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Philippine Humanities Review

Volume 21, Issue 2, 2019, pp. 35-64

ISSN-0031-7802

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Internet Mediated Technologies and the Networked communicator: An anthropological inquiry on UP Diliman students

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The internet, a 20th century technological invention, has created a huge impact on various aspects of our lives. It has influenced our identities and socio-cultural relations. I particularly probed into the University of the Philippines Diliman (UPD) student's sociality in a hypermodern academic community. I employed a combination of three theoretical perspectives in this anthropological investigation: Augé (1995)'s concept of hypermodernity, Bourdieu's (1990) framework of the habitus and Hine's (2015) representation of the embedded, embodied and everyday internet. I utilized an adaptive methodological approach, which is primarily qualitative using multi-sited ethnographic methods (Marcus, 1995) to probe into the socialities. The study reveals that UP students consider the melded online and offline worlds as

one social world. The online and offline spaces operate in a hypermodern state and may be regarded as anthropological places, or at least have the potential to be such. Findings also show that UPD students' embodied lives are entangled with the internet, their dispositions are embedded on it and it has altered the way that they conduct their everyday habitual tasks. Indeed, the internet as technology is seen as a capital that shakes and messes up the habitus that is encased in hypermodernity; how far the society is shaken is discussed in the article.

Key words: internet, supermodernity/hypermodernity, identity, socio-cultural relations

Digital culture (trans)formation

How does one become human? The query has been asked, answered, scrutinized and problematized since the discovery of human consciousness, yet it remains to be relevant in contemporary times. An observable constant in examining being human is its attachment to culture. Examination of culture, its existence, development, endurance and transformation has been and still is the principal preoccupation of any academic particularly interested in making sense of the complications of humans cohabiting and surviving with other humans within an equally complex environment. Our complicated existence as humans is partly shaped and guided by technology. In this article, I aim to show how a student already shaped by one's cultural background embarks on an academic acculturation in the university at the same time adjusts to the demands of change in today's fast-paced technological innovations. This study likewise explores possible methodologies albeit true to the anthropological discipline, take on new interdisciplinal approaches corollary to the unique and complicated nature of

the context of the study. It addresses the question: How does the internet become an anthropological communicative place in the age of hypermodernity?

Technology — our brain's ability to think it and develop it — is mostly the answer to the challenges of ensuring that we endure as a species and that our existence is “easy” and “comfortable”. Technologies through the years of human existence serve as custodians of human development, inevitably intertwining with how we make sense of our selves. They cease to be mere tools of existence; they become part of the reasons why we want to exist. Technology is always linked with culture and society. It is socially constructed due to its humanized nature (Pfaffenberger 236-252). It is assumed that due to our interrelationships with nonhumans, changes in the way we view and conduct our selves take place (Pythinen and Tamminen 135-152). The various conduct of our relationships with non-humans define and redefine our existence. Foucault questions assumptions of an “inner essence of man or self-enclosed homology of humanity”; he instead puts forward the idea that humans are “contingent and temporary due to their dependence on changes and relations”. Latour, on the other hand, examines being human in the *anthropological present*, emphasizing the dependence of humans on nonhumans in daily activities. He stresses that various nonhumans, such as technology, things, natural phenomena, are an integral part of our existence: “this is to the extent that the human cannot be grasped and saved unless the other part of itself, the share of things is restored to it” (Latour 136). Deleuze has a similar perspective maintaining that our relations with the nonhumans, such as information technology, computers and chains of genetic code, constitute us (102, 108).

A context wherein technology is seen actively infiltrating the lives of humans is the digital world. What is this world? This is the context wherein HCI is mostly experienced. This realm is primarily powered by the internet described as “at once a world-wide broadcasting capability, a mechanism for information dissemination, and a medium for collaboration and interaction between individuals and their computers without regard for geographic location” (Leiner, et.al 2). Markham describes working in the virtual world or the Internet as “apparent simplicity, an abstraction fraught with multi-layered complexity and paradox as one faces the actuality of trying to know anything about one another online” (360). She presents three contexts in which the Internet is experienced:

- As Tool — the internet is a network of electronic connections, a communication medium, a conduit that allows information to flow from one place to another.
- As Place — comprises the cultural spaces in which meaningful human interactions occur. It is a described, imagined or perceived place.
- As Way of Being — the internet as part of the *self*, embodied connection to the technology. In this context computer-mediated communication (CMC) is both process and product, medium and outcome (Markham 361-363).

The digital world paved the creation of the “networked self”, which is comparable with Haraway’s “cyborg”. The cyborg “a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction” (Haraway 149). Although Haraway’s lens is directed towards

the context of women's issues and ideologies, her perspective is useful in explicating the phenomenon around human and machine relations that I consider the stimulus and foundation of people transforming into networked selves. According to her, "by the late twentieth century, our time, a mythic time, we are all chimera, theorized and fabricated hybrids or machine and organism; in short we are cyborgs . . . a condensed image of both imagination and material reality, the two joined centers structuring any possibility of historical transformation" (Haraway 150). When technologies become a necessity in conducting daily routines, then we become cyborgs. Like Haraway, Castañeda discusses how our engagement with "new" technologies may be likened to the body of child described to be "inherently incomplete and malleable" (46). Like a child, our consciousness is compared to an "under-construction" entity where several socio-cultural conditioning and structuring are put together.

The networked self is thus a and functions as a communicator. Communication being a dynamic human action often develops alongside communication technologies. Marshall McLuhan's "the medium is the message", where he argues that channel in which one sends a message is partly responsible to the reception and perception of meaning of the message by the receiver (McLuhan 82), shows how the space (cyberspace) can transform the way we humans understand and subsequently interact with one another. Within this communicative setting, McLuhan further asserts that we employ technologies to serve as extensions of our human body, which results to "an individual or society that makes or uses something in a way that extends the range of the human body and mind in a fashion that is

new” (21). The “newly” fashioned human is the focus of this inquiry, their “everyday” experience of as a networked citizen in the networked world they navigate in.

Framing a networked gaze

When the internet began to break into the society, our various ways of living predictably started to change. In the beginning, acceptance of the internet as a legitimate system that transforms the conduct of our everyday life was treated with ambivalence. However, as internet technology advanced further, sophisticatedly surpassing imaginations of most of us untutored in the disciplines it originated from, this technological innovation challenged our habitual and typical ways of living, including how we socially interact with one another. The internet along with other technologies it gave birth to have penetrated and permeated our culture. The online world is not anymore separate from the offline world. They have merged. The online world is an extension of the offline world, or, could it be the other way around?

The current circumstance of melded worlds is attributed to hypermodernity (Augé 30), a condition that creates fragmented and incomplete socialities amongst community members. Hypermodernity is a condition where we are overwhelmed with so many interests and pursuits in life (Lipovetsky and Sebastian 29). Augé (30-36), who labels this socio-cultural state as supermodernity, describes hypermodernity as “overabundance”. A supermodern society, he says, is composed of spatial abundance . . . overabundance of events and increased manifestation of individuality, which is attributed to the increased possibilities of moving to and moving around spaces

and places and to the proliferation of agencies for interactions and socializations. Both the internet and the face-to-face socio-cultural worlds are impacted by hypermodernity.

Hine on the other hand suggests viewing methodologically the internet as both culture and cultural artefact. As mentioned before, the former refers to a cultural site where we humans take part in various ways of socialization, the latter signifies that technologies are essentially social (Campanella 168). With this kind of discernment of the internet, Hine proposes to probe the internet within three interrelated adaptive approaches (3Es). In the embedded internet we examine various IMTs, especially how we engage in meaning-making and entrench our identities in these technologies. The embodied internet is an approach where we evaluate our social actions, which include our emotions as we take part in activities involving the internet. The everyday internet on the other hand requires the ethnographer to critically analyze the tendency of the internet to become mundane and topicalized (Campanella 169-171).

The human who is the UPD student in this study is considered to be an “ordinary” or “everyday user” of IMTs. Bakardjieva distinguishes the everyday users from those who take part in the programming and innovating internet technology in cyberspace as the end users who do not question how the IMTs are created and developed (92-114). The everyday users of IMTs accept these technologies for what they are and use them for a variety of purposes. IMTs that are related to both academic and non-academic contexts are primarily studied. The “everyday user” label suggests a heterogeneous group that just utilizes technology without questioning how that technology is created or acquired. The students’ perceived “accepting” frame of mind is what I want to explore in this study especially as it experiences and relates to IMTs.

The human in this study is foreseen to undergo autopoiesis as a result of our engagement with the internet. The production and reproduction of this engagement is explicated by the complex interrelationship of Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, capital and field (72-95). Bourdieu's theory of social change explains how we have transformed into networked humans traversing offline and online worlds. In this study the students' introduction to, adoption of and adaptation to the IMTs that paved the way in the creation of a networked UP Diliman student are probed. Evidences of such formation may be seen embedded in the kinds of IMTs that students utilize; in the embodiments of students as observed in how they socialize and interact with each other using IMTs; and in the everyday activities they engage in where IMT has become a regular feature.

The conceptual model that is crafted for this study shows how the whole UP community is covered by the hypermodern society. It means that the habitus, the capital and the field are influenced by hypermodernity. It also demonstrates how the UP Diliman student who is an everyday user of IMTs is affected, influenced and consequently altered due to alterations in the habitus, the capital and the field. Our being human is a system that relates to other systems in the society such as the habitus, the capital and the field. Each of these systems is independent of each other, they only reproduce or modify themselves when they relate to one another. Eventually the interdependence and interrelationships of these systems give birth to culture formation or transformation (Bogñar 137-152), which impacts the communicator. The humans' autopoiesis transpires only when other systems surrounding itself impacts its own system. Our autopoiesis is inevitable since our existence is essentially based on our relations, i.e. interrelations with human and non-human beings (Latour 137).

The human is represented by the UPD students who, in the process of interacting, connecting and interconnecting with other systems in their social world, become networked thus prompting and contributing to a cultural transformation. In an autopoietic sense, the human is both the producer and the produced i.e. the students contribute to culture change but they are also shaped by other systems working within the same culture they are shaped in.

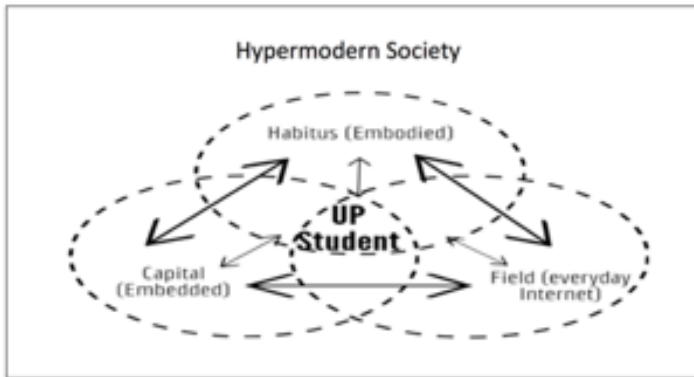
The habitus is represented by UPD, an educational institution, formed more than one hundred years ago. Aside from being the national university of the Philippines, UP is described as a microcosm representation of the Philippine society. The members of its community, especially the students, come from diverse sets of social, political and cultural groupings. UPD specifically is the flagship constituent unit of the whole UP system. The UPD habitus is primarily a product of the dominant cultural arbitrary (Bourdieu 159-197; Bourdieu and Passeron xv-xvi). It is composed of dispositions borne out of the structured structuring structures that spanned more than a century. The deeply ingrained dispositions within the UP community have been passed on for many generations. The experience and the value appropriated by students to education takes center stage in the UPD habitus. All other dispositions and structures in the habitus are contingent to the disposition on the value of education in the university. Hence, it can be deduced that the dominant cultural arbitrary in the UPD habitus is the one that supports and contributes to this disposition.

The field of education is the context where the habitus functions. This is also where Hine's (2015) concept of the everyday internet is positioned. The dominant cultural arbitrary in UP provides a model or a perception of what a "quality education" is. It envisions what a UP student and graduate

should be. The educational structures in place and at work in the university are in place to aid in the attainment of the “*tatak*” UP education. The UP student, however, does not just exist within the university’s habitus. Each student also has to be prepared to join the “outside world” composed of several habitus in various fields in the society. Therefore, dispositions to acquire the kind of education that students need to be able to join the society are also needed and should be in place. To be able to achieve this, contradictory as it may seem, the UP habitus in the field of education has to keep pace with technologies. However, it should be noted that young people nowadays possess technological devices and use IMTs not solely or not necessarily for educational purposes. Part of the habitus has dispositions that value knowledge and skills in managing human-machine relations and co-existing with new technologies. The habitus then has to have structures in place that will make sure that the students are taught to be “properly” equipped to live in a society where technologies are necessary and considered mundane. A paradox is seen here: the habitus has to reproduce and maintain the dominant socio-cultural arbitrary, but in the process of doing so, may change that dominant socio-cultural arbitrary.

The links of the UPD habitus, its capitals, the field of education and the IMT — a form of capital that may be part of the dominant cultural arbitrary — all contribute to the transformation of the UP student as a networked being consequently transforming UPD’s culture.

The following figure illustrates the framework of the study.



Methodological Challenges

In the process of my pursuit to find out how students engage with IMT in their daily activities, I faced challenges especially on how to reconcile what I used to know how things are and should be done and how it must be modified with our current state of IMT usage. One of the main challenges I encountered while conducting this research relates to methodology. Instead of immersing in a single community where community members go in and out or back and forth in specified locations, I found myself engaged in an anthropological site where boundaries are blurred, where no definite lines are established. Members of the community have their own entanglements in a world that is theirs alone. Each member's set of entanglements intersects simultaneously with other members' worlds that contain their respective sets of entanglements. Each of their worlds involve offline and online public and private places of interaction. These intersections make up the world of UPD students. To be able to make sense of their intersecting worlds, I "followed."

Following is a form of ethnography or at least an ethnographic technique. With the development of technologies, henceforth societies and cultures, ethnographic strategies are inevitably modified as well. These transformations are not necessarily intentional; the life worlds of people that anthropologists explore and observe have been altered to the point that there is no choice but to make some adjustments from the traditional ways of conducting ethnography. This should not be a problematic issue since a research method is chosen on the basis of a theoretical framing and the research question (Hine 70-81).

One of the pioneer anthropologists to suggest a departure from the traditional ethnographic strategy is George Marcus (1995). He recommends the employment of the multi-sited ethnography to capture the nature of modern communities. He argues that the single-sited ethnographic strategy may not be able to capture the entirety and the thickness of the descriptions of communities. Marcus identified several conceptual visions of multi-sited spaces. Among them are Haraway's cyborg construct, and Apparudai's idea of the global cultural economy (Marcus 105). According to Marcus there are also a variety of multi-sited techniques that we can conduct for our ethnographies. One of them is what I explored, modified and employed — "Follow the people", which involves following and staying with the movements of a particular group of initial objects. Hine's view on the changes that need to be employed in the practice of ethnography does not only concern adding new methods to the traditional method but also coming up with new methodologies based on a new way of looking at the role of the internet in our ways of living (85-88).

As a cultural site, the internet's significance in the field of social science is highlighted by focusing on interactions and other activities we engage in this space. As a cultural artefact, it is focused on a premise that there is a relationship between technological development and social and communicative processes (Campanella 167-173). In short, technology is influenced by how we go about our daily activities. On the other hand, the resulting social processes from the technologies we utilize are somewhat manipulated by those technologies we use.

This study's research design is composed of Marcus' multi-sited ethnographic frame linked to Hine's E3 of the internet and a descriptive approach. The study is qualitative in nature, which specifically employs a case study research design utilizing digital and non-digital ethnographic research strategies. I followed the networked world of my informants. I followed them in the online networked spaces they engaged in and asked them how these spaces coalesce (if ever they do) with the offline spaces wherein they navigate. In this study, I chose two college-based organizations: UP Speech Communication Association (SPECAs) and UP Engineering Society (Eng'gSoc) from which I invited ten respondents each to participate. I deemed that choosing participants from specific organizations presents a more "cohesive" context since these students more or less share similarities in their habitus because of their organizational affiliation.

Networked Peypups: The (Re)created Communicator

The following figure illustrates the UPD Students' Online and Offline Melded world



By considering the internet as culture and at the same time a cultural artefact, I view the engagement of UP students with IMTs as both a human to machine experience (how we utilize “new” technology) and a cultural outcome of this experience, especially when such an experience develops into an essential in the society we exist and navigate in.

“Trending” is a term I describe the journey of a UP student in becoming networked. It shows how the embodied lives of selected UPD students are entangled with and are immersed in IMT. My informants reflected on their experiences from the moment they received the news that they were eligible to enroll in the university to their current status in the university. As, they reflect, each of their habitus unfolds, which includes their thoughts about entering a “new world” (college life) and all other elements connected to it. We have embodied the internet in almost all aspects of our daily activities inevitably implicating the status and development of our habitus. Hine explains the embodied nature of the internet as a concept that explicates how we navigate our daily activities within and around the internet and IMTs, “we use the internet as socially situated beings subject to various constraints on our actions and responding with emotions, as

we forge a very individualized perspective on the internet through the particular links we follow and sites we encounter” (Campanella 170).

Before and During UPD

For UP students, IMTs are shown to be already embodied before enrollment to the university. They talked about how they are influenced by the positive impressions they have of UP, which would usually originate from parents and relatives. This is understandable since the habitus is first developed with parents and loved ones as initial and major influences. Paul, an informant, recalls how happy she was when she learned that she passed UPCAT. She admits that there was pressure on her to get into UP since she was already conditioned since she was a child that it will be “great” if she did, especially because her aunt who raised her, is a UP graduate.

When the habitus expands, students’ selfhood are implicated. Their identities and sense of rootedness are also developed as they experience UP where IMT is involved.

Evidently, students believe in the common impression that UP is prestigious. They express this sentiment reminiscing about their initial exposure to UP. The high expectations on being a UP student is highlighted in our conversations because all my informants agree that UP has the best quality of education and quality of students in the Philippines. This belief has been ingrained in their habitus; hence, students now are challenged to uphold the prestige. To achieve this, one has to embrace technology, because technology aids in achieving excellence.

Students contemplate on their initial exposure to UP. They compare their actual experiences with impressions and assumptions of theirs and others. They describe their impression of UP based

on their involvement with a variety of academic and non-academic activities, where IMT is included and entangled. How a UP student gains identity and rootedness starts even before he or she enters the university and becomes a member of the community. My informants mostly discuss their initial impressions of the university centered on two main aspects: quality of UP education and the quality UP students. These thoughts about themselves and the university are results of their experiences as students in the combined online and offline UP world. Major dispositions of current undergraduate students mostly center on the value of honor and excellence except for one on practicality. *Matalino* (intelligent) is the primary feature that UP students ascribe to the university and its students. UP students embrace the university and its embodiment of honor and excellence.

Aside from intelligence, UP students are known to be aware of and sensitive about the plight of fellow Filipinos. "*May pinaglalaban*" (have something to fight for) is a state of being, which my informants claim that every UP student (in varying degrees) is always in. They say that it may seem that not all are vocal about their opinions about social issues, but they are sure that every UP student has in his or her own way is doing something to show or express his or her opinions and judgments. UP students are "*masipag at madiskarte*" (hardworking and resourceful). These are attributes that UP students are very proud of. They say that one cannot expect to graduate if one is not hardworking and resourceful, which they claim to have realized and acquired as they were going through tough times in the university. According to my informants, in order to survive in UP, one has to have strength in character, locally termed as "*astig*". This strength in character is developed

among UP students because they encounter a variety of challenges that most of the time test their tenacity in staying put in the university.

Affordability is the only practical feature assigned by my informants to UP. They say that it is important to mention this aspect, because they truly feel “special” and grateful to be given this privilege of acquiring quality education with considerably less financial stress.

IMT’s Impact on Self and on the Conduct of Interpersonal Relations

The emergence of online spaces and IMTs compels us to claim our spot in those spaces. If we do not declare those spaces as ours another will most likely take them. If we do not learn how to utilize “new” technologies, we will be left out. Informant Agatha recognizes that somehow it is inevitable to go online because it is part of being a responsible student/classmate since these platforms are needed to complete group projects.

Expressing emotions and reacting to them are two main reasons why rules are employed in cyberspace. My informants say that whether it is online or offline, handling of emotions is a difficult task; hence, they are very careful in posting about emotions on the internet.

Notably, students are apprehensive on a variety of issues that affect their existence in the melded world. Safety and security issues come up in our discussions. They are aware and concerned about invasion of privacy on the internet. One informant says that he was being impersonated when he discovered that he has a number of fake accounts. Another informant talks about how she is stalked on the internet and another who is bullied because her posts do not sit well with the

beliefs of a fellow netizen. In these instances, students concede that there are no concrete, legal and effective ways to stop these wrongdoings, they just try to look for creative ways to solve their “online problems”. They hope policies will be established to prevent the rise of online security and safety issues.

Students also mention that the inclusion of the online world in their reality, results to problems relating to their ability to focus. Because of too much information, too many things that need to be accomplished and too many distractions, they feel that their time is always not enough. For informant Burnak, “time is lost online”. This dilemma results in lack of sleep. Evidently, these occurrences signify that IMT is indeed embodied in the lives of students. The disposition of getting worried about one’s self-preservation is present in the melded reality caused by the internet.

IMT’s embeddedness and embodiment in the lives of UP students is clearly shown when they themselves divulge that they learned and discovered more about themselves, about other people and about the world because of their engagement with it. An informant realizes that he is truly an introvert when even in social media he tends to lurk more than converse. It is noticeable that some individuals seem to be more sociable or talkative on the internet compared to the face-to-face set up; however, in this case, because of this particular typical online occasion, my informant became sure that indeed he is an introvert. Another realized that there are many haters in his network of online friends. According to Goldfish, “*Marami palang walang kwenta*” (there are many worthless-people). “haters and people displaying superiority over other people,” “*tuloy, nag-ha-hate na rin ako*” (this makes me hate too). Social network posts do not just show people’s opinions on issues, most importantly they show their dispositions as well

in the manner in which they express their emotions about their opinions. Another informant unfortunately states that his fate in humanity has degraded when he saw local and international posts displaying hate and ignorance. Tuna thinks "*Dami pa lang ignoranteng tao!*" (there many ignorant people), "it has degraded my faith in humanity". The internet presents different perspectives of realities that oftentimes engage our values and principles. When we react to opinions of others, it means we somehow care about the state of the world we live in; hence, the internet embodies as a well our disposition of awareness and concern about ourselves, fellow members of the community and the world we live in.

The habitus of UP students are not changed in terms of their view and conduct of interpersonal relations — the habitus just becomes "bigger". As they experienced more, they add even more to their habitus, expanding it to be able to accommodate changes. As they talk about their self-realizations, I deduced that the changes they experienced because of UP and IMT are made sense of and became "acceptable" because their habitus provides structures that help them understand and integrate these new experiences in their individual systems. Internet becomes embodied in the lives of students when they become dependent on it to accomplish their daily routines.

IMT's ability to connect and communicate is extended to dispositions relating to other interpersonal relations such as with friends, classmates and acquaintances. IP, an informant, discloses that he is more comfortable communicating online than offline. IP shares that he has two personalities on the internet: one for those who he interacts with in both offline and online social spaces and the other for those that he met and communicate with exclusively online. Involvement of emotions vary depending on the level of relationships one has

with people, nevertheless connection is made possible through IMT. UP students acknowledge that their offline lives are extended to the online world made possible by the internet and IMT. This self-realization is the outcome of both practical and emotional connections students relate to IMT that primarily involves family and close relations involving both academic and non-academic daily activities. JJ states “I usually talk to the same people.” He concedes though that IMTs extend his interactions with people, “We just continue what we talk about whether online or offline.” Their connection with their families shows the continuation and development of their filial related disposition even without face-to-face interaction. This may be attributed to IMT as a conduit in their connection made possible as well by the well-forged family structure that is strong and resilient. Emma talks about how she and her parents maintain their parent-and-child relationship “in a different way” as they became “in a sense closer to each other” through Facebook.

However, friendships and other relations seem to be classified under a different disposition. For Helena it is more difficult to figure out what they (friends) “really want to say.” She says, “*hindi na clear . . . mahirap intindihin*” (it is not clear any more . . . difficult to understand). The need for constant communication and connectivity is not present in this type of interpersonal relationship. This may be due to the lack of the concept of filial obligation. There are “many” friends that one has to attend to online, making it understandable and acceptable to “everybody” that there is no need to regularly “connect” to one another. This setup shows how students value their families and the normative social obligations that our society has ingrained in us. It also presents how students construct and maintain relationships outside of immediate family members.

More importantly, it is revealed that rules have changed on and because of the internet. Offline and online rules meld, but often clash. Embodied and embedded in the IMTs are rules that students adhere to when they relate to each other while traversing online and offline worlds. Rules depict structure. There must then be a form of structure that has developed to accommodate the embodiment of UP students of IMT within academic and non-academic contexts. Rules have developed as a result of the melding online and offline realities. Without a doubt, students have already accepted that the internet and IMTs will continue to be a permanent fixture in their lives. They acknowledge that technologies will change and “improve,” but for now, the internet remains to be a constant.

Presently, the internet is essential in almost all technological innovations. The recognition of the state of melding realities brought about apprehensions and uncertainties amongst people not just students. Intentionally or unintentionally, rules are formed to accommodate uncertainties. However, rules are not the same for online and offline spaces. There are behaviors that are acceptable online but are rejected offline. According to my informants, rules are made mainly to make sure people are responsible for their actions. This notion and expectation of a responsible behavior is already established offline, but in the online space, the sense of responsibility amongst netizens are yet to be firmly instituted. This may be the case since the internet has no precise physical boundaries where penalties legal or otherwise may be imposed on those who do not follow or break the rules. Nevertheless, most countries globally undertake actions to regulate actions and interactions online. In the Philippines, the Cybercrime Act in 2012 aims to safeguard Filipinos’ online safety and security. Regulated behaviors and the presence of

rules — guided by policies or otherwise — are evidences that netizens believe and adhere to a structure, a disposition that gives importance to social order.

IMT and the Mundane

Interest on the everyday users began when design and development of IMTs are motivated by how everyday people use them. The typical consumers do not remain passive anymore, without knowing about it, they actively contribute to how human and computer relationship develops. When the internet became regarded as a “place” where human “living” may be extended, the everyday user became one of the most important consideration for IMT development. Almost every aspect of human existence is extended, sometimes simulated on the internet, hence it is not anymore for people who belong to special fields, the internet has become mundane (Bakardjieva 37).

On the onset of this study, when I started to locate the field of the study, I was able to determine the area by understanding and consequently utilizing the concept of everyday internet. It was difficult at first to identify the field since online geographical boundaries simply do not exist. However, I also cannot ignore that my informants also and truly exist in the offline space where physical boundaries are part of the society’s structure. Hence, I “followed”. Following is an everyday action in the everyday internet merged with the offline world. Following is a modified ethnographic methodology designed to follow persons who adopt the “new reality” — the merged online and offline realities. I started my “following” by locating my informants in the offline world, then followed them in the variety of spaces and places they visit and belong to in the online world. I then asked them about their lives as UP students

existing in the melded worlds. I initially thought that they were just constantly entering and exiting the two worlds, but as I listened to them, I began to realize that they do not refer or regard the two worlds as separate, instead, they view the two worlds as one. This attitude adopted by UP students proves that indeed UP Diliman is both a physical and virtual space where students navigate their academic and non-academic lives. Although my informants did not actively discuss online sites managed by UP Diliman, our conversations indicate that they are aware of such sites, but do not figure much in their everyday mundane lives.

UP students have unintentionally included IMTs in their daily habits. When asked why they consider IMT's presence in their daily activities as "normal", most of them answered that they do not particularly know, that it just happened. Their answers refer to IMT as necessity, routine, acceptance, "something you got used to already" and "automatic." On the other hand, they also consider internet as topicalized, when they have specific defined purposes that require the internet for carrying them out.

Bourdieu's concept of field is central in comprehending and making sense of culture formation because it connects the concepts of habitus and capital. Aside from methodologically representing the field site of this study, the field (melded world of UP students), which according to my informants they already consider to be normative, allows access to capital, which validates, strengthens, reproduces and sometimes changes the habitus that may stimulate culture change.

Culture (trans)formation?

According to Bourdieu and Passeron, a dominant cultural arbitrary exists in every society that makes possible cultural reproduction and change (xv). A cultural arbitrary is neither determined nor permanent, it is already present in the society because of social and cultural reproduction. In short, social structures and systems that support the dominant cultural arbitrary ensure that its position in the society is maintained. These structures in turn are strengthened by the pedagogic action practiced and followed by community members imposed by the dominant cultural arbitrary. Pedagogic action does not necessarily mean indoctrination through the formal educational system, rather it is any instructive and influential action that support the dominant cultural arbitrary.

What could be a dominant cultural arbitrary in UP that propel the “necessary” adoption of IMT in the melded world of students. What is in the habitus of the students that made them “easily” accept and adapt to the cultural arbitrary and pedagogic action (Bourdieu and Passeron xv) explicitly and implicitly imposed by the UP melded community?

Is there culture transformation? This query may be answered by examining how the internet became an anthropological place in the lives of UPD students. The internet is not merely a space where they can perform a variety of tasks. It has become a hypermodern place (Augé 1995) where meanings are constructed and negotiated manifested in the students’ social relations that will be part of both their individual’s and/or community’s developing histories. How they individually embodied and embedded the internet in their melded lives presents a sense of history and identity. Is the internet an anthropological place? Is it embodied in

the socialities of UPD students? Certainly, the internet is a place where UPD students socialize and interact. It has the capability of saving, uploading, creating, storing infinite data to its infinite space we call the cloud. It is a space where their identities are shaped and constructed. It has become part of their history and the making of their future histories as they live their everyday lives. The internet is partly responsible in developing identities, maintaining relationships and creating memories due to the many hyperlinked networks it allows us to generate and mingle in. In these habitual practices, the internet has already been assimilated and embodied in the socialities of UPD students; hence, they live in a reality where there is no separation of online and offline worlds.

The need to achieve success is the underlying disposition that makes the internet a vital cultural capital. Success may refer to short term academic accomplishments. It may also mean the probability (because of UP education) of acquiring competitive jobs or skill set needed to set up profitable business transactions. These goals of course lead to us to the goal of living a comfortable and secure life made possible by the monetary compensation we get from gainful employment or a rewarding entrepreneurship or business venture. For students to attain success in both scenarios, they know that they must have access to information and up-to-date technology. At present, IMT is a form of capital that is necessary to be able to fulfill the dominant disposition. IMT possesses the power of dependence. It has created a world where we have been convinced that without it, we cannot compete and be successful in the current melded society we exist in. As what some of my informants emphasize, *“there is no going back, whether we like it or not”*.

Although this study does not aim to discuss class struggle and social inequalities, certainly, when we talk about capital, we inevitably ask about access. Those who have access possess power; conversely, those who do not have access do not possess power. Access to IMT relates to access to anything and everything. However, if one has limited access only to the internet, it means one's access to the "limitless" information and knowledge is also limited. If the university cannot provide unlimited access to internet connection and is not able to make available the hardware needed to connect online, it can be said that economic power struggle is still at play in these present conditions and circumstances.

Are social structures that support the inherent disposition of gaining "a successful life" reproduced? They are reproduced in the sense that they perpetuate feelings and principles that lead to that particular goal. What I think has changed is the addition of a new capital that "helps" reinforces and fortifies the "old" disposition. IMT transformed us into cyborgs, fortified and armed us to better engage in the expanded and added spaces. These spaces are places borne out of or products of IMT. Our socialization as cyborgs in these IMT places certainly add more to how we identify ourselves as individuals and as members of groups in both online and offline realms. These contribute to the strengthening of social structures and systems that are already in place. It should be clear by now how the internet and IMT perform several functions simultaneously: as a tool, as a place and as a way of being (Markham, 360-361).

If there is no change in the core dispositions, is it possible for culture change to transpire? Is an introduction of a "new" capital enough to cause a modification in our cultural system? I think that culture essentially is about how we make sense of our existence, the patterns of our routines we take part in "everyday" and how we create meanings as we navigate our

lives. Our adoption of the internet relates directly to how we manage our habitual practices. When we crisscross the melded world, we engage the internet in new sociocultural actions that compel us to create meanings, make sense of experiences and manage a “new” set of behaviors and attitudes. We try to accomplish these so that we can co-exist harmoniously with one another in the society. IMTs have created sociocultural actions within the already established learning structures in UP. When UP professors adopt IMTs in their teaching methods or when students find it necessary to use a computer and go online to be able to complete a well-researched paper, the “old” action is transformed. When making friends and “taking a break” from academic work entail a student’s presence in social media or watching videos on YouTube become common and mundane, again, an “old learning action” is transformed. Culture is transformed. The communicator is transformed.

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