poor living conditions and fewer assets (World Report on Disability 2011: 263). This serves as the backdrop of this Philippine case study. It is against these global and local realities and perspectives that the following theories of cyberspace, disability and lifeworlds will be examined.

**Disability, Cyberspace and Lifeworlds**

“Disability – it is an issue, a label, a statistic, an experience, and a complex space (Goggin and Newell 2003:xiii).” The realities describe the landscape where the disability theories are tested and applied. Disability as a complex and dynamic field
offers many definitions of the term “disability” and this paper enumerates some of these explanatory models that I have used in my studies. I expound on how sociology theorizes disability and how it informs this dissertation research. What is the landscape of the 21st century conception of disability and how it influences disability construction in the Philippines?

“Disability is the loss or limitation of opportunities to take part in the normal life of the community on an equal level with others due to physical and social barriers” (Johnstone 2001:14). As such disability (like race, gender or religion) is not necessarily a bad thing but an identity and a source of diversity. It is an identity with social and personal dimensions, which may be associated with feelings of community, solidarity and pride, or conversely, with feelings of indifference, exclusion and shame or what is sociologically termed as stigma. The famous Union of Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS, 1976) defines disability as a "disadvantage or restriction of activity caused by a contemporary social organization which takes no or little account of people who have physical impairments and thus excludes them from participation in the mainstream of social activities" (p.14). Kendall (2001) refers to disability as a reduced ability to perform tasks one would normally do at given stage of life that may result in stigmatization or discrimination against persons with disabilities (p.583). Hence, there are many theories and models that have been developed to explain disability.
Table 1 below (Depoy & Gilson 2004) lists and explains the different ways of thinking about disability:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Title of explanation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Medical model</td>
<td>The medical model of interpretation of disability projects a dualism which tends to categorize the able-bodied as somehow better or superior to people with disabilities (Johnstone 2001:16)</td>
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<td>Medical-diagnostic explanation</td>
<td>Views disability as an atypical activity, appearance, and experience which locates its cause within the individual’s physiology as a permanent impediment with diminished capability (Gilson &amp; DePoy, 2002)</td>
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<td>Rehabilitation explanation</td>
<td>The focus in this explanation is on physical, behavioral, psychological, cognitive, and/or sensory tragedy, and thus the problem to be addressed by intervention services is situated within the individual as well (Mackelprang &amp; Salsgiver, 1999); Shakespeare &amp; Watson, 1997)</td>
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<td>Social Model</td>
<td>This will be explained much lengthily on the succeeding sections.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social explanation</td>
<td>Explains disability as a social phenomenon, medical and/or diagnostic conditions and/or diagnoses are socially interactive. Disability is viewed as a diversity of the human condition and not as an undesirable trait to be cured or fixed. Negative attitudes, limited physical access, insufficient access to communication resources, as well as exclusion from the rights and privileges of a social group are considered just some of the barriers that interfere with an individuals potential to actualize his or her desired roles and aspirations (Depoy and Gilson 2004, p.76)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Model</td>
<td>Disability is explained by power differential and political jockeying for resources. Because of a capitalist society’s high regard for economic resources, a primary position within the political domain holds that individuals who do not participate in the economy through work or other accepted forms of capital acquisition are considered politically powerless since they have nothing to exchange for privilege (Albrecht, Seelman &amp; Bury, 2001). This view is closely aligned to the social explanation but moving into the domain of power and resources.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cultural Model</td>
<td>Disability is viewed through a cultural lens that creates a collective that is typically referred to as disability. Within this explanation, the experience of oneself as atypical intersects with issues of race, class, gender and power differential as important determinants of the shared experiences that bind people together in single, identifiable community concern (Charltlon, 1998; Ingstad &amp; Whyte, 1995).</td>
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The above models are tools that provide insights into situations that depict disability. It is interesting to note that despite the number of theories about disability, this phenomenon remains misunderstood especially in developing countries. It is therefore significant that these theories be applied and tested in such contexts to see similarities, differences and divergence between societies in order to shed some enlightenment about the disability phenomena. This type of academic discourse would make disability more visible as a social issue that needs to be understood and addressed by society.

**Social Model of Disability**

The Social Model is considered as the most prominent theorization of disability in sociology and the creative platform form of sociological imagination that affords new meaning constructions in real life and exploration of lifeworlds in cyberspace.

The social model of disability "does not deny the problem of disability but locates it squarely within society. It is not individual limitations, of whatever kind, which are the cause of the problem but society’s failure to provide appropriate services and adequately ensure the needs of disabled people are fully taken into account in its social organizations… the consequences of this failure do not simply and randomly fall on individuals but systematically upon disabled people as a group who experience this failure as discrimination institutionalized throughout society."

- Michael Oliver.

I chose this model because social explanations posit disability as constructed (social meanings reside on the people), and the locus of the problem should be addressed by concepts, services and supports that are found within the context where people interact. It sets service goals as "[the] removal or amelioration of social environmental barriers to full, social, physical, career, spiritual participation” (French, cited in Quinn 1998:xx, Depoy & Gilson 2004:77). Johnstone (2001) further argues that the essential difference
between the medical and the social model of disability revolves around the shift in the explanatory power. His emphasis is the structural and personal barriers created by society and submits the following as the elements of the social model (p.20):

- Recognition of the interaction of structural and attitudinal variables that create disability in society;
- Recognition of the voice/opinion of the disabled person;
- Acknowledgment of the political processes that oppress and deny civil rights to PWD;
- Power/information within the control of disabled people and their organizations.

Lennard Davis (1997) argues that disability is always actively repressed memento for the fate of the normal body. Between life and death, the disabled person can embody alternative relations to and interpretations of, both (219). Disability is a “between-ness” since all people are temporarily able-bodied (TAB) at point (Brueggemann 2001). Its image is always more than the disabled figure can signify or even say. “Disabled people, as the marginal figures of everyday life, academic research, and bodily experience, are positioned betwixt and between contrasting values, conflicting assumptions, painful conceptions, and infuriating and ordinary expectations –fusing the typical with the atypical and experiencing transformation” (Titchkosky 2003:229). Thompson adds: “Disability, then, can be a painful, comfortable, familiar, alienating, bonding, isolating, disturbing, endearing, challenging, infuriating, or ordinary. Embedded in the complexity of actual human relations, it is always more than the disabled figure can signify” (1997:14). Thus, it is a very rich source of narratives that can be expressed online and offline.

Michele Foucault also offers insights on disabilities with his post-structuralist analyses of madness, criminality, biopolitics and power. He explores the new ways of
life and the techniques which individuals take care of their “selves” and strive to reconstitute themselves as privileged, suggesting ways in which people might better understand the relationship between private life and broader culture. Foucauldian perspectives on disability argue that a proliferation of discourses on impairment gives rise to the category of “disability.” It is considered as “talk” that produces and reproduces social structures in the paradigm of conversation analysis. Further, Foucault shows that social identities are the effects of the ways in which knowledge is organized, which provide indications on the links between knowledge and power (Foucault 1980; 1989; Shakespeare and Corker 2002:8).

Others argue that disability discourse is just about the strength of the human spirit – the most common and powerful ideology that surrounds disability. The idea that mind is the only thing of interest in disability experience and the fact that there is really a mind and body split in the disability discourse. Many theorists reject this saying that disability ideology is to be found in its ability to serve an occasion for the strength of the human mind to shine bright and strong. It feeds into the modern conception of the individual as ‘rational, autonomous, centered and stable (Titchkosky 2003:211).

Based on the review conducted, the abovementioned similar and contrasting approaches suggest that there is no unitary sociology of disability, but rather sociologies of disability that continue to offer quite different perspectives on the nature of disability. Shakespeare and Watson (2001) submit that disability—as a discipline—has to be understood as the product of multiple bio-psycho-social forces and a range of helping professions. This should better inform and sensitize it for a more adequate theory of
disability. To this must be added an understanding that everyone is impaired, in varying degrees” (p. 24). This perspective offers important insights and can be used as a springboard for dismantling socially constructed divisions between 'the disabled' and the 'normal'. Clearly, the future challenge of an informed sociology of disability is to be open and to benefit from the new theoretical toolbox, without losing its audience among disabled people and their supporters (Corker and Shakespeare 2002:15).

Postmodernism encourages the idea of ‘thinking globally and acting locally at the same time’—seeing and researching disabled lives as both constrained by social structures and as an active process of production which transforms social structures (Giddens 1990; Corker and Shakespeare: 2002). I therefore submit that no particular sociology or any other discipline has a monopoly of influence on it, though it aids its acceptability and hegemony when it finds alliances with other disciplines.

Disability Studies

Disability Studies, which emanates from the social model, is interdisciplinary and/or multidisciplinary in terms of theory and philosophy. It is an applied study of it crosses boundaries and draws from a variety of helping disciplines. In relating the experiences of the PWD, this study recognizes that advocates of the social model have had a significant impact on wider social and sociological thinking about disability and places the social model alongside another influential sociological approach to chronic illness, advanced by Arthur Frank (1995). As a challenge to the legacy of Parsonian sociology which constructed the patient as passive, Frank and like-minded sociologists have drawn attention to the agency exercised by people with long-term illness: they become 'wounded storytellers'. “Patients and people living with illness are constructed
as active creators of new selves and life trajectories in a 'remission society', opening up the possibility that illness experiences involve positive as well as negative outcomes (Frank 1995). Stories are building blocks of disability social construction and it is the mission of this paper to chronicle these stories and histories of PWDS in the Philippines.

Interdisciplinary/multidisciplinary approaches to disability guided by the social model and applied disability studies may utilize such debates and stories to further the socialization of the disability discourse. This is all part of socializing the disability message which means getting the word out the talk or discourse about it can further enrich the message of disability and contribute to the growth of knowledge. It is important because disability studies scholars view disability more in terms of culture and identity perspectives, rather than a medical label and a social construct of discrimination and oppression. It challenges the way in which disability is constructed in society. It involves the development of the theoretical, research, educational, and advocacy models necessary to remove the legal, physical, policy, and attitudinal barriers that exclude people with disabilities from society (Syracuse University’s Center on Human Policy, Law, and Disability Studies 2010). It adds critical dimensions to thinking about disability issues such as autonomy, competence, wholeness, dependence, health, physical appearance, aesthetics, community and notions of progress and perfection - issues that pervade every aspect of the civic and culture (Linton 1998a: 118; Swain et al 2003: 34-35).

Postmodernity in Disability

Postmodernity as applied to disability offers crucial explanation on why and how cyberspace can improve social construction and the lives of persons with disabilities.
People with disabilities continue to be engaged in a rights struggle which is reinforced through processes of modernity. Within modernity, binary notions (normal versus abnormal) that support an oppressive discourse are created and maintained. Within the position of privilege, people are politically and economically esteemed and supported by hegemonic advantage. The ‘disabled body’ is defined and controlled by the privileged. They are framed as an inspirational super crip who has overcome many challenges to achieve a goal: or as a tragic burden to be pitied, medicalized, treated and cured (Shapiro, 1994, Egan, 1998). Disability as a social construction is pathologized and categorized as the “other.” The “other” are thought of as deviant, different, even undesirable, and subsequently made inferior. Exclusion is reinforced and consideration of systemic issues such as discrimination and stigma is nominal at best (Newell, 2005).

In contrast, a post-modern framework focuses on post material interests. Post-modernity emerged as a school of thought, initially a reaction to modernity in the late 1970s, including a transformation from mass production to information technologies; a shift toward global rather than national economies, with an accompanying weakening of the nation state as a local regulator; and a decline of class politics and subsequent rise in new social movements (Giddens 2006). This shift removed disability from being an individualized economic consideration and invited it to an exploration of definitions of acceptance outside of the economy. Disability as a postmodern concept embraces the complex, interactive dynamics of disability. The implication of this framework is particularly pertinent to people with severe developmental disabilities, who under the modern framework, have been ignored for their apparent lack of economic contribution.
Corker and Shakespeare’s (2002) explanation of postmodernity as “an attempt to label contemporary society” suggests that PWD today are living through the transition from a modern to a postmodern age.” The main challenge, though, is to achieve a shift in knowledge and culture – in how people perceive, think and produce – rather than in the material factors of economics (p.14). It could be a door opener that could include the disabled, and an eye-opener that could change views towards marginalized groups such as them.

Postmodernity implies a shift from meta-narratives to local narratives and from general theories to pragmatic strategies. A metanarrative literally means a "big story. In Sociology, the concept of a metanarrative is sometimes referred-to as a "high level theory" or, more-usually, a perspective / ideology. Instead of these high level stories, local stories are given attention and practical values are considered. Postmodernism is no longer restricted to weighty theoretical discussions in elite circles of the academy Carling-Jenkins 2009). It is now expansive and is open to narratives of everyday and lived experiences in informal and online settings.

“Disability is a diverse experience. It affects some people’s minds, some people’s senses, other people’s bodies, and soon. Someone who is hard of hearing is likely to have very difference life experiences from someone who is blind, or another person who has a developmental disability. And they all will have different life stories to another person who has a serious mental illness or someone who has end-stage cancer. Even among disabled people, there are huge differences. We need to be mindful of the diversity among disabled people as one of the starting points for understanding any particular disability” (p. 5).

Disability becomes understood through actions and relationships that promote a personal, political, and moral commitment to a post-modern view of disability. Teaching disability studies from a post-modern perspective becomes a “way of knowing,” an
imparting of multiple knowledge rather than a prescriptive schedule of facts and theories (as supported by McRuer, 2009). Students of disability studies should be led to identify and confront the binaries, barriers and oppressive discourse surrounding disability within the context of the complex societies in which we live. Conway’s (2009) work on multiculturalism and disability is an important contribution to this way forward, where an emphasis is placed on preparing students to recognize and conceptualize diversity and therefore on the oppression experienced within diversity. Disability studies must challenge the deficit models which individualize disability and actively display a commitment to a post-modern agenda or disability. Jakubowicz and Meekosha (2000) described the role of disability studies as opening-up “ways of examining cultural diversity that cannot otherwise be approached” (p. 1).

The role of disability studies must include the encouragement and facilitation of an alternative world view which embraces disability as a diversity, moving beyond borders and pathology. Such a curriculum needs to be tied to action, or it is “parasitic” (Mackelprang, 2009). Within disability studies the role of academic and activist becomes a fluid category—a partnership (Mackelprang, 2009).

Closely linked to the study of disability is its research. There is a long history of challenging the role of researchers, particularly researchers without a disability. Stone and Priestly (1996), for example, advocated that researchers without disability needed to adopt a position tied to political action, where oppression is challenged and there is a commitment to the emancipation of people with disability through research (see also Priestly, 1997; Swain & Cameron, 1999). Oliver (1999) also stressed the importance of disability research where researchers position themselves clearly within society. The postmodern framework gives disability researchers such a position.

Disability research when viewed through a post-modern framework demonstrates
a commitment to action. This action involves an active engagement in relationship through challenging the binary of researcher/researched for example. This also means engaging actively with other social movements and interacting with the nexus of oppression (e.g. women with disability) (see Carling-Jenkins, 2008). Post-modern disability research values studies of the past that propose to prevent repeating mistakes in the future, hence disability research should increase consciousness and expand knowledge as defined by multiple dimensions (Mackelprang, 2009). Post-modern disability research becomes a platform from which dynamic definitions can be practiced, barriers which exclude and marginalize can be challenged and explored. As such postmodernity is seeing its most intense expression in open and non-judgmental venues as the “space” provided by cyberspace, especially when it concerns disability.

**Cyberspace**

Cyber in cyberspace, for example, comes from the Greek word for "steersman" (*kubernetes*) and carries with it the connotation of **control**. Norbert Weiner (1954) established the precedent of making cyber a prefix when he first adopted it to christen a field of study he called "**cybernetics**" - the science of automatic control systems. In the case of PWD, equal importance is placed on both “cyber” for control and “space” for mobility and expanding possibilities. According to Krippendorf, space conceptualizes the ability to move, act, create and describe, for example, mental, social, economic spaces, cyberspace. Cyberspace results from the human collective ability to conceptualize possibilities in the design and use of technological artifacts (Krippendorf 2010).
Cyberspace can afford an experience built on imagination and interaction – conceptual and consensual. Conceptualizing possibilities is aligned with the themes of cyberspace as equalizer and leveler of the playing field (Wood and Smith 2001:17) and manifested through the following: 1) the number of tasks that can be accomplished via cyberspace is increasing daily and will continue to multiply at rapid rates; 2) disabilities are invisible in cyberspace; 3) no stigma attaches to using the tools of cyberspace; 4) cyberspace, depending as it does on digital convergence, can, in principle at least, facilitate the need for different forms of input and output. It provides a structure that can be used to help make many “reasonable accommodations” to the needs of PWD (Murelli 2002). The internet is no longer the expensive high-tech toy of corporate elites and university professors. It has become the routine appliance of a large chance of the developed world and a sizable portion of the developing world (Chen, Boase and Wellman, Wellman 2002:13) As such, cyberspace introduces new variables to sociological imagination which it challenges Goffman’s conceptualization of stigma, the presentation of the self and the traditional view of social interaction. And the better news for the poor PWD’s is:

Social Networking tools in Cyberspace

Web-based social networking tools as we understand them today facilitate the creation and extension of social relationships through the medium of the internet and provide a convenient way for people to maintain an awareness of the activities of a potentially large number of people. Social networking services make it possible to connect people who share interests and activities across political, economic, and
geographic borders. Through e-mail and instant messaging, online communities are created where a gift economy and reciprocal altruism are encouraged through cooperation. A good example of this is the Wikipedia. It is a platform for sharing information, e-learning and other forms of electronic exchange.

Social networking sites share some conventional features. Most often, individual users are encouraged to create profiles containing various information about themselves. Users can often upload pictures of themselves to their profiles, post blog entries for others to read, search for other users with similar interests, and compile and share lists of contacts. In addition, user profiles often have a section dedicated to comments from friends and other users. It is becoming a norm for websites to tap into the power of the social networking to gain more following. These communities of hypertexts allow for the sharing of information and ideas, an old concept placed in a digital environment. As such, social networks provide effective and efficient ways for individuals and groups to communicate digitally and to build relationships more easily, efficiently and cost-effectively. Cause-oriented groups use it as a means to do advocacy and low-cost grassroots organizing. It is also used in education, business and other forms of human enterprise. Evidently, online social networking is defining the concept of community and the community defines its use for it. At the same, we are also seeing that social networking is redefining what community means.

Facebook is currently the most popular social network site in the world with more than 845 million active users (February 2012). Filipinos rank high as one of its most active participants. Philippines, the texting capital of the world, tops the list of Southeast
Asian countries signed up on Facebook (Russell 2011). Facebook is an inexpensive and convenient way for keeping in touch, catching up and nurturing relationships. Hence, it is very popular as well to people with disabilities.

Also used for social networking is the “website” or simply termed as “site” is a collection of related web pages containing text, images, videos or other digital assets. A website is hosted on at least one web server, accessible via a network such as the internet or private local area network through an Internet address known as a Uniform Resource Locator (URL). All publicly accessible websites collectively constitute the World Wide Web. Websites can be divided into two broad categories - static and interactive. Interactive sites allow for virtual exchanges between the site owner and site visitors. A blog (a short term for web log) is a type of website or part of a website supposed to be updated with new content from time to time. Blogs or blogspots is used for the more dynamic part of the website to include regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other material such as graphics or video. Entries are commonly displayed in reverse-chronological order. The term blog can also be used as a verb, meaning to maintain or add content to a blog.

The last type of web-based social networking that is extensively used in this study is Youtube. PWD groups sampled in this study have Youtube channels where they express visibility and voice cost-effectively given their meager resources. YouTube is the largest video-sharing website in the world that was founded in 2005 by three former PayPal employees. It is the leader in online video and the premier destination to watch and share original videos worldwide through a Web experience. YouTube allows
people to easily upload and share video clips on www.YouTube.com and across the Internet through websites, mobile devices, blogs, and email. It even welcomes, amateur content such as video blogs and short original videos. The wide range of topics covered by YouTube has turned video sharing into one of the most important parts of Internet culture and it is proving to be very encouraging to the disability culture.

Cyberspace enhances activity and interactivity that facilitate socialization of the message (Shakespeare 1992). The Internet provides a way of communicating which is not one-way oriented but an interactive one. The Internet has the capacity to collect messages of every kind from all over the world in one exchange network. This enables people to communicate, to exchange opinions and comments with other users. The WWW and computer mediated communication are greatly increasing the access of disabled people to information and interaction. It is a conduit to social interaction especially with the advent of social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, etc. Internet offers opportunities to become more active (Goggin and Newell 2003:130). Cyberspace with its dynamic social networking tools is notably changing the world and this postmodern transition is reaching the lifeworlds of people with disabilities.

**Lifeworlds**

The lifeworld concept is used in philosophy and in some social sciences, particularly sociology. Lifeworld (German: *Lebenswelt*) may be conceived as a universe of what is self-evident or given, a world that subjects may experience together. It is a state of affairs in which the world is experienced or how it is lived (German: erlebt). It is a pre-epistemological stepping-stone for phenomenological analysis in the Husserlian
tradition. It is also related to further concepts such as Pierre Bourdieu's notion of habitus and Erving Goffman's to the sociological notion of everyday life. Edmund Husserl introduced the concept of the lifeworld in his Crisis of European Sciences (1936) book which argues that “this collective inter-subjective pool of perceiving is both universally present and, for humanity's purposes, capable of arriving at 'objective truth,' or at least as close to objectivity as possible.”

As a sociological concept, the 'lifeworld' can be thought of as the horizon of all our experiences, in the sense that it is that background on which all things appear as themselves and meaningful. It is a grand theatre of objects variously arranged in space and time relative to perceiving subjects, and is the “ground” for all shared human experience. The lifeworld is rarely understood in a purely static manner, but rather a dynamic horizon in which people live, and nothing can appear in the lifeworld except as lived. The Husserlian discourse of lifeworld provided a starting point for the phenomenological sociology of Alfred Schütz, who tried to synthesize Husserl's phenomenology of consciousness, and Max Weber's conceptualization focusing on subjectively meaningful action. On the other hand, Jurgen Habermas submits that lifeworld consists of socially and culturally sedimented linguistic meanings. It is the lived realm of informal, culturally-grounded understandings and mutual accommodations.

Social coordination and systemic regulation occur by means of shared practices, beliefs, values, and structures of communicative interaction, which may be institutionally based. We are inevitably lifeworldly, such that individuals and interactions draw from custom and cultural traditions to construct identities, define situations, coordinate action, and create social solidarity. Ideally this occurs by communicatively coming to
understanding (German: *Verstehen*), but it also occurs through pragmatic negotiations (Compare: Seidman, 1997:197). In sum, by the term lifeworld, Habermas means the shared common understandings, including values, that develop through face-to-face contacts over time in various social groups, from families to communities. The lifeworld carries all sorts of assumptions about who we are as people and what we value about ourselves: what we believe, what shocks and offends us, what we aspire to, what we desire, what we are willing to sacrifice to which ends, and so forth.

2. Applying Goffman’s Sociology to Disability in the 21st Century

The preceding section explains the sociological theories and related themes that will be tested in the Philippine case study. However, I use Erving Goffman’s symbolic interactionist theory with the complement of relevant theories of the disability in the digital age. In particular Goffman’s concept of stigma (1922-1982) is provides valuable insight to how we can explain the sociology of disability.¹ He explains the value of stigma in these terms:

"Society establishes the means of categorizing persons and the complement of attributes felt to be ordinary and natural for members of each of these categories. When a stranger comes into our presence, then, first appearances are likely to enable us to anticipate his category and attributes, his "social identity" ... We lean on these anticipations that we have, transforming them into normative expectations, into

¹ By definition, a **stigma** is an attribute, behavior, or reputation which is socially discrediting in a particular way: it causes an individual to be classified or stereotyped rather than accepted as normal which makes it a big concern in the social construction of disability. It is a kind of gap between virtual social identity and actual social identity and as such a theory useful to this research.
righteously presented demands. It is [when an active question arises as to whether these demands will be filled] that we are likely to realize that all along we had been making certain assumptions as to what the individual before us ought to be. These assumed demands and the character we impute to the individual will be called] *virtual social identity* (p. 2)

Stigma is crucial since first impressions in social encounters are important in the construction of social identity. It has a bearing on social interaction which conveys anticipations and expectations on the part of others. The perception of stigma for PWD, especially among those with visible deformities, automatically reduces the expectations of others -- discrediting them without giving them a chance. Thus, the stigmatized PWD can become self-conscious, insecure, afraid to display negative emotions or develop avoidance to cope with the stigma. In some cases, they can undergo a moral career, a learning experience that develops different kinds of adjustment to themselves. Not all are stigmatized, disability as a concept has a connotation of stigma that according to Goffman spoils identity. The question in this study is - how does cyberspace factor in the schema of PWD stigma? Does it offer a way of managing the stigma for a better presentation of the PWD self. Goffman is a symbolic interactionist who is also recognized for his research that extended the understanding of the presentation of the self in everyday life using a dramaturgical metaphor. The 'self' is torn between the desire to act spontaneously and the desire to follow social expectations. According to dramaturgy, individual attempts to follow social expectations are best understood as dramatic, or theatrical performances. In these performances, the actor or team of actors, strive to convince their audience that they are playing their roles very well. They
have the attributes that make them play their character well.

Dramaturgy depicts the social world to be composed of front stages, back stages, and regions that define situations and influence performance. The front stage is where socially recognizable performances unfold. The backstage includes spaces where performers are not observed, and there they can engage in actions that might otherwise undermine the integrity of the performance. Goffman argues that much of the activity in everyday social life includes efforts to present idealized images of self to others in front-stage performances. The attempt to maintain an ideal performance and to prepare for contingencies to ensure successful performance is called impression management. The objective is to reach actor-audience consensus. In *Frame Analysis*, Goffman writes, "What is important is the sense he provides them through his dealing with them of what sort of person he is behind the role he is in" (p. 298). The dramaturgy perspective can be seen as an anchor to this perspective, where the individual's identity is performed through role(s), and consensus between the actor and the audience.

Dramaturgy emphasizes expressiveness as the main component of interactions.

I test and relate these concepts to the PWD use of cyberspace and test it for its effects to the identity and social relationships of the subject case studies. I apply the dramaturgical analysis to their social products: websites, blogs, Youtube and narratives from interviews and participant observation. Goffman defines “performance” as “a single image” or “all the activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serves to influence in any way any of the other participant. Taking a particular participant and his performance as a basic point of reference (p.15).” In the case of the subject PWD in
this study, there is an online and offline performance. The online performance is primarily the website and this is complemented by the blog, Facebook page or Youtube of the subject PWD organization. The offline performance are the real-world conducting or “playing out” of their social roles serving a particular PWD group. The actors and the team are the members of the organization, and the audience consists of the particular groups or publics that receive their performance in the everyday life. There is “Interaction” or encounter among the actors, audiences and other participants of the “drama” at play.

In the “disability drama” under study, these performers, roles, routines, front and back stages, characterization and actor attributes and stagecraft will be analyzed for its effects on identity, communication and building social relationships. But to Goffman’s concepts, I will add the following elements 3Ps that I deem crucial to successful performance: the producer or sponsor, the plot or the story and practice. In Goffman’s theory, if the actors possess the true attributes that their character is playing, performance comes out well. In my disability dramaturgy, stigma can be overcome online and on-the-ground, it need not undermine performance. Because there is a way of managing impressions that is through doing good and telling it well. By performing well what they say will do (per roles and scripts), they will enhance their identities and encounters with their clients and supporters (audiences). Good performance will result in actor-audience consensus that could lead to more interaction and further unfolding of the plot that in the disability civil society means helping relationships.
3. Carling-Jenkins and Hocks and Balsamo

Carling-Jenkins (2009) posits that PWDs continue to be engaged in a disability rights struggle that is reinforced through processes of modernity. I see the wisdom and application of her conceptualization of a way forward for understanding and explaining disability using a comparative and transitory modernity - postmodernity framework. Post-modernity highlights the ‘transformation from mass production to information technologies’ that has shown evidence of inclusion, flexibility that are now accommodating and enabling PWDs to be part of the economic system. There is a shift towards global rather than national economies, with an accompanying weakening of the nation state as a local regulator; and a decline of class politics and a subsequent rise in new social movements (Giddens, 2006). This shift removed disability from being an individualized economic consideration and invited to an exploration of definitions of acceptance outside of the economy (Carling-Jenkins, 2009).

I used Carling-Jenkins’ way forward post-modernity framework to examine the websites and interview narratives for the elements of an alternative view of disability. This theory informs my study on how each of the sampled PWD groups are influenced by modernity or post-modernity in their social construction and the presentation of their “self” in everyday life. The application of this theory examines online and offline data gathered for influence of “post-modern framework alternative to the disability situation in the Philippines among the respondent organizations. Specifically, I look for the following elements of postmodern in disability. (See Table2 below that is borrowed from Carling-Jenkins, 2008). Socio-politically these descriptors have been used to “rationally”
explains the inferior health, economic, political and social status of people with disability. Disability is conceptualized by hegemonic groups that claim a position of social, economic, political, and linguistic privilege at the expense of disenfranchised people with disabilities. Post-modernity gives the PWD agency and portrays knowledge as embracing many or no truths. There is a shift in emphasis from scientific absolutisms to narratives, and from expert-knows-best to a shared basis for knowledge (see Lyotard, 1979), such as those shared in blogs, Facebook or Youtube.

Within the post-modern framework, definitions give way to descriptions, absolutes give way to fluidity, and constricted narrowed views give way to opportunities for inclusivity. Disability as a post-modern concept is therefore more fluid and less descriptive, and a concept that opens up and explores opportunities for genuine inclusion and engagement in relationship. Disability is conceptualized and defined through multiple identities, including most significantly by people with disability themselves. A post-modern framework enables definitions that explore the paradox of disability (Dempsey & Nankervis, 2006). Knowledge within this framework is a process and a journey, rather than a set entity (Carling-Jenkins 2008).
Table 2 Carling-Jenkins’s (2008) “Way Forward” Modernity/Postmodernity Framework

View of Economy and Knowledge

Disability as a modern concept is viewed within manufacturing terms and treats people with disability as objects. It offers an understanding of disability towards global rather than just national economies, a decline of class politics and a subsequent rise in new social movements (Giddens, 2006). This shift removes disability from being an individualized economic consideration and invited to an exploration of definitions of acceptance outside of the economy.
**View of Society**

*Society*, as seen through the modern framework, is portrayed in terms of certainty, progress, absolutisms, and reductionist philosophies. When disability is considered within such a framework, functional definitions, prescriptive treatments, categorizations, and narrowed operating agendas are imposed. In contrast, a post-modern society is characterized by dynamic and fluid interactions (Giddens, Duneier, & Applebaum, 2007). Disability within this context celebrates difference, embraces fluidity, and can be understood in terms of relativity, and social and cultural contexts. This framework gives emphasis to the need for micro theories to understand the nature of “difference” (Barnhart, 1994). It views society within multiple meanings, ambiguity, diversity, difference, and even contradiction that follows a different view of the subject, and a breaking up of grand narratives occurs (see Lyotard, 1979).

**View of Subjects**

A modern framework categorizes *subjects*, bounding them within limited binary positioning (see Table 3). Hierarchical social relations where disability is portrayed undesirably are reinforced. “A binary positioning of powerful/powerless is perpetuated through the modern framework. As an alternative, a post-modern framework promotes a more fragmented, decentered sense of self, which accepts multiple, conflicting identities. It adheres to the mobility of self and the accompanying fluidity of power: “A *self* does not amount to much, but no self is an island; each exists in a fabric of relations that is now more complex and mobile than ever before... No one, not even the least privileged among us, is ever entirely powerless. (Carling-Jenkins 2008).”
View of Reality

Reality within a modern framework is ruled by objectivity, logic, science, and reason (see Table 2). The reality of disability then is couched in scientific, economic, medical, and individual terms. This underlies all four themes previously discussed. A post-modern framework promotes reality as socially constructed, views subjects as creations of the social world and embraces subjectivity. Disability within this frame is then considered as involving social construction. The implication is that we are encouraged to embrace subjectivity, and to focus on the deconstruction of the binaries created within modern society (Carling-Jenkins 2008).

Hocks and Balsamo’s Technology as Articulated Ensemble

I also used the Hocks’ and Balsamo’s “Technology as Articulated Ensemble” framework in conducting QCA of the websites. This theory argues that the organization of technological ensemble is not random, but an articulated arrangement. It is built in certain ways which can be discerned among the articulated elements (Hocks and Balsamo 2003). As such, technological agency is always shared, albeit unevenly, with the people who design the device or program it. The process of analyzing a technology involves describing and analyzing the constitutive elements of the articulated arrangement and specifying the relationship among them. Technologies embody reified human practices and enable it. The incorporation of human practices and the empowerment or disempowerment of bodies distributes a measure of agency to a technological arrangement.
Any given articulation includes several forces of determination, such as economic, political and institutional that can combine to invest determining agency in the technological device or object (Hocks and Balsamo, p203).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technology as Articulated Ensemble Element</th>
<th>Website content example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Devices and artifacts</td>
<td>Website, blog, facebook community page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Material conditions</td>
<td>Poor, middle-class, rich</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aesthetic properties</td>
<td>Amount of images, graphics, style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human practices</td>
<td>Employment practices, equal opportunity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional forms and policies</td>
<td>Philippine disability laws, human rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural values</td>
<td>Deaf culture, disability culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forms of knowledge</td>
<td>Disability issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural narratives</td>
<td>Success stories, parent’s testimonial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social relations</td>
<td>Local, international collaborations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideological systems</td>
<td>Democratic, libertarian</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 above lists the elements of the Technology as Articulated Ensemble. The purpose of invoking theory of technology embodied in the above elements in the context of disability is to underscore its role in empowering PWDs and the importance of its cultural context manifested in its design, production and dissemination processes. In the same manner, assistive technologies are an interdisciplinary contemplation of all of the helping disciplines that make up Disability Studies. But this is not an argument about the limitations of earlier analyses of neither technology nor assistive technologies although they are explored in this study. Rather this research is an attempt to sketch a theory of empowering PWDs in the developing world through cyberspace that will build foundational concepts and socially construct a critical philosophy of cyberspace and disability.
CHAPTER II
RESEARCH DESIGN: DATA, METHODS AND APPROACH

This study is designed to examine the role of cyberspace in the social construction of disability group identity and representation online, its parallel effect in the physical world and potential in empowering persons with disabilities (PWD) in the Philippines. Starting with existing literature on what cyberspace claims to do for people with disabilities (PWD), I explored how it addresses stigma and enhance social interaction and relationship building between the disabled and non-disabled. I examined case studies of nine (9) organizations through their online social products and offline (on-the-ground) performance for the actual effect of the Internet on their everyday existence and lived experiences.

A. Research Questions. This research will pursue the following questions and test its related propositions.

1) Is cyberspace an equalizer for persons with disabilities (PWDs)? How?
   How does it help them act and interact in everyday life?

2) What cyberspace tools do they use & with what effect?
   How do they use it to manage ‘spoiled identity’ in order to be treated as equals?

3) Application: Can this lead to opening up of lifeworlds and empowerment of PWDs? How?
B. Hypothesis

Cyberspace offers a means of addressing the unequal power relations between the disabled and non-disabled. Using cyberspace tools such websites, Facebook and Youtube, persons with disabilities (PWD) can present a better group identity, manage impressions and thereby neutralize stigmatized or spoliled identity. Cyberspace provides equitable “space” to see and be seen (for the blind), to hear and be heard (deaf) and the mobility-impaired to go out and explore new lifeworlds. It can introduce new variables to enrich lived experiences, deepen disability culture and empower PWDs.

C. Methods

I employed a multi-method approach, specifically qualitative content analysis (QCA), interviews and case studies. First, I used QCA, specifically web content analyses as framed by Krippendorf (1980) who submits that content analysis involves a set of procedures that can be summarized in four (4) steps:

1) The researcher formulates a research question and/or hypotheses.
2) The researcher selects a sample. In this case the websites of the nine (9) organizations, which are chosen purposively for their representation of the major disability types and significant activity on the web since 2010.
3) Categories are defined for coding. Coders are trained, code the content, and the reliability of their coding is checked. I am the only coder for this research and I used codes that represent the theories that I was testing. Basically, I examined if the theory is operating on the particular organization under study based on website
content. This is called deductive use of theories in analyzing and interpreting data collected.

4) The data collected during the coding process are tabulated, analyzed, validated and interpreted.

5) The last step is inter-coder reliability and process validity which is explained extensively below.

Knowing that visual and content analysis can be extremely subjective just as texts can be read from numerous perspectives (Krippendorf 2004:22). Inter-coder reliability is conducted with subject matter experts (preferably with local knowledge and competence) to validate and finalize my coding scheme. After reviewing the theoretical foundations of the study, and defining and describing distinctions between the different categories, the initial data set is coded and afterwards a joint review of results follow in order to determine the degree of inter-subjectivity of the themes/codes, and refined the initial list to increase reliability. Even so, the study may encounter different meanings of the coded texts, that is, they may not be mutually exclusive and/or are shared by the greater majority. Krippendorf (2004) asserts that “the meanings of the invoked texts need not be shared. Although intersubjective agreement as to what an author meant to say or what a given text means would simplify content analysis tremendously, such consensus rarely exists in fact” (p.23).

The second tool in multi-method is the conduct of key informant interviews to validate what was observed ONLINE. I interviewed staff members who hold agency over the websites, from each of the five of PWD organizations. I probed on the discourse, development, publication and back operations of a PWD website using my
research questions and the aforementioned sociological theories. PWD organizations employ impression management and readers have to see beyond what is outwardly presented or the “performance.” In doing participant observation, I employed ethnomethodology (EM), which refers to the investigation of the rational properties of indexical expressions and other practical actions contingent to accomplishments of organized artful practices of everyday life (Garfinkel, 1967:11). I examined the social phenomena and the ways to know about them through the analysis of the relationship between language and social reality. I probed on how PWDs make sense of the world and their place in it. I asked questions to PWD, about themselves, what and how they observe. I looked for empirical evidence of the following themes: progressive social construction of “disability” (medical, rehabilitation, social, economic); presence or absence of modernity and post-modernity issues (capitalism, flexible workforce, new labor relations, information economy, innovations); government policies and their positive and negative reaction to them (specific mention of policies, opinions, complaints, etc. After my second interview, I realized that the PWD organizations have more to share. Though guided by my theories and methodologies, I decided to be open to their narratives and new themes. I needed to view their experiences from their very own perspectives not just mine.

The third and final step is the compilation of the data and development into case studies. Descriptive case studies are written for each of the nine organizations and the disability types, that is, to make a case for the blind, the deaf and the orthopedically impaired. In this particular research, the case study methodology (not the case method) is used to investigate further the cyberspace and disability phenomenon and applicable
theories at work in the sampled organizations within its real-life context. It is an empirical inquiry that sought to describe their everyday presentation of the self to the world. It is used to explore causation in order to find underlying principles. Thomas (2011) offers the following definition of case study: "Case studies are analyses of persons, events, decisions, periods, projects, policies, institutions, or other systems that are studied holistically by one or more methods. The case that is the subject of the inquiry will be an instance of a class of phenomena that provides an analytical frame — an object — within which the study is conducted and which the case illuminates and explicates."

The case studies are structured according to disability types – the blind, the deaf, the orthopedically impaired and one government organization case. Within the sector case studies are individual case studies of the specific organizations. The latter highlights the use of cyberspace tools and how it has empowered individual PWDs and their particular sector. Lastly, embedded within the organizational case studies are the individual stories (mini cases) of key actors in each of the specific organizations under study. These are personal stories and accomplishments of leaders, staff and program beneficiaries with a particular focus on their use of cyberspace and/or how it has opened new lifeworlds for them. Personal narratives were collected using interviews and analyzed using deductive use of theory, mainly Goffman’s theories of the presentation of the self, stigma and social behavior. Some narratives were gathered from the respondent’s organizational website, Facebook page and Youtube channel.
D. Data Sample

The following PWD organizations have been selected as case studies for this research to test the equalizing effect of cyberspace among PWDs:

1) **Manila Christian Computer Institute for the Deaf (MCCID)** is a non-sectarian, post-secondary, Christian foundation school for the deaf authorized by the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority, which offers non-degree computer and other technical training programs. It assists the hearing impaired in getting a better chance to compete for employment, education and other opportunities. They train call center agents, data encoders, etc.

2) **International Deaf Education Association of the Philippines.**

International Deaf Education Association (IDEA) is a US-registered non-profit foundation that is working to educate impoverished and neglected deaf children and blind children in the Philippines. IDEA is the founder and owner of Bohol Deaf Academy (BDA), both are located in the island of Bohol in the Visayas or Central Philippines. IDEA envisions a society in which the Deaf in the Philippines enjoy social and economic equality, exchanging isolation for community, servitude for self-reliance. Although, prioritizing the deaf, IDEA also serves the blind children of the Philippines.

3) **Bohol Deaf Academy**

**Bohol Deaf Academy** is a private, Christian, residential high school for the Deaf. Established in 2005, we are accredited as an outstanding school by the Philippine Department of Education. Our curriculum includes both standard high school
coursework and extensive vocational training subjects. At Bohol Deaf Academy (BDA) the students are exposed to so much more than just reading, writing, and math. Besides having the standard academics they are trained in independent living skills, work skills, and Christian values.

4) ATRIEV (Adaptive Technology for Rehabilitation, Integration and Empowerment of the Visually Impaired) is a not-for-profit organization and the only IT-based school for the blind that facilitates access to post-secondary education, mainstream employment, and similar opportunities using assistive/adaptive technologies. It provides adaptive technology through a systematic partnership with educational institutions, private businesses, local government units and specialized interest groups.

5) Resources for the Blind - Philippines

Resources for the Blind (RBI) is a non-profit organization devoted to removing the obstacles that prevent blind Filipinos from reaching the fullest potential that God has for them. This involves counseling, rehabilitation, education, and training. It is also actively involved in preventing blindness and in restoring sight whenever possible.

1) Tahanang Walang Hagdanan (House without any steps)

Tahanang Walang Hagdanan (TWH) Incorporated has been existence for 38 years. It is a non-stock, non-profit organization that aims to uplifts the lives of orthopedically impaired persons. It is a rehabilitation and skills training center with sheltered workshops where PWD are trained to be productive and self-reliant members of society.
7. **Nova Foundation** - Nova Foundation has been established to promote the full participation, total access, economic and social integration of PWD by assisting them to identify and reach their career goals. It leads the advocacy for awareness on the potentials of differently-abled individuals. It provides PWD youth skills training to find gainful employment. It provides assistance in developing skills and the correct mindset to enable them to work within a corporate environment. It has trained call center agents, web developers, data encoders, administrative clerks, etc.

8) **Autism Society of the Philippines**

   Autism Society Philippines (ASP) is a national, non-profit organization dedicated to the wellbeing of persons with autism spectrum disorder. It is comprised of families, teachers, therapists, institutions and other individuals whose lives are affected by autism. They envision an environment that empowers persons with autism spectrum disorder to become, to the best of their potentials, self-reliant, productive and socially accepted members of the community.

9) **National Council on Disability Affairs**

   The **National Council on Disability Affairs** (NCDA) is the national government agency mandated to formulate policies and coordinate the activities of all agencies, whether public or private, concerning disability issues and concerns. As such, the NCDA is the lead agency tasked to steer the course of program development for persons with disabilities and the delivery of services to the sector.

   Samples were selected based on desired representation of all major disability
types and per actual observation of significant online and offline activities. All of the case studies have been previously observed for my Certificate Disabilities Studies paper submitted in May 2010.

E. Significance and Limitations of the Research Study

In general, this study seeks to contribute to theory development in the Sociology of Disability and Disability Studies. The Sociology of Disability employs theories, research and insights to advance understanding of the social structures and processes which create and perpetuate unequal power relationships between the disabled and non-disabled which result in oppressive practices and relationships (Tomlinson 1997:1). Along these lines, this study intends to interject the variable of cyberspace in this schema and test how it can be an equalizer or affect unequal power relationships. It will test how disability is treated as impairment, a disadvantage or a form of social oppression and how does cyberspace figure in this debate?

It is also purposely undertaken to contribute to the oriental conceptions of disability studies literature in contrast to the more predominant western concepts. Locally, it is important in formally developing a chronicle of the history of disability in the Philippines that has never been done before. The Philippine case tests the application of western and developed world theories to oriental and developing world context. Practically, the effective integration of the abovementioned academic disciplines is envisioned to impact the quality of life of PWD in the Philippines. Disability Studies is known for its influence to policy and practice in developed countries and this research
tests these western conceptions and experience in a developing country as the
Philippines. I will scrutinize how Internet has enhanced connectiveness in the PWD
social movements, and how global economies have included the disabled. Finally, I
have offered my research to the PWD Council as a start-up research for the pioneering
work to formally establish a Disability Studies discipline in the Philippine academe.
Reports around the world attest to the fact that disability studies have been a powerful
influence on policy and practice in regards to PWD. It has the power to pass the word
and serve as a catalyst to shape disability culture and discourse (Brown 2003).
Discourse makes social change a visible event, worthy of description, publication and
circulation (Robillard 1992:1).

However, the observation of the websites as PWD social products is from
January 2010 to October 2011. Observations are noted every semester, which started
in Spring 2010. The focus of the research is on the strategic and programmatic content
and not its time-based contents. Finally, the nine (9) organizations were chosen for
their representativeness of the different disability types and demonstrated engagement
in cyberspace that offers empirical evidence for the social phenomenon under study.
CHAPTER III

WHAT IS SO DISABLING ABOUT DISABILITY IN THE PHILIPPINES AND WHAT ENABLES THE DISABILITY MOVEMENT?

A. WHO IS “DISABLED,” AND WHAT IS THEIR SITUATION?

The Philippines is a developing country in Southeast Asia with a population of 93M (World Bank, 2010). The population of PWD is about 940,000 people (1.23% of the population at large) according to the census executed in 2000. Statistics on disability in the Philippines have not been properly established. There is still heavy reliance on World Health Organization estimates that 10% of every country’s given population has some form of disability (ADB, 2005). Philippine population is growing at the very high rate of 2.36% per year. At this rate, more than 5,000 people are born every day in a country where the number of poor people has increased by more than four million since 1985. The population is projected to reach 111 million by 2015. A growing population readily translates to a growing population of people with disabilities who will need basic services such as health, education and livelihood. The situation is bleak not only for persons with disabilities but for the majority (70%) of the people who live below poverty line.

It is estimated that one in 20 households have at least one member with disability. Low vision was noted as the most common disability with three out of eight (37.41%) PWD’s having this disability, followed by partial blindness (8.14%), mental illness (7.14%), mental retardation (7.02 percent) and multiple impairments comprised 2.92%. Again, this is based on “registered” PWDs, which is only 1.23% of the total population of PWDs. Aside from the lack of government funding to do a more detailed census of PWDs, Filipino families do not readily register their disabled family members.
due to “stigma” and thus data collection is problematic (ADB 2002; NCSO 2005).

Figure 1. Percent Distribution of Persons with Disability by Type of Disability: 2000

Legal Definition

Persons with Disabilities (PWD) in RP are legally defined as follows:

1. As defined by the Accessibility Law (Batas Pambansa #344): “those suffering from restriction or lack of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being as a result of a mental, physical, or sensory impairment.”

2. As defined by the Economic Independence of Disabled Persons Act (Exec Order 417): “persons who cannot perform work in the usual and customary way due to loss of limbs or any part of the body by injury or absence thereof by birth.”

3. As defined by the Magna Carta for Disabled Persons (Republic Act 7727): “those persons suffering from restrictions from different abilities as a result of a mental, physical, and sensory impairment, to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being.”

History and Cultural Attitudes toward Disability

Culturally-speaking, there are disability views and values that have remain resilient through the years, particularly those pertaining to the care of a disabled family member. In general, Filipinos tend to cope with illness and disability through the help of
family, friends, and faith in God. Some families view children with mental handicaps as “bringers of luck” especially in business; others think of it as punishment or the illness is caused by “mystical, personalistic, or naturalistic causes.” Causes include punishment by evil spirits, the environment or genetic susceptibility. But, whatever the cause, due to the overriding obligation to family, Filipinos generally accept and fight for their disabled family members, sacrificing time, effort, career, and sometimes marriage, in order to take care of a sibling or parent. Disability would at first receive shock, disbelief and frustration but this is later on replaced with acceptance patience, tolerance, and understanding, while learning how to cope with guilt, pity, rejection or stigma. Parents adjust to their roles and make the child with disability the priority. It is not uncommon to see families who ask their other children to stop going to school to assist in taking care of the disabled child. Family members feel obligated to adjust their lives and priorities to meet the disabled family member needs (Shapiro from the Asian Culture Brief, n.d.).

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) reports that “public perceptions about disability have improved through the years.” Said improvement ranges from charity to sympathy and some notes on empowerment: “people giving money or in-kind donations to PWD. Others support the institutionalization of the disabled and there are those who argue that what is needed is equal treatment and equal access to development opportunities (ADB 2002). From these narratives, it may be deduced that there is an evolving view of disability as evidenced by politically-enhanced terminologies and legislations. It is finding and forming a social meaning within the social, political and cultural context of the Philippines.
Socio-Economic Conditions of the Disabled

Poverty is a major concern of the Philippine Government. It cuts across all sectors in society. Several poverty reduction programs have been formulated and implemented, but assessments of these have shown that little impact was made to improve the situation of the poor, including the disabled. Persons with disabilities are generally among the poorest of the poor both in urban and in rural communities. Mainstream poverty reduction programs of the government do not necessarily address the needs of persons with disability, the majority of whom live the proverbial “hand-to-mouth” existence. PWDs are consistently excluded from basic social services because of a lack of data on their number and their disabilities, among other reasons.

The lack of access to basic social services characterizes the poor, especially persons with disabilities. Most receive basic education but have less tertiary schooling. National Statistics Office (NSO) figures show that poverty incidence is highest among those who did not finish elementary education (37.8%) and those who only finished sixth grade (30.8%). Further, the country’s Medium Term Development Plan 2001-2004 found that for most of the poor, access to hospitals, or to the benefits of government subsidy/programs on health, public housing, livelihood and credit is limited. There is low access to public infrastructure in poor areas.

In-depth studies that examine the conditions of Philippine PWDs especially across disability are very limited, with only case studies being available and with statistics being very rare. This lack of information on the conditions of PWDs becomes a problem in coming up with appropriate programs for them. In response to this, the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) collaborated in August 2008 with the Institute of Developing Economies (IDE) of Japan, a semi-governmental research institute working for international cooperation between developing countries and Japan, to undertake a survey on PWDs in Metro Manila. The survey covered four Metro Manila cities, namely, Makati, Pasay, Valenzuela, and Quezon City, and was conducted in
partnership with the Social Welfare Office of each of these cities and various PWD organizations. The objective of the survey was to gather the socioeconomic profile and livelihood sources of PWDs as well as their access to programs and awareness of existing government policies aimed at improving their living conditions. Although limited in scope and sample, this study offers significant indicators and insights that are useful in contextualizing this research.

This relatively new particular survey of PWDs in Metro Manila validates previous findings and projections that Filipino PWDs continue to suffer from “a low employment rate.” Only half of the survey’s respondents had income-generating jobs and half were looking for jobs. A greater proportion of men (57%) had jobs compared to women (40%). The visually impaired had the highest proportion with jobs (72%) followed by the mobility-impaired (44%) and the hearing-impaired (32%).

Among those with jobs, 65 percent were visually impaired who work as masseurs and seem to have found their niche on this type of job. Because of this, their group had the highest employment ratio among the three types of impairment surveyed. On the other hand, 24 percent of the hearing-impaired with jobs worked as aide, helper, or messenger; 15 percent were working in the construction industry as helper, carpenter, maintenance worker, painter, or laborer; another 12 percent. Among the types of impairment, the mobility-impaired had the largest percentage (at 30 percent) inclined toward some types of business. The visually impaired came next at 25 percent while the hearing-impaired had the lowest proportion at 16 percent. Among the business ventures that they were engaged in were stores, street vending, room/house renting, umbrella

Major sources of income differed according to the types of impairment. For the mobility-impaired, the largest proportion of their income came from earnings in business while for the visually impaired, wages and salaries mattered the most. On the other hand, the hearing-impaired obtained most of their income from money received from family and friends. The hearing-impaired therefore can be considered as the least independent among the PWDs interviewed. The visually impaired PWDs have higher average incomes than the hearing-impaired and mobility-impaired. The average income for the year of the visually impaired with jobs was P76,270 while it was P45,667 for the hearing-impaired and P55,681 for the mobility-impaired. Note that 69 percent of the mobility-impaired earned higher than the poverty threshold.

The key to determining the income of PWD is gender and education. In a deeper analysis of the survey data, Soya and Yamagata (2009) concluded that female PWDs are less privileged than male PWDs even with the same level of education, age, marital status, and type of disability. There is a large variation in terms of income and level of education among PWDs where the higher the educational attainment the higher the income. Highly educated PWDs earn substantially higher incomes than those with little or no education. Their study also revealed that both the incidence and depth of poverty are higher among sample PWDs than those of the total population in Metro Manila. PIDS survey data further suggests that urban-based PWDs are involved in at least one disability self-help organization. When asked about the activities of their organization
wherein they got involved, the most common activities mentioned were socialization (the most popular), occupational trainings and learning. Other activities included were advocacy campaigns and lobbying.

**B. WHAT CAUSES DISABILITY?**

The Philippine Health Department has identified malnutrition and unsanitary living conditions (especially among the urban slum dwellers) due to extreme poverty as the most significant causes of disability, especially among children. Its report indicates that prevalence of disability among children 0-14 years is highest in urban slum communities and in rural areas where health services are limited, if not inaccessible. Another health-related cause is poor prenatal care. The practice of seeking the help of *hilots* (traditional birth attendants) sometimes causes accidents that result in disability among newborn babies. Lastly, the armed conflict and unstable peace and order situation, particularly in Mindanao, and pockets of communist insurgency and terrorism erupting time and again across the islands are likewise causes of disability in the country (ADB 2002:iii).

In general, disability is viewed differently depending on a particular sector of Philippine society. To families, family members with disability should be taken care of and not rejected. To the government, it is a poverty alleviation and development issue that needs intervention in terms of legislation, education and various programs. These views generally subscribe to a social model, human rights perspective and social justice model of disability. Nonetheless, implementation suffers at the community level because most local government officials are reluctant to support efforts for the disabled, e.g.
education, because they think that providing special needs education entails a lot of expenses (ADB 2002:18). The government’s main challenge remains to reduce the incidence of poverty among the poorest of the poor. Persons with disabilities continue to live under deplorable conditions with most of their needs unmet and their issues unaddressed by concerned agencies of government.

What are the laws that are designed to enable the disabled? Foremost and the basis of it all is – “Section 11, Article XIII, of the 1987 Constitution,” which declares that “the State shall adopt an integrated and comprehensive approach to health development which shall endeavor to make essential goods, health and other social services available to all the people at affordable cost. There shall be priority for the needs of the under-privileged sick, elderly, disabled, women and children. The State shall endeavor to provide free medical care to paupers.”

Next is the landmark legislation “Republic Act No. 7277, otherwise known as the Magna Carta for Disabled Persons,” expressly provides that “people with disabilities shall be given rehabilitation, opportunities for self-development and self-reliance to prepare them for full integration into the mainstream of society.” Republic Act No. 8425, otherwise known as the Social Reform Act Provides for the poverty-alleviation of the basic sectors including persons with disabilities.

The rights of PWDs in the Philippines have been covered by the enactment of the Philippine Republic Constitution in 1987, the promulgation of the Republic Act No. 7277 (alias “Magna Carta of Persons with Disabilities (Great charter)”) in 1992 and the promulgation of the Republic Act No. 9442 (articles of amendment on the Magna Carta)
The term “persons with disabilities” is a recent change under the Republic Act 9442 (2007), which amended Republic Act 7727 (1992). PWD’s used to be called “handicapped” and later on “disabled persons” in preceding legislations. Presidential Decree No. 1509 (1970), one of the earliest PWD legislations called the disabled “handicap.” An old and enduring theme is the “rehabilitation” of the disabled which in the more recent times changed to self-determination. Indeed, disability perspectives have adapted to the changing times, conditions and developments in the world. Amendments indicate that disability is an evolving social construct in Philippine psyche and policy environment, but they do not readily translate to social change that directly impact the improvement of the lives of PWDs.

The Biwako Millennium Framework which promotes a rights-based, barrier-free and inclusive society for persons with disabilities is supported by Philippine Proclamation No. 240 “Declaring the period 2003-2012 as the Philippine Decade of Persons with Disabilities.”

Republic Act No. 7160 known as the Local Government Code of 1991 mandates the devolution of services to the local government units (LGUs); and with Executive Order 437 “encouraging” LGUs to provide comprehensive rehabilitation services and promote the rights and empowerment of person with disabilities. Note the specific wording of E.O. 437 as a legislative measure. I contend that the word “encourage” is not strong enough to move local government officials much more allocate funds to such a program. It has my observations in most LGUs is such to the detriment of PWDs.
C. DISABILITY SOCIAL MOVEMENT

There are several disability non-government organizations (NGOs) providing services to PWD. The NCDA offers to register them and these groups become a part of their network and under the PWD Basic Sector they become part of the National Anti-Poverty Commission. The government reaches out to these NGOs to enlist their support and assistance in providing services to the disability sector (ADB 2002:14).

The RP government, through its legislations, recognizes disability as a social, cultural and political phenomenon that is not to be cured or fixed but a human and social condition that needs to be effectively and innovatively addressed. The previous story, however, indicates that the demand is very high for disability awareness and consciousness, even within the very ranks that should be promoting the law. The immigration agent here has defined disability as a functional impairment: he is deaf and cannot speak therefore he cannot fly and work overseas. And they would have sealed his fate, if not for the intervention of the deaf social movement that brought in the Department of Justice. Common sense would dictate that baking does not need a lot of talking. But apparently, the resolution of the situation would call for the full operationalization of a rights-based, social justice framework of disability.

Principles and provisions that cover these human and social aspects are enshrined in the Philippine Magna Carta for Disabled Persons under Republic Act (RA) 7727, which is considered by the United Nations as a comprehensive disability law (ESCAP 2009). Policy instruments and structures that address the disabled Filipino as a person-first before a person with disability reject the idea that disability is merely a medical condition and functional impairment. There is a long list of disability laws found
in the National Commission on Disability Affairs (NCDA) website, but their implementation is questionable. For example, Access is still a remote dream, despite legislations in-place. There are no means of “accessible” transportation. Our buses and jeepneys cannot take wheelchair users. There are elevators in metro-rail systems but when “not out-of-order” they are swamped with non-disabled passengers. The trains are always jam-packed with commuters and no disabled would dare ride it for threats of further disabilities if not death. There are special “cars” in the rail system designated for women, elderly and disabled. I was a regular MRT commuter, and I have not seen disabled person even in the specially designated cars – no wheelchair user, no crutch-user, no blind person.

An in-depth examination of the scarce literature on disability in the Philippines led me to conceptualize and propose a “Pinoy” (Filipino) model of disability (See figure below). This framework attempts to provide a snapshot of the social construction of disability in the Philippines. The Filipino construction runs in somewhat a circular spectrum which views disability as a human condition that can be prevented, cured/rehabilitated, accepted positively as diversity, and engaged practically and progressively given new information economies and flexible labor relations. It is beset with poverty as its biggest barrier and bounded on the left by a perception that it is always a “problem-thing” and on the right with prejudice and stigma. But with the advent of cyberspace, international conventions, and other modern/post-modern developments, new objectives have been introduced to the disability environment that validate empirical evidence of potentials/possibilities, participation/performance and disability culture and pride in the global world. See Figure 2 below.
The following are the real challenges and policy issues as far as internet access is concerned (Umali and Paragas 2004:247; Karan 2004:247)

- Legislation that will ensure telcos do not subsidize their other services while at the same time competing with companies engaged in the same service
- Programs that will help communities realize the value of IT tools and encourage them to take ownership of IT-related projects (Sanchez 2003)
- The transformation of internet cafes into “computer laboratories” for distance education (Oliva 2002);
- The regulation of the pricing of ISPs and other upstream supplies such as telephone service providers and bandwidth sellers (Asia Internet 1999b: PISO 2003)
- The monitoring of interconnectivity problems that lead to unreliable and expensive telecom services (Newsflash.org, 2001)

Overall the sustainability of IT projects is a major obstacle to Internet connectivity especially in the rural areas. As the ITU (2002) has noted, “there is no shortage of
programs and ideas” for IT in the Philippines. The problem lies in translating these programs into concrete action, which applies to disability sector as well.

In sum, there are more policies and government practices to enumerate and critique, and essentially the verdict is - there remains a big gap between disability policy and implementation (ADB 2002; JICA 2003). It needs a spirited and innovative boost. Towards this end, I would like to use four principles for strategic action from the ADB (2002) that are recommended to address the current disability context. These are the principles of inclusion, participation, access and quality. Regardless if it is a social, economic, political and cultural intervention – it should ensure inclusion, participation of PWDs and their access to quality programs and services.

1. **Inclusion:** According to the ADB report, PWD need to be visible to society, and in order to be visible they need to be “included.” Inclusion should all be provided under a “doable” and responsive National Plan of Action that translates into programs and services the provisions of RA 7277 or the Magna Carta for Disabled Persons. It should start with Accessibility Law and other disability-related policies and commitments that prioritize inclusion such as transportation, education and assistive technologies. Moreover, renewed efforts must be made for the collection of comprehensive, accurate and updated data/information on disability that can be disaggregated according to a vast range of variables as a basis for effecting planning and implementation of services and progress monitoring and evaluation, among other important issues. When the PWDs are not counted, they are not included and the neglect would be perpetuated.
Information is power. It provides the opportunity to be informed and included. ADB suggests that information and education about disability and related policies should be pursued vigorously to enhance inclusion by society (schools, public places such as transport, markets, malls, etc), economic institutions (training and employment venues), political processes (election, representation in decision-making) and cultural organizations. Technology can enhance inclusion hence, government is persuaded to consider seriously the need to provide assistive devices to persons with disabilities in order to facilitate their inclusion in education, employment and other mainstream activities and entitlements. Continued failure in this area critically limits the opportunities of millions of PWD to participate equally and fully and live productive lives. Many PWD groups argue that current efforts are piecemeal, insufficient and not institutionalized.

2) Participation: ADB recommends that individual PWDs and their organizations must have a voice in decisions that affect their lives and their communities. Concerned government and NGO representatives and their organizations are encouraged to be involved in multi-sectoral collaborations, dialogue and consultations where disability issues are discussed in relation to the national development agenda and priorities. The government is called to ensure that PWDs and their representative organizations are regularly consulted in social, economic, political and cultural venues, and that their ideas, issues are used as a basis for the Government’s position and programs of action.

3) Access: Removing barriers and creating opportunities to access all services and resources within a community is a priority if we are to see improvements in the lives of PWDs. Access requires that people with disabilities and other stakeholders are
informed and aware of disability issues and have access to available data (i.e. demographics) on disability. Both national and local governments must demonstrate greater political will and commitment to enforce laws that will remove the barriers that significantly limit access to basic services and the environment. While the Philippines passed an accessibility law more than 20 years ago, most of the provisions of the law are not enforced. It must be given priority attention and funding. With the advent of ICT, access has been redefined and clarified to include access to information and communication. Developing a physical environment that is conducive for all, PWDs and non-PWDs alike, is very important. This includes promoting barrier-free designs of housing systems and buildings, including schools, malls, streets, public areas, and offices, that guarantee continuity of space to ensure accessibility for all. Unless barriers are eliminated, PWD will not be able to participate fully in various activities in society nor be able to avail equally of the opportunities that exist.

4) Quality. Implementation without quality defeats the purpose of policies and programs. The Department of Transportation and Communication sure does provide elevators in the Metro Rail System but it is always broken. PWDs cannot use it. How then does that serve the purpose of quality service? Further, PWDs can achieve quality of life through acquiring knowledge and capacity building. Education is a key factor to ensure improvement in the quality of life of persons with disabilities in general. Government strives to institute measures to significantly increase the number of children with disabilities included in educational services from the current levels of 3-5 percent but still lags in this area.
5) **Local government involvement** – LGUs need to be mandated not just encouraged to serve the needs of PWDs. For one, it is critical for LGUs to accelerate the profiling of PWDs in their jurisdictions. PWDs will greatly benefit if LGUs (i.e., the social welfare office) can fast-track the issuance of ID cards to them so that they can avail of the discounts for various services that they need. Key to this is the close coordination between the city social welfare office (CSWO) and the barangay/village health workers (BHW). What the survey found out was that the lists of PWDs in many parts of the cities during the time of the survey were still with the BHWs and were still due for submission to the CSWO. Fast-tracking this is very necessary for PWDs to be able to avail of discounts and other benefits due them as mandated by law. The profiling would facilitate the conduct of research on PWDs and could in turn provide inputs to policymakers in the formulation of policies and programs for PWDs.

5. **Information and Education** - There is an urgent need for more intensified dissemination of information on the programs and policies involving PWDs at the national and, more importantly, local level. At the national level, informing not only PWDs but also the general population on the rights and privileges of PWDs should be prioritized. The media can play a big role in this. The local government levels (both city and barangay levels), meanwhile, which have a closer proximity to the PWDs themselves and their organizations, should ensure that their constituents are properly informed of the programs and policies concerning PWDs. Enforcing anti-discriminatory laws and equal opportunities in the employment sector for the PWDs is a must. This should not only form part of the written laws but should also be enforced in the strictest way. This is definitely a vital component in helping PWDs live more independent lives.
CHAPTER IV

CYBERSPACE AS LOOKING-GLASS, SO THE BLIND CAN SEE

How the blind can “see” a brighter future in life, and how he or she is motivated to search and find opportunities in the global economy is the running theme of this first set of case studies. It is made possible through assistive technologies that although expensive are made accessible to poor and disadvantaged blind Filipinos through multi-agent action channeled through the Adaptive Technology for Rehabilitation, Integration and Empowerment of the Visually Impaired (ATRIEV) and the Resources for the Blind Incorporated (RBI). Although both urban-based, they have satellite offices, programs and projects in the rural areas and they do make extra provisions for students coming from the provinces. They are also both Christianity-based in terms of values and originally pioneered by Christian missionaries. Pastor Tony Llanes for ATRIEV and Dr Arthur Lown for RBI. Together, armed by their lean and mean but committed staff, these two organizations make a case for the blind in the Philippines. I first visited ATRIEV located in Cubao at the heart of Metro Manila and it encouraged me to go to RBI for further research. There is no competition between the two and they practically work as team to serve the visually-impaired (VI) sector. They share information, resources and complement each other’s work in helping their blind beneficiaries. Figure __ below describes how the two organizations manage impression through cyberspace. What tools do they and what lifeworlds are opened as a result of these activities. ATRIEV is more technology-based, while RBI is more comprehensive in its approach. The former is basically concerned about computer training and employing the blind in
ICT field. On the other hand, RBI is involved in the entire life-cycle of a blind person. They have programs for children, young people, adults and even old people. But together they complement each other in serving their target beneficiaries. See Table 4 below for the findings that make the case for the blind in the Philippines.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Making a case for the blind</th>
<th>Impression management thru</th>
<th>Lifeworlds introduced</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Resources for the Blind -Quezon City -Cebu, Davao > | Website, support for scholarships & production of Braille books; frontline services | Education for blind children/youth  
Friendships / Social relationships for the blind  
Showcase of talents  
Larger community |
| Adaptive Technology, Rehabilitation, Integration and Empowerment for the Visually Impaired -Quezon City > | Website Youtube Channel Alona Bateg story Angel Balasbas story Genashtim videos | Employment for blind who had training on computer operation and BPOs (medical transcription, call center) |

A. Adaptive Technology for Rehabilitation, Integration and Empowerment of the Visually Impaired (ATRIEV)

"There are some things in life that are truly worth doing. And one of the most worthy is to help others, particularly those that are disadvantaged. ATRIEV students and staff may not be able to see but they have a vision that goes way beyond sight." Mr. Peter L. Wallace, Chairman, Board of Directors, ATRIEV

In 1994, a group of blind computer enthusiasts put up Adaptive Technology for Rehabilitation, Integration and Empowerment of the Visually Impaired (ATRIEV) as the only computer school for the blind in the Philippines. Their goal was to come up with
innovative ways to help visually impaired people find educational and employment opportunities, which were not there before. At a time when training institutions for the blind are competing in massage and music training, ATRIEV pioneers looked into how technology can change their lives and the way society look at the blind. ATRIEV persisted through the years and has produced the first Filipino blind medical transcriptionist, the first Filipino blind recruitment specialist in a multinational call center company, the first visually impaired SEO manager, the first visually impaired web content writers, programmers and telesales agents. All these were possible with the use of adaptive technology that translates every keystroke and screen change into speech output. Now, the blind can gain access to post-secondary education, mainstream employment, and other opportunities through adaptive technology. It includes screen reader software that provides every stroke of the keyboard and click of the mouse with a vocal response. It allows the blind to have confidence in word processing, e-mail and even Web surfing, knowing that whatever is on the screen will be spoken aloud for instant feedback.

This case study consists of the review of ATRIEV organization, its programs, projects and its management that have been gathered online and observed in their physical location in Cubao, Quezon City. It is also contains the stories of its three leaders, Antonio Llanes, Carol Catacutan and Des Borgonia, all stalwarts in the VI sector in the Philippines. It also includes the extraordinary story of one of its beneficiaries, Alona Bateg, the first female blind medical transcriptionist in Asia. As of 2011, ATRIEV has directly and indirectly trained over 400 young blind adults and have
introduced more than 100 blind grade school kids to information technology. Over 100 special Education teachers, rehabilitation workers, university instructors and parents of blind children have also benefited from the trainers' training programs of the organization. Aside from training, they also offer “SERVICES” since 1994. ATRIEV has skillfully woven together private business enterprise and government agencies to support demand-driven programs for the blind. Because of the organization’s expertise in information and communications technology, it has trained blind persons and staff to provide many services through their “Technical Support, Access and Resource Center. This JAWS-equipped Internet café and technical support center is a frontline operation of ATRIEV. It is open to all from Monday thru Friday, 8:30 AM to 5:30 PM, with computer rental / internet access, computer repair and troubleshooting, Braille embossing, text-to-Braille translation, text-to-audio translation, printing (laser or inkjet), image / document scanning, CD/DVD burning, video transfer (VHS, VCD, DVD), audio transfer, LCD projector rental, and other services at reasonable and competitive rates. This is located at the 2nd Floor, 1680 E. Rodriguez Boulevard, Barangay Immaculate Concepcion Cubao, Quezon City, Philippines

ATRIEV Website

The ATRIEV website presents the identity, history and successes of ATRIEV as an organization, and the individual staff and members comprising it. It also serves as their information, announcement and advocacy platform. The ATRIEV homepage banners the superordinate goals (vision, mission and thrusts) of this computer school for the blind. It presented on its banner pages are links to the ATRIEV Facebook page
and YouTube Channel. Interestingly, ATRIEV has the most number of videos amongst all the organizations in my sample. Interestingly, the blind, which cannot see, clearly wants to be seen. See Figure/Photo #3 below for the ATRIEV Homepage.

Vision-Mission

ATRIEV’s vision is “to be the leader in Information Communications Technology (ICT) education producing socially-responsible, technically-competent and employable blind and visually impaired persons through a network of committed government organizations (GOs), non-government organizations (NGOs) and private business sector in a barrier free society.”

ATRIEV’s mission is “To use and promote assistive technology to facilitate the rehabilitation, integration, and empowerment of the visually impaired sector in the country, to capitalize on the unique skills and continue to harness the strengths of each employee, and to continuously strive to become a sustainable organization.”
Main Thrusts

- Skills development program through computer literacy training and related specialized training programs for visually impaired persons and for professionals dealing with visual impairment
- Job placement through employers’ education/sensitization and job matching
- Technical assistance to persons with visual impairment for equal access to Information Technology through the use of adaptive hardware/software
- Provision of adaptive technology through a systematic partnership with educational institutions, private businesses, local government units and interest groups

The website highlights the “Training Programs and Other Services” which its core project that provides computer training for the visually impaired. ATRIEV implements this in partnership with the Overbrook-Nippon Network on Educational Technology (ON-NET), Christoffel-Blindenmission / Christian Blind Mission (CBM), Lilianne Foundation Philippines, Commission on Information and Communications Technology (CICT)/National Computer Center (NCC) among others. For a minimal fee, ATRIEV offers regular training courses and special tutorials for blind and visually impaired persons and for people working with/for persons with visual impairment. Training programs include: PC Operations with Access Technology, Training of Trainers in Access Technology for the Visually Impaired, Trainors’ training on the use of a Screen Reader in Open source Platforms, Transcription training, One-on-one tutorial, English Language Communication (ELC), Software and hardware support and troubleshooting related to the use of screen reader software, disability awareness briefings and sensitivity workshops, computer skills demonstrations and transcription services.

TEAM ATRIEV: Key actors in the mission to empower the blind

A significant contribution of the ATRIEV case is Team ATRIEVE, or in Goffman’s sociological sense, the “actors, their roles and performance in the visually-impaired (VI) sector through ATRIEV. Operationally, three (3) totally blind individuals founded, lead and run ATRIEV. Organizationally, the ATRIEV leadership consists of nine (9)
members of the Board of Trustees from various business groups, nine (9) full-time employees and part-time volunteers. ATRIEV is an established partner of the government in administering computer-based government examinations for blind examinees (Civil Service examination in 1999, Technical Education and Skills Development Authority’s scholarship examination since 2001 and TESDA Assessment Exam for blind trainers in 2008). It has been bestowed several awards and has been appointed as consultant for various projects nationwide. It has partnerships with government agencies, non-government organizations and private business enterprises in carrying out its mission. These are just some of the results of performing their roles in the organization. The question is what is behind the ‘performance’ and how did it yield tangible results in real life? Let us examine the success narratives of Antonio Llanes, Jr (Executive Director), and Lourdes “Desse” B. Borgonia, (Chief Trainer) and complemented by part-time staff and volunteers.

**ANTONIO “TONY” D. LLANES JR, Executive Director**

Tony Llanes is a pastor, pioneer, trainer and founding President of ATRIEV. He also took the active position of heading its Programs Unit. He has a natural talent for anything technical. Though low vision since birth, his blindness did not stop him from learning how to repair audio equipment, refrigerators and even computers.

Tony is an innate pioneer. When no one else in the Philippines has dared to use the computer, he was already experimenting with speech boxes so that the blind can gain access to computer-based information. Tony goes beyond the exploration and experimentation. After his discoveries, he makes it a point to share the information and skill with others.

As a teacher, Tony is well loved by his students—whether sightless or sighted. He tediously explains every topic there is about using computers. He graciously taught
me the assistive technology features of my Macbook which I previously did not know.

Because of Tony’s unparalleled contribution to the blind community through ATRIEV, he was the sole blind awardee of the “Go Negosyo Most Inspiring PWDs for 2007” given by the Philippine Center for Entrepreneurship headed by Jose Maria Concepcion III.

In 2008, Tony received yet another prestigious award. In celebration of RFM’s milestone of 50 golden years in the industry, the “Yes The Filipino Can! Awards,” spearheaded by RFM chairman Jose Ma. “JoeCon” Concepcion Jr. and RFM president and CEO Jose Ma. “Joey” Concepcion III, recognized Filipinos who have greatly contributed to improving lives and empowering their countrymen. A total of 11 individuals and institutions received the distinguished award led by no less than Sen. Juan Flavier. ATRIEV’s Antonio Llanes Jr. was the one and only PWD awardee for his unparalleled work in information technology for the blind. The ceremonies were held on October 13, 2008 at the NBC Tent.

Now in his golden age, Tony has renewed his vocation as a pastor. He continues to develop the next generation of ATRIEV leaders so that he can serve God full time. He continues to think of creative ways to elicit more than donations for ATRIEV, he goes for sustainable livelihood operations. As far as this study is concern, his performance has produced social relations, such as education and business for ATRIEV. Lastly, Tony attributes the milestones and achievements of ATRIEV to the multi-agent action backing them. (They are too many to list, please see Appendix _____ for the long list of milestones). These milestones have opened up lifeworlds and “accomplishment spaces.” The continuing performance of these activities signify that ATRIEV is able to privilege what it has for the blind and disability sector and that through it, social relations and structures are produced and reproduced. If they are HIRED, employer-employee relations are established. If benefactors and partners SHARE equipment, supplies and other resources, support-beneficiary relations are born. If donors GIVE, donor-beneficiary relations are borne and maybe perpetuated.
LOURDES “DESSÉ” B. BORGONIA, Chief Trainer

Before I visited ATRIEV, I have seen Lourdes “Desse” Borgonia in video clips and have read about her in several PWD publications. She is the Chief Trainer and webmaster of ATRIEV. Desse is a multi-awarded web-designer and I felt so insecure that I hardly know WordPress. Accordingly, Desse is one of ATRIEV’s most hardworking, strictest and toughest training instructors. I surmised that she developed this from her upbringing.

Despite the odds—having a big family and living in a provincial town—Mr. And Mrs. Borgonia wasted no time in giving her the best education they can afford to their blind daughter. Desse attended primary school in Cagayan and completed her high school at the Philippine National School for the Blind—the only residential school in Metro Manila. In year 2000, Desse took her first computer training program in ATRIEV. Then she took a two-year E-Commerce course in STI Recto as one of TESDA’s scholars. In 2001, she bested sighted TESDA scholars in the National Capital Region when she received the Academic Excellence Award. She continued to reap more awards when she bagged the Webmaster Award for ATRIEV’s Disabled-Friendly Website in 2005.

Desse strongly believes in the power of cyberspace as an equalizer of PWD. She is a living proof of this truth. She prides herself of a great empowering job in ATRIEV. She is able to pursue her other talents as singing, swimming and other hobbies. She has also participated in various training programs overseas. She was the only blind competitor in the 2003 Abilympics held in India. She has represented ATRIEV in the JAWS scripting workshop held in Vietnam and web accessibility workshop held in Malaysia. Currently, as chief trainer of ATRIEV, she handles the main training course in Basic PC Operations. Since 2008, Desse acquired the crucial role as ATRIEV’s Mediator to Liliane Foundation Philippines, one of ATRIEV’s major partners. As a mediator, Desse works to identify the needs of ATRIEV’s blind clients and recommended to Liliane best practices to support them. She is adept in all of the
popular social networking tools and she continues to learn. Her experience as a totally blind person herself, gives her clear insight to the real needs and capabilities of blind people and their caregivers. Desse works with Tony and Carol in providing content and updating the ATRIEV website, but she does all the technical stuff. However, credit is due to Dess for the ATRIEV Youtube Channel which contains 25 videos. These videos exemplify Krippendorf's (2007) conceptualization of cyberspace, that is, the ability to move, act, create and describe. It is space for mobility and expanding possibilities. The videos are short, concise and crafted very well. The language is carefully selected and strategically woven to deliver a powerful message that deals with the stigma attached to the blind. The videos present very good arguments to the popular notion that the blind cannot do much because they cannot see. The ATRIEV Youtube Channel says otherwise. It is certainly an “accomplishment space” for the blind actors or speakers who participated in the audio-visual presentation. See Figure #4 below.
CAROLINA “CAROL” C. CATACUTAN, “Chief of Operations

The third hardworking performer in the ATRIEV front and backstage is Carol Catacutan. Though blind since age 11 due to *retinitis pigmentosa*, Carol is a Cum Laude graduate of Mass Communications from the University of the Philippines. (We are schoolmates as well and she was glad to hear from me that my goal is to establish a Center for Disability Studies in UP.) Carol's life story is found on the ATRIEV website, hence the interview just supplemented what already she has online. Carol plans to continue her teleplay writing someday soon. She dreams of writing her life story for commercial feel so that people can learn from her struggles and victories: “I truly believe that the greatest glory is not in never falling but in rising each time we fall.” She has gone through discrimination by school administrators and even by employers. She has also experienced rejection by the community she lives in and the people she has chosen to love. Through it all, she has remained steadfast and resilient. Currently, Carol is chief of operations, resource developer and teacher. She shared how she looks for funding opportunities and develops grants proposals. She also emphasized the importance of donor relations. ATRIEV plans and implements its programs in coordination and in cooperation with concerned government agencies and offices, and with private and non-profit organizations, especially those with programs for persons with disability, including:

- Overbrook-Nippon Network on Educational Technology (ON-NET)
- Christoffel BlindenMission/Christian Blind Mission (CBM)
- Technical Education and Skills Development authority (TESDA)
- Standard Chartered Bank Philippines
- Commission on Information and Communications Technology (CICT)
- National Council on Disability Affairs (NCDA)
- European IT Service center (EITSC)
The above list is not just a roster of companies or corporations, but the donors, partners, employers and clients of ATRIEV. To this study, these are audience, social relations and lifeworlds in the socio-economic arena that have opened up to the blind because they have had trainings and qualifications on computer technologies.

Carol makes sure that they acknowledge donors publicly and puts forward their commitment to them. She pointed out to me a message from one active donor, the European IT Service Center. First is from European IT Service Center and the second one is from ChristofelBlinden Mission (CBM). This is actual feedback from donor audiences and it demonstrates reception of ATRIEV performance as an organization.

“We congratulate the Adaptive Technology for Rehabilitation, Integration and Empowerment of the Visually Impaired (ATRIEV) for its dedication to empower persons with disabilities and to provide them career opportunities through training in information technology (IT).

We are convinced that the sector of Information Technology in its widest interpretation has become one of the sunrise sectors for the Philippines. The IT sector has grown substantially in recent years, but the full potential of the Philippines as a hub for IT and IT-enabled services has still to be developed. The challenges to be addressed by both government and the private sector in a public–private partnership range from effective marketing of the skills available in the country to creating the manpower resource to be able to catch the available business opportunities in all regions of the world.

ATRIEV is evidence that persons with disabilities can contribute and play a role in the growing IT industry. We share its vision of changing the lives of the blind through the use of computers.” - Dominic E. Sabado Executive Director

This letter from Dominic Sabado of the European IT Center confirms the viability of the ICT sector as a sunrise or new door of opportunities for PWDs. On the last paragraph, it acknowledges ATRIEV as a recognized player in the IT industry that they would like to continue working with.

Here is another message from Christofel Blinden Mission (CBM), South East Asia and Pacific Region)

“CBM – which celebrates its 100th anniversary this year, is happy to have made a small contribution towards getting ATRIEV up and running, and helping to meet some of the essential operational and training costs. ATRIEV is a very good example of a not-for-profit programme combining good governance, good management and good income-generation, in support of the challenging task of enabling visually impaired people to develop marketable skills, and get work.

One hundred years ago, the German Pastor Ernst Christoffel started CBM’s work when he opened...
schools for blind children in West Asia. From these small beginnings, CBM has grown to be a major international agency working with local partners to improve the quality of life of people with disabilities in over one hundred countries, using a twin-track strategy of technical and financial support for service delivery, together with advocacy for the right of all people with disabilities to be included in all aspects of life and work.

Thanks again to ATRIEV for its tremendous work, and for helping CBM to commemorate its centennial. As CBM’s strapline proclaims – “Together, we can do more!” --Michael Davies OBE

Michael Davies, explicitly lauds its exemplary performance and effective income-generating efforts. It conveys its appreciation for ATRIEV’s partnership through the years. What is the significance of the above to the actors and performance under discussion here? To this study, this is the audience’s response and reception of the ATRIEV actors. In Goffman’s dramaturgy, this is evidence of actor-audience consensus building. In Goggin and Newell’s terms, the web pages containing this messages are “accomplishment spaces” that indicate potentials for future accomplishments not just in the web but also in real life. But first of all the actors made it happen in real life.

ARMAN MENDOZA AND DON NAZ: Volunteer Staff and Protégés

They are blind but the leadership’s vision extends far and wide. Tony gave me a comprehensive tour of ATRIEV and oriented me on their typical year and typical day. They occupy two floors of that building in Aurora Boulevard, a prominent commercial district in Metro Manila. He also introduced me to volunteer instructors and students of ATRIEV. They explained to me the different training programs and equipment used by the blind to participate in cyberspace.

One of Tony’s protégé is Arman Mendoza, who teaches PC operation and the use of JAWS. Arman is a low vision masseur who wants to make a career change and ultimately change his life for the better. Arman comes from a family of blind persons. His
father is also low vision due to congenital cataract. His father fends for the family through massage while his mother is a homemaker. Three of the five children are also visually impaired who are all masseurs. Arman completed one year in college through the sponsorship of a foreign foundation. Arman told me that he uses email, facebook, YM for chats and Google and Yahoo as browser. He is generally comfortable with a Windows PC using his JAWS screen reader. Arman believes that blind people can be productive individuals other than just being masseurs. He hopes that the computer skills he will acquire through ATRIEV's training will open new opportunities in other fields. Arman plans to continue his collegiate studies majoring in information technology.

Another protégé is Don Naz, who is a 25-year-old B.S. Education graduate from Daraga, Albay. His father sent him through school by working as a tricycle driver. Don enjoyed a normal life until recently in 2009 when his sight started to deteriorate. He was diagnosed with retinitis pigmentosa, a progressive eye disease. As of this writing, Don can still read SMS messages but he is already color blind and suffering from night blindness. He wants to pursue a career in teaching. He believes that the computer literacy training in ATRIEV will help him in his chosen career. He is now in Manila exploring possibilities for employment. While his parents can still support his meals and lodging, he needs to find a suitable job very soon in order to support himself. Don is asking for your support for the Php25,000.00 or $600 USD tuition fee for the PC Operations training. He believes that he is already equipped with the proper educational background. All he needs is to acquire the computer skills to make him more competitive in the job market. Don uses email, facebook, YM and is PC user, too.
ALONA BATEG: First Female Medical Transcriptionist in Asia

Alona Bateg is a beneficiary of ATRIEV training. She is recorded in the blind sector history as the first female blind medical transcriptionist in Asia. Alona is from Baguio city and had to live in Quezon City for eight months in order to attend the Medical Transcription Training. She has six children and had to bring two of them with her. The older one is Eliza, who became her mother’s guide throughout the training period. The second one is the baby who has still breastfeeding and cannot be left alone with also visually-impaired husband. Both kids are sighted. After the training, Alona went back to Baguio and waited for more than a year before she had the call for interview. According to the Top Source Medical Transcriptions, the employer, Alona was given the same requirements, battery of tests and interviews as the sighted applicants. She passed it with flying colors and has been with this company after she was hired in 2008. See Alona Bateg’ story published by ATRIEV on this link http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kLeU38g0hNE&feature=related.

B. RESOURCES FOR THE BLIND, INCORPORATED (RBI): The Philippine Government’s Hardworking Partner in Educating the Blind nationwide

Resources for the Blind (RBI) began as a personal project of Dr. Arthur Lown to produce a braille version of the Filipino Bible. Blind since childhood, Dr. Lown had retired as Director of the Atlanta Public Schools Services for Blind Students in 1970 and moved from the United States to the Philippines to serve as the administrator of the Manila branch of the Summer Institute of Linguistics. In 1980, three blind Filipino pastors, learning about Dr. Lown's interest in Bible translation, visited him to request his
help in transcribing the Filipino Bible into braille. Thus began the first project of what would become RBI the non-profit organization.

Virtual Identity through the RBI Website

Similar to other PWD websites studied, the RBI website presents upfront its identity, who they are and what type of disability they cater to, their proud history and what they do. They present it in a manner that starts with the problem and its related challenges. It is followed by solutions in the form of strategies, program and projects, and how well they are doing now as a result of years of courage and resourcefulness. See Figure #5 below for the RBI Homepage.
I was able to interview Mayette Galang, the Administrative Officer of RBI. She granted me an interview and gave me a tour of the RBI main office, which is located in Cubao, Quezon City. For Programs and Projects, RBI focuses on producing reading materials, which are perpetually deficient in the Philippine educational system.

Braille textbooks are the key to a blind student's successful integration into a regular school. With braille textbooks, a blind child has access to all the same information that the sighted students have. Without a braille textbook, they have to find a way to get the information second hand. Our Philippine Braille Technology Center was set up to ensure that blind students have the braille books they need to succeed in school. Because of the continually changing curriculum, most of our time is spent in encoding new textbooks into the computer and preparing them for brailling. Approximately 5000 volumes of textbooks are sent out each year to students around the country.

RBI established and operates its own Philippine Braille Technology Production Center. Mayette explains that conventional methods of producing braille material are simply not adequate to meet the needs of blind Filipino readers. Braille must be made available in larger quantities and in shorter production times than what is currently available. I was happy to hear that RBI recognizes that for them - computer technology is providing the solution to this problem. By encoding the text into a computer file, and by using small, computer driven braille embossers, many copies can be quickly produced. What might have taken months to produce by hand before, can now be produced in minutes. Mayette was proud to say that they are now using the latest technology in our Philippine Braille Technology Center to produce up to one million pages of braille materials per year.

Related to its Braille books, RBI is publishing "Insight" and "Double Yum", are the only braille periodicals produced in the Philippines for the blind. In order to encourage
Braille reading skills among children, RBI produces a bi-weekly braille children's reader titled Double Yum. This magazine is sent out to 600 blind children and to classes for blind children around the country. They feature short stories for children, poems, and articles submitted by blind children themselves from all parts of the country. But recently, their legislated privilege of mailing them for free to blind subscribers all over the country has been stopped. Accordingly, the Philippine Postal Corporation is doubting that the recipients of the magazines are truly blind. Currently, they are in the process of appealing and lobbying to get this privileged back. I was told that this only amounts to less than P800 or less than $20 per issue.

Aside from publication, RBI also offers computer trainings. This gave me the chance to ask my cyberspace questions. Why should blind students learn how to use a computer and how are they going to use this after they learn it? Who shoulders the cost of hardware and connectivity? According to Mayetter, this is usually the first question that comes to mind when people learn about our computer training for blind students. The answer is: For the very same reasons that sighted students should learn to use the computer! Recent technology has made it very possible for blind persons to make full use of the computer. A software package, which can be installed on any computer, makes the computer "speak" whatever is written or displayed on the screen. Keyboard commands replace the functions of the mouse, allowing the blind student to choose from menus, commands, or icons. A braille printer provides a braille copy for later reading. This technology has opened up all the possibilities of computer technology to those who are blind. By providing training in this technology, we can open doors to
further training for blind students, and to the almost unlimited employment opportunities created by the explosion of computer technology in the Philippines.

“First, RBI started an effort to set up computer centers in every high school in the country where blind students are enrolled. These centers, (12 so far) are located mainly in regular schools where the blind students are integrated with sighted students. They have these in their branches in Cebu, Bohol and Davao. The schools are provided with two computers, the special software, and a braille printer. The second program, "Computer-Eyes", is an annual National Computer Camp for Blind Students. Thirty (30) blind high school and college students are invited for this intensive, two-week training course in computer technology. IBM Philippines provides the use of their state-of-the-art computer lab for the training. During the first week, the students focus on word processing skills. The second week, the students set up email accounts, explore the internet, and create personal web pages.”

The next section presents individual case studies of RBI beneficiaries. The first is Jerome Perez who represents the case of beneficiaries from the rural areas, and the urban cases represented by Pia Resurreccion and Michael Santos.

**JEROME PEREZ, PIA RESURRECCION AND MICHAEL SANTOS: Beneficiaries**

Jerome is one of 7 blind students enrolled with about 100 sighted students at the Wesleyan Bible College in Rosales, Pangasinan. He is from Sta. Rosa, Nueva Ecija, 20 years old, blind and the eldest among three siblings. When his father left them for an overseas job in Japan and never came back, their mother took the responsibility of supporting the entire family. Jerome was 14 years of age when he became blind because of an eye injury. This made him so impatient and negative as he cannot accept it. He was discouraged that his dream of helping his family was not going to happen. In January 2001, Jerome met one of the RBI staff in Pangasinan and told him that even if he is blind he can still go on with his life and that he can still go to school. The RBI staff invited me
also to attend the summer camp. He was so happy that time because it was his first time to mingle with other blind people. The camp was a big blessing for him and it impacted his decision in life. Through the influence of one blind graduate, Reynold, who inspired him to go to the Wesleyan Bible School. He wanted to grow in the knowledge of the Lord and learn how to face the real world despite blindness. He strove to learn Braille and was fully equipped to be in school and be independent. Since then he made a decision not to waste any more time. He cherished and made wise use of the chance to live his life through assistive technologies. He would other blind people to experience the new life he has serving God, where blindness is not a hindrance.

I was able to interview two beneficiaries of the Computer Eyes program, Pia Resurreccion and Michael Santos. Pia, who works for RBI, is blind but can use Facebook, Skype, Google, Yahoo, Gmail, YM. She visits Facebook once a week and has about 100 FB friends. She does not blog yet but wants to learn it and has some background on programming, HTML. She communicates with BF through text and calls. She met the BF through the VI sector. As far as relationships go, Pia said that the blind are more on personal meeting rather than text. Relationships based on chats or online commas are not very popular among the VI sector. For the job, she uses email, research via internet. She usually researches on the latest gadgets for the blind

On the question “how important is the internet to the blind and what is the difference with life with Internet?” Pia replied on the level where she is finds use for the internet. She talked about research and that it becomes easier when one has access to online sites. She is very aware that it is not just access but wit the use of assistive technologies: “Of course with the help of the screen reader, computer becomes
accessible.” The blind are now included in more friendship and social circles. The blind can posses a global outlook because the internet expands his horizon. It is better than listening to the radio and TV. He or she can choose and pursue the topic that she wants because it is all within the reach of the finger tips and the screen reader. The disadvantage though of being hooked with the computer is the lack of quality time spent with family. She “sees” that this has negatively affected people’s relationships. Also, she was very aware of the risks from all sorts of scams and crimes. She cautions that not all sources are reliable. Yes, she “sees” all these things in the virtual world.

Michael, on the other hand, is in search of a job and for the mean while volunteers at RBI. He uses Friendster, Hotmail, yahoo, YM, gmail. He has a blog before with Friendster and Multiply. Currently, he is courting a girl via FB through posting through the “Wall.” I asked how does a visually-impaired reader see or read graphics on the FB Wall and they said, FB provides icons with descriptions of happy, sad, tired, etc. JAWS can read the icons and through this they can communicate how they feel.

MARX MELENCEO: Model Cyber-entrepreneur

The last story is that of Marx Melencio, a beneficiary of both RBI and ATRIEV. Marx was gunned down while buying rice in a neighborhood store. It claimed his eyesight and he was devastated. He was depressed until the turning point came when he started training on computers in order to find a source of living that could support his family. He was grateful to achieve for this. He ventured to start a computer software company in 2004 with only four people – his wife, two staff members who were both
relatives and himself. Six (6) years after, his company has expanded and in 2010 had a total of 200 employees. This company now caters to both local and foreign clients, while Marx Melencio has been a model and inspiration for the blind sector. The National Council on Disability Affairs (NCDA) featured him in their print and audio-visual communication materials to empower PWD in the Philippines. Genashtim, a business-process outsourcing (BPO) company that is based in Manila but has global operations, is also using the story of Marx Melencio as an inspiration to their blind trainees.

Both ATRIEV and RBI pride itself of its collection of videos of their blind beneficiaries. It is interesting because the blind audience cannot see them but can only listen to them. This tells me that the other target audiences of these videos are the sighted. Rightly so, Carol explains that in terms of providing employment to the blind, the problem is not on the supply, but on the demand side. Most employers are not convinced that blind workers can be as good or even surpass the abilities of the sighted. Genashtim’s founder and director, Mr Ng presents very strong arguments on the strategic advantage of employing PWDs. In the case of the blind, he submits that the best typists in the world are touch typists, and there is no reason why a blind cannot become a good touch typist. He doesn’t need a monitor and as such saves energy. He argues that the biggest problem in BPO is high staff turnover (about 50%) every year. He said that he does not have such problems in his company, as PWD workers are loyal. They are not too easily distracted. The blind do not have problems with graveyard shifts. Those who work at home render more hours because they do not need to computer. Learn more from http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WXGmJgL1mOQ.
CHAPTER V

OPENING UP CLOSED CAPTIONED, SO THE DEAF CAN HEAR

Making the case for the deaf community are the Manila Christian Computer Institute for the Deaf (MCCID) College, the International Deaf Association (IDEA) and Bohol Deaf Academy (BDA). The theme of this chapter is the complementation of virtual, social identities and mutual-knowledge. Similar to the blind, the deaf community is also closely-knit. They share information and complement services. All three organizations are non-religion-based groups, though expressively Christian in values and orientation. They accept PWDs of all faiths. Their overarching identity is who they are to the deaf community – excellent non-profit organizations, global-class schools and a caring family to the Filipino deaf. Figure ____ below provides the social networking tools used these deaf organizations and the lifeworlds that are open to the deaf.

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A. MANILA CHRISTIAN COMPUTER INSTITUTE FOR THE DEAF (MCCID)

COLLEGE: Pioneering World-class Computer College for the Deaf

Manila Christian Computer Institute for the Deaf (MCCID) recently celebrated its 18th year anniversary (October 14, 2011) and the festive mood (evidenced several photos and texts) is all over its website and Facebook page. In 1993, two young Christian computer professionals, one hearing (Remberto ‘Jojo’ Esposa, Jr) and one deaf (Ervin Reyes), dreamt of an educational institution that can concentrate on the needs of the deaf through the use of computers. They founded, MCCID, a non-sectarian, post-secondary, Christian foundation school for the deaf is located in the Philippines. Eighteen (18) years later, they are now in three provinces, Rizal, Pampanga and Quezon and pride themselves of producing 250 deaf graduates, majority of whom are gainfully employed. Outstanding alumni have been recognized and received Presidential awards as well as international accolades from all over the world. It now has a new building and location at San Mateo Rizal, which is still in Greater Metro Manila area. MCCID now called “MCCID College of Technology by virtue of government accreditation” has the following objectives:

1. **To help the deaf, regardless of economic status, gain access to better employment in the field of computer and computer work applications through technical education;**
2. **To give training to improve computer skills that can be compared to existing industry standards;**
3. **To provide job assistance and placement for graduates for domestic employment;**
4. **To develop computer based curricula and instructional materials for the deaf;**
5. **To assist in the development of sign language for science and technology terms;**
6. **To provide scholarships and free training seminars to qualified hearing impaired students.**
7. To help in the dissemination of information about deafness, deaf people and their culture.

Through Jojo’s visionary leadership, the support of his parents and his partners in the school, MCCID is now a well established organization in the field of computer education for the deaf that is recognized both here and abroad. They do not claim to be the first post secondary school for the deaf in the country, but they certainly is the pioneer computer and technical education. Aside from education and training, take pride in providing access to job opportunities for their deaf graduates and their stories are highlighted on their website.

MCCID has also capitalized on the huge popularity and success of the Internet by being the first school to add courses on web page designing, flash animation and digital photography. It is the first institution for the deaf that went online in 1997. Its website is the first recipient of “Disabled Friendly Website Award” for being accessible to Persons with Disabilities. It is also the first advocate of Web accessibility among deaf organizations and the first institute that published a book on Web Accessibility in 2004. MCCID’s students design websites for Filipino foundations free of charge. Among the other significant MCCID contributions to the field of Philippine deaf education are:

1. First to offer the first sign language course approved by the government;
2. First to include Deaf culture as part of the curriculum;
3. First to strongly promoting the use and propagation of Filipino Sign Language as part of the fourth wave including documentation of FSL in technical terms;
4. First to advocate the use of closed captions videos played on the Internet;
5. Sustained advocacy to strengthen IT programs by participating in national and international skills competitions, and
6. First to submit its deaf students to government’s competency certification examinations in IT.
Evidently, the online life of MCCID is exquisite – they are at the top of their game, so I proceeded to look into their on-the-ground activities and backroom operations. The inquiry was accomplished through interviews, the tour of the compound and observation of the classes. The first interview was with Ervin Reyes and interpreted by the Executive Director of the School, Jojo Esposa. The second interview was with Jojo. Ervin is deaf, while Jojo though “hearing” is proficient in sign language borne of a natural interest to learn and use it.

**Virtual Social Identity: MCCID Website and its Social Networking Tools**

The purpose of the MCCID website is to inform people about their courses and how to study at MCCID. The website is designed to enhance the awareness of people about successes of the deaf students and to get feedback from emails, calls and to stay in touch with people who have visited them in the past, especially donors and partners. True to its organizational expertise, the MCCID Website is a well-developed site having been crafted by professional designers who understand the content and style preferences of its target audiences. Essentially, it is made by the deaf for the deaf. As such, it has received several awards including the Deaf Watch Awards and a nomination in the 2nd Philippine Web Awards. It was even cited as “a credible online resource information pertaining to deaf people and institutions in the Philippines by Deaf Child Worldwide, Asia Disability Japan, Google Directory Asia, Deaf World Ministries (Deaf Culture) and The Interpreter’s Friend. In one occasion, it was even used as a reference by Gallaudet University. The current website (as of this date 7 November 2011) is the 4th version and is continuously updated to be of optimum use for the deaf community. Ervin Reyes, instructor and program coordinator at MCCID designed it with
inputs from the leadership and students of MCCID. It can be noted that the site is loaded with photos. The rationale behind is the target audience’s interest in graphics more than any other design elements such as sounds and videos. See Figure/Photo # 6 below for the MCCID homepage.

Ervin explains that the MCCID website is search engine optimized - hence, MCCID comes out when people search for “deaf Philippines” or “deaf college Philippines.” Jojo demonstrates MCCID website for its content and links. It has a lot of contents and very good for research. It has photo galleries, videos and articles on various topics concerning the deaf. It provides a comprehensive directorate for the deaf,
e.g. deaf entrepreneurs in the Philippines. Jojo got this from the Department of Trade and Industry, which has a publication on the disabled with businesses. In terms of tools that they use in their website, MCCID has “Stumble Upon” (referrals of specific pages), Linkedin, Google Buzz, Delicious which are automatic features of the Wordpress platform. The old MCCID website - used to have news and networking news for the deaf community nationwide. But MCCID website now focuses on MCCID. Its ultimate objective is to serve as primary resource tool or one-stop shop for the deaf.

On the website, the activities of the students are celebrated and given emphasis. The recurring them for this one is the excellence of the deaf and how they are being useful to society, especially the deaf sector. A very good example is the narrative about MCCID students and how they developed websites of PWD organizations. This thesis project is lauded as the students' way of helping the disability sector. Through developing their web presence, they are given the opportunity and capabilities to reach out to potential donors and financial supporters. In this particular group, 24 deaf students representing the graduating batch attended the yearly seminar-workshop on Web Accessibility. After the workshop, the students immediately applied what they learned and were able to complete the design work for the websites. They never forgot to add the accessibility features on the websites for the following non-profit organizations: Liliane Foundation, Philippine Christian Fellowship for the Disabled, Inc, Wheelchair for the Disabled Foundation, Inc, House with No Steps Foundation, Inc., National Federation of Cooperatives for PWD, Capitol City Baptist Church Deaf Ministry, Deaf Community Development of Paete, Inc. and Rolando Landicho’s Deaf Handicraft. Four sites now have their own paid webhosting accounts while the rest will be hosted
for free by MCCID Online. The graduating trainees presented their finished work to the officials and staff of National Council on Disability Affairs (NCDA formerly NCDA) led by Deputy Executive Director Mateo Lee and Technical Cooperation Center Chief Ms. Nelia De Jesus. It must be noted that since 2004, MCCID has incorporated web accessibility on the www.mccid.edu.ph and at the same time included accessibility features in the websites that they create especially for PWD organizations. The book "Basic Web Accessibility Guide for Filipinos" was the main resource material used. This is a landmark contribution of MCCID to the disability sector in the Philippines.

**ERVIN REYES: world-class deaf computer instructor and web designer**

Ervin Reyes works as a teacher and deaf coordinator at MCCID. He joined MCCID as teacher. He is one of the pillars of MCCID and is held as Jojo’s partner in founding the school. He is an expert in flash animation and computer design among others. Ervin believes that computer school is an effective and efficient way to help the deaf. He argued that computer education is best because computer knowledge and skills are very much job-related. A deaf person does not need oral speech communication in using the computer and some computer jobs do not need oral speech. He said he is a living proof that computer education is a good choice.

Socially, Ervin has been using Campfrog since 2009. He said Yahoo chat is slow while Campfrog is smooth and more comfortable for the deaf who uses a lot signing. Campfrog is an application for video conferencing.

“At Campfrog - many people can see you because of multiple chat rooms. Skype and Oovoo is limited and much more personal. He has many American friends and a few British ones whom he met in Campfrog. Because FSL has ASL, he can
communicate very well with Americans, not so with British Sign Language. German is different. Asian signing is also different so they do not have online friends from the Asian neighbors. Non-English speaking chatters are a big challenge. But one time, we had Vietnamese visitors and we were able to communicate with them after getting to know them for 2-3 hours."

It may be surmised that Ervin’s life revolves around MCCID. He lives close-by the School. He lives in an apartment alone in San Mateo, but boasts of a deaf girlfriend whom he met via Campfrog. When asked where he goes to know policies and programs of government, Ervin remarks that he uses NCDA website. Ervin actually designed the NCDA website. The latter had an old website that was really very confusing. NCDA cannot update their news, so MCCID trained the NCDA website staff. Ervin designed the format and Jojo was in-charge of the content: “Before the web accessibility seminar, we wanted more flashy images for the site, but when NCDA conducted a seminar on web accessibility, we understood better the needs of PWD as far as website are concerned. We learned the concerns of the blind, the paralyzed, etc. Because we are knowledgeable and trained, they chose us to design the NCDA website.”

Ervin is not knowledgeable about many of the disability laws, so I asked him about special laws for the deaf that he knows of and he immediately took out his PWD Identification Card (ID). Ervin has a PWD ID and enjoys special discounts for the disabled. Issued by QC government. NCDA also gives ID and he learned it from them. He was also told that the municipalities issue ID as well. Ervin uses it to obtain discounts for transportation (airfare, movies, restaurants, Ocean Park and Manila Zoo. When asked how he appreciates moves, Ervin said he likes action movies not romance.

Ervin believes that the PWD life improved with the introduction of the internet. It
gave the opportunity to have contacts with people from other countries. Some of them met their partners online and now have gone abroad. Other job opportunities became available for the deaf with access to the internet, other than the usual utility workers and cooks, PWDs can now own businesses. They can get a driver's license in some provinces in the country such as in Laguna. However, Ervin believes that the situation is not true for the entire country. There are much better opportunities for the deaf in the urban areas. Not so much in rural areas. Thus, for Ervin, cyberspace an equalizer for the deaf and the cost can be borne by the deaf and their families, which can come after they have awareness.

“If they were aware, they would take care of the cost, if they feel they need it and can benefit from it. Parents need to be aware so they would pay for it for their student kids and we have experience that they could, if they want to. Even if they are poor and cannot afford their own internet at home, they can go to Internet Cafes that are so cheap. Once they are hooked in the online world, they would crave for more and ask their parents if they can have more computer education. Filipinos believe in education as a way to climb the social ladder and they will go through great extents to give it to their children. That is why we have some 12-14 overseas Filipino workers. Almost always, they will say, so I can give my children good education.”

**Jojo Esposa: MCCID Founder and Pioneer**

Next I interviewed Jojo Esposa, the founder and school director of MCCID. To Ervin’s interview, Jojo had some additions. (Note that when he interpreted for Ervin, he did not interfere to his answers or influenced his opinions. He waited for his interview to be able give his own comments.) He said that the purpose of their website and other social networking tools is to inform people about the MCCID as a thriving deaf school in the Philippines. He introduced to me the FSL font that the MCCID students designed. He demonstrated the FSL font on my Macbook Pro. FSL font, its the third of its kind in
the world. Not ASL, because it has signs that are only found in FSL. I followed-through with the question the current challenges in the use of cyberspace. For Jojo, the top three challenges with regards to the web include payment for hardware and the bandwidth and finding time to work on content.

Jojo espouses that cyberspace is a better investment for the PWD. This is true for the deaf sector. For example, if the websites are optimized, the public need not go to the physical government offices. Even the people in the rural areas need not go to physical offices in the cities. For the government, this will cost less, less personnel, office equipment, time and effort. Although, PWD are prioritized, still it takes money to get the offices. Hence, Jojo believes that cyberspace, IT education is a cost-effective and cost-efficient empowerment highway. More opportunities will be opened to the PWD if they have access and the skill sets. For example in web-designing, opportunities were opened to the deaf because of the digitization of information.

“Deaf culture is better propagated with the use of cyberspace, e.g. we spread the news through Facebook. For example, there was this Memo from Deped requiring all deaf schools to use "singing exact English" which follows the English language. This is not good because ASL and FSL has its own word order and grammar. The deaf community used the forum to raise awareness about this inappropriateness of this Memo. The Federation of the Deaf agreed to respond with a unified stand that signing exact English is not the deaf culture of communication. We used Facebook, blogging and emails to get the word out and have people behind our signature campaign.”

Jojo advocates that cyberspace is a big bridge that narrowed the gap between the deaf and the hearing. His vision for the deaf is bond as one community so that they can fight for their rights. He said that there are so many challenges that they do not know and they are not doing anything about it. The deaf needs to be a cohesive community led by the deaf. Phil School for Deaf has been established since 1907 and
still it is the hearing who lead the deaf. Jojo also brought the issue about the bill lobbying to have news interpreters on television. It is a current and on-going debate.

“Baguio and Cebu news have deaf interpreting but not in Manila. Probably because the news programs in Manila are too commercialized. The law only says "encourage" insert interpreting but not required. No court interpreter hence there are so many cases of (192 in the supreme court) deaf pending in courts. Interpreter has to have signing skills.”

Finally, Jojo's vision for the school is to have broader and more opportunities for the deaf and for the MCCID school - to be able to help more people. Jojo explains that the deaf are good in web design, flash animation, typing, drawing, graphics.

“I think it is innate in the deaf that they are very good with their hands. Their attention to detail is good because they can focus on their work. From the awareness of this, we designed our courses, which are focused on IT. Better preparation for job opportunities for the students. Jobs attract parents and students to go to MCCID.”

Jojo concluded that cyberspace is an empowerment highway for the deaf, though he did now not want to speak for the other disabilities.

“It is a big bridge that narrowed the gap between the deaf and hearing. The cost comes is in the form tuition fees and daily expenses but after that the parents are very happy because their children become productive and their socialization skills improved. We have seen how the love between the children and their parents are enhanced and enriched with the education of their deaf child.”

I also interviewed some MCCID students in a particular group and location after class. I asked them about CAMPFROG and they said there are deaf channels and those for the hearing. They also use Google, Facebook, emails and chats. Like Ervin, they also do not use SKYPE much because it is just one-to-one conversation. There are
tools that the deaf prefer and there are those preferable to the mainstream. One student mentioned Deaf Singles Connection that-used to be free but now is $50/month. In general, these MCCID teachers and students are very knowledgeable and adept with cyberspace and its tools, and they are sharing what they know to the PWD community. Hence, they help produce and reproduce social structures and social relations. Their dramaturgy is excellent as they perform well the role that it has assigned to its “self.” Their identity is well expressed to its audience and the website is doing a good job of impression management. The dramaturgy perspective can be seen as an anchor to this view, where the individual's identity is performed through roles, and the consensus between the actor and the audience. As Goffman writes in Frame Analysis, "What is important is the sense he provides them through his dealing with them of what sort of person he is behind the role he is in" (p. 298). In this case, the roles were outlined in the website and the primary audience is the deaf and disability sector. The presentation of the MCCID story unfolded in both online and on the ground.

**B. International Deaf Education Association**

International Deaf Education Association (IDEA) is a US and Philippine registered non-profit foundation that is working to educate impoverished and neglected deaf children and blind children in Bohol, Leyte and Samar (in the Visayas region or Central Philippines). IDEA is the founder and owner of Bohol Deaf Academy (BDA), which comprise the rural sample for this study. IDEA envisions a society in which the Deaf in the Philippines enjoy social and economic equality, exchanging isolation for community, servitude for self-reliance.
“Our mission is to foster self-reliance by providing academic, vocational, physical, spiritual, and economic opportunities for deaf children, adults, and families.”

IDEA currently works exclusively in the Philippines but is open to opportunities to reach out to newly emerging deaf communities in developing countries. It is funded through donations, contributions, and grants. Its ability to expand is limited only by funding and personnel. Currently, more than 400 deaf children are able to attend IDEA supported special education classes on the islands of Bohol and Leyte. This is mainly made possible through a sponsorship program whereby American or European families and individuals financially support the schooling of a student assigned to them.

Since IDEA was established in 1985 or about 26 years ago, many of the children that were in the early education programs are now adults and have families of their own. The adult deaf need jobs so IDEA operates various businesses, which provide employment to over 120 deaf men and women. These businesses also offer vocational training for deaf young people. It can be tough for deaf married couples to just learn how to set up a home, rent an apartment, pay bills, etc. etc. Imagine how much more difficult it is for new deaf parents to learn how to take care of mostly hearing babies and raise their children. IDEA provides much needed counseling and training.

DENNIS DRAKE, Founder and Advocate for the Filipino Deaf

Dennis Drake relates that IDEA is a holistic ministry to the deaf in the Philippines with education as the main thrust. In 1982, IDEA began its partnership with the Philippine Department of Education (DepEd) to establish special education classes for deaf students. To supplement limited government funding, IDEA provides dorm and classroom buildings, furniture, books, teacher salaries and training. Through hard work,
we have established a unique combination of academic and social skills training. He chronicled how IDEA started and progressed into a full-scale non-profit with strong income sources.

“At the heart of everything is education. In 2007, IDEA supports 320 deaf students and blind students in five elementary and two high school residential programs. Through our cooperation with DepEd, dormitories and classrooms are located on public school campuses. IDEA-trained teachers provide instruction to deaf children in Kindergarten (Prep) through 4th year high school. All students are trained in English, math, science, history, Filipino, health, values, art, P.E., and home economics. Additionally, high school students receive extensive vocational training. Note: “Our primary language of instruction is Filipino Sign Language. Our primary written language is English.” Plus there is Cebuano as the local language and has its corresponding signs as well.

Language and socialization are crucial skills in IDEA-ventures. The deaf must learn sign language in order to communicate and socialize. Most of the local deaf do not know how to sign, they learn it in school. Dennis pointed me to a video on their website that details exactly what he meant. I saw the video and it is thoroughly good. It is exactly how he related it to me.

“It follows a pattern, on the first day of school, students arrive scared. They are surrounded by unfamiliar faces and language. Within a week, however, this fear is replaced by fascination and freedom. Why? They are immersed in sign language. They are guided by their teachers, classmates, and dorm mothers into a world of mutual understanding. IDEA students arrive from mountain villages and small off-shore island communities with no formal language. Typically, their family members communicate with them through “home sign” or simple gesture-based signs. Our first challenge is language development and socialization.

Before entering school, a deaf child’s social development has been severely delayed. Their parents are unable to express to them correct behavior and values. IDEA students learn social skills as they learn language. In the classroom, on the playground, and in the dormitory, they are constantly shown and taught how to get along with others. Older students provide mentoring to their younger schoolmates. Prep teachers are patient and careful to express positive classroom etiquette. Dorm mothers teach table manners and neatness. Each child is given chores and responsibilities in their dormitory homes. The child that enrolled in fear and confusion ends his first academic year in anticipation of returning to his friends and teachers after summer vacation. (From the
As the students reach the upper grades they are introduced to more and more advanced social activities. The friendship bonds they create through living together in dormitories are unbreakable. School provides so many other activities for the kids outside of academics such as drama, dance, exercise classes, and sports. Dennis explains that the ultimate goal of IDEA is to help these deaf and blind children find their place in society that will allow them fulfillment and productivity. They believe that the only route to achieve this objective is through education, and that is what they have set and continue to do in Bohol and Samar.

The IDEA Website

The IDEA website embodies the vision, mission and activities of the IDEA organizations and its constituency. My interview with Dennis Drake, Founder of IDEA, revealed that website is set-up for the purpose of keeping donor interest and relations high. It serves as an archive of activities and artifacts of IDEA and its programs and projects. It also contains links of partnerships and collaborations with patrons all over the world. Mostly, IDEA is doing what it says it will do in their website. The dynamic texts and images reflect the business of this PWD organization. See Figure/Photo #7 below for the IDEA homepage.
Education, training and employment is the recurring theme of the posts and images in the IDEA website. I was given a tour to experience IDEA programs and projects, how they empower the deaf through training and employment. Accordingly, young adults that finish their schooling need jobs. Few regular businesses are willing to hire the Deaf so IDEA Philippines has established a number of businesses to offer employment. All of the deaf employees are expected to become proficient in their jobs as they must compete with all other regular businesses. The hallmark of IDEA's EIGPs is quality, good service, good facilities, and fair prices. It is on these qualities that we are able to succeed with our businesses.

The IDEA businesses are promoted online and offline. Mostly marketing it offline connects the business to the local communities and tourists, while online marketing promotes it to the world. If a business does generate a profit, that amount is funneled
back into educating and caring for the deaf children in the schools. Here are some of
the businesses IDEA is involved in: Garden Café, Dao Diamond Hotel, IDEA Pension
House, Fly Tying and Vocational Training.

As part of my interview, I was given a comprehensive tour of the vocational
workshops of IDEA. I met some of the BDA graduates who are gainfully employed in the
workshops and happily exploring ideas for their craft. I particularly observed an original
invention of a stove that one of the staff improved for fuel-efficiency. Very interesting.

It may be noted that these are manual labor oriented and not directly Internet or ICT
related. This presents the distinction between the nature of economic and job
opportunities available in the rural areas as compared to urban areas. I am thrilled to
document that as part of my data gathering, I actually went and lived the experience of
staying at the Dao Diamond Hotel that are serviced by deaf. I went with my son, Eric
Joseph, and I tried to observe how tourists from urban Manila can enjoy or not enjoy
this deaf hotel. We also ate at the Garden Café and enjoyed the food and services of
this restaurant run by the deaf. The hotel and restaurant were exactly as how they are
described in the website and my interviews with Dennis and Keats. It enjoys a thriving
business and a good reputation among the deaf community. This case provides
empirical evidence of opportunities available for the deaf located in rural areas.

C. BOHOL DEAF ACADEMY

Bohol Deaf Academy (BDA), located in Tagbilaran City, Bohol (island) in
Central Philippines is a private, Christian, residential high school for the Deaf. It was
established by IDEA in 2005 and is now recognized and accredited as an outstanding
school by the Philippine Department of Education.

**Virtual Social Identity**

The BDA website banners the slogan Excellence in Secondary Education for the Deaf Youth: balanced training in academics, vocational and Christian values. It contains everything that one has to know about BDA from academics, faculty and staff, academics, athletics, extra-curricular activities, dorm-life, tuition and fees, scholarships, etc. Just like other PWD website, they are upfront with who they are and what they do.

**Mission**
The mission of Bohol Deaf Academy is to provide young deaf people with high quality academic, spiritual, social, and vocational education that will prepare them for fulfilling responsible and self-reliant lives after graduation.

**Vision**
The Bohol Deaf Academy envisions a deaf society on Bohol that has been educated to a level where the individuals in that society will reach their full potential and make valuable social and economic contributions to their communities.

Keats Ronquillo, BDA principal and school administrator is the overall in-charge of the website. He provides content but the IDEA Office maintains it for them. As a journalist and teacher, Keats is very creative and finds it easy and fun to put regular content on their website. Aside from informing the national audience about BDA, they use it particularly to get sponsors for the students and to maintain donor relations.

From the photo below, it can be seen that BDA uses the following tools: Facebook, Linkedin, Buzz, Digg, Youtube and other widgets provided by Wordpress. Organizationally, BDA uses Facebook for friend of BDA, internal communication (paperless), Gmail chat, email for sending and saving documents online. Keats notes that they rarely use the fax or international telephone lines. They use email, although
sometimes to get real-time contact Facebook is better. Keats observes that people check how many times they have been tag for a day, more than how many emails they got. Hence the website and social networking tools are used complementarily. See Figure/Photo # 8 below for the BDA homepage.

BDA also uses the website and its tools to conduct advocacy for the deaf culture. Before it is about showing that deaf "can do it" but now it is no longer that. They went from we're deaf give us a chance, to we are deaf, this is what we can do, and we can do
it well. The deaf can dance in tune and in time. They can do what must be done even if it is twice as hard. They are trying to be more sophisticated and as much as possible elicit minimal help. They want to prove that they are contributing members of society, not takers all the time. In this connection, the internet is good in promoting what they can do - they can dance, etc.

**Keats Ronquillo: BDA School Director and Filipino Sign Language (FSL) advocate**

Keats Ronquillo is the very young (34 years old) Principal and School Director of BDA. He graduated with a Degree in Secondary Education major in Language and minor in Journalism from the University of the Philippines (UP) in Diliman. I also studied in UP, so we bonded instantly and having been brought out from a similar Christian background in both the community and in college, I readily understood his background and line of thinking. To Keats, cyberspace as space to empower the deaf is a good motivation to raise the deaf student’s bar on written English. He explains that students are encouraged to go to cyberspace so they do not need to sign all the time and still communicate especially with “non-signers” and/or the hearing community. He adds that in the internet they get to meet more friends and learn more about the world. Academically, they get to do wider research given a broad array of scholarly materials to read and use for their papers. But they do need to look for materials that they can read and understand. By and large, he agrees that the internet improves access to information. There is no need for interpreters if they can READ the text, which is a given among their high school students. They can also find resources to enjoy such as videos and movies. They just have to look for those with captions or sub-titles.
“In the internet, the deaf can find TEXT to read, so the first step is still education – to learn how to read. Then they can take control of their access to information, no need to interpreters. Is it easy to teach deaf kids how to use the computer?

Keats, however, cautions me about the peculiarity of rural students compared to urban-based students in Manila. Students in BDA do not have prior knowledge. Mentally normal but because of the lack of exposure, academically they are delayed.

“Speaking only of our kids, because they come from the very far-flung rural areas (impoverished and no means of daily commute to the city), it is not that easy because some of them have never seen a computer. Touching the mouse is a skill to begin with. Not having seen the keyboard before. Among the first skills to teach is touch-typing. It is our standard procedure that teachers always have to teach them what good it will do for them to learn the skills - not just to do things.”

But like other school kids of the global age, once they learn basic operations they are on their own. He sees them using various social networking tool such as Youtube, Facebook, Yahoo Mail, Gmail and the school courseware that teaches them technical skills (e.g. cell-phone repair, welding, etc). Deaf students ask for closed-caption movies and he is glad that there is not scarce nowadays. Nonetheless he dreams of the students doing the sub-titling themselves.

BDA curriculum is grounded on the reality of the socio-economic situation of their deaf students and the goal is future financial viability. Their students academically and vocationally train for future employment immediately after high school. Because in reality, majority of them do not have resources to go to college even if they want to. Hence they are training for industry-standard skills during lunch break, I chatted with the students regarding their use of social networking tools and plans for college. Keats interpreted for me.

When asked about government support and policies about the disabled. Keats
mentioned the Bohol Organization for the Deaf who is currently promoting two House Bills, that is the insert of sign language interpreter in the news, sign language interpreter in Philippine courts. He said they generally do not seek out policies and just learn from them from the news or the disability sector. If they want to understand certain laws, they seek legal advice from lawyers helping them. He mentioned about the ID that services as a certification of disability. He knows about tax breaks if employers hire disabled people such as deaf persons. He generally does not search the internet for policies. The clear message, they do not depend much on either the national or local government. Basically, BDA shares the same philosophy and belief with IDEA.

But overall, Keats believes in the power of cyberspace as an equalizer for the deaf and the disabled. Basic to the issue is the ability to read, access to hardware and internet, and acquiring of basic skills on computer operation.

“Because education requires resources and most of the deaf students that we have do not have a lot of money to buy books, tools, etc – the internet becomes an equalizer because it is the biggest library and bookstore in the world. It offers free resources, too which is what the poor needs.”

In terms of hardware and access, I asked him at what cost because someone has to pay for it. Students in BDA are sponsored by donors in terms of tuition and some allowance, hence the donors pay for access. The cost for the students is just to get into school. Keats argues that it need not be shouldered by the school alone. Kids can get online via Internet cafe as cheap as $0.20 cents per hour. However, Keats explains that the real challenge with the use of cyberspace is not the cost but the learning of internet ethics.

“The big question is where they can and will go when they are already in
cyberspace. They can easily by-pass firewalls and parental controls are not very popular in the Philippines. Overt censorship can be by-passed, too. What must be taught is responsibility and proper internet etiquette. Their values must come to play as they explore the internet."

Keats further adds that open access to cyberspace is good, but at the same time bad because the school people cannot monitor them. Students can get internet access anywhere, but proper internet behavior is something that they can only get in school, especially in rural areas where parents do not have the knowledge and skills to guide their children. Parents cannot supervise them because they are not familiar with the computer. He argues that basic internet etiquette starts with proper personal etiquette.

“Take for example the case of working hard and honesty in school. Cyberspace can teach our children all sorts of things. They can things easily and fast. Sometimes they get lazy and do not process what they get. There is that temptation or habit of copy-pasting which is tantamount to plagiarism. Copy-pasting is brainless and lazy, something that they learn and are able to do using the Internet.”

Dramaturgy and Real Story

One of the best reasons for a deaf student attend BDA is they are given exposure and training in many vocational skills. The hands-on training allows them to truly gain skills that will prepare them to gain employment after graduation. They are grounded on the global reality that it is a very competitive world out there and it sure helps to have the advantage of quality education and cutting-edge skills. Moreover, as a residential school, the learning does not end when classes are out at 5:00PM. The students participate in chores such as helping prepare meals, running the school store, and keeping their campus clean. They are part of dormitory bungalow units and have responsibilities for their “homes”. The students are able to seek after school help with classroom lessons from other students or staff. They enjoy the on-campus extra
curricular events such as sports and movies, which were carefully selected for them.

“Our curriculum includes both standard high school coursework and extensive vocational training subjects. At BDA, the students are exposed to so much more than just reading, writing, and math. Besides having the standard academics they are trained in independent living skills, work skills, and Christian values. BDA is concerned about having its graduates truly prepared for life after high school.”

BDA believes that kids need exposure to many different possibilities of livelihood before they find something that clicks for them. They are also fully conscious of their context as an island province in Central Philippines. They stress vocational education and the students love it. Academic education paired with “skills training” means opportunities to succeed, to work, to find fulfillment. BDA is fully aware of the changing times and the onslaught of the digital economy, BDA has new thrusts for their curriculum and this year (2011) it has upgraded its computer room. The Consuelo Foundation (based in Hawaii) has come to the rescue with not only new computers but also a whole list of e-skills modules for teaching vocational skills. This list of skills range from cooking to welding and the manner in which these courses are presented on computer provide deaf students with individual, independent study allowing them to progress at their own rate. Along with the computer e-skills training, the students are then put into actual environments such as kitchens, wood or metal shops, hotels, sewing rooms, etc to gain hands on experience. Consuelo Foundation in Hawaii proves the international connection of BDA that enhances multi-agent action for the deaf youth of Bohol and nearby provinces.
CHAPTER VI. IN CYBERSPACE - NO ROOM FOR LAME EXCUSES

Making the case for the orthopedically impaired are Tahanang Walang Hagdanan (TWH) and Nova Foundation. Figure ____ below lists the social networking tools used by TWH and Nova and the lifeworlds that have opened to them as a result of engaging in cyberspace. TWH is more holistic in approach compared to Nova. It is actually a community engaged in education, health, livelihood, and is just starting to engage in cyberspace. Nova Foundation is an enterprising entity that is more technology and employment-oriented. Similar to the organizations discussed earlier, TWH and Nova Foundation share information, resources and complement each other to serve their beneficiaries better. I also included in this chapter, the Autism Society of the Philippines. All three organizations enjoy a vast network of partners, donors, beneficiaries, alumni and friends. See Table 5 below.
A. Tahanang Walang Hagdanan -Helping PWDs Help Themselves

Tahanang Walang Hagdanan, Inc (TWH) was established in 1973 and it has been in existence for 38 years. It is a non-stock, non-profit and non-government organization that aims to uplift the lives of the Orthopedically handicapped persons. It was founded by Sister Valeriana Baerts, a Belgian nun who was assigned as a volunteer nurse in the Philippines. The TWH center is located in Cainta, Rizal which is about 15 kms. East Manila. It is rehabilitation and skills training center with sheltered workshops where the people with disabilities are trained to be productive and self-reliant members of the society. In its current condition having five (5) workshops and six (6) dormitories for trainees who come from far provinces, it can accommodate around 400 workers and around 200 people in its living quarters. Through sustainable livelihood programs and project, TWH helps PWDs to be self-reliant so they can improve their standard of living. Thus, TWH is committed to maintain the training and employment services for the PWD by reaching out to local companies, donors and other partners who can provide business for them or hire its trainees for viable employment.

Entering the TWH or the “house without any steps” is like stepping into a different world. Not because it only has level one for all its buildings and there are no stairs in the entire compound. But because it is a place where mobility impairment and not being able to walk is the norm. I walked with my two feet, and that gave the sense that I was different. It felt like I was forcing my way into a territory where I do not belong and imposing values that are alien to my audience. Men in wheelchairs are playing basketball and everybody, including residents from outside the compound, was excited
in watching the two teams compete against each other. I can understand how the guy in wheelchair could shoot the ball in the basket, of course he has his two hands. But to see them dribble, grab the ball from the opponent and shoot from a three-point rainbow territory were certainly the highlights of my dissertation fieldwork. Indeed, the TWH motto is evident in this situation – “what your mind can think of, your body can do.”

Before going to the tour of the compound, I was privileged enough to meet and interview Sister Valeriana Baertz, who left Belgium 40 years ago to serve the disabled and disadvantaged Filipinos. She was waiting for her ride to visit in prison a former staff, who committed felony against TWH. Apparently, this formerly trusted staff stole the money of the organization and instead of saying negative things about him, Sister Valeriana was hopeful that this person will have a change of heart while in jail. As the founder and leader of TWH, I surmise that her Christian philosophy pervades her dealings with the staff members, workers, clients and supporters of PWD. It is an ideology of faith in God, in the other person and hope for the situation no matter how bleak it is. I later saw the corporate video of TWH, which praised Sister Valeriana for her high-energy despite her old age and deep compassion for the disabled Pinoy. Like RBI, ATRIEV, IDEA, BDA and MCCID, TWH is run by a Christian ideology of faith, hope and love. Similar with RBI and BDA, it is founded and led to institutionalization by a Christian missionary. Though religions, they accept people of all faith or no faith.

She said the biggest challenge of TWH is funding and sustaining the workshop operations. It appears that she is not a firm believer of Philippine disability laws. She
thinks it is good to have these laws but they not translate to readily available resources that they can use. Through the years, they have learned not to depend on government.

"I have a half-a-million payroll every month and collections from their clients are not that swift. Even if its government or worse if it is government. Private sectors such as the Church of the Latter Day Saints is one of our better customers. They order wheelchairs and pay on-time. They use to get from China, but we have dislodge China from their list. Actually, we now compete with China as a wheelchair produce in the country. China is still cheaper, but customers see the moral obligation and benefit of helping disabled workers. They said, they were able to double their help when they buy from TWH."

This sentiment was later confirmed by Lolit Tuazon, marketing director of TWH, who explained that Magna Carta provisions are not implemented even by government offices themselves, who should be exemplars of following the law. The law does not help them in easing the difficulty of bidding in government entities. Despite provisions in the Magna Carta for PWDs to allocate a portion of the contract to disabled suppliers, they still have to bid against other suppliers. Sometimes they win and sometimes they get their designs stolen. Sis Valeriana would tell them not to protest but wait for heaven's intervention. If they can help it, they would rather not deal with government. Aside from bidding, they do not provide downpayments and it takes them a long time to pay. Private companies give downpayments and pay immediately, hence they would rather have them as clients. Along these lines, TWH shares the concern and sentiments of IDEA, with their trauma in dealing with government.

The TWH Website

From its website, TWH banners its vision of “a sustainable enterprise providing employment for PWD and its organization/sheltered workshop as an ideal venue for holistic development of their physical, mental, economic, social and spiritual well-being.”
I have visited TWH three times and I have observed that they are actively pursuing their mission despite financial barriers.

1. To assist the disabled in the physical and emotional rehabilitation, and integrate them in the mainstream of society.
2. To equip persons with disabilities with skills and knowledge through education and trainings.
3. To provide shelter, medical and welfare assistance to indigent disabled and medical families.
4. To uplift the standard of living/economics conditions of the disabled through employment and job placement.
5. To educate the public and promote social awareness concerning persons with disabilities.
6. To promote independent living to disabled individuals.

The website clearly and graphically describe the broad array of services that TWH provides which include the following: rehabilitation and vocational training educational Program and job placement. They also offer mobility aid assistance and prosthesis and brace acquisition as socialized costs, meaning those who cannot afford are given free courtesy of sponsors. For social and economic development, they have Sports/Recreational Development Program, welfare services, small loans, and community-based rehabilitation programs. These programs were better illustrated on the THW two-part video found in Youtube. The video speaks to the mind and the heart, provides a comprehensive picture of TWH, its history, dreams for its people, and its typical everyday struggle for life and economic independence.

There are testimonies that validate the success of the TWH programs and these are found in their website, Facebook and the corporate video. These are seed of hope
for creating a more lasting impact on the lives of the people we serve without sacrificing its sustainability. Alongside new projects and services, TWH Management continue to develop new strategies and plans leading the organization towards a more comprehensive direction anchored on the three bottom line approach which will be the key drivers of change to influence our future. Patterned after FSSI (Foundation for a Sustainable Society, Inc) our partner in community Development. Recently, there were many new enterprises introduced in TWH. I was able to check out a few training sessions (cellphone repair, call center) courtesy of the Department of Education.

**Actual Social Identity and Activities on Cyberspace: Domingo Literal and Leove Noleal**

Domingo "Domz" Literal is the TWH webmaster. He was first a worker of TWH and then he was given a scholarship by Sis Valeriana to study Computer Science. He finished after years of perseverance and self-determination - working in the daytime and going to school at night. Domz explains that TWH uses website, Facebook, Email, Youtube, YM and inter-office message. Internet is turned-off during office hours to avoid staff from engaging in cyberspace instead of working. He controls the switch. He also mentioned that TWH is reconstructing the website. Between the interview in March and the writing of this paper, he has accomplished the reconstruction and improved the site. He made significant changes on the homepage and the business center.

Like Domz, Leove Noleal is a wheelchair-user. He was a polio victim when he was toddler. He is one of the staff workers relate that he uses Yahoo email, YM chat, Google for search engine and SKYPE. He said he has a girlfriend in the province and
they communicate via email, YM and Skype. Angel Villafuerte of Program Development explains that the social networking tools used by TWH in its operations and marketing are- its website, facebook account and email blasts/e flyers with partner organizations which also promote the objectives of TWH through their own individual schemes. Yes Ma’am, we have our official facebook account, just type Tahanang Walang Hagdanan. She believes that their current website is effective as it has promoted, advocated and disseminated important information about TWH. We are actually implementing the continuous upgrading of our website with the assistance of partner companies/schools, agencies and organizations.

TWH is mostly a manual labor sheltered workshop. But there is substantial business within its compound that uses cyberspace. This includes the Computer Laboratory and the Call Center. The Computer Laboratory that was donated by Acer Philippines is manned by 5-6 wheelchair user staff who are knowledgeable with computers. At the time of the research, they have a contract with a foreign company to produce e-books from scanned old books from a company in the United Kingdom. They are paid per page of the e-books they produce and they get paid every 15 days. Leove Noleal is one of the enthusiastic workers in the group. He said, he could do the job at home if only he has computer and Internet. He is from Naga City in Bicol Province and currently has no means to own his own computer and pay for his Internet. He is also not sure if he will be given the contract if he moves back to Naga. So, for now, he is staying in the dormitory and working everyday at the computer laboratory. They were mostly self-programmed and have very minimal supervision. The manager of the contract checks on the workers and there is no TWH staff that needs to supervise them.
Actual Social Identity from the views of Angel Villafuerte, Lolit Tuazon and Tess Lloren

Angel Villafuerte of Program Development underscores the value of the internet in communication and advocacy. She explains that the internet is a potent communication that enables us to advocate for disability policies as we conduct surveys, gather comments and opinions, circulate strong letters of advocacy and the likes. With regards to the actual implementation of disability laws or legislations like the accessibility law and Magna Carta for the disabled, we use the internet to contact government agencies and private entities for more effective implementation. We also use the internet to call the attention of those which violate these laws.

What about clients? Lolit Tuazon explains the mechanism behind the Business Center on the TWH website. She said, TWH Marketing organized a cooperative for PWD entrepreneurs and they support them through marketing and distribution services. The PWD entrepreneurs are engaged in different kinds of businesses to include handicraft, dressmaking/weaving, woodcraft, painting, etc. Most of them are graduates of the TWH training programs who have chosen to establish a business of their own. Their products are showcased for free online via the TWH website and display room onsite. Some of them get clients from the web and transactions are facilitated by Lolit's office. Some are regular suppliers of the TWH main office store. In addition, TWH coordinates fairs and expos where the PWD entrepreneurs can participate. The TWH website promotes these events to the local and global audiences.
Tess Lloren, HR staff, toured me around the TWH compound. She showed me the male and female dormitories, the small chapel, the SPED school, Daycare center for workers with small children, the Rehabilitation Clinic and the various workshops. I was shown the different woodcraft, linen and handcraft products. There were also special projects as packing sample medicines, denture making, the computer laboratory and the Call Center. The Call Center is renting a facility in the compound. It is not exclusive to TWH people. They train and hire workers from outside TWH as well. Majority are PWDs, but some are non-PWDs, both trainers and staff.

For Angel, the three top concerns of TWH as PWD organization are sourcing of funds including viable business profit for our products, more effective programs and services for PWD's and advocacy. The internet is a big help in sourcing out funds from local and international funders, online marketing of our products and events/projects, online promotion of our programs and services and online advocacy of PWD issues and concerns. She affirms that the internet assists them in getting more funds and this positively affects the effective and efficient delivery of programs and services.

On the question of “cyberspace an equalizer for persons with disabilities in the Philippines” – the TWH respondents unanimously agree. For TWH, The internet is an equalizer for PWD's in the Philippines in the sense that it assists us towards better communication, promotion and marketing. Like for TWH, the internet is another venue for us to be also adept with online schemes and strategies with regards to sourcing of funds, promotion and marketing of our products, events and projects, more effective communication and advocacy, etc. The internet is important to the empowerment of
PWD’s in the Philippines through enhancement of their online skills and knowledge. They also become empowered through the Internet as it teaches them to become more aggressive in their communication, promotion, marketing and in strongly advocating for their cause. This is demonstrated by the TWH website and video organizationally and the Business Center as a vehicle for entrepreneurship and disability culture advocacy.

*But at what cost, and who pays for this cost?* For TWH, the institution pays for the cost. Majority of the PWDs are poor and they cannot afford hardware and internet on their own. The little income that they have mostly goes to food and daily amenities. Some manage to go to internet cafes, but it is hard for them to invest thousands of pesos on computers and monthly internet payments. My sense is that, the orientation of TWH workers is mostly manual labor and not many of them have been privileged with quality education, hence they do not appreciate the value of the information and knowledge economy.

The management and sustaining of TWH as a viable civil society group and economic enterprise affirm that cyberspace has a critical role to play to empower PWD. TWH is mostly a manual-labor oriented sheltered workshop, hence they are not that engaged in cyberspace. Although, it must be noted that they are socially, economically and politically engaged to the global world through their website. The President of the TWH Board of Trustees who is also President of Nova Foundation, Noli Agcaoili is an ardent believer of cyberspace. He brings in to TWH what Nova Foundation has. He is the lynchpin of technology and cyberspace as far as TWH is concerned. Both Sis Valeriana and Noli do not rely on Philippine government to sustain and improve TWH.
The former believes in Divine Providence, hard work and the faith in the human being. She has lived and worked with the disabled in the Philippines for 40 years. She is happy with the legislations but does not put her faith on them. Noli, on the other hand, is a political entrepreneur and knows how to deal with government, international as well as local donors. Together, they have sustained and expanded the work of TWH and they have already put up satellite sheltered workshops all over the country. In this case, cyberspace is useful, but per their experience, it was more of providing physical space for the PWDs to work in and a space in the heart of people to be integrated in the mainstream society. They are sheltered, but they make their presence known in the local and global community.

All of the three cultural artifacts, website, Facebook and Youtube videos that were mined for the analysis validate the active engagement of TWH in cyberspace, which complements their on-the-group action and social realities. The more powerful artifact, in my opinion, is the corporate video that was written and directed by Father James Reuter, a prominent foreign missionary, media person and historian in the Philippines. But to see all three, coupled by a visit and actual conversations with the people of TWH deliver the total package of impression management towards this able organization. It is a house with no steps but almost always, they take impressions and expectations to the next level, for though they have disabilities, they have no room for lame excuses.
B. Nova Foundation: Premier Hi-tech PWD Organization and Entrepreneur

Nova Foundation stands out as the most sophisticated venture entrepreneur among the PWD case studies, and this is true in the disability sector as well. As a non-government organization, it has been established to promote the full participation, total access, economic and social integration of PWD. It aims to become the prime mover in creating employment opportunities for the differently-abled. Its focus are young adults without or minimal education and the educated but not employed. It provides assistance in developing skills and the correct mindset to enable them to work within a corporate environment. As a leader in the PWD sector, it pursues the continuing awareness and support for the disabled sector in general, and advocate for their acceptability, as co-equals – meaning PWDS should be evaluated based on their ability, not their disability.

Study-wise, I first encountered Nova Foundation as a website when I did my paper for my Certificate on Disability Studies. It was the first to inspire me to look into the cyberspace phenomenon involving PWD, and from there I dug deeper into this digital enterprise. The website and the actual visit complemented each other and I was more impressed when I met the people who run it. It does a good job of impression management. It is a true leader in the advocacy for awareness and enhancing on the potentials of differently-abled individuals. See Figure/Photo #9 below for the Nova Foundation Homepage.
Nova Foundation: Virtual Social Identity

From its website, the positioning and brand of Nova Foundation as a PWD organization can be inferred. Nova envisions “the self-development and self-reliance of persons with disabilities to be employed and integrated into mainstream corporate environment.

Towards this, its mission and goals are the following:

Mission

To promote the full participation, total access, economic and social integration of persons with disabilities, and to enhance the lives of those we assist, enabling them identify and reach their career goals.
Goals
To be the prime mover in creating employment opportunities for persons with disabilities
To lead the advocacy for people to become aware of the potentials and welfare of persons with disabilities
To be a premier training and educational vehicle for the career and personal development of persons with disabilities.

Objectives
To achieve a level of 50% or more degree of success in placing trainee graduates of the Foundation
To entice more private and public corporations to participate and give persons with the disabilities that opportunity to apply for employment

Nova Foundation recruits and works with young PWD (kids and youth) to undergo and complete their secondary education and assist to enroll for collegiate level with emphasis in either 2 year or 4-year courses. In terms of training programs, Nova always strives to improve its courses to meet industry demands. As of End of June 2011, Nova ICT Training Center has given free skills training to 659 qualified applicants, 604 of them finished and graduated their courses/programs. Nova notes that PWD, though they may have finished a 4-yr college course or the minimum requirement of a 2-year associate or vocational course on computer application, still lack the self-confidence, and their abilities need to be further honed to meet the demands of the corporate world. Given the requirements of the workforce and the profile of our trainee-applicants, a competency-based training program is the most applicable and relevant developmental methodology to use, as against the traditional classroom type learning model. Competency is defined as a set of Knowledge, Skills and Attitude (K, S, A) needed to perform the work activities within the standards expected in the workplace. The competency-based training programs of the Foundation are designed to address the expectations of the corporate world and our trainee-graduates should
possess those characteristics by the end of the training program, for them to be competitive within the larger sector of the unemployed. (See Appendix ____ for Nova Foundation Training Programs, Services and List of Partners).

Several program funders provide grants and/or aid to the Foundation specifically to be used for its programs. These international development organizations have seen it fit to donate financial resources that will greatly affect and improve the lives of persons with disabilities. To the officers of these organizations, the programme managers who deal directly with Nova Foundation, we salute and thank you:

- Australian Agency for International Development (AUSAID)
- Christoffel Blinden Mission e.v (CBM)
- Development Bank Of The Philippines (DBP) Deep Program
- International Monetary Fund Civic Program Advisory Committee
- Workability International
- World Bank Development Innovations In The Marketplace (DIM PROJECT)

Nova explicitly emphasizes the importance of managing donor relations through the website and social networking tools. Their donors include private individuals, the local corporations, and multinational companies who have contributed cash and non-cash donations to the Foundation without any restrictions to fund the operations of the Foundation. On their website this local and foreign lists are prominently displayed.

LOCAL DONORS (See novafoundation.org.ph for the complete list)

- Accenture Philippines Inc
- Acer Philippines
- Ariel Felix Ortilla
- Avaya Philippines Inc

FOREIGN DONORS

- Deogracias Capili
- Dennis Josue
- Teodoro & Angie Evangelista
- Jerry Sibal
Participating Companies

▪ Aficionado’s Corporation
▪ Air 21
▪ Blue Eyes
▪ Creative Voices
▪ Duracare
▪ EDP Foodlines
▪ Fina Digital
▪ Golden Astiplaza
▪ ICT Group
▪ Lamoiyan Corporation
▪ 

And the Government agencies and local government units whose enlightened views have made it possible for persons with disabilities to break through the barriers of prejudice to find meaningful employment:

▪ Department Of Foreign Affairs (DFA)
▪ Department Of National Defense
▪ Department Of Transportation & Communications (DOTC)
▪ Land Transportation Office, Dotc (LTO)
▪ National Council On Disability Affairs (NCDA)
▪ Office Of The President, Republic Of The Philippines
▪ Social Security System (SSS)
▪ Supreme Court Of The Philippines
▪ LGU- Manila
▪ LGU- Mandaluyong
▪ LGU- PASIG

Nova Foundation works and recognizes cooperating schools. Cooperating Educational Institutions who provided the basic education to persons with disabilities, the trainees would have continued to be disadvantaged and been hard pressed to qualify for the employment opportunities that will be opened for them by the Foundation.

▪ Cap College Foundation
▪ De La Salle- College Of Saint Benilde
▪ MCCID College Of Technology
▪ Miriam College – Southeast Asian Institute For The Deaf (SAID)
▪ Philippine Institute For The Deaf (PID)
**Web accessibility** is an outstanding feature of the Nova Foundation website and a primary advocacy of the Foundation.

Here are some features of this site that are Disabled friendly:

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Use your keyboard to navigate through links and graphic images.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>All graphic images that appear in every page have the ALT tags which can be read by a Screen Reader Program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>All the buttons used also have the ALT tags to explain what they are.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>The whole web site is consistent with designs and column positions. Every site is divided into four parts;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. The banner logo together with the Navigation buttons at the top;</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. The navigation links at the left side colored brown with titles at dark brown which remain the same all through out the pages;</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. The actual content that changes depending on the web page;</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. And the bottom links, statements, and copyright.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>At the banner logo, simply press the enter key to go directly to the main content.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>The navigation links or breadcrumbs are located at the top of every content part for you to know at what part of the site you are in.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>A Navigation link at the bottom of every content part appears if you want to go to the previous page so you don't need to go back to the top part of the site or on the breadcrumbs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Another feature of this site is the extensive use of Cascading Style Sheets. If you will view the encoding source, the site is neatly arranged without the clutter of non-cascading style sites. Macromedia Dreamweaver is the web page editor used.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>The &quot;D&quot; hyperlink appears at the bottom of every comic strip describing every frame of the cartoon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>At the bottom part of the index page is the link where you can test if your site is accessible to People with Disabilities.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

In the same manner that computers and the internet revolutionized the world, it is revolutionizing the world of the disabled. It has different effects to different sectors such as information & communication, education, health, agriculture, etc. It has the same drastic and life-changing effect to the disabled. If it has changed the lives of the regular, how much more to a sector that has much need for it. The blind who can now read and use a computer using adaptive technologies. The deaf through live chat is given opportunities to meet new deaf and hearing friends. The paralytic who can only stay at home but now enjoys an online job and is developing his own network of co-workers and acquaintances. These things empower the PWD in ways that are cumulative and
multiplicative. Like other PWD websites is all about publishing organizational success stories:

On May 6, 2011, Mercury International Security Printing Corporation (MISPC) officially hires three Deaf graduates of Nova Foundation: Saul Zumel, Agnes Eleda and Jordan Capulong (all from Batch 21) to fill their requirement in Electronic Data Processing and Operations Departments. The training lasted for ten days and was directly conducted by MISPC HR Manager Ms. Cathy Manalastas and immediate supervisors of concerned departments. With the good performance shown by the Deaf trainees during the training, MISPC decided to hire additional Deaf. Successful applicants are Krista Madela Romera, Aileen Dumol and Jasper Sigfried Salas. The second placement took place on June 23, 2011.

The President of MISPC, Mr. Gil Manalastas, has promised to look into the possibility of hiring more Deaf as part of their company’s Corporate Social Responsibility and their recognition that persons with disabilities workers are as good as their abled body employees. **MISPC is the leading security printing specialist in the Philippines. Equipped with the latest security document technology and production systems, MISPC offer the best solutions to document fraud.**

Aside from this, Nova is all about posting opportunities and the latest craze of course are online jobs. The more recent one was Nova’s partnership with Clickerwayne, opens another employment opportunity [a work-from-home online jobs] to PWD, most especially for those who are having difficulty in mobility.

Founded and manage by Mr. Erwin Ramos last December 2010, Clickerwayne is committed to providing its members a unique opportunity of making money online safely by viewing and clicking advertisements, playing games, and referring other members. Users may also multiply their earnings by completing easy and simple typing tasks at your convenience and/or dedication.

Nova Foundation never tires in striving to find and open more employment opportunities for PWD. Here is an example for a Call Center Job Announcement for business process outsourcing (BPO) companies and here is what they are looking for.

Who can apply?

- Persons with orthopedic impairment;
• Siblings and other relatives of persons with orthopedic impairment
• Siblings and other relatives of the Deaf, blind, etc.

Although persons with disabilities are preferred, this is the first time that PWDs’ relatives are provided the chance to work with a call center.

Requirements:
• At least 18 years old;
• With at least one (1) year college education;
• Can carry reasonable English conversation;
• Within convenient commute distance/ time from Ortigas or Makati;
• Can work full-time or project-based;
• Information Form

I endeavored to show all these details to demonstrate how technical (or hi-tech), global in outlook and expansive this PWD organization is. It is the epitome of postmodernity of disability in the Philippines. In general, Nova Foundation’s websites mirror how the organization is managed. It presents both an individual and cooperating group identity. It connects and networks with local and international groups. It espouses accessibility features. As an organization, it exemplifies valuing the participation and contribution of donors, partners, etc and they show them in their website. No wonder it was noticed by the mainstream media and given a 2.30-minute feature on primetime evening news (TV Patrol) over a leading television network. It was delivered as a “good news” report, one of the very few in the daily primetime daily news which is dominated by bad news. The Philippine media follows the motto, “if it bleeds, it leads” and to see this on primetime is an accomplishment. Nova takes it further to another accomplishment space by uploading it on Youtube. This is where I saw it.
Actual Social Identity from the views of Manuel ‘Noli’ Agcaoili, Carol Trinidad and Lynn Garcia.

The Nova Foundation focuses on helping the educated disabled. In May 2011, it claims to have made a difference in the lives of 396 persons with disabilities out of the total 604 graduates we have trained who are now employed for the first time ever in their lives. Its programs, both the training and the job placement, are unique in the sense that these are “change multipliers”, meaning the service of providing skills and behavioral training to persons with disabilities not only benefits the individuals themselves but also their extended family and, society in general as they, the PWDs, become productive and responsible citizens. Its job placement program not only seeks to assist PWDs find employment but also to recast corporate perception towards persons with disabilities. It has a very dynamic website that was developed and maintained by its own staff.

With the limited response of the Philippine government and society to the needs and requirement of persons with disabilities, Nova Foundation is determined to lessen the gap by providing them computer skills in addition to their education so they would be more competitive in the corporate environment. They are using cyberspace and social networking tools to achieve this mission.

From the inception of its ICT Training Center in 2005 and the ICT Marketing & Job Placement Office was conceptualized almost two years ago, the success ratio of the Foundation in terms of employment is more than what is expected. With the team effort of the Foundation and its graduates, 65.56% success ratio in employment is
achieved. Noli believes that seeking job opportunities for persons with disabilities is not an easy task but not impossible to achieve. There just needs to be a change of perception towards persons with disabilities. Awareness and collaboration are needed to make things happen for the PWD.

Nova uses website, Facebook, email listserv, YouTube and online newsletter toward this goal. They term this as "bridging the gap and indeed cyberspace can bridge this gap – between those with information and those who have not, those who can afford education/training and those who cannot, and those with other situations that need bridging the gap.

Noli talked about communicating to President Noynoy Aquino via Facebook regarding the stalled implementation of the 20% discount on drugs and medicines for PWDs. Apparently, the biggest drug retail store in the country, Mercury Drug, has not implemented it. With Noli’s earnest note to the President, he convened a Technical Working Group to resolve the issue. Eligible means they present an ID registered with the NCDA or their local government. On March 1, 2011, Mercury Drug has conceded to implement the 20% discount for all eligible PWDs and a Memorandum of Agreement was signed at the House of Representatives. Noli believed in Facebook since then.

Finally, the PWD sector won the battle against Mercury Drug Corporation. This was announced to the general public on March 1, 2011 during the press conference conducted by AKBAYAN Representative Walden Bello and Social Services Committee Chair Cong. Arturo Robes. The signing of a Memorandum of Agreement was held on the same day at Batasan Pambansa, Quezon City duly signed by Cong. Arturo
Robes, Chairperson, HRep- CSS; Vivian Que- Azcona, President- Mercury Drug Corp; Cong. Walden Bello, AKBAYAN Partylist and all PWD leaders of AKAP Pinoy.

Noli was proud to relate and demonstrate that Nova foundation is a cyberspace user. They extensively use email and they have a long and continuously grown listserv. He values the “contact us” portion of the website as very important in maintaining effective web presence. He makes it a point that emails that go to nova.info address gets responded to by the right staff. I told him it works because that was how I got in contact with them. After his interview, I was introduced next to Lynn Garcia, the marketing and alumni relations officer of Nova Foundation. She relates that their deaf students and the deaf friends in their network use Oovoo. Lynn sends out a regular (bi-annual) newsletter entitled withinREACH.

Lynn explains how Nova uses cyberspace to enable education and implementation of disability policies. She explicates that first and foremost is the fact that cyberspace enables information dissemination cost-effectively and efficiently. Awareness and that will not happen without information dissemination made fast, frequent and extensive via cyberspace. Second is acceptance, which is facilitated by demonstrating action, progress and successes. The website enables Nova to advertise its successes and good news – our trainees, graduates and alumni. It is not for the PWDs but for families and friends to know that training, education and employment are possible for PWDs. Once they know, they spread the word and convince PWD to try us or better yet try for themselves.
“Three Deaf graduates of Nova Foundation (Rea Tortugo, Mary Grace Poquiz and Michelle Musngi) passed the evaluation and testing on May 9, 2011 at Toon City Inc. and are given opportunities to training on Animation. They are assigned at the Digital Ink and Paint Department. Toon City is the animation production house for major clients around the world, including Walt Disney Television Animation, Universal Animation, Warner Bros. Animation, MoonScoop Productions, etc., offering the very best in high quality traditional, 3D/ CGI and flash animation artistry.”

According to Lynn, Nova and its clients use email, youtube, Facebook and Oovoo. It is actually from them that I learned to use Oovoo and later used it for my online summer extension class. She explains that the top three concerns of Nova foundation includes sustainability of training operations through sustained funding, placement of its trainees. Both of Noli and Lynn agree that cyberspace an equalizer for persons with disabilities in the Philippines. Once the PWD has had some training and is able to work, he can be included and compete in the workplace. Socially, through the internet, the PWD can meet more people and make friends. He can even date and meet a lifetime partner that would otherwise be difficult given his disabilities. Professionally, he can avail of online courses, education via correspondence and virtual training to improve his craft. Per the Nova Foundation experience, cost is paid individually by those who have the means, and/or institutionally for those who cannot afford it. It is not just the cost of the hardware but the training or skill sets necessary to make effective use of the hardware.

C. Autism Society of the Philippines

Autism Society Philippines (ASP) is a national, non-profit organization dedicated to the well-being of persons with autism spectrum disorder. It is the only sample in this study catering to individuals with learning disabilities. ASP is comprised of a network of families, teachers, therapists, institutions and other individuals whose lives are affected
by autism. Together, this national network of partners, “envision an environment that empowers persons with autism spectrum disorder to become, to the best of their potentials, self-reliant, productive and socially accepted members of the community.” They are committed in words and deeds to the establishment of institutional mechanisms to support persons with autism and their families.

**Virtual Social Identity: ASP Support Networks**

ASP, at the time of the interview and visit, do not have a website. According to Ranil Sorongan, Executive Director, it has been hacked and they have not been able to reconstruct it. But they have two blogspots which act as their website. Ranil Sorongan and his staff maintain the blogspots. Through it, they work to maintain connections with its partners and supporters. More specifically, the blogs and social networking sites serve the provincial chapters of ASP. It is important for ASP to support them because the situation is much more difficult in the rural areas, especially for the underprivileged who have no have access to intervention services. ASP endeavored to establish links in the rural areas through regional networks, and currently has 52 chapters, covering the northern and southern parts of the country, and they continue to grow. The public can get in touch with ASP via telephone, email at autismphils@gmail.com/autismphil@pldtdsl.net, and various social networking sites to include [http://autismsocietyphilippines.blogspot.com/](http://autismsocietyphilippines.blogspot.com/), [http://www.facebook.com/pages/Autism-Society-Philippines/151064536472](http://www.facebook.com/pages/Autism-Society-Philippines/151064536472), [http://twitter.com/autismphils](http://twitter.com/autismphils) and [http://www.youtube.com/user/autismphils](http://www.youtube.com/user/autismphils). See Figure/Photo #10 below for the ASP homepage.
ASP has an email newsletter sent every week to partners and members. Ranil Sorongan said they do not call their constituents or audiences as clients but rather partners. Their website has been hacked a year ago (2010) and they are still reconstructing a new one. They are waiting for a webmaster to do it since the expertise is not available among the current staff pool. Nonetheless, they have a simple website via multiply.com under URL http://autismphils.multiply.com. They are a prolific user of Facebook, twitter and Youtube where they showcase ASP programs and projects.
They also publish an online newsletter that is released bimonthly to its partners and networks nationwide.

**Actual Social Identity from the views of Ranil Sorongan, Executive Director**

ASP as an organization, advocate and activist is definitely a cyberspace leader and social networker in the global disability civil society. They believe in the use of websites and blogs. They also use email, Youtube, SKYPE for online conferencing with regional and provincial partners, mass SMS through local providers (UNLITXT promotions). They have an online and printed directory. The printed directory of about 500 copies is a fundraising project. It has ads and is sold for P500/pc or about $USD 12 per copy.

Ranil relates that they use cyberspace to enable education and implementation of disability policies through an ASP has a weekly newsletter, an online forum via a blog, a second blog exclusively for announcements entitled ASAP and twitter. Regional chapters manage their own email listserv, newsletter and facebook accounts to promote their activities for their respective network of partners and members. Some are more active than others but they have their own local and unique ways of managing the support group.

Ranil further relates that the top three concerns of the ASP clients and how cyberspace helps in addressing these concerns. For most of the ASP constituency, the cost of autism treatment that continues to be a challenge for members. For the general public, it is still the lack of awareness and understanding about autism that persists as a problem. Give the lack of knowledge, early diagnosis and treatment is hampered.
For rural areas, they don’t have information as to where to go and where to get effective treatment and services. The online newsletter helps in providing info and advice.

On the question - Is cyberspace an equalizer for persons with disabilities in the Philippines, Ranil gives an outright positive YES. He says that ASP as a small organization with lean and mean staff and meager resources can actually tackle a national problem as autism because of cyberspace. But at what cost and who pays for it? For ASP, she shares the cost of its operations with donors and partners. They are continuously on fundraising mode to get donations, project grants and earned income. That week they are co-sponsoring an international movie with a Filipino in the starring role. The movie is produced in Indonesia with majority of the actors from there and released internationally. It has both Bahasa and Filipino dialogue with English subtitles. I bought two tickets and went to see the movie in Megamall. It was a great movie.

Ranil agrees that cyberspace provides opportunities to empower PWDs in the Philippines. He espouses “cyberspace enables a small organization as ASP to move nationally and internationally, and have a voice that resonates worldwide without leaving our little office in Kamuning. This is very important in empowering parents of autistic children and for the disabled sector in general.”

Ranil as leader of ASP concludes that cyberspace opens doors of lifeworlds – a broad array of wonderful realities and possibilities. It tells parents that they are not alone and there are others in the same boat. They do struggle but there is somehow success in finding solutions. There are others who have coped and their stories are
very valuable to learn. These stories will not be disseminated well without the use of the Internet. Ranil admits that they cannot be postmailing newsletters at this day and age. It is not only tedious, slow and “jologs” – it is not hi-tech or modern and people would not want to be associated with those old-fashioned ways. People want to be part of something new, hip and great. Cyberspace has that revolutionizing and enticing effect. People wanted to be associated with novelty and the latest technologies. It gives self-esteem just to be able to say you have a Facebook account or you can tweet. This is definitely something about what cyberspace can give that boosts the self-esteem and self-determination of the disabled.
CHAPTER VII


The last PWD group and website under study is not a non-government organization as the previous eight (8) cases that have been discussed. It is also not categorized based on disability type, hence I deemed it necessary devote a whole chapter to it. The National Council on Disability Affairs (NCDA) is the national government agency mandated to formulate policies and coordinate the activities of all agencies, whether public or private, concerning disability issues and concerns. As such, the NCDA is the lead agency tasked to steer the course of program development for persons with disabilities and the delivery of services to the disability sector. This section on NCDA primarily highlights disability police and practice in the Philippines along with its challenges as a government organization serving the disabled. The secondary focus is the government’s effort to build and sustain an information and communications technology infrastructure for the disabled. It details and explains the web accessibility initiatives of the government in partnership with non-government organizations to include the groups who participated in this study. Lastly, it provides insights on the online and offline performance of NCDA as a cyberspace user serving the disability sector in the Philippines.
The NCDA is tasked to monitor the implementation of several laws to ensure the protection of PWDs’ civil and political rights. These laws include Republic Act No 7277 (Magna Carta for Disabled Persons), Batas Pambansa Blg. 344 (Accessibility Law), Republic Act 6759 (White Cane Act) and ILO Convention No. 159 (Vocational Rehabilitation of Persons With Disability). It has also been tasked, through Proclamation No. 125, to coordinate activities and to monitor the observance of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons (1993-2002) in the Philippines. Proclamation No. 125 was issued by the President on January 15, 1993, to enjoin both the government and the
private entities to organize projects based on the policy categories mentioned in the agenda for action of the decade.” See the Historical Background of NCDA and its organizational make-up in Appendix _____.

**Vision**

Provision of direction to and coordination of activities of government, non-government, and people’s organizations involved in the prevention of the causes of disability, rehabilitation, and equalization of opportunities in partnership with persons with disabilities.

**Mission**

All persons with disabilities are able to attain their fullest potential and to become active contributors and participants in nation building.

**NCDA’s express role is to provide support** and technical assistance to GOs, NGOs and POs for the prevention of the causes of disability, rehabilitation and equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities. Since it was set up in 1978, the NCWDP has become a focal point for national policy on disability issues. It also monitors and reviews policy and program implementation of government, non-government and people’s organizations for the sector.

Read more of the NCDA historical background, programs and projects in Appendix A.

Disability legislation in the 20th century falls into two primary categories: (a) legislation and policy to provide resources to legitimately disabled or needy persons; and (b) civil rights legislation (Depoy & Gilson 2004:34). The Philippine government covers these through a combination of policy types to include regulation, compensatory or incentive and integration policies. The National Council on Disability Affairs (NCDA) is the government agency mandated to formulate policies and coordinate the activities
of all agencies, whether public or private, that are designed to ensure the full participation and equality of rights and opportunities for PWD. A comprehensive review of these policies and activities led me to conceptualize an Operations Management Framework for Analyzing Disability Policy & Practice.

The Philippine government endeavors to put a high premium on its communication infrastructure, one of which is the Internet as a venue for growth. As stated in Section 24, Article II of the 1987 Constitution: *The State recognizes the vital role of communication and information in nation-building*. In tune with this provision, the government enacted Republic Act 7925 (Philippine Telecommunications Act of 1994) which makes the promotion and development of Philippine telecommunications and its delivery to the public a national service priority (Karan 2004:239). A policy initiative specifically geared to the Internet is the Electronic Commerce Act (Republic Act 8792) signed into law in 2000. How has the global cyber phenomenon and the aforementioned policies reached and affected the PWDs of the Philippines?

Since majority (about 70%) of the PWD are in rural areas, I will submit here the insights from Karan’s (2004) survey as cited in *Cybercommunities in Rural Asia*, which featured a survey in rural Philippines. Accordingly, the Filipinos recognize the benefits of the Internet: speed with which to access information, reducing labor costs and enhancing the connectiveness among people. The survey also indicates that the Internet’s main contribution is in easing up the geographic isolation of their place - isolation which is a big issue to PWDs. Overall, Internet penetration is 29.7% or about 29,700,000 users in the entire country (Nielsen, June/10). Internet cafes are providing
connectivity in both urban and rural areas for a minimal cost of about USD$0.20-30 cents or P15.00-25.00 cents for 60 minutes, while coin-operated computers can provide internet use for P1.00 or $0.02 cents for three minutes in urban poor and rural areas.

On the international front, the government of the Philippines is signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of Disabled Persons, the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, ILO Convention 159 for the Rehabilitation and Employment of Disabled Persons, Framework of Action for the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Biwako Millenium Framework Plus Five, and the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDG) to name a few (ADB 2002:4). It appears to be very active in the international arena.

On the local front, it has enacted several laws, proclamation orders and issued executive orders emanating from the Office of the President to recognize and protect the rights of PWDs. The government has encouraged and incentivized the translation of the national policies into local government ordinances and funded programs. The government has implemented the landmark integration and regulation policies in the following legislations:

1) Section 11, Article XIII, of the 1987 Constitution, declares that “the State shall adopt an integrated and comprehensive approach to health development which shall endeavor to make essential goods, health and other social services available to all the people at affordable cost. There shall be priority for the needs of the under-privileged sick, elderly, disabled, women and children. The State shall endeavor to provide free medical care to paupers”;
2) Republic Act No. 8425, otherwise known as the Social Reform Act Provides for the poverty-alleviation of the basic sectors, including persons with disabilities.

The PWD sector was organized and headed by the elected leader of the different disability groups and placed under the supervision and support of the National Anti-Poverty Commission. I have worked a volunteer consultant of the PWD council since 2008 under the able leadership of Honorable Deanna Gregorio.

3) Republic Act No. 7160 known as the Local Government Code of 1991 mandates the devolution of services to the local government units (LGUs);

2) Republic Act No. 7277, otherwise known as the Magna Carta for Disabled Persons, expressly provides that “people with disabilities shall be given rehabilitation, opportunities for self-development and self-reliance to prepare them for full integration into the mainstream of society”;

The following is a regulatory provision with incentives under RA 7277:

Title II. Chapter 1. Sec. 5. Equal Opportunity for Employment. — No disable person shall be denied access to opportunities for suitable employment. A qualified disabled employee shall be subject to the same terms and conditions of employment and the same compensation, privileges, benefits, fringe benefits, incentives or allowances as a qualified able bodied person. Five percent (5%) of all casual emergency and contractual positions in the Departments of Social Welfare and Development; Health; Education, Culture and Sports; and other government agencies, offices or corporations engaged in social development shall be reserved for disabled persons.

Under this compensatory regulation are incentives for employer:

Sec. 8. Incentives for Employers. — (a) To encourage the active participation of the private sector in promoting the welfare of disabled persons and to ensure gainful
employment for qualified disabled persons, adequate incentives shall be provided to private entities which employ disabled persons.

(b) Private entities that employ disabled persons who meet the required skills or qualifications, either as regular employee, apprentice or learner, shall be entitled to an additional deduction, from their gross income, equivalent to twenty-five percent (25%) of the total amount paid as salaries and wages to disabled persons: Provided, however, That such entities present proof as certified by the Department of Labor and Employment that disabled persons are under their employ: Provided, further, That the disabled employee is accredited with the Department of Labor and Employment and the Department of Health as to his disability, skills and qualifications.

(c) Private entities that improve or modify their physical facilities in order to provide reasonable accommodation for disabled persons shall also be entitled to an additional deduction from their net taxable income, equivalent to fifty percent (50%) of the direct costs of the improvements or modifications. This Section, however, does not apply to improvements or modifications of facilities required under Batas Pambansa Bilang 344.

Other examples include provisions against discrimination in public transportation (Chapter II. Sec. 24) and discrimination on the use of public accommodation services (Chapter III. Section 35). A major criticism against RA 7727 is its funding.

Title IV. Final Provision. Sec. 47. Appropriations. — The amount necessary to carry out the provisions of this Act shall be included in the General Appropriations Act of the year following its enactment into law and thereafter.

It mandates national agencies and local governments to support the Magna Carta by ordering them to allocate ten percent of their budgets to programs for the disabled. However, they are totally subject to the discretion of the agency heads. There are no sanctions for not following this specific provision. Interestingly, the government mandated support from non-government organization which it does not control at all.
Sec. 41. Support From Nongovernment Organizations. — Nongovernment organizations or private volunteer organizations dedicated to the purpose of promoting and enhancing the welfare of disabled persons shall, as they, are hereby encouraged, become partners of the Government in the implementation of vocational rehabilitation measures and other related programs and projects. Accordingly, their participation in the implementation of said measures, programs and projects is to be extended all possible support by the Government.

The Government shall sponsor a volunteer service program which shall harness the involvement of private individuals in the provision of assistance to disabled persons.

In reality, the law suffers poor implementation due to a serious lack of funding. It heavily relies on the resourcefulness and creativity of the NCDA.

5) Presidential Decree 1509 mandated the creation of the National Commission Concerning Disabled Persons in 1978. This integration and regulation legislation created the coordinative structure that governed national disability affairs. This was later amended by virtue of Executive Order 232 which provided for the structural and functional reorganization of the National Council for the Welfare of Disabled Persons of 1987. In 2008, it was again revised under Executive Order 709, which redefined the functions and organizational structure of the National Council for the Welfare of Disabled Persons which is renamed as the National Council on Disability Affairs and attached to the Office of the President.

With the use of ICT, policies must be communicated vigorously using all available human, social and digital technologies. Government needs to use a variety and combination of policy instruments to promote access to ICT and cyberspace and its related opportunities and advantages. Among the effective instruments are tax shelters for companies employing PWDs, funding allocation (earmarking 10% of local
government budgets for PWDs), and support for foreign investment. The observance of international declarations and special days promote awareness are crucial to information and education as well as social mobilization campaigns. They help both directly and indirectly. Local ordinances signify local government commitment, but they suffer from poor dissemination and they have not really been evaluated and measured. Globally, the influence and encouragement from developments the disability rights movement around the world (ESCAP 1999; 2009) are considered opportunities that empower the government so they can respond well to the challenge of the disability. It is explained by the following theories:

1) It is informational capitalism, relying on innovation-induced productivity and globalization-oriented competitiveness to generate wealth, to appropriate it selectively (Castells 2000:369). The change in labor relations, flexible capitalism accommodated the disabled workforce. Depoy and Gilson (2004) submit that capitalism is a critical factor in how disability has been conceptualized, defined and treated in the 20th and 21st centuries. On many levels, capitalism, productivity and profit have been primary in shaping our current views of legitimate disability and responses to these views (p.29).

2) The new social structure of the Information Age, which it is called the network society made up of networks of production, power, and experience, with its new culture and power relations transformed by social processes (Castells 2000: 377; 381).

3) The shift in the global economy from manufacturing to information technologies; shift towards global rather than national economies that is enabling a more flexible workforce thus accommodating PWDs (Carling-Jenkins 2010)
4) Innovations which are the main source of productivity, knowledge and information are the essential materials of the new production process (Castells 2000:376).

A recent milestone in NCDA work is the "Manila Declaration on Accessible ICT" which confirms that Filipino PWD recognize that ICT accessibility barriers need to be addressed at all levels effectively and urgently. It is a call for progress on the elaboration of a comprehensive and integrated international convention on the rights of persons with disabilities. Related to this is the issuance of the "Manila Accessible ICT Design Recommendations" which represent a minimum threshold in accessibility with reasonable accommodation. These recommendations are a work in progress and promote the provision of flexibility to accommodate needs and preferences of PWD. It is noted ICT development, opened up many opportunities for PWDs in networking, global employment and independent living. Nonetheless, it has also widened the gap between PWDs and the non-disabled. The digital divide includes inaccessibility to infrastructure for ICT, Internet, and ICT skills. These problems are worst in rural areas. Towards this end, NCDA and PWD groups set three targets to improve the situation:

1) By 2005, persons with disabilities should have at least the same rate of access to the Internet and related services as the rest of citizens in a country of the region.

2) By 2004, international organizations should incorporate web accessibility standards for persons with disabilities in their international ICT standards.

3) Governments should adopt, by 2005, ICT accessibility guidelines for persons with disabilities in their national ICT policies.

It is now November 2011 (as of this writing) no account relates that target #1 and #2 has been achieved by NCDA. There were reports of local government leaders initiating hardware and internet access in urban poor and remote rural areas. There is
the “One Laptop Per Child Program in Lubang Island, Mindoro Oriental.” There is also
the “Eskwela Project which established community e-learning centers for out-of school-
youth and adults, and persons with disabilities in four pilot sites, namely Quezon City,
San Jose del Monte, Cebu City and Cagayan de Oro City. Another project noteworthy
of mention is the ‘Basic and Customized Internet Literacy Course for Rural Women’ of
Bato, Leyte in the Visayas and Binalonan, Pangasinan in Luzon. But news about them
have to be mined deep in the internet and they do not impact enough the 95 million
PWDs in the country. But at least, there were seeds of hope, which should be
celebrated as accomplishment spaces. Towards the achievement of target #3, the
government through NCDA spearheaded the establishment of the Philippine Web
Accessibility Group (PWAG). After participating in the NCDA let Webmasters Interface
Workshop, this group of webmasters accepted the mandate to serve the government’s
accessibility adhoc group. As a government supervised group through the Department
of Social Welfare and Development-National Council on Disability Affairs (DSWD-
NCDA) and the National Computer Center-Commission on Information and
Communications Technology (NCC-CICT), PWAG is tasked to oversee and implement
relevant programs on accessible ICT in the Philippines. Currently, it works with
government and NGOs in lobbying for inclusion of web accessibility in pending laws on
information and communications technology. It collaborates with international groups in
promoting and learning new developments and technologies on web accessibility.
PWAG has produced one publication – The Filipino Web Accessibility Guide. Next, we
move on to Private Initiatives Outputs and Outcomes. I took three organizations from
my sampled groups as mini cases for this framework – Nova Foundation, Manila
Christian Computer Institute for the Deaf (MCCID) and the Adaptive Technology for Rehabilitation, Integration and Empowerment of the Visually Impaired or ATRIEV. I compared the outputs and outcomes of these non-profit groups with the government organizations. See figure below on Outputs and Outcomes of Private Sector Initiatives.

But what is the impact of all these to the 9.5M PWD spread across the archipelago? In responding to this question, the resource and political environment of disability policy and practice would inform us that poverty remains the number one issue for poor to non-access of ICT and cyberspace. Poverty that is seen as both causative and consequential of disability. Poor living conditions and limited access to health care have been increasingly recognized in the literature, economic reports, legislation and public response as the cause of disability (Depoy & Gilson 2004, hence the reality of the digital divide is very glaring as far as PWDs are concerned. Policy needs to address the digital divide issue. NCDA tries to address this problem through tapping to the resources of non-government organization, international aid agencies and the private sector.

**Behind the Virtual Identity of NCDA: Interviews of Nelia De Jesus and Dandee Victa of the Information Technology Division of NCDA**

The NCDA website team consists of Dandee Victa and his supervisor, Nelia de Jesus. Although, he did not develop the website, Dandee knows how to upload content and to maintain the website. MCCID developed the NCDA website. NCDA also uses social networking tools which include Youtube, Picasa, RSS feed and Facebook.
Accordingly, the purpose of the NCDA website is to serve as a one-stop-shop for government information on disability. It is used to promote its advocacies and launch announcements. It is not used much for feedback, it has no blogging plug-in but has telephone numbers and emails for those who want to contact them.

Dandee says that content comes from top to bottom. It is usually his hardworking supervisor, Nelia, who identifies and directs content. She is very creative and always has things to put up on the web. She even has her own sign language video of the song “Evergreen.” Dandee believes cyberspace is an equalizer for PWDs who have access, but not so much to those in the rural areas who do not have access to hardware let alone broadband. But definitely, once they have access, they hit a homerun with it. They empower themselves and take their vocation to new heights. Their office has and continues to document such stories. Aside from the print publication, they want to upload it online and continue to publish these stories for the disabled and the general public. For the next level of their cyberspace engagement, Dandee envisions a website that is a entrepreneur hub for PWDs. He dreams of PWDs trading and marketing their products in the world using their website. He wants to help PWDs in rural areas and wants NCDA to facilitate it so that government can make its presence felt.

Nelia De Jesus is a staunch advocate of empowerment through cyberspace. She is very proud to show me their documentation of PWDs who made it in big in their vocation armed with their ICT-related knowledge and skills. She said that thrust of her leadership in NCDA is to continue to document and publish success stories of the
PWDs in whatever field they have chosen. She wants to use the website and other tools to promote these stories so they will reach and inspire the PWD and their families. It will serve to motive and challenge them to explore for their own learning and benefit.

She is excited about the possibilities that the internet and its related social networking tools offer for the disabled. Nonetheless, she is also mindful about the cost of access – especially hardware. But she has this idea of providing the use of government facilities in the evening times when they are not in use by regular workers for the use of the disabled. Anyways, these buildings have security guards. The disabled can use the lobbies and libraries for WIFI access. It is a wild idea but it tells me how big a heart this government official has for the people she sincerely serves. She admits that the government cannot solely bear the cost of access, but should continually pioneer and lead the way to get donors and other partners to fund disability groups that work on these ventures.
CHAPTER VIII

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND SUMMARY

A. FINDINGS: CONTENT ANALYSIS AND CASE STUDIES

The qualitative content analysis of the sampled organization’s communication artifacts that include websites, Youtube channel/videos, Facebook and blogs has given me the generalization that the running theme of each and every cyberspace artifact is presence or visibility: “We are here and we are reaching out to you.” The primary issue that they want to address is visibility because of the primary concern that the disabled are “invisible” in society. Invisibility though it connotes not being seen denotes many faces that may include being hidden, ignored, repulsed, neglected, marginalized or a combination of the above. Cyberspace has proven to be a game-changer in this case because it offers “space” to all kinds of players. At the cost of about a $100, a PWD organization can publish a website and have a visible presence in the global world for a full-year. They can be searched and found more cost-effectively compared to buying an ad in the local newspaper, where their $100.00 (Php4,300.00) cannot even buy them a one-liner ad. The minimum cost is about $300.00 ($12,900.00) for a one-liner ad for a one-day presence with limited national circulation. For a minimal cost, they can present content effectively and efficiently. It follows here that cyberspace, aside from visibility has also given them a “voice” through mass self-communication. They can literally afford to say whatever they want to say, and by “they” it means not just the leadership, but potentially several members of the organization. Social networking tools further levels the playing field with the members' access and use of “Facebook, Youtube
and emails. Mass self-communication is provided free of charge to the organization and its members. Some may argue that this is not free because of the cost of hardware and internet connection, but the point here is the comparison between traditional and online media and their affordability to marginalized groups as disability sector.

The preceding sections provide a series of tables/summary matrices of the qualitative content analysis conducted on the online and offline data collected using deductive use of sociology of disability and cyberspace theories. Table 1 (found in Appendix ___) contains the content-analyzed data of the organizational websites using Hocks and Balsamo’s Technology as Articulated Framework Ensemble. Table 2 presents a summary matrix of content analysis of the sampled websites using Carling-Jenkins Way Forward – Postmodernity Framework. Table 3 below summarizes analysis of theory application of Goffman’s sociology about the social behavior of persons with disabilities on the online and offline data gathered during the qualitative content analysis and field research conducted for the study. Finally, Table 4 summarizes the testing and application of the concept of Lifeworlds and Goggin and Newell’s Accomplishment Space on the data collected from the websites, Youtube, blogs, interviews and participant observation of the sampled PWD organizations.
Table 7 below presents a summary matrix of content analysis of sampled websites using Carling-Jenkins Way Forward – Postmodernity Framework

QCA using the ‘Way Forward’ Postmodernity Framework’ (Carling-Jenkins)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disability as a postmodern concept</th>
<th>Post-modernity’s view of economy</th>
<th>Post-modernity’s view of knowledge</th>
<th>Post-modernity’s view of subject</th>
<th>Post-modernity’s view of reality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PWD Website</td>
<td>Considered outside of economy</td>
<td>Disability is defined in many ways including the PWD themselves</td>
<td>Rejection of functional definitions, focus on identity</td>
<td>Socially constructed, definition of disability, community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RBI</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATRIEV</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCCID</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDEA</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BDA</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOVA</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TWH</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASP</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCDA</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: If they are meeting the criteria then they are on a ‘way forward’ and operating on postmodernity framework

The concept of post-modern and post-materialism based economy is espoused in the sampled websites. There is emphasis on both monetary as well as intangible values such as the observance of equal opportunity and the respect for the rights of the disabled. TWH can get cost-effective labor for its manufacturing industries, but prioritizes the hiring of wheelchair users to exemplify the point that the post-modern economy is not just about profit but principles that protects and promotes the PWD
workforce. Nova Foundation demonstrates in their website their international partnerships in both capacity building and placement. They are not confined to local industries and markets. The websites showcase PWD laborers and staff engaged in various types of work. They testify to a new global economy that is genuinely flexible, includes different kinds of people and understands diversity.

‘Knowledge’ per the postmodern conceptualization under the Carling-Jenkins (2010) model is no longer the monopoly of one or an elite group of powerful organizations. The websites demonstrate that they can become gatekeepers and provide information about the disability sector. They can contribute locally and globally to the growing knowledge about disability and people with disabilities (e.g. NCDA public service announcement (PSA) define normal, defy normal). Disability and empowerment are defined in many ways, and in instances by the PWD themselves. The different disability groups through their websites claim and espouse their identities and cultures, and are actively engage in mass-self communication.

‘Subject’ in postmodernity per the Carling-Jenkins model rejects the external definitions (meaning outside the disability community) and binary notions. There is a growing awareness of decentered sense of self and multiple conflicting identities. Disability in postmodernity rejects functional definitions in favor of a focus on identities. These are exemplified in the websites particularly in MCCID and Nova Foundation.

‘Reality’ in the postmodern theory per the Carling-Jenkins model is socially constructed and goes beyond objective reality, science, medicine and logical reasoning. The website discourses presented herein demonstrate the on-going social construction
of identities and realities. Although the leaderships confront hard-nosed realities as poverty and insufficiency, they press on to find new partnerships and pursue innovation based on their newly found identities and opportunities (cyber workforce) in the global economy. The websites exemplify how their members and constituents have become part of the global workforce as call center agents or graphic designers of Toon City. Now, it is not just them constructing realities about them, but society as they become included and integrated in the mainstream.

Based on the above theoretical affirmation, this paper submits that the Philippine PWD sector has seen a paradigm shift from a modern to postmodern perspective of viewing and constructing disability. This new social construction sees the possibility and actually incorporates cyberspace as an equalizer as information and opportunity provider for PWD organizations and their constituents. Empirical evidence from this study reveals that cyberspace provides a relatively accessible and affordable (compared to other media) venue or space for discourse. In cyberspace, through websites, blogs and social networking sites, PWDs can create space for the marginalized and producing alternative discourse not just the dominant. Now, Philippine PWD websites are showing manifestations and expressions of the abilities and expressions of the differently-abled. They are able to participate in public dialogue and access various policy instruments.

**Table 8** below summarizes analysis of theory application of Goffman’s Sociology to both online and offline findings from the sampled PWD organizations.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Virtual world</th>
<th>Physical world</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>Stigma and social identity - How does it address stigma or the management of a spoiled identity?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Virtual social identity – a characterization in effect as a result of front stage performance</td>
<td>Philippine Braille Technology Center Christian Growth Ministries Education for Blind Children Blindness prevention activities (Cataract Surgery, eye-screening in schools) Special Programs: Computer Resource Center for the Blind Computer Camp Training and Rehabilitation (livelihood) Advocacy and Outreach (Christmas party for blind kids)</td>
<td>Actors – Board of directors, executive staff, research, development and writing staff; print production staff, pre-school teachers, administrative and support staff. Paid / volunteer eye doctors and surgeons <strong>Audiences</strong> – Blind clients, families, Donors, partners (local and international) Phil gov’t, general public</td>
<td>Yes. They still deal with stigma. It is very hard to find employment for the blind for jobs other than masseurs or musical entertainers. They would rather be called the visually impaired (VI) sector or “kabulagan.” Yet the term blind is also accepted. But VI has an educated, social movement elite connotation. They hold outreach events to disseminate the community, e.g. Christmas Party for Blind Children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actual social identity – category and attribute that actor proved to effect – on-the ground &amp; backroom operations</td>
<td>Complementing online and offline</td>
<td>Individuals / groups involved in the organization</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actor (who and what roles)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audience (who they are)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Resources for the Blind (RBI) - Philippines**

- **Virtual world:** Website, Facebook
- **Physical world:** RBI front office, Braille Textbooks, Braille Magazines, Computer Resource Center, Computer Camp

**Activities**

- **Philippine Braille Technology Center**
- **Christian Growth Ministries**
- **Education for Blind Children**
- **Blindness prevention activities (Cataract Surgery, eye-screening in schools)**
- **Special Programs:**
  - Computer Resource Center for the Blind
  - Computer Camp
  - Training and Rehabilitation (livelihood)
  - Advocacy and Outreach (Christmas party for blind kids)

**Audiences**

- Blind clients, families
- Donors, partners (local and international)
- Phil gov’t, general public

**Adaptive Technology for Rehabilitation, Integration and Empowerment of the Visually Impaired**

- **Virtual world:** Website, Facebook, Youtube
- **Physical world:** Access & Resource Center, JAWS-equipped internet café, computer rental, computer repair

**Activities**

- **Computer Literacy Training of Trainers in Access Technology for the Visually-Impaired**
- **Digital Early Intervention Training (DEIT) for Kids**
- **MIDI musical Transcription (MMT) course**
- **Corporate and Voice Mail Transcription**
- **Other Computer-related training**

**Audiences**

- Blind clients, families, caregivers, donors, local and international partners, National Government, impaired and non-impaired patrons

**ATRIEV**

- **Actors:**
  - They call themselves TEAM ATRIEV
  - Board of trustees, Program unit head, chief trainer and chief of operations, instructors and volunteers

**Audiences**

- Blind clients, families, caregivers, donors, local and international partners, National Government, impaired and non-impaired patrons

**ATRIEV has creatively addressed stigma through its very own Youtube Channel. They have some 25 videos there that deal with how the blind should be treated as a normal human being. They showcase the abilities and talents of the blind in music, art and most especially, computer technologies. They also publicize SUCCESS NARRATIVES on both Youtube, website and Facebook. Offline, they have an internet cafe, events and their graduates as main advocates confronting STIGMA in words and deeds.**

**MCCID**

- **Virtual world:** None
- **Physical world:** Degree-giving Computer College

**Activities**

- **House visits to parents and families**
- **Advocacy & lobbying for disability rights**

**Audiences**

- Deaf students, families, caregivers, donors, partners (local and international)

**MCCID is one of the more successful PWD organizations that has penetrated the mainstream educational system. It is recognized by the Technical Education & Skills Development Authority (TESDA) and the government itself. It can be inferred that it has addressed stigma through its excellent performance as a computer school for the deaf.**

**IDEA**

- **Virtual world:** None
- **Physical world:** Non-profit Christian organization

**Activities**

- **Non-profit Christian organization**
- **Educational outreach**
- **IDEA businesses**
- **Deaf Church**
- **Vacation Bible School**

**Audiences**

- Deaf students, trainees, families, caregivers

**IDEA**

- **Actors:**
  - Board of Trustees, Leadership, instructors, management

**Audiences**

- Deaf students, trainees, families, caregivers

**Dissemination of the film “Amang” (Parts 1-4) on Youtube**

- Exposing the public to businesses owned and run by the deaf – Dao Diamond Hotel, Garden Café, Hosting of the Bohol Deaf culture Week (every two years, which also serves as the reunion of alumni, donors and friends of IDEA) Participation in the provincial celebration of...
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Deaf Academy/Center</th>
<th>Physical World</th>
<th>Virtual World</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bohol Deaf Academy (High School) in Tagbilaran City</strong></td>
<td>Deaf High School Computer Center, Christian activities – (optional)</td>
<td>Website, Deaf School Blog, Newsletter, forum</td>
<td>Donors, Board of Trustees, Support group, Advocacy and lobbying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NOVA</strong></td>
<td>Business Center serving the PWD Community in Cainta, Rizal</td>
<td>Virtual technology training center, Website, Facebook, Youtube</td>
<td>Vocational technology training center, Marketing, Placement / Alumni Relations, Donor Relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tahanang Walang Hagdanan (House without Any Steps)</strong></td>
<td>Sheltered trade skills workshops, Chapel, Dormitories, Daycare, SPED School Computer Laboratory, Training Seminars</td>
<td>Website, Facebook, Youtube</td>
<td>Information, Autism care education, Advocacy, Support group, Online Newsletter, Online Forum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ASP</strong></td>
<td>Information, Autism care education, Advocacy, Support group</td>
<td>Newsletter, forum</td>
<td>Information, Autism care education, Advocacy, Support group, Online Newsletter, Online Forum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NCDA</strong></td>
<td>Information, Education, Advocacy</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Donors, partners (Foreign aid driven, they’d rather stay away from government), Philip gov’t, general public, patronizing the computer services</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Activities:
- **Bohol Deaf Academy (High School) in Tagbilaran City**
  - Participating in mainstream events to promote deaf culture. Here are some of the events:
    - Dance Festivals (Sandugo Festival & 31st Annual Disability Week – posted 8/27/09; Cheer Dance – posted 8/8/09)
    - Cooking Festival – posted 8/27/09
    - Hosting or joining Basketball Leagues and performing during Halftime – posted 11/21/2010

- **NOVA**
  - They participate in legislative advocacies, public hearings and technical working groups to enhance disability laws, e.g., Technical Working Group for the implementation of the 20% discount for medicines for PWDs, to be followed by the largest pharmaceutical company in the Philippines, Mercury Drug.
  - TV Patrol News (TV) Feature by Zeny Aragones (posted May 4, 2008)

- **Tahanang Walang Hagdanan (House without Any Steps)**
  - TWH has a corporate video of two parts developed in late 2008 (written, directed and narrated by Fr. James Reuter, posted in Youtube on Jan 16, 2009)
  - TWH participates in the National Disability Prevention and Rehabilitation Week

- **ASP**
  - ASP participates in the National Disability Prevention and Rehabilitation Week. They also hold their own events in partnership with donors, other chapters, etc. Example of events:
    - Premier Night of Symphony at Megamall (July 2011, I saw this one);
    - Angels Walk for Autism, Echoes of Dreams, Alyana (film), Embrace (TV ad)

- **NCDA**
  - Hosting of the Annual National Disability Prevention and Rehabilitation Week
  - Spearheading campaigns such as Decade of the Disabled (Philippines) Public service announcements – Defy Normal and Parehong Kakayahan, Parehong Karapatang (posted on Youtube on 1/20/10); per my interview with NCDA this is a very low-budget media production
Table 9 below summarizes the sampled website application of Lifeworlds and Goggin and Newell’s Accomplishment Space (to both online and offline findings)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lifeworld’s and accomplishment spaces based on the analysis of online / offline data</th>
<th>Specific accomplishment spaces – areas of inclusion and recognition</th>
<th>Personal-level lifeworlds (education, training, friendships)</th>
<th>Socio-economic lifeworlds (e.g. employment)</th>
<th>Political lifeworlds (legislative, social movement)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organization Name</td>
<td>Network of family/relatives, friends, classmates, training-mates, co-workers via Facebook or FB and text, e.g. Pia Resurreccion – is active in Fb and has an adult love relationship.</td>
<td>Pia Resurreccion has a job at the front office of RBI</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned in the website and offline interview.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RBI</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCCID</td>
<td>Abilympics Award – Ervin Reyes Philippine Deaf Basketball League 2011</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>Business process outsourcing, Website development, flash animation, clerical jobs and data entry operations</td>
<td>Economic Independence for PWD, ID System for Discountes and other benefits for the disabled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDEA</td>
<td>Hospitality industry (hotel and restaurant) Elementary school graduates in the IDEA dormitories in Leyte and Samar</td>
<td></td>
<td>None / Wants to stay away from RP government local or national</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BDA</td>
<td>Education, intercultural festivals, e.g. cookfests</td>
<td>Education, intercultural festivals, e.g. cookfests</td>
<td>BDA alumni some of them have become teachers in BDA</td>
<td>None / Depends NOT on RP government local or national</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOVA</td>
<td>Business process outsourcing</td>
<td>Call Center, medical transcriptionist, data entry trainings.</td>
<td>Business process outsourcing</td>
<td>Legislative advocacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TWH</td>
<td>Business process outsourcing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASP</td>
<td>Nationwide network of partners Expansive network of partners, co-sponsorship of concerts, film showing, other events</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCDA</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Legislative advocacy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overall the findings, validate the use of space and cyberspace the way Krippendorf defines it: “space – conceptualizes the ability to move, act, create and describe to include mental, socio-cultural, economic, political and other spaces for human enterprise and social relationships. The PWD organizations have proven that cyberspace results from the human collective ability to conceptualize possibilities in the design and use of technological artifacts (Krippendorf 2010). This study demonstrates it with the data-mined contents of the websites, blogs, youtube videos and interview narratives, which claim that they are optimizing the use of cyberspace as socio-political space, economic space (business center) and cultural space (education, creative arts, music and performance art).

Cyberspace offers opportunities to level the playing field for individuals with disabilities for several reasons.

First, the number of tasks that can be accomplished via cyberspace is increasing daily and will continue to multiply at rapid rates in the near future. [From just staying at home, the PWDs are able to study, socialize and work.] Second, disabilities can be made less visible, meaning they can be overcome in cyberspace. Cyberspace has provided the option to be invisible, be gradually visible and be very visible. Disabilities can be hidden or presented in a different light using cyberspace. Through the visibility, the abilities of the disabled have been given a stage. Abilities have been seen individually, but with the help of multi-agent action.

Third, no stigma attaches to using the tools of cyberspace. Individuals who find it crucial to use cyberspace because of a disability will not be perceived as different from
individuals who find it convenient for any other reason. Fourth, cyberspace, depending as it does on digital convergence, can, in principle at least, facilitate the need for different forms of input and output. Cyberspace provides a structure that can be used to help make many “reasonable accommodations” to the needs of individuals with disabilities (Murelli 2002:).

Sixth, the use of new media and ICT operationalizes the constituting of new cultural spaces for PWD. As a sociopolitical space, disability will continue to exist, and technology will remain as an important site in which it is constructed. (Goggin and Newell 2003: 135,153). After all, disability is constructed even in affirmative exchanges and rituals, in habitus (to use Bourdieu’s term) of everyday life where the dominant construct is to remove barriers for people with disabilities and cyberspace can do it.

The case studies revealed that cyberspace has leveled the playing field because it has given space to the disabled to accomplish something given their abilities and disabilities. Cyberspace is the accomplishment-space created by a huge infrastructure that accommodates communication—communication among people and communication among people and all of the information nodes (web pages, airline schedules, commodities vendors, libraries, etc.) that are stored on the network of computers. Indeed, cyberspace is the latest stage in a long process of extending “accomplishment-space” beyond the limitations of our natural senses and abilities. In general, the more accomplishment spaces extended by communication, tools and infrastructure, the less appropriate the intrinsic conception of disability becomes (Perry et al 1998). Lastly, cyberspace affords an experience built on imagination and
interaction – conceptual and consensual. Conceptualizing possibilities is aligned with the themes of cyberspace as equalizer and leveler of the playing field (Wood and Smith 2001:17).

The findings herein confirm the ADB (2005) report that submitted the country’s economic managers’ suggestion that “achieving higher growth and enhancing the ability of the poor (including persons with disability who are considered among the poorest of the poor in this country) to participate in that growth by building up their assets through investments in their human capital and their physical environment would be the main engine for poverty reduction. Building the human capital of the poor is important for enhancing productivity and for empowering them. Local government units in the rural areas could be key to this process, especially if they are strengthened and equipped to provide adequate and timely agricultural, environmental and natural resource management extension services to their constituents. LGU leaders and PWD civil society groups are key elements of multi-agent action to build the human capital and assets of the PWDs to access and master cyberspace.

The caveat though is - cyberspace can be an equalizer for PWDs to the extent that multi-action can afford because majority of the disabled are poor. Someone has to share the cost of the hardware, accessibility software and broadband for them. The findings suggest that individual PWDs can gain access to computer technologies through participating in the education, training and livelihood programs of the non-government organizations of their particularly sector. The blind to look for the computer schools and training centers for the blind, the deaf to find technical schools for the deaf,
and so on and so forth. Once in the context of an education or training institution, they have access to computers and Internet. Evidently, the pathway for change is for the PWD to leave isolation and participate in the outside world. A good starting point is getting education. It is important to acquire basic education (elementary and secondary) because it will provide the essential skills of reading, writing and arithmetic. These are pre-requisites for computer education and then technology takes over.

Computers have features that make them adaptable to the different kinds of disabilities and have the several advantages. For most of the disabilities, it needs minimum supervision once the technology is learned. Most of the time, the interaction is between the computer and the deaf person. Occasional instructions coming from the immediate supervisor and managers are given but not too often. Some communication barriers are removed. It enhances creativity and imagination due to visual or aural concentration. In the case of the deaf, a vast majority of deaf persons are highly skilled in drawing and designing. Given the opportunity, they can excel in fields like Web Page Design, Visual Arts and Graphics Animation. Computers are deaf-friendly – no special software to install or additional peripherals. A keyboard, mouse and a well-lighted place are all it needs for the deaf person to work. Admittedly, it is different in the case of the blind or other types of disabilities. But technology has provisions for them, too.

Employment can follow after education and training, but remotely in the absence of training and skills. Depending on the types of disabilities, the PWD can be employed in the following fields of work: graphics animation, data entry operations, computer
operations/ encoding, computer programming, computer or cellphone repairs, software testing and development, web page design and development, IT entrepreneurship.

Social networking community expands with the use of the Internet, hence finding employment becomes more possible and feasible. Employment involves matching potential employees with job opportunities (Potts, Blyden 2005, p. 1). Through impression management, the disability sector is able to achieve communicative power. “Power is primarily exercised by the construction of meaning in the human mind through processes of communication enacted in the global/local multimedia networks of mass communication, including mass self-communication (Castells 2011).”

Construction of meaning simultaneously occurs in the production and reproduction of power relationships in all domains of social life. The process of constructing meaning operates in a cultural context that is also simultaneously local and global, and is characterized by a great deal of diversity and adversity in the case of the marginalized. In the new world of mass self-communication and highly segmented audience there are few instances of simultaneous mass sharing of media images, what is broadly shared is the culture of disability, whether the general disability culture or specific cultures of the blind, deaf and those with learning disabilities. “Precisely because the new communication system is so versatile, diversified and open-ended, it integrates messages and codes from all sources, enclosing most of socialized communication in its multi-modal, multi-channel networks.

I further agree with Castell’s communicative theory of power that the more people build their own networks of mass self-communication, the more they empower
themselves. Actually, the critical operative word is not network-building but mass self-communication with “self” as a key term. Why? Because mass-self-communication implies self-empowerment which has gone through the long, arduous preliminary steps of anger, denial, acceptance, self-determination and self-advocacy. It connotes power and liberation from marginalization whether self-inflicted or otherwise. Mass self-communication in the context of the case studies explored in this power is enabled by cyberspace. Cyberspace provides the space and the communication flows for PWD self-empowerment in the Philippines.

B. SUMMARY

Through the newly discovered facts, insights learned, cultural values and social practices bared and/or rediscovered, this study aims to reach a broader consensus among scholars and professionals of the various helping disciplines to push for PWD empowerment in cyberspace through improved access, design, development, deployment and dissemination processes both in urban and rural or hard to reach areas.

In the developed countries, computer technology has seen to have a tremendous potential to broaden the lives, increase the independence and deepen the culture of people with disabilities. Cyberspace, the combination of the physical (computers) and virtual (internet) aspects of information and communications technology has revolutionized the lives and lifeworlds of people with disabilities (PWD). The Net effect is that the world has been wired and transformed. It has leveled the playing field and included the disabled in the global economy (Kolko 2003:). PWD groups in the Philippines have caught this wave and these are manifested in the narratives collected.
online - on its websites, social networking tools, and offline through interviews with its leaders and members.

The testing of Carling-Jenkins’ ‘Way Forward Modernity and Postmodernity’ theory against the online and offline discourse of the PWD respondents reveal a social construction of disability that is influenced by postmodernity framework. Through their verbal, actual and symbolic actions online and offline, they have questioned the traditional “pathologization” and the categorization of the disabled as the “other” and have moved them from isolation to inclusion and integration. They have started a new signification of themselves as people with disabilities. No longer defined by binary functions and inflexible in including them in the ‘modern’ economy. The new social allows for the redefinition of situation and identities according to their own knowledge, realities and lived experiences in the global world. The use of cyberspace and its related tools has proven to be effective “precisely because the online communication system is so versatile, diversified and open-ended, it integrates messages and codes from all sources, enclosing most of socialized communication in its multi-modal, multi-channel networks (Castells 2011).”

Using cyberspace, each of the PWD groups studied, has developed, following Goffman’s terms, a new “presentation of itself in everyday life’ that overcomes stigma. Cyberspace has given them a virtual social identity that complements their actual social identity. They are using websites supplemented by social networking tools such as blogs, Facebook, Youtube, Twitter, Wikipedia and other applications for communication and managing social, professional and business relationships. This has enabled them
to enter and participated in the global economy with their educational and training centers, commercial ventures, innovative programs and projects, and various types of political, social and cultural enterprises. They have made accomplishment spaces in the disability and digital economy sector and these are evidenced by real outputs such as number of graduates for the training centers, roster of clients, business partners and donors, and recognition through local and international awards.

PWD groups are using cyberspace for “impression management” which has led them to communication, building of relationships, and the opening of lifeworlds that enrich their personal, vocational/professional, political and social existence. I surmise that they are not conscious about it, but they are doing it so effectively because their websites and Facebook pages are teeming with donors, partners, cooperating schools, employing companies and other supporters. The ocular visits and interviews made as part of my fieldwork proved that these benefactors are truly invested in their giving and supporting the PWD groups. I have seen the facilities with donor markers, vehicles and equipment with donor logos, trainings that are running with students, and operations that actually produce tangible results.

Behind all these manifested these frontline actions are backstage operations and a dramaturgy that has been played or well. There were actors, who performed their roles wells, and audiences, whose anticipations and expectations were met, and an actor-audience consensus has been established. The websites, which are a critical part of the frontline operations, have seen to communicate well what the organizations have promised to deliver. They have clear and sincere texts and graphics complemented by real-time, not staged, videos of programs and projects being implemented by the
organizations concerned. The websites are made alive by the so-called technology articulated ensemble that has the constitutive elements of devices/artifacts, material conditions, aesthetic properties, human practices and cultural narratives/values and forms of knowledge that resonate to the target audiences.

In the websites, the leaders and members of the PWD groups are the "actors" (using Goffman's term) and they take center-stage in what they have committed to do – be it trainings, outreach events (Christmas parties) or constructing dormitories for deaf and blind children. The videos are in the websites, hosted in Youtube and shared in Facebook as well. These texts and images deliver calculated moves and good “impressions” that almost always exceed expectations because of the traditional social construction that the disabled have lesser capacities and it is not fair to expect much from them. Instead, both in online and offline, they have seen to present a new conception of themselves, their new-found abilities in the global economy, and cultural attributes such as self-determination, competence and trustworthiness which altogether elicit a positive attitude towards them. When anticipation and expectations are surpassed by actual performance, satisfaction happens and good first impressions are established. This enables professional routines and opening doors of opportunities and the eventual offering of goods and services. It also happens the other way around, donors and supporters come to volunteer to the PWD organization even if they have not met them online. After working with them, the PWD organizations manage donor relations through recognizing their donors online through the website, Youtube or Wikipedia, and keeping in the relationship going using emails and of course, Facebook.

Impression management paves the way and it is the kind of control that sets the
stage for the production and reproduction of social structures and relationships ensue. In the case of the educational and training organizations, these are student to student and student-teacher relations, parent-teacher associations, and alumni keeping in-touch with their alma mater. In the case of the non-profit groups engaged in business ventures, these include employee-employer relations, scholar-sponsor links, donor-beneficiary ties, and other partner and volunteer ties with the PWD groups. Contrary to stigma that attracts concealment and marginalization, this brand of online-offline impression management has the potential to instigate good first impressions, enlightening discovery, and communicative power. All of these contribute to the social construction of disability in Philippine society.

“Power is primarily exercised by the construction of meaning in the human mind through processes of communication enacted in the global/local multimedia networks of mass communication, including mass self-communication (Castells 2011). Emphasis here is on the mass self-communication which is the approach utilized by the PWD in their cyberspace engagements and impression management. The construction of meaning, the framing of individual and collective minds, simultaneously occurs in the production and reproduction of power relationships in all domains of social life. It must be noted that the process of constructing meaning operates in a cultural context that is also simultaneously local and global, and is characterized by a great deal of diversity and adversity in the case of the marginalized. Hence, the significance of local and cultural-based case study such as this to understand this social phenomenon. Theories can be broadly applied across disability-types and socio-economic background, but never undermine the nuances of the local culture.
In this case, the sampled PWD groups and the societal elements surrounding them have found new meaning in digital living and have redefined social relationships, human bonding and community-building. There are similarities and differences in the physical and social barriers that they face and have their own unique way of dealing with their respective adversities. They are all hampered by the big gap between the expressed disability laws and its implementation. Some of them have been traumatized by government corruption and discouraged by its bureaucratic red tape. But all of them have learned their lessons from dealing with government and have been true to their institutional genre of being non-government and non-dependent on government. Overall, they are grateful that cyberspace has come to level the playing field between the powerful and the powerless, the "connected" and the marginalized. Being part of cyber communities have been socially, political and economically liberating and uplifting to them. Cyberspace has bridged their way to new lifeworlds and accomplishment spaces in both virtual and real-world spaces. It has enhanced knowledge, lived experiences and deepens disability culture resulting to redefined situations that focus on identities and abilities rather than disabilities.

This study provides a significant contribution to the growth of disability discourse and knowledge in the Philippines. The case studies presented herein represent an aggregate of non-government organizations based in urban Metro Manila (6) and rural areas (2), which maybe argued to have easy access to electricity and computer technologies. Nonetheless, it does not deny the reality of ‘digital divide’ particularly in remote rural areas where the cost of access needs to be addressed. However, the use of cyberspace as an empowerment highway for the PWD has been done successfully
by eight (8) PWD non-profit groups and they provide tried and tested models and best practices that are replicable in both urban and rural contexts and across disability types.

All of the PWD organizations sampled have connections to the rural areas, be it satellite offices or sheltered workshops, outreach projects, partners, students or alumni - and they keep in-touch as they are phenotypically close-knit groups. They consider themselves "family" and that is socio-culturally loaded to both the disability sector and the Philippine context. More significantly, it is crucial to realize that the backbone of all these is the self-determination of the PWD, and the multi-agent action of the individuals and groups supporting them. Their history and accomplishments should be captured, documented, disseminated and further enriched through an interdisciplinary academic discipline known as Disability Studies. Recognizing what they have done, through documentation, research and publication, is a crucial first step to discourse, which is important in taking this social phenomenon to its rightful next level. Discourse makes social change a visible event, worthy of description, publication, circulation (Robillard 1999:1), advocacy and action.
CHAPTER IX
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. CONCLUSION

Cyberspace can be an equalizer for persons with disabilities (PWD), as it affords the PWD an alternative or additional ‘stage’ to be able to present itself in everyday life. This is literally everyday through an online website, where they can provide new, innovative and calculated means of presentation and interaction without the fear of stigma. They are not automatically discredited, tainted or reduced to something. In the organizational context, self-disclosure is done as a group (an NGO, sectoral group) and through a collective identity with disability pride and dignity. They need not all be physically present in a certain location to present a collective front. They can do it using social products as website, corporate video on YouTube channel and Facebook page, etc. They can express themselves and their disability culture. There is space for who really are and what they wanted to say. They can somehow manage or take control of information, that is otherwise difficult to do in person. They can perform and engage in mass self-communication. All of the above contributes to the management of a ‘spoiled identity’ that is created or perceived because of stigma. The initial encounter could lead to further interaction and building of relationships that can open up new lifeworlds such as friendships, relationships, educational and employment opportunities. They can express and impress –through online and offline social artifacts and activities – thereby managing ‘spoiled identity’ and getting a fair chance at opportunities.

As such, Goffman's theories are proven true in the PWD social interaction through the following elements: Actors are effective in the case of the PWDs because they
render very real characterization (sincere) of their roles. (6 out of 9 are church-based but accepting people of all faiths). Backstage preparation is crucial in the empowerment of PWDs in cyberspace. PWD NGO’s contribute in this through the provision of venues for inclusion and participation. Good performance can lead to actor-audience consensus and open up new lifeworlds for PWDs. Tools such as websites, Youtube, Facebook allow for calculated moves such as self-disclosure, expressing disability culture, abilities and managing impressions

Overall, the Philippine case proves Goffman’s theory of ego alignment through the three levels of online interaction that have been observed in the sampled organizations:
1) **Physical** use of ICT tools (hardware and software, assistive devices (e.g. JAWS for the blind) and internet to access information, training and employment (BPO, call centers, etc); 2) **Virtual** connection to social networks that enriches human experience and disability culture[ 3) **Symbolic interaction (SI)** effect of PWD technical know-how that gives off **prestige status**, a **disidentifier** that breaks up the otherwise coherent picture of stigma (Goffman 1963). The cases further provide proof that the association of PWDs with technology improves their public image and neutralizes stigma. The traditional stigmatized scenario portrays the PWD as poor and unskilled, especially in highly technical matters. However, the intelligence, innovation and high-tech skills inherent in the concept technology and computers rubs off on the PWD engaged in them. This is perceived as positive, superior and favorable compared to the lowly association with manual labor. The blind medical transcriptionist is perceived as better off compared to the blind who is employed as a massage therapist. The deaf web designer is seen as more talented compared to the deaf who is a baker in a bread shop.
Technical know-how that gives off prestige status, a \textit{disindentifier} that breaks up the otherwise coherent picture of stigma (Goffman 1963). In popular terms, the high-tech outlooks can produce an instant makeover in the personality of the PWD or the collective group engaged in them. It gives off an air of respect, appreciation and that element of surprise that can work positively well for impression management.

In conclusion, this paper submits this proposition on the use of cyberspace to equalize and open up lifeworlds to persons with disabilities through these three levels of engagement in the offline world that complements the online interaction previously outlined. First is participation. Individual PWDs need to end their isolation and muster self-determination to be part of the disability social movement that could connect them to available digital disability movement in their respective locations. It does not matter if they are in a remotely rural place or miserably urban poor situation. Digital disability networks are available everywhere and there is a way of connecting the dots. Second is \textbf{performance} that is through– front stage (training, service delivery) and back stage operations. Third is \textbf{production} and reproduction of results and social structures/relations (for the self, family, sector, disability culture). The three steps can lead to impression management that is outlined and illustrated below in \textbf{Figure #12. Impression Management Framework adapted from Goffman’s Dramaturgical Analysis as applied to the Philippine Disability Context.}
The first step is group alignment through participation. The PWD must end isolation and be part of multi-agent action. Multi-agent action simply means a group of agents or actors who make things happen. This can be in education, training, civil society activities, or any other form of creative human enterprise. Second is performance in both back stage and front stage area of operations. Back stage may include technical workshops, life skills training to self-determination, etc. Front stage is role performance may include online presentation or work performance in the physical realm. The goal of back and front stage performance is role fulfillment. Third is production which is the intended by-product of performance that can lead to empowerment. Good performance can lead to actor-audience consensus which is geared toward acceptance of the PWD,
the presentation of himself and the work that he can accomplish. This can lead to encounters and subsequent production and reproduction of social structure and relationships, e.g. employer-employee relationships, donor-benefactor relations and disability pride.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS: CONTINUING THE SAGA WITHOUT THE STIGMA

This final section presents the recommendations of this study to the PWD Sector. First is the creation of a digital disability portal that will serve to promote cyberspace engagement and advocate group alignment and multi-agent action in global digital economy. Second is to take the online and offline fight to the next level by adopting a Disability Studies Framework to socialize the disability message. In both recommendations, the goal is to sustain and take disability discourse to the next level. Discourse makes social change visible worthy of description, publication, circulation (Robillard 1992), advocacy and action.

In the first recommendation, this author takes it upon itself to present to the Philippine government and the disability community what the nine subject organizations have accomplished in cyberspace. As such, I will establish a digital disability portal through a blog. I will post the nine cases and the findings of this study. I will multi-agent action and enterprise and promote the business models such as Genashtim. Genashtim presents a great argument on the strategic advantage of PWD workers that can inspire and push government and private sector investments for wider computer technology and Internet access for PWD.

The social model of disability maintains that society and its environment create
the conditions that enable persons with disabilities or further disable them. Philippine
disability policy instruments are well intentioned and web accessibility initiatives are
underway, all envisioned to empower the Filipino PWD. However, policy structures can
only do so much, where the policy and operational environment is hampered with the
lack of awareness and understanding in the bureaucracy, insufficient funding
aggravated by graft and corruption and a host of other bureaucratic issues. The big gap
between policy and implementation has been noted and the sampled organizations
reveal a striking non-dependence on government structures and resources. They have
come to grips with reality on what they government can do for them and have basically
taken matters in their own eyes, hands and feet - despite the disabilities. The glaring
unanimous decision based on their online and offline action is - they will not allow
government to disable them further.

Indeed there is a lot to cover as far as social mobilization and advocacy are concerned,
so this study will limit its recommendations to empowerment through information and
communications technology (ICT) and the wider use of cyberspace.

1. Enable disability policy and practice in the Philippines using cyberspace.
Yes, do not give up on the disability policies because they function like birthrights and to
own them is to claim them. They are in-place and cyberspace has ways for you to
enable them towards your advantage. Here are some practical suggestions? The
PWD sector must nurture a culture of mutual-knowledge with the government and other
stakeholders. Keep up the communicative power through mass-self-communication
initiatives online - the website, blogs, Facebook and Youtube in order to communicate
and further the socialization of the disability message to society. The interviews conducted sought for plans for a 'next level' and readiness is at hand. I say, go for the next level in your online and offline engagements.

Through the online discourse supplemented by on-the-ground activities (e.g. training programs, commercial services and advocacy events), collectively nurture a culture of mutual obligations among stakeholders (private, public, PWD sectors) in pushing policies and multi-agent action in providing information and communication access to PWDs. I submit that the strength of policies may be derived from understanding the principles behind them. What is the law about and why is there a need for it? What is the spirit behind the law? OECD espouses the propagation of principle-driven policies:

“To improve the integration of disabled persons, societies need to change the way they think about disability and those affected by it. The concept of unbundling disability and benefit receipt would shift the character of disability policy away from a passive approach towards a stronger emphasis on activation measures (OECD 2003).”

This change in paradigm requires information and education about disability in order to have society rethink its perspectives about disability. The change in attitudes and perspectives are inputs to re-engineering of structures, frameworks and systems in dealing with PWDs. Heightened awareness and understanding can redound to a change of attitude and lead to positive and affirmative action of PWDs, their families and other stakeholders. The idea is to re-shape and improve disability policy and practice based on cooperation and mutual obligations. I have heard it time and again, “those who have less in life should have more help” or should have more in terms of law.
Whatever the version maybe the principle behind is the fact that cooperation and mutual obligations enable the disabled. Ignorance, apathy, insensitivity they are more disabling than any physical impairment and the way to confront them is through spreading correct information, influencing attitudes, and reinforcing good behavior in the most dynamic media available –cyberspace.

As applied to policy-driven principles, the idea is to treat disability right not only because of policies but because it is the right thing to do. It is good for us and society to do good and to affect more people and influence culture, we have to tell it well using human, social and digital technologies. Sociologically-speaking disability is constructed even in affirmative exchanges and rituals, in habitus (to use Bourdieu’s term) of everyday life. Society’s dominant construct should be to remove barriers for people with disabilities. Hence, as a sociopolitical space, disability will continue to exist, and technology will remain as an important site in which it is constructed. (p.153).

According to Castells (1996), computer mediated communication is critical in shaping future culture. He argues that women, and other oppressed groups of society are more likely to express themselves openly through the protection of the electronic medium (p.360). Cyberspace is populated by the interacting and the interacted. The communication of all kinds of messages in the same system induces an integration of all messages in a common cognitive pattern (p.371) that can shape culture. It is generating culture and collective identities, which are particularly needed in shaping disability culture (p.375).

2). Push government for investments in the telecommunications sector and realize provisions for information, communication and assistive technologies for
PWDs. Emphasize to them that efficient telecommunications networks would boost economic development. Because we live in global society, which is anticipated to routinely, live in a world of space and time (Murelli 2002:3). ICT will make available information and opportunities for people wherever they are and they can take charge of their destinies. One way of strong advocacy is to collectively demonstrate what it has already done for the disability groups. Report in tangible terms how it has provided employment and increase household incomes and give them suggestions and concrete steps. The government, for example, can push and assist local governments in investing in public internet cafes and to transform them into “computer laboratories” for distance education, communication, and small and medium enterprises. They can use policy instruments to "push" national and local political to initiate and sustain programs that will help communities realize the value of IT tools and encourage them to take ownership of IT-related projects (Sanchez 2003). Emphasize to the government that they can optimize the use of cyberspace to generate efficiency savings in the provision of government services (Pilling, D. et al 2004: 9). Instead of the expensive international and interregional seminar and other government-personnel based activities – invest in hardware and software and distribute them to PWDs and make local governments responsible for their maintenance. This is an example of mutual obligations in action.

3. The PWD sector to collectively strengthen public information, education and communication campaign. Engage the help of PWD non-government organizations and use cyberspace in all of these processes Address the digital divide in creative and innovative ways. Given the recognition that poverty is the underlying problem and that disability is viewed within a poverty alleviation framework – the issue of the “digital
The "divide" needs to be addressed. Digital divide refers to the gap between those people who have access to the new information and communications technologies and those who cannot. Governments around the world are addressing this issue through various access-points as they are compelled by both market and social forces to do so and the Philippine government should learn from them. The emergence of the new ICT is complementary, perhaps a prime mover, to the process of globalization and addressing poverty. Hence, optimizing life in the global society is the way to go in addressing the digital divide. Yes there are costs that must be paid, but in most cost-benefit analysis, the dividends are greater and it is more costly if we let go of the opportunities that it presents. The recommendation then is not to fight it but instead we should be able to ride it even if we have to do it with crutches, braces and wheelchairs. Because we are living in a global society the transformation of the world into a global village can be "inclusive" and accessible, if there is a will – there is a way and that way could be via cyberspace. The digital divide can be regarded as both threat and challenge. I argue the benefits outweigh the costs for PWD. It is a practical choice and well-worth every cent and all the effort. Governments and civil society groups are in the process of adapting to information technologies, and the structure of political opportunities is creating active citizenship and civic engagement (Norris 2001:95). Cyber-optimists regard digital technologies as very important in fueling this process of active citizenship and civic engagement. It is hoped that this will redound to the disability community. Indeed, the internet has the potential to allow the public to become more knowledgeable about public affairs, more articulate in expressing their views via email, online discussion lists or chat rooms, and more active in mobilizing around community affairs.
(p.97). As such I highly recommend the use of cyberspace to empower Filipino PWD.

The second and final recommendation of this study to empower PWD in general is the establishment of Disability Studies as an academic discipline. Disability Studies is known for its influence to policy and practice in developed countries and this research will test these western conceptions and experience in a developing country as the Philippines. On the other hand, Disability studies is based on the premise that the disadvantage typically experiences by PWDs, reflects primarily the way society defines and response to certain types of difference (Ryerson). Disability sits at the core of many overlapping disciplines in the humanities, sciences and social sciences. In the more advanced countries, it has a curriculum that allows students, activists, teachers, artists, practitioners and researchers to engage in its interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary perspectives. It studies national and international perspectives, policies, literature, culture, history with the aim of placing current ideas of disability within the broadest possible context. In most countries, it actively encourages the participation of disabled students and faculty, and ensures physical and intellectual access. It makes sense to have a disability studies field given the fact that almost everyone will become either temporarily or permanently disabled at some point in life (Linton, 1998, p. 1). Human beings, regardless of economic status or philosophical views about disability, is subject to reaching a point of reduced ability status - sooner or later. For the younger generation, since they are the future, it makes sense to have a distinct separate special education field since special children have diverse needs and learning styles. It is for the benefit of the special and mainstream education children and teachers to separate the two.
The envisioned Philippine Disability Studies will be grounded on the personal and societal experiences of Filipino PWD's, their families, caregivers and service-providers. I will argue that there are existing social theories that can explain their experience and such can be validated and improved through disability studies. Later on, such 'area studies' of local PWD experiences in our archipelago of 7,107 islands can be a source of social theories that could incorporate disability issues that Filipinos face to include poverty, armed conflict, ethnic identity, diversity, gender, social entrepreneurship and service-culture. There is a popular universal definition of disability, as there is a universal meaning attached to caring for PWDs. On other hand, there is also a place for culturally-based and informed definitions of disability, disability rights and disability culture, aside from the policy-based or legal definitions of these terms. Shared meanings create better awareness and understanding of disability terms/ issues, that would more likely lead to better interventions and resolutions to problems. It is for the above reasons that I recommend the establishment of Disability Studies as an academic discipline or higher learning in the Philippines. Online-learning is not new to Philippine schools and Disability Studies course can also be offer using this mode. Through its "streaming" or offering in cyberspace, PWD who cannot physically go to school can access this body of knowledge and be empowered by them. (See Appendix _____ for this author's proposed Disability Studies Framework for the Philippines and its discourse on how to establish it at a major university in the country.

In retrospect, the advent of the World Wide Web since 1993 has enhanced the interaction and connectiveness of social groups. Former Secretary General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan (2006), echoed: “As the development of the Internet and
its related technologies take the needs of the PWDs fully into account, the
barriers of prejudice, infrastructure and inaccessible formats need no longer
stand in the way of participation.” With the enhancement of disability policy and
practice this potential can be realized and optimized. Further, it can be energized and
complemented with Disability studies as an academic discipline that will take the
disability discourse and the socialization of its empowerment message to the next level
of realization.

In line with this, government policies and instruments must continue to strive to
enable and help sustain the provision of information, communication and assistive
technologies that provide access to cyberspace for it can do a lot for people with
disabilities. The Internet has an enormous potential to further aid the construction of
social meaning, particularly overarching meaning constructed in interaction.
Virtualization via the Internet expands the situational possibilities through which identity
may be legitimately constructed leading to self-presentation and (Surrat 2001: 218) for
self-determination. It helps them develop, appropriate and manage their individual and
group identities. Castells (1995) argues that the new communication systems is
radically transforming space and time and the fundamental dimensions of human life
and facilitating social and function integration. (p.375). Hence, policies and programs
should be geared toward enhancing connectivity and interactivity and take advantage of
the motivation, means and momentum provided by cyberspace culture. Indeed, it can
generate culture and collective identities, which the PWD can use towards the
development of an empowered Pinoy disability culture.
Cyberspace must continue to be promoted as an empowerment highway for the PWD. Economically, PWDs can search for clients for their products and services, find a network of support and collaborate with others using the Internet. They can affordably show their abilities (talents, products, skills, etc) to national and global audiences. The World Wide Web also educates them about different worlds and diverse cultures. They learn about equity and diversity, and they can see that disability is a normal aspect of life. They can develop self-esteem and be inspired to pursue self-advocacy and self-determination. A whole new world – a way forward and extended space are opened to them, and they can go thread that information and opportunity highway armed with hope and the support of others they know or have yet to meet.

Overall, this study is pleased to contribute to the theoretical development of the sociology of disability that incorporates updates in the social digital world, and to the development of disability history and knowledge in the Philippines. In aims to prove that in a third world context as the Philippines, cyberspace can be an equalizer of power relations for persons with disabilities. Cyberspace can level the playing field and “include” the disabled in the global economy and open up new lifeworlds. The case studies presented demonstrate how Filipino PWDs have moved from isolation to inclusion and all the way to accomplishment spaces using cyberspace. They are exercising agency and privileging of their collective cause using their virtual and actual social identities and building social relationships cost-effectively. The "Net effect' is that the Filipino PWD sector, through self-determination, impression management, and multi-agent action, has been wired and their lived experiences are being transformed toward self-empowerment and the enrichment of our own brand of Pinoy disability
culture.

*They who cannot see, can now see and be seen.*

*They who cannot hear, can now listen and be heard.*

*And they who cannot walk, can now GO, go far and even go fast.*

*They, who used to be not included, are given space.*

*And because they can express, they can impress.*

*They perform with visibility, voice and versatility.*

*Cyberspace is the news stage for the drama that need be controlled by stigma.*

**Reflexive Statement**

What makes a dissertation – a dissertation? I asked my adviser for a one-word answer to my question. Dr. Albert Robillard replied - a story. It is the particular story that it is privileged to tell. This is a pioneering work in chronicling the history of disability rights movement in the Philippines. At the same time, it is an advocacy piece on what the PWD can do in today’s digital world, and how they are positioning themselves in the global economy. It is a story struggle, self-determination and hope. But I must admit, I have presented the tip of the iceberg and there is more to the PWD story, and it needs to be told. There is a difference between reporting about them and telling their story. The reports such as those written by the Asian Development Bank, JICA, etc. are now outdated and it takes funds and political will to have them updated.

My dissertation presents the story of persons with disabilities (PWD) in the Philippines as a collective group and their place in our society (the physical locale) and the global world (Asia Pacific region and digital cyberspace). Culled from reports and
laid out in an objective research fashion. It has facts, theories, insights and options. It is well intentioned but critics can easily find limitations and flaws.

This study entitled, “Cyberspace as Equalizer: Opening up Lifeworlds and Empowering Persons with Disabilities in the Philippines” presents the individual, collective and online identities of PWD in the country. It locates them in the physical, social, economic and vocational realm. It showcases their talents, abilities and uniqueness and situates their position in life and other possible lifeworlds. As the main research focus, it brings out and determines if cyberspace can be an equalizer and opening up lifeworlds for individual or PWD groups. It presents arguments that it does and provides how it transpires through an array of empirical evidence from actual PWD organizations and across disability types.

Methodologically, my findings are limited to data collected through qualitative content analysis (QCA) of website content and interviews of key informants from the sampled nine (9) organizations. Given more time, I can do a longitudinal study and do quantitative analysis. But for this particular phase, I deliberately limited it to QCA using deductive use of theory as I only wanted to test the organization’s presentation of the self and social behavior using cyberspace. Do they or don’t they and how? Hence, I went for testing Goffman’s theories of the presentation of the self and social behavior against the online and personally presented profiles of the nine (9) organizations studied. The interviews served to validate the online findings.

For the future direction of this research, I plan to do a longitudinal study and still collect data on the organizations through their websites. It will still be qualitative content
analysis (QCA), but this time looking at patterns of development, work processes, systematic approaches, linkages, alliances and synergies made with other PWD groups. I would like out to map out PWD strategies in social cyberspace and how they translate to socio-economic developments. Through the use of a blog, I will connect the subjects of this study and inform them on my findings. The objective is let them see what they are doing and can do further in cyberspace. It is meant to showcase their abilities and competencies to potential markets in the global world.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


G. Thomas (2011) A typology for the case study in social science following a review of definition, discourse and structure. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 17, 6, 511-521


Web Resources – There is not much written literature on disability in the Philippines, hence I have to read a lot from the following web resources.
   http://www.internetworldstats.com/asia.htm
12. http://www.youtube.com/user/ATRIEV#g/u (ATRIEV Youtube Channel)
13. http://www.youtube.com/user/mccid#g/u (MCCID Youtube Channel)
17. http://www.atriev.org/
20. Video on the History of social networks by WikiLecture
APPENDIX A. ATRIEV MILESTONES

▪ Held two major conference workshops on information technology for the visually impaired (1996 and 2002)
▪ Assisted in the conduct of computer-based government examinations for blind examinees (civil service examination in 1999, Technical Education and Skills Development Authority’s scholarship examinations since 2001) and TESDA Assessment Exam (PC Operation NC II) for blind trainers in 2008
▪ Received TESDA’s Kabalikat Award for Institutions in 2001
▪ Technical consultant in the conduct of computer skills competitions for the visually impaired from 2002 to 2005
▪ Appointed by World Bank Office Manila as consultant in its “Accessible Information for Disabled Persons Project” for all the Knowledge for Development Centers (KDCs) nationwide
▪ Received the “Disabled-Friendly Website Recognition” award conferred by the Commission on Information and Communications Technology (CICT) in 2005
▪ Received the top award for the Philippines only in the 2006 ADOC competition conferred by the APEC Digital Opportunity Center led by Chinese Taipei for “Bridging the Digital Divide” category
▪ Awarded as the grand prize winner of the Samsung Digital Hope competition in 2006 and again won the Samsung Hope Competition in 2009
▪ Awarded by the Philippine Center For Entrepreneurship for the achievement of ATRIEV’s President, Antonio Llanes Jr., as one of the “Go Negosyo Most Inspiring PWDs” in 2007
▪ Awarded by RFM Corporation the “Yes! The Filipino Can” award to Antonio D. Llanes jr. for his significant contribution in changing the lives of the visually impaired Filipino and making life better through the use of technology
▪ Conducted two major fund raising concerts entitled “when You Believe” in 2006 and “Stand by Me” in 2008 showcasing mainstream concert artists back-to-back with ATRIEV’s very own blind performing artists
▪ Trained and hired Lourdes Borgonia, the first totally blind CICT awarded Webmaster in the Philippines
▪ Trained and Assisted in the employment of Ma. Criselda Bisda, the first blind recruitment specialist in TeleTech, the leader in customer management solutions
▪ Trained Julius Charles Serrano, the country’s first totally blind computer science graduate, and a web accessibility specialist and international trainer on accessibility
▪ Trained Alona Bateg, the first totally blind female medical transcriptionist in the Philippines who has no medical background
▪ Trained Marx Vergel Melencio, the 2nd totally blind Go Negosyo Awardee for establishing and managing Grayscale Consultancy Services, a company that specializes in web content writing
▪ Partnered with Gallop IT Solutions, a transcription company, for the provision of employment to qualified blind transcriptionists
▪ Trained Erick Marco G. Ramos – the world’s first visually impaired grantee for the U.S. Department of State’s Global Undergraduate Exchange Program

Programs and Services

FOR SCHOOLS & STUDENTS, ATRIEV makes available software and hardware support and troubleshooting related to the use of screen reader software in school or for schoolwork, for blind / sight-impaired students and the schools they are enrolled in.

FOR EMPLOYERS & EMPLOYEES, ATRIEV offers software and hardware support and troubleshooting
related to the use of screen reader software in the workplace or for work-related purposes, for blind / sight-impaired on-the-job trainees and employees and the companies they work for or are training at.

**FOR THE GENERAL PUBLIC, ATRIEV also offers the following services:**

1) **DISABILITY AWARENESS BRIEFINGS AND SENSITIVITY WORKSHOPS** for schools, employers, government offices, and other organizations to gain a better idea of how persons with disability can be mainstreamed as responsible and productive members of society;

2) **COMPUTER SKILLS DEMONSTRATIONS** – a showcase for schools, employers, government offices, and other organizations on how blind / sight-impaired persons can actually use computers at school or at work; and 3)

3) **OUTSOURCED TRANSCRIPTION WORK** – for print or digital copies of your medical dictations, conference recordings or business meetings, let ATRIEV do the job for you. ATRIEV is an NGO that has done transcription work for media fora, en banc meetings of government agencies and private businesses since 2002. ATRIEV transcribes: one-on-one interviews (in English, Tagalog or Taglish); focus group discussions (FGD) (in English, Tagalog or Taglish); conferences, meetings, seminars or workshops (in English, Tagalog or Taglish); voicemail messages (in American and British accents). They also translate your interviews or FGDs from Tagalog to English. We have a pool of dedicated, hardworking and experienced transcriptionists to meet your transcription needs. We guarantee continuously improving ACCURACY, reasonable TURNAROUND TIME, and CONFIDENTIALITY with respect to the contents of your material. Of course, we also guarantee COST-EFFECTIVE RATES!

**VARIOUS MEANS OF PARTNERING WITH ATRIEV.**

**HIRE:** Some blind persons can encode, send and read email, transcribe voice files into a computer, do computer programming, make and receive phone calls, and even read text messages – especially with the use of specialized software. In short, they can now do what you can, in different ways, and with the help of technological breakthroughs. If a blind person applies at your company and is qualified for the job, consider him/her for the job. We will help you with the rest, like installing the software, orienting your people, etc.

**SHARE:** Do you have facilities, equipment, supplies, or other resources that you can let us use? Do you have a vehicle that we can borrow to transport computers or people? Do you have a venue for a seminar? Do you have furnishings or equipment that you no longer use? You could share them with us!

**GIVE:** Would you like to help blind persons go to computer training at ATRIEV? You can donate any amount and it will go to tuition fees, transportation, board and lodging, and related expenses.

**LISTEN:** Do blind people watch movies? Do they really have better hearing? Do you feel awkward around blind people? If you would like to know more about how to interact with the blind, we can do a disability sensitivity workshops for your company, school, church, organization, or community. Just tell us when and where and we’ll be glad to give you this experience!

**VOLUNTEER:** Do you have time to spare? Do you have a talent or skill that you would like to share? You can do volunteer service and help us do our work!

**SPREAD THE WORD:** Is there a blind person in your community? Do you have friends in the media? Do you have friends who can help enable a blind person to become a more productive and responsible person? Tell them about what we do!
## APPENDIX B. INTERNATIONAL DEAF EDUCATION ASSOCIATION (IDEA)

### BUSINESSES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Business Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Garden Café</strong></td>
<td>Garden Café was opened in 1984. Initially it was a small bamboo snack center. It has undergone many renovations. The most recent was to turn the entire restaurant into an Old West, Cowboy restaurant / museum. It could also be called a theme restaurant. In 2007, Garden Café is employing 25 deaf persons and 8 hearing persons. All hearing are required to become proficient in sign language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dao Diamond Bed and Breakfast</strong></td>
<td>This small hotel is most popular with NGO (non-government organizations) and LGUs (local government units). They hold their live-in seminars and workshops here. It also caters to local and international tourists as well as group student tours. Dao Diamond currently (2007) employs 14 Deaf and 6 hearing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IDEA Pension House and Garden Café</strong></td>
<td>This small lodging house and restaurant is located in the quaint little town of Jagna, Bohol. It is a very clean and comfortable operation offering 14 well furnished private rooms and a spacious restaurant. All agree that the Garden Café restaurant in Jagna has the best food in town.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fly Tying</strong></td>
<td>This small cottage industry produces artificial fishing bait for export. In 2007 there are 16 very highly trained deaf women working in this field. It is expected to at least double in 2008. IDEA is hoping to build them a permanent work shop soon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vocational Training</strong></td>
<td>The unemployment rate on the islands of Bohol and Leyte where IDEA works is over 50%. The odds of a Deaf high school graduate getting a job in a regular private business are extremely small. For this reason, IDEA Philippines operates a number of businesses that currently employ over 100 deaf persons. IDEA is working hard to give the Deaf a better chance at employment in the general private business sector.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX C. NOVA FOUNDATION TRAINING PROGRAMS AND DONORS

1. PC Operations NC II

A 12-week training with curriculum components composed of three major modules, covering the Knowledge, Skills and Attitudinal (K,S,A) component of competency-based training. It aims to equip trainees with computer operation skills for backroom operations such as encoding, billing and transcription works.

Utilizes a completely digitalized the training curriculum (PC Operations NC2). Produced 630 graduates, 346 of which are deaf.

2. Computer Literacy Training Program

Computer Literacy Training Program is a special program designed specifically for soldiers disabled in the line of duty to acquire office skills and enable their re-integration into their respective mother units for administrative duties. Its curriculum backbone is based on PC Operations NC II with additional modules on E-Commerce, basic Communication skills, basic Math and Advocacy on Disability issues. Produced 63 graduates.

3. Developed a twelve-day (12) training module

Secured equipment donations from AVAYA Philippines for the communication server (Media Gateway) for call center operation incorporating JAWS which is a software program that translates digital information into audio.

Produced 15 graduates in 2 pilot runs in partnership with Telededvelopment Inc. (a call center training institution), Inc., Genpack Philippines (a call center company) and Akap Pinoy (umbrella organization of disabled persons organizations) in 2008 and 2009.

4. Medical Transcription Training Program for the Blind and Disabled Persons

Developed a medical transcription training program incorporating the SUM training program and JAWS program.

Piloted one training batch of 25 disabled beneficiaries in partnership with the AUSAID and the IMF-CPAC under a Work-at-Home concept project submitted to and accepted by the World Banks’ First Phil Development Innovation in the Marketplace Project (DIM Project)

Of the 25 work-at-home project beneficiaries, 15 qualified as transcriptionist (8 were given further training and hired by TTSI, while 7 were hired at 700 Club)

Data encoding is one of the primary services offered by Nova. It has been involved in the data conversion and processing business since 1994 and currently maintains a 135 manpower complement (working in 2 shifts) of which over 60% are disabled. Each encoder, both disabled and able bodied, have the following qualifications: college graduate of at least any two (2) year Information Technology course; able to produce
60,000 to 80,000 characters (both alpha and numeric characters) in an eight (8) hour shift or about 40 to 45 wpm; able to provide an accuracy level of 99.97% in one encoding pass; and trained to perform complicated data processing tasks and analysis. Aside from the manpower complement, they also offer the following support and equipment to our clients:

1. A Local Area Network (LAN) consisting of five (5) Servers and more or less about 130 computer workstations (all of which are PIV and above), all are covered by the necessary required software licenses;
2. Internet connection for all workstations;
3. Data security and virus protection;
4. Data back up and redundancies;
5. Twenty four (24) hour technical support or help desk.

Currently they process over two (2) million records of data a month for several clients.

Some of our most notable clients include:

1. **The Nielsen Company (Philippines),** Inc. – by providing data entry and report processing services for all department which include Media Research, Retail and Consumer Panel, as well as provide data entry support for all their survey requirements.

2. **Home Development Mutual Fund/PAG-IBIG Fund** – handled data entry of the Home Mutual Development Fund Project covering several branches such as Caloocan, East Ave., Cubao & Makati Branches.
   - **MCL** – Updating the monthly contribution of member companies & its employees, as well as insertion of new members of the PAG-IBIG Fund.
   - **BLD** – Updating of identification numbers of all new member of the PAG-IBIG Fund.

3. **Armed Forces & Police Savings and Loan Association Inc. (AFPSLAI)** – handled the updating of savings & loans ledger cards used in tracking the loans of the Philippine Armed Services personnel.

4. **KODAK Philippines** – A multinational company that offers a wide variety of services, ranging from Film & Photograph Development equipment sales & distribution. It also offers outsourcing services to companies for their imaging requirements. Recently, it has entered the data conversion industry by securing a contract with the Philippine National Statistics Office (PNSO) for the indexing and conversion of Birth, Death and Marriage Certificates to electronic file.
   - **CRS-IT** – Performs data entry services & database updating of Birth Certificates included in the National Statistics Office’s “Serbisyo Bilis Project”, with a committed volume of 5 million records for the backtracking project alone.
APPENDIX D. NCDA. Historical Background

Based on historical accounts the government’s concern for the disabled persons began as early as 1917 and the national concern for rehabilitation was manifested by non-government organizations as well. On January 16-20, 1978, the country hosted the Second International Conference on Legislation Concerning the Disabled organized by the Rehabilitation International’s national affiliate, the Philippine Foundation for the Rehabilitation for Disabled Persons (PFRD). During the said conference, President Marcos signed P.D. No. 1509 creating the National Commission Concerning Disabled Persons (NCCDP). NCCDP was tasked to prepare and adopt an integrated and comprehensive long-term National Rehabilitation Plan (NRP).

From the time of its inception in 1978, the Philippine Foundation for the Rehabilitation of Disabled, Inc. (PFRD) served as the Commission’s Secretariat to assist the NCCDP Board in the implementation of its objectives and functions. This arrangement stayed in effect until P.D. 1509 was amended by P.D. 1761 on January 4, 1981. With the success of the important work began during the International Year of Disabled Persons, the Decade of Disabled Persons (1981-1991) was proclaimed for nationwide observance on December 17, 1981 with NCCDP as lead agency. Mission Organization and Staffing At the apex of the NCCDP organizational structure is a Board of Commissioners presided by a Chairman. Pursuant to Sec. 5 of P.D. 1509, as amended by P.D. 1761, The “Board” shall be composed of the Chairman and the following as Members: Director-General, National Economic and Development Authority Minister of Health Minister of Labor and Employment Minister of Social Services and Development Minister of National Defense Minister of Education, Culture and SPORTS The Presidential Assistant on Legal Affairs President of the Philippine Foundation for the Rehabilitation of Disabled Inc. President of Veterans Federation of the Philippines.

Its powers and functions include the following:

1. Formulate policies and propose legislations concerning the rights and well being of disabled persons, and lead in the implementation of programs and services concerning the same;

2. Conduct consultative meetings and prepare symposia with all stakeholders, and undertake program evaluation and monitoring to ensure that comprehensive, relevant and timely programs and
services are adequate and accessible to persons with disabilities;

3. Conduct researches and studies relevant to formulated policies to promote and enhance at all levels the rights of persons with disabilities;

4. Establish, develop and maintain a data bank on disability in partnership with concerned government agencies and non-government organizations and strengthen the referral services to ensure availability of data to stakeholders and services to persons with disabilities including provision of assistive devices;

5. Establish and maintain linkages and networking with local and international organizations, including organizations of and for persons with disabilities to generate resources and to maximum utilization of existing resources and for purposes of convergence;

6. Serve as a national working body to promote and monitor implementation of national laws ad international commitments;

7. Assist in the establishment of self-help organization and the setting up of specific projects through the provision of technical and financial assistance to draw out the active participation of persons with disabilities in the social and economic development of the country. (Section 31, RA 7277).

Under the new Aquino administration, the following are its thrusts and directions:

1. Maintains and strengthens coordination and networking with local government units, non-government organizations, peopleâ€™s organizations and other concerned agencies and get their commitment to implement programs in line with national and international mandates on disability

2. Promotes the institutionalization of Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR), Non-Handicapping Environment (NHE), accessible Information and Communications Technology (ICT) for persons with disability, Republic Act No. 9442, 1% budgetary allocation for persons with disability and older persons and other emerging disability trends and concerns;

3. Strengthens the Regional Committees for the Welfare of Disabled Persons as a structure for consultation and coordination through the provision of technical assistance and resource augmentation to link with local government units;

4. Intensifies advocacy in support of programs for persons with disability and other disability-related matters, i.e. education, skills development or training on ICT

5. Monitors and assesses the implementation of the national and international mandates on disability in consultation with concerned government organizations, non-government organizations, peopleâ€™s organizations and local government units.

6. Strengthens database on disability for policy formulation and program development.

7. Conducts policy review and consultation dialogues with different stakeholders, right holders and duty bearers in preparation for the participation on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
Appendix E for the Consolidated Table and Operational Management Framework of Disability Policy and Practice in the Philippines:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inputs</th>
<th>Process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policies</td>
<td>Activities towards the implementation of the law.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulation</td>
<td>Operationalization of the government office tasked to coordinate and monitor the implementation of disability policies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local ordinances issued by Local government units</td>
<td>Establishment of disability social movements and organizing them under a government-supported network or umbrella such as the National Anti-Poverty Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compensatory/Incentives</td>
<td>Establishment of companies who train and hired PWDs such as Nova Foundation, MCCID, private companies that worked with them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal Opportunity for Employment (RA 7727)</td>
<td>Issuance of PWD IDs for discounted transportation and</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Through-put</th>
<th>Outputs</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Factors that affect the process such as influences, opportunities, problems &amp; challenges</td>
<td>Results from the processes that may directly or indirectly affect target beneficiaries</td>
<td>Results that directly impact the target beneficiaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence and encouragement from developments in the disability rights movement around the world (ESCAP 1999, 2009)</td>
<td>Awareness and understanding of disability and related issues.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities provided and powered by globalization and capitalism (Castells 2000 369)</td>
<td>Heightened awareness, interest and support for DISABILITY RIGHTS.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The new social structure of the information age and changes in labor relations (Castells 2000 377;38)</td>
<td>Establishment of PWD coordinating offices in local government units (cities, towns and barangays)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Nova Foundation | Established schools now open to the public; trainees of different programs; job placements for the graduates |
| Manila Christian Computer College | |
| ATRIEV | |
| S& R Supermarket | |

Heightened awareness, interest and support for DISABILITY RIGHTS.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title II. Chapter 1 Sec 1)</th>
<th>ILO Convention No. 159 Vocational Rehabilitation of Persons with Disability</th>
<th>Executive Order 417- Promoting the Economic Independence for Persons with Disabilities of 1999</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facilitating of parking stickers for PWDs (Neri 2007).</td>
<td></td>
<td>Innovations as the main sources of knowledge and information in the global age. (And in the case of the Philippines, a great deal of creativity and resourcefulness).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EO 417 requires all government agencies, instrumentalities and government owned and controlled corporations to source at least 10% of their supplies and equipment requirements from cooperatives of PWDs that are engaged in manufacturing and fabrication in order to support their economic independence.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Problems and Challenges:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1. On economic independence – lack of capital and collateral for loans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. On ICT: The Phil gov’t is cash-trapped and depends greatly on private sector to initiate and maintain internet access and programs especially in rural areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Internet projects also appear to suffer from poor planning and petty politics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of sustainability in the implementation of programs and projects at all levels of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy instruments</td>
<td>Operationalization of the National Commission for the Concern of Disabled Persons, changed to National Commission for the Welfare of Disabled Persons (NCWDP), and lately as the National Council on Disability Affairs (NCDA) under the Office of the President</td>
<td>Call Centers and others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participation in international</td>
<td>Advocacy on the talents and abilities of PWDs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Income for employed PWDs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No actual survey yet to measure the gains of the economic provisions of the disability policies in both local and national government levels. There are a few anecdotal reports but there is no organized body of knowledge on these subject.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Integration Policies

Presidential Decree 1509 (created National Commission on Disabled Persons in 1978); Executive Order 232 (1987); Executive Order 709 (2008)

The Philippine Constitution of 1987, the Social Reform Agenda or RA 8425, the Magna Carta of Disabled Persons (RA 7727) are also examples of integrating policies.

Policy instruments

Public-Private Sector Partnerships -Activities resulting from the Observance of the Declaration of the Period 2003-2012 as the Philippine Decade of Persons with Disabilities -Publications "Filipino Web Accessibility Guide" -Phil

Outcomes have yet to be measured for what the coordinating offices have accomplished.

Limited availability
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Treatises &amp; Conventions</th>
<th>Treatises &amp; Conventions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Observance of the Declaration of the Period 2003-2012 as the Philippine Decade of Persons with Disabilities</td>
<td>Observance of the Declaration of the Period 2003-2012 as the Philippine Decade of Persons with Disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access Audits on government offices (ONLY) to determine member agencies NCWDP Governing Board’s compliance with the Accessibility Law</td>
<td>Access Audits on government offices (ONLY) to determine member agencies NCWDP Governing Board’s compliance with the Accessibility Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishment of Philippine Web Accessibility Group (PWAG)</td>
<td>Establishment of Philippine Web Accessibility Group (PWAG)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in DAISY Network (Digital Accessible Information System)</td>
<td>Participation in DAISY Network (Digital Accessible Information System)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Advocacy events – Annual National Disability Prevention and Rehabilitation Month (July of every year)</td>
<td>-Advocacy events – Annual National Disability Prevention and Rehabilitation Month (July of every year)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Social networks &amp; movements – membership of web designers in PWAG</td>
<td>-Social networks &amp; movements – membership of web designers in PWAG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-International Reports - Public dialogues</td>
<td>-International Reports - Public dialogues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and access to publications that have been produced</td>
<td>and access to publications that have been produced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness about web accessibility among network of PWAG</td>
<td>Awareness about web accessibility among network of PWAG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation of Filipino PWD athletes in international paralympics</td>
<td>Participation of Filipino PWD athletes in international paralympics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness and understanding of disability and persons with disabilities but it is yet to be measured. <strong>No evaluation yet</strong></td>
<td>Awareness and understanding of disability and persons with disabilities but it is yet to be measured. <strong>No evaluation yet</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX F. DISABILITY STUDIES IN THE PHILIPPINES: A PROPOSAL

Abstract:

The proposed Philippine Disability and Diversity Studies Model presented herein endeavors to be an academic discipline that will discipline Filipino thinking about persons with disabilities (PWD). It shall serve as a catalyst for shaping disability discourse that will disable misconceptions and negative attitudes, and enable informed social action toward empowerment, disability culture and pride. It will harvest the best from Oriental and Western models of disability and “hybrid” its own that is customized to its socio-cultural and economic contexts and grounded on practical reason, social justice and the interdisciplinary integration of the helping professions. It will bridge gaps, bond cultures, expand social networks, fuel activism in order to synch disability policy and practice together. It shall mediate debates, produce cultural artifacts, reproduce social relations and structures that could extend PWD accomplishment space as far as social movements and sociological imagination can stretch.

Keywords: disability, disability studies, social model, disability police & practice

Introduction

Consider this recent news story published at Philippine Star, one of the major broadsheets in the country. It provides a reality-check of how is disability viewed in the Philippines today?

NAIA immigration officer stops deaf-mute baker from leaving RP

“MANILA, Philippines - A deaf and mute baker invited for a seminar in Qatar was stopped from leaving the country after an immigration officer decided that he could not explain the reason for his trip since he was “deaf and cannot speak.”

The immigration officer then ordered Franklin Galano Corpuz, 30, to leave the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA). Corpuz was allowed to depart for Qatar at 10:45 a.m. yesterday after Justice Undersecretary Vicente Salazar found his documents in order.

Corpuz and his wife, Raquel, sought the assistance of Salazar through Dean Raul Pangalanan of the University of the Philippines College of Law and Liza Martinez, Philippine Deaf Resources Center Inc. director.

A company in Qatar had invited Corpuz for business training and orientation on programs for persons with disabilities and eventual employment. Accompanied by a Qatar Airways flight attendant, Corpuz went to NAIA last Oct. 4 and checked in at the immigration counter. Upon being told that Corpuz is deaf, the immigration officer at the counter directed him to the immigration office, where he was interviewed.

After the interview, the immigration officer said he would not allow Corpuz to board his flight because he is “deaf and cannot speak.” Corpuz has no sufficient proof that his trip to Qatar is for business since he was deaf and mute and lacked documents, he added.

To prevent similar incidents, Bureau of Immigration officer-in-charge Ronaldo Ledesma said he will recommend hiring sign language experts at all airports/ sub-ports to allow immigration officers to communicate with deaf and mute passengers (Philstar.com 10/82010)."
This story generated comments of public outrage and disgust at www.philstar.com, which provide evidence of the dire need for disability consciousness in the Republic of the Philippines (RP). Note the intervention of the UP College of Law, which represents “rights” and power, the Philippine Deaf Resources Center that represents social movements, and the problematic Philippine government represented by Bureau of Immigration and the Department of Justice. Note the elements of globalization, the Filipino diaspora, the “problematization” of the issue, and the power of the Internet to bring this issue to public agenda. What are the implications of this social fact to country perspectives, policies and a possible Disability Studies program?

The CRDS definition (above) applies to the RP context as the government, through its legislations, recognizes disability as a social, cultural and political phenomenon that is not to be cured or fixed but a human and social condition that needs to be effectively and innovatively addressed. The previous story, however, indicates that the demand is very high for disability awareness and consciousness, even within the very ranks that should be promoting the law. The BI here has defined disability as a functional impairment: he is deaf and cannot speak therefore he cannot fly and work overseas. And they would have sealed his fate, if not for the intervention of the deaf social movement that brought in the Department of Justice. Common sense would dictate that baking does not need a lot of talking. But apparently, the resolution of the situation would call for the full operationalization of a rights-based, social justice framework of disability.

Principles and provisions that cover these human and social aspects are enshrined in the Philippine Magna Carta for Disabled Persons under Republic Act (RA) 7727, which is considered by the United Nations as a comprehensive disability law (ESCAP 2009). Policy instruments and structures that address the disabled Filipino as a person-first before a person with disability reject the idea that disability is merely a medical condition and functional impairment. There is a long list of disability laws found in the National Commission on Disability Affairs (NCDA) website. The RP government does comply with the CRDS progressive definition. But how can its framework and legislations do their job when the very structure that implements it is flawed. How often can government excuse itself from the ignorance of the law that it is supposed to champion? How many times is it tested every day given a population of 8.5M people with disabilities?

In this paper, I will further discuss how the CRDS definition can be useful in developing a Philippine Disability Studies program and the social and cultural contexts that are needed in promoting disability rights policies and activities. First, I will discuss first the landscape of disability perspectives, policy and practice in the Philippines. This would explain the socio-economic, political and cultural contexts where disability studies in the Philippines should be grounded. Second, I will provide a theoretical discussion of disability studies and different models currently offered in North America, Europe and most of all Asia for lessons, insights and applications to disability studies in the Philippines. Next, I will discuss my proposal for establishing disability studies in the country that is designed to serve as a
catalyst to enhance the implementation of disability rights policies and activities in the Philippines, grounded on “power” from all possible socio-cultural, political and technological sources that will extend Filipino persons with disability (PWD) “accomplishment space” in socio-economic, political and cyber spaces in the country and beyond.

Disability Studies as Intervention

How does all the background information feed into the DISABILITY STUDIES in the Philippines? Why turn to Disability studies?

As of this writing, there is no formal and exclusive “disability studies” field in the Philippine academe. I have surveyed the biggest universities in the country as basis for this report. As far as academics are concerned, disability is found in different compartments. It is very much lodged in medical studies as part of Rehabilitation Medicine, Psychiatry, etc. It is found in Education as Special Education. Perhaps in Law School as human rights and Social Work as it is very much anchored on poverty and marginalized sectors. But never an integrated and interdisciplinary body of knowledge known as formal Disability Studies. So, what can we learn from others who have gone before us?

Reports and testimonials around the world attest to the fact that disability studies have been a powerful influence on policy and practice in regards to PWD. It has been recognized as a means of addressing how PWD have been treated historically and how they continue to be treated. Once viewed through a medical model as “sick people” in need of a cure and long-term care, through a sociological model where people with disabilities are labeled and stigmatized, or through a psychological model where their experiences have been individualized and pathologized. PWDs are now seen through different perspectives. Disability Studies explain that “the nature and significance of these differences depend on how we view and interpret them” (Bogdan and Taylor 1994). Therefore, rather than seeking to “fix” a person or to separate him or her from the rest of society, a disability studies perspective would seek to problematize society rather than the individual. The solution therefore lies not in the person, but rather in breaking down the barriers that limit people with disabilities from full participation in their communities and in society in general.

Operationally, disability studies seek to examine the social, economic, and political forces that for years have served to marginalize and oppress PWD. The field draws on theories and perspectives from sociology, social science, women’s studies, cultural studies, and education. Its central premise is that PWDs are a minority group who has suffered perennial discrimination. In this sense, it is similar to the study of race, class, and gender inequalities and would have its enabling and empowering effect and momentum.
In addition, disability studies provide the intellectual and methodological tools needed to create disability research and policy. The theories and philosophies of disability studies can then be applied to real issues in the law, in community inclusion, and in public policy. It is very dynamic and it continues to grow (Bogdan, R., and Taylor, S. J. 1994). Ultimately, it serves to be the basis and platform for understanding people with disabilities and their quest for social justice and quality of life, hence it is important if we are to improve the life of PWD.

**Review of the evolution of disability studies: Lessons for the Philippines**

In the global scene, Disability Studies is still considered a relatively new area of academic inquiry (Gleeson 1997) which is interdisciplinary and diverse, drawing on sociology, linguistics, economics, anthropology, politics, history, psychology and media studies (Plieffer and Yoshida 1995). It has been promoted largely by disabled activists and disabled academics from various disciplines, particularly sociology. Their work has had much to offer disability studies in the development of theory (Barnes et.al. 1999; Thomas 1999); the analysis of professional ideologies and practices (Davies 1993; Priestly 1999); the examination of the disabled people's movement (Drieger 1989; Campbell and Oliver 1996); disability equality training (Swain and Lawrence 1994); and the development of new approaches to research (Rioux and Bach 1994); Barnes and Mercer 1997). Filkelstein (1998: 33) defines disability studies as 'the study of disabled people's lifestyles and aspirations. Although disability studies encompasses many sociological perspectives, a rejection of any explanatory model that locates disability within the person is a common and central feature (Paterson and Hughes 2000; Albrecht et.al. 2001) Yoshida (1995) submit that disability studies *reframes the study of disability by focusing on it as a social phenomenon, social construct, metaphor and culture utilizing a minority group model. This focus shifts the emphasis away from a prevention/treatment/remediation paradigm to a social/political paradigm (Pfeiffer and Yoshida 1995: 480; Swain et al 2003: 33).*

**Plans and Proposed Framework for Disability Studies in the Philippines**

This section will describe the social and cultural contexts of the current disability rights, policies and programs in the country. I submit that Disability Studies can be used as a strategy to tie policy and practice together. It can strategically and tactically use the Internet, assistive and human technologies to serve as an effective catalyst to enhance the implementation of disability rights, policies and activities.

Toward this end, I would use the lessons drawn from various disability studies program models in the previous section. I would also use empirical evidences to further illustrate the social and cultural contexts of the disability policy environment and consequently justify my proposed theoretical framework. At the heart of this framework is the mission to empower the disability sector - "power" that would propel disability studies to a position where it can serve best the PWD and the Philippine public. Because essentially the debate about defining disability and constructing it's social meaning is not a debate about literal meanings and words. It is a debate about power (Brown 2003:79). It is a struggle for funds and
resources. Thus, power emanating from all possible socio-cultural, economic, political and technological sources must be mustered in order to gain proper share of resources. Using the social model and social justice frameworks – solutions should come from the same environment that constructs disability as a problem and barrier. With Disability Studies, disability discourse will have a base – which signifies positioning and belongingness. Belongingness is about naming, claiming and proclaiming. Thus, disability studies will give the Filipino PWD the power to name, to claim and proclaim – this I believe should be the mantra of Philippine disability studies. The introductory story of the deaf baker proves the need for the intervention of the power and authority provided by the UP College of Law in moving the Department of Justice to give a quick resolution to the problem. There is that element of “rights-based policies, the social movement and the power of setting public agenda using cyberspace in this tale. Had the Philippine Deaf Resources and UP College of Law intervened, the deaf baker would still be jobless, his family in poverty and the whole situation perpetuating itself. Let us examine it further. What was the response of the Philippine government? *Hire interpreters for the port to help immigration officers understand the deaf people.* What were the responses of the online?

“No need to hire a sign-language interpreter. Gastos pa iyan. Kulang lang ng common sense yung immigration officer. Maski ang itanong mo sa deaf mute ay siyempre di makakasagot ORALLY- but had the officer simply written his questions on a piece of paper and showed it to the man, I bet the handicapped passenger could have readily replied by WRITTING his answers. Truth is, mas maganda pa iyan kasi black and white ang interview and will avoid confusion and misunderstanding.

“Its not that Mr. Corpuz cant explain himself but the NAIA IO cant understand him.and the IO cant adjust to the situation, he just uses his position to hold mr.Corpuz. that IO is a dumbass and a jerk.let him undergo sensitivity training to handicapped people”

The man was not blind, so he could read, di ba? Ang may handicapped dito ay yung immigration officer kasi handicapped yung utak niya.” [the handicap is the IO cause his brain is handicapped.]

“The BI officer can talk, can hear but simply NO BRAIN.......maybe th BI officer don't know how say , in sign laguage, " PAY ME TROUBLE TAX or DELAY."

The immigration office should be reprimanded for their actions so that all the other government offices will be aware in the protection of our citizens who are handicapped.

Source: [http://www.philstar.com/Article.aspx?articleId=618934&publicationSubCategoryId=65](http://www.philstar.com/Article.aspx?articleId=618934&publicationSubCategoryId=65)

Another justification for the need for “power” in disability studies due to the long-time time problem is the fact that “one of the biggest barriers to disability rights enforcement in the Philippines is the court system (Favis 2002).

“Actually, the Philippines’ courts have never even heard a disability rights case until recently when one advocate Manuel Batac struggled to be the first affiant. In 2002, Batac, chair of the Accessibility
Task Force Building Inspection of the Caloocan Development Committee for Persons with Disability, tested the strength of the court's commitment to disability rights. He filed cases with the Department of Justice against a group of restaurants located in Caloocan City, for violations of the Accessibility Law and the Magna Carta for Disabled Persons. Both pieces of law call on public establishments to provide appropriate access features for persons with disabilities. These are the first cases ever filed in the Philippines against an establishment for noncompliance with the country's disability rights legislation.

Mr. Batac, with the support of the National Council on the Welfare of Disabled Persons (NCWDP), has worked to get the cases accepted by the Philippines government for over a year. He had a success on KFC, which is a multinational and that is expected. He has yet to have successes on local ones. To this moment, there are still no updates have been published on Batac's quest, and there were no additional cases filed. This is doubtful given the fact that “access” in terms of infrastructure as far as the government is concerned, despite legislations in-place, is still an area of serious want. There are no means of “accessible” transportation. Buses and jeepneys cannot take wheelchair users just like in developed countries. There are elevators in metro-rail systems but when they are rarely not out-of-order, they are swamped with non-disabled passengers. The trains are always jam-packed with commuters and no disabled would dare ride for threats of more disabilities if not death. There are special “cars” in the rail system designated for women, elderly and disabled. I have been taking the MRT in EDSA, one of the busiest routes, for the last ten years and I have not seen disabled person in the specially designated cars – no wheelchair user, no crutch-user, no blind person. Access is still a “dream” in RP.

So, these are illustrative descriptions of the socio-cultural contexts. What are the current policies that address this situation? In terms of national legislation, the following are the major laws, proclamations and executive orders that govern disability in the country:

Foremost and the basis of it all is – “Section 11, Article XIII, of the 1987 Constitution,” which declares that “the State shall adopt an integrated and comprehensive approach to health development which shall endeavor to make essential goods, health and other social services available to all the people at affordable cost. There shall be priority for the needs of the under-privileged sick, elderly, disabled, women and children. The State shall endeavor to provide free medical care to paupers.”

Next is the landmark legislation “Republic Act No. 7277, otherwise known as the Magna Carta for Disabled Persons,” expressly provides that “people with disabilities shall be given rehabilitation, opportunities for self-development and self-reliance to prepare them for full integration into the mainstream of society.” Republic Act No. 8425, otherwise known as the Social Reform Act Provides for the poverty-alleviation of the basic sectors, including persons with disabilities.
The Biwako Millenium Framework which promotes a rights-based, barrier-free and inclusive society for persons with disabilities is supported by Philippine Proclamation No. 240 “Declaring the period 2003-2012 as the Philippine Decade of Persons with Disabilities”;

Republic Act No. 7160 known as the Local Government Code of 1991 mandates the devolution of services to the local government units (LGUs); and with Executive Order 437 an encouragement to provide comprehensive rehabilitation services and promote the rights and empowerment of person with disabilities. The Community-Based approach has been successfully demonstrated as an appropriate way of providing comprehensive rehabilitation services to person with disabilities nationwide.

Actually, there are more to enumerate, but the verdict remains that there exists a big gap between policy and implementation (ADB 2002; JICA 2003). Certain social, cultural, economic and political contexts must be in-place to ensure implementation of disability rights and policies in cyberspace and outside of it. Towards this end, I would like to use four primary areas for strategic action from the ADB (2002) that should be embody the aforementioned contexts. These are the principles of inclusion, participation, access and quality. Regardless if it is a social, economic, political and cultural intervention – it should have ensure inclusion, participation of PWDs and their access to quality programs and services.

Proposed Framework for Disability Studies

Given the above legislation history, disability models, socio-cultural contexts, scenarios and issues, I would like to submit my proposal for a Disability Studies as a unifying concept and mechanism that would strategically address the complex issues that surround disability policy and practice.

The vision is a “Disability and Diversity Studies (DDS)” program in-place that would serve as the base & platform for Interdisciplinary research, practice & informed social action on DISABILITY. It shall be grounded on the over-arching principles of the disability models described earlier, namely, practical reason, social justice and interdisciplinary integration of the helping professions. It will have a four-fold mission:
"Disability Studies Framework for the Philippines"

1) **Lead the way forward** by initiating VISIBILITY & shaping DISCOURSE. Discourse makes social change a visible event, worthy of description, publication & circulation (Robillard 1999:1). Extend PWD space through cyberspace & make people STOP, LOOK & LISTEN.

2) **Facilitate - bridging and bonding cultures.** Serve as the communication hub between & among social groups, networks (government, private, civil society, community & various PWD groups). Reproduce such social relations, structures & related cultural artifacts.

3) **Tie policy and practice together.** Pursue the juncture between medical, & social model, social justice models of disability – adaptive of local narratives, a hybridity suited to culture & economic situation.

4) **Look back at how far we’ve come.** Serve as chronicler of disability history & repository of knowledge; celebrate disability culture & pride, monitor & process policy & practice; document lessons learned & advocate best practices. *Enjoy the journey not just the destination* (which is part of the socialization of the message).

The power to name, to claim and proclaim, to pass the word out that disability is a natural aspect of life. Confront barriers & extend PWD space in social, economic, political & cyber spaces. [Brown 2003, Depoy & Gilson 2004, Linton 1998, Robillard 1999.]

1) Lead the way forward. DDS shall lead the way by initiating VISIBILITY & shaping DISCOURSE. Discourse makes social change a visible event, worthy of description, publication & circulation (Robillard 1999:1). Its mandate is to extend PWD space through cyberspace & make people STOP, LOOK & LISTEN.

A well defined policy direction must be set, backed by corresponding resources to efficiently and effectively deliver services to persons with disabilities. This may require the establishment of specific measures focusing on areas such as barrier-free access to the built environment, access to education, social protection, housing, employment, health and rehabilitation and the mandatory inclusion of disability concerns in provincial, municipal and city plans implemented by local government units. Enforcement measures, municipal and city disability anti-discrimination ordinances must also be passed and a mechanism established to monitor the enforcement of those policies listed above, particularly at the level of local government units.

2) **Facilitate - bridging and bonding cultures.** DDS shall serve as the communication hub between & among social groups, networks (government, private, civil society, community & various PWD groups). It shall work to reproduce such social relations, structures & related cultural artifacts. It shall work with ALL stakeholders to include government, civil society group, private industries and service providers. To enhance involvement, efforts must be made to increase awareness by integrating disability issues into
mainstream programs like those for poverty alleviation, health, housing, transport, human resources development, labor, education, communications, culture, tourism, political activities and disaster management programs. Filipinos PWD must be provided the opportunity to enhance their capacity to assume roles as decision makers, key actors and leaders in efforts for their rehabilitation rather than seen as mere beneficiaries and consumers of services.

3) **Tie policy and practice together.** DDS shall pursue the juncture between medical, & social model, social justice models of disability – adaptive of local narratives, a hybridity suited to culture & economic situation. To tie policy and practice together, DDS shall pursue greater and more innovative collaboration of efforts with Government, NGOs and people with disabilities and their organizations. It shall promote shared responsibility and accountability among sectors in the development of policies, programs and services for the sector of persons with disability.

4. "**Look back at how far we’ve come.**" DDS shall serve as chronicler of disability history & repository of knowledge; celebrate disability culture & pride, monitor & process policy & practice; document lessons learned & advocate best practices. It will encourage the PWD sector to “**Enjoy the journey not just the destination (which is part of the socialization of the message).**”

Conclusion and Recommendations

In retrospect, the aim of the Disability Studies is rooted within, and shall reflect, the development of the disability sector and the social model of disability developed within the movement. It is designed to enable critical thought, reflection and growth of research in disability studies; to explore the experiences and lives of disabled people by examining the barriers that disabled people face in the social world. And to take the social justice and diversity framework as the foundation for an equity based approach to the study of disability in a social world. Disability studies as a discipline will "discipline" (correct and direct to the proper way) how Filipinos will think about disability. I felt that is what happened to women and gender studies. It raised the level of respect to women and in a way disciplined the thinking and feeling towards women and gender issues.

As an added value, I would like add Diversity studies to Disability studies. This model is envisioned to serve as the bridge between government and the PWDs. It can pursue the juncture between medical and social model, the body and the environment, and policy and implementation. DDS can integrate the different disciplines under disability studies. It can create opportunities for education and learning. Interdisciplinary pull together the different fields to raise the debate and shown concern for PWDs. It can raise the debate to another level; there is no debate. It can carry the vision to vision to transcend the binary medical-social model debate that is focused on impaired bodies. It shall engage the interests and expertise of multiple fields, as well as attract resources for funding and mobilization.
If properly packaged and situated “Disability and Diversity Studies” will have the power to project power. It will have the power to name, to claim and to proclaim. It has the power to pass the word out about disability as a natural aspect of life (Brown 2003). It will accomplish the vision of being “a trailblazer for the acceptance of transhumanist ideas and products (Wolbring p.15).”

I therefore conclude that the establishment of formal DDS field can elevate the disability discourse to a higher and dignified level - a topic that is considered important, enabling and empower just like women/gender studies, ethnic minority studies. It has the potential to initiate, steer and shape discourse to the direction that will move forward the quality of life of PWDs. It can be a knowledgeable, respected institutional advocate for PWDs that can stand up to legislators, government executives, private corporations and others. It can tie policy and practice together for informed social action.

**Recommendations: Where to house Disability Studies and how to do it?**

In the international arena, controversies abound in terms of “where” disability studies should be located within the university structure of faculties and departments. International experience show that “disability studies often sits, rather uncomfortably, in department of ‘health studies’, ‘social care’ and rehabilitation’ where health care academics, with medical orientation to disability, may eager to get involved. Departments of ‘social sciences’ may appear to be more appropriate and yet, as we have seen, sociology pays scant attention to disability while psychology takes an individualistic stance [Swain et al 2003: 35].” The following are some options for the Philippine program: 1) UP Department of Sociology; 2) College of Social Work and Community Development; 3) College of Public Health – UP Manila; and other Universities. See a description of the following options in Annex A)

One option is the University of the Philippines -DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY. Current information on indicate that they do not offer “Sociology of Disability” even as a course in the degree programs. The closest relationship is the specialization of two faculty members on “Gerontology.” Below is a very generic description of the Department and I believe that having having Disability Studies in their turf would pump blood into their system. However, they appear to very traditional and “closed,” it would take powerful people to secure a meeting to propose Disability Studies.

2) Another option is the College of Social Work and Community Development in UP Diliman. Initiated as a Social Welfare Section within the Department of Sociology and Social Welfare in 1950 in the then College of Liberal Arts, the present College of Social Work and Community Development (CSWCD) became a separate Department of Social Work by 1961 and evolved into the Institute of Social Work and Community Development in 1969 through R.A. 5174 which was passed in 1967. Its reclassification as a full-fledged college was prompted by the University's move to standardize the nomenclature of academic units performing similar functions. The CSWCD offers graduate and undergraduate programs in both social work and community development, as well as graduate programs on women and development.
3) College of Public Health at UP Manila in collaboration with the National Institute of Health - INSTITUTE OF HEALTH POLICY AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES. The Vision of IHPDS is to be the hub of state-of-the-art studies in Philippine health policy and development studies in the next millennium. As a recognized national institute, we will actively initiate and participate in regional and global health policy and management researches. Its Mission is to serve as the leading exponent for an integrative approach in health policy research analysis, development, capacity building and advocacy towards the search for the common good in the Philippines and in the Asian Region.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Proposed Disability and Diversity Studies Program</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>First Semester</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Foundations in Disability Studies: Theories, Models, Personal and Social Perspectives on disability</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Disability Policy and Practice (with international and local historical perspectives and contemporary issues)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Disability Lifestyle, Families and Relationships, Society</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Disability, Barriers, Rights, Politics and Policy, Social movements</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Practicum in a Disability Organization and Journal</td>
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| **Second Semester**                             |
| - Professional Perspectives, Investigating Services, Barriers and Rights, |
| - Disability Culture and Pride |
| - Disability: Internet and other assistive technologies |
| - Disability enterprise: critical Issues and Current Debates in Disability Studies |
| - Disability Research |

Electives from
College of Education on Special Education studies
College of Law on Human Rights and International Convention studies
College of Public Health on Health Policy and Development studies
Etc
Final Word: How do we tie policy and practice using the Disability Studies Framework?

A strategic base is crucial for the Disability Studies program because before it can wield influence, it has to be recognized first and in order to be recognized – it should be situated strategically and credibly. Wherever it will be given its proper place and voice, it shall invite the collaboration of the social science disciplines, health sciences, community development, education, development management and law and human rights studies. The University of the Philippines is one good place. It has that prestige, political, intellectual and influential stature in Philippine society. It still has the reputation and spirit of activism for fighting for people’s rights. It’s mantra: “MAKIBAKA, HWAG MATAKOT!” [CONTINUE THE FIGHT, DO NOT FEAR!] So how should the Disability Studies program fight without fear?

The “Disability and Diversity Studies” program in-place that would serve as the base and platform for interdisciplinary research, studies, practice and informed social action on disability and diversity. It shall humbly but credibly lead the way forward by initiating VISIBILITY & shaping DISCOURSE. It shall facilitate and serve as the communication hub between and among social groups. It shall work to reproduce such social relations and structures through conversations and cultural artifacts. It shall endeavor to tie policy and practice together. It shall pursue the juncture between medical, social model, social justice models of disability – adaptive of local narratives, a hybridity suited to culture & economic situation. And it shall serve as the repository of knowledge and disability culture and pride that will catalyze the socialization of the disability and diversity messages, the Filipino version and contribution, across the nation and the global digital world. It shall have the power to name, claim and proclaim that disability is a natural aspect of life.

Death is the destiny of every man – but before that a pre-departure orientation in the school of disability and social security. This is how I wish to position Disability and Diversity Studies in the Philippines. Government must lead and enforce, but it is everyone’s genuine concern that will be its driving force. I wish people to have the consciousness that disability is a possibility within one’s family and lifetime, hence it should be everybody’s responsibility. Given our socio-economic and cultural contexts, I intend to enrich the "social" in the social model with a lot more social strategies and tactics --social justice, social responsibility, social enterprise, social mobilization, social marketing, social networking, informed social action, etc. Because we need all the help we can get from society. I will be pragmatic in approach – admitting the fact that the PWD can only draw so much from “within” and he needs a lot of help from “without” in order to attain a level of human security. Then after that, possibly a workable and meaningful “social security” that is accessible to all Filipinos – disabled or otherwise. For we are all TABS (temporarily able-bodied), and we all have a destiny to fulfill. I envision Disability and Diversity Studies in the Philippines – and it is my goal, my dream with a deadline.
References (Disability Proposal Only)


