Social Transformations facilitated by Facebook on the Filipino Generation Y*

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Abstract

Social network penetration is incredibly high in the Philippines. More than Google, Facebook is the country's most popular website. Nine out of ten Filipinos who are online are on Facebook and most of them belong to Generation Y.

Using a triangulation method, it investigates the social transformations facilitated by Facebook to the Filipino Generation Y, particularly how it maps social relations, create a system of exchanging information and how it changes their ethos.

Among the important findings are: Most Filipino Gen Y has more than 751 friends in Facebool, with 4 out of 10 respondents having more than a thousand friends. Most of their Facebook friends are people they know in the virtual world, referrals from friends and people they meet once or twice in person. The social transformations facilitated by Facebook on the Filipino Gen Y are cultivation of superficial friendships, socializing selectively, projecting a puffed- up self, over-sharing, communicating and socializing easily, and the flaunting of material possessions or luxurious experiences.

Keywords: social transformation, Facebook, Generation Y, social relations, social network

1. Introduction and Relevant Literature

The Internet is deeply embedded in the social fabric of developed and developing nations. People are now comfortable using the Internet as a source of information and as a communication and socializing tool. Shirky (2009) explained that "Internet is the first medium in history that has native support for groups and conversation at the same time. Whereas the phone gave us the one-to-one pattern, and television, radio, magazines, books, gave us the one-to-many pattern, the Internet gives us the many-to-many pattern."

Comscore, Inc. reported that the "social networking site is the most popular online activity worldwide: it accounted for nearly 1 in every 5 minutes spent online globally in 2011, ranking as the most engaging online activity worldwide." It further gave account that "82 percent of the world's Internet population age 15 and older, represents 1.2 billion users around the globe ("it's a social world", 2011).

The Internet as a social media can become a catalyst of transformations for an individual, organization and society. Deragon (2011) affirms that social media are communications that drive

everything and influence everyone. Society, organizations and individual transformation (change) happens as the result of communications.

The usage of social networking sites is extensively widespread. Pending one's free time on a social network site seems to be very popular. Most young people are online every day (Pempek, Yermolayeva & Calvert, 2009). This is because, according to Ellison, Steinfield and Lampe (2007), social networking websites offer the opportunity to stay in contact with friends and peers while they are offline.

On October 4, 2012, Facebook announced that it has officially passed 1 billion monthly active users (Protalinski, 2012) Since its launched, it has seen 1.13 trillion Likes, 140.3 billion friend connections, 219 billion photos uploaded. It should be clarified, however, that Facebook counts active users as anyone who actually uses their Facebook login. Guynn (2012) shed further light on the issue stating that Facebook defines active users as people who have logged on to Facebook within the last 30 days.

Citing the survey of Global Web index, Kemp (2012) presented that the Philippines leads the world in social media usage. He explained that though only one third of Filipinos have access to the internet, but more than 95% of these netizens use social networking sites – with more than 90% on Facebook alone – the rationale becomes a lot clearer.

Supporting the figures above, Russel (2012) also relates that the "social network penetration is incredibly high in the Philippines, with 95% of its internet user population. More than Google, Facebook is the country's most popular website, having a penetration rate of 93.9%." In other words, nine out of ten Filipinos who are online are on Facebook. As of September 28, 2012, the total Philippine Facebook population is 29.3 million ("Philippine Facebook Statistics", 2012.). On average, Filipino visit Facebook 26 times a month (Kemp, 2011).

In determining the trade-off between having large networks of social connections on social networking sites such as Facebook and the development of intimacy and social support among today's generation of emerging adults, Manago, Taylor and Greenfield (2012) confirmed that Facebook facilitates expansive social networks that grow disproportionately through distant kinds of relationship (acquaintances and activity connections), while also expanding the number of close relationships and stranger relationships.

 Networking sites also help satisfy human psychosocial needs. Manago, et al. (2012) found that college students with higher proportions of maintained contacts from the past (primarily high school friends) perceived Facebook as a more useful tool for procuring social support.

Today, not all are completely enthusiastic about Facebook. Maurer (2013) provided seven reasons why he quits the popular social networking site. These are: Facebook sucks time from my life, most of my Facebook friends aren't actually friends, there are other (better options for photosharing, Facebook brings out the worst in people, I learn more on twitter, the presence of ads on Facebook is getting ridiculous, and he wanted to simply his life.

1.1. Generation Y

Generation Y is known by many names. They are identified as the Millennial Generation or the Millenials (Strauss & Howe 1992), or the Generation Next ("The Online NewsHour", 2010), or the Net Generation (Shin, 2008), or as the Echo Boomers (Armour, 2005) because members of this generation are mostly children of baby boomers. Howe and Strauss (2000) set as parameters 1982 and 2001 as the start and end years of this generation. The characteristics of this generation may vary by place, depending on social and economic conditions. However, it can be deduced that they can be characterized by a popular use and familiarity with communications, new media and digital technologies.

Conducting a research about the personality profiles of Millenials, Junco and Mastrodicasa (2007) found that this generation used technology at higher rates than people from other generations.

1.2. On Studying Social Transformations

The paper is anchored on Castle's theory on studying social transformation. Castle (2011) contrasted social transformation studies from other studies as the analysis of transnational connectedness and the way this affects national societies, local communities and individuals. Social transformation can have both positive and negative consequences for individuals, local communities and nation-states. In academic discourse (especially in the field of social theory) social transformation can also be circumscribed in a more specific way with reference to theories that seek to understand the nature, power dynamics, scale, impact, reception and social construction of various forms of societal change (Keim-Lees, Roux, Lombard, & Oleyede, 2009). Keim-Lees, et al (2009) defined social transformation as the process of change in values, norms, institutionalized relationships, and stratification hierarchies over time. The study at hand seeks to determine the impact of the various forms of societal changes facilitated by Facebook on the Filipino Generation Y as significant alteration of their behavior patterns and cultural values and norms.

2. Methodology

This study used a mixed method design that involves a survey questionnaire and a semi-structured interview guide. The said instruments were administered to a purposive sampling of 200 respondents, with an inclusion criteria of being a Filipino, belonging to the cohort of Generation Y and is an active user of Facebook as defined by Guynn (2012).

Data on the mapping of social relations of Filipino Gen Y on Facebook and the system of exchanging information of Filipino Gen Y on Facebook were analyzed by percentages. Thematic analysis was employed to identify and bracket the themes in the answers of the participants on the social transformations facilitated by Facebook in their ethos. A word cloud was used to present a visual presentation that highlights the responses of the participants. MacNaught and Lam (2010) described a word cloud as a special visualization of text in which the more frequently used words are effectively highlighted by occupying more prominence in the representation. A word cloud output is useful for quickly perceiving the most prominent terms appearing more frequently in the source text.

3. Findings
3.1.Mapping the Social Relations of Filipino Generation Y in Facebook

Table 1 presents the total number of Facebook friends of the respondents. Seventy-one percent of the respondents have 751 or more friends in the social networking site, detailed as 41% of respondents has friends above 1000 friends while 30% of the respondents has 751-1000 in Facebook. Only six percent of this generation has 251-500 friends. No Gen Y surveyed has friends below 250. The average Facebook friends of Filipino Gen Y is 872.

Social networking may start with close contacts but quickly moves to less familiar circles. Table 2 presents the people whom the Filipino Gen Y interacts with in Facebook. Nine out of ten (9 out of 10) people connections of Facebook of the respondents are regular friends , family members and relatives. In fact, 98% are regular friends and 92% are family members and relatives. The other interactions that they have are with friends they have lost contact with 78%, and co-students with 36%, The least that they interact with are the people they meet once or twice in person with 12% and referrals from friends with 11%., and people they know in the virtual world with 2%.

Table 3 presents the profile of friends of the Filipino Gen Y in Facebook. Sixty-three percent (63%) of the friends of Gen Y are the people they know in the virtual world (23%), referrals from friends (21%) and people they meet once or twice in person (19%). The least of their friends in Facebook are the family members and relatives with 9%, regular friends with 12% and friends with whom they have lost contact with 16%. This data reveals a stark realization that the least of their friends in Facebook which includes family members and relatives, regular friends, and friends with whom they have lost contact with are the people the Filipino Gen Y is mostly interacting with.

Table 4 presents the reasons of the Filipino Gen Y for using Facebook. It appears that Facebook is used by the most respondents as a communication and socializing tool in the web. In details, Facebook is used for staying in touch with 86%, learn/ update about my regular friends with 77%, learn about the latest trends with 76%, chatting on line with 73%, upload/sharing of photos with 73%, sending messages with 69%, re-establishing old contacts with 67%. This supports the findings of Ellison, Steinfield and Lampe (2007) that social networking websites (such as Facebook) offer the opportunity to stay in contact with friends and peers while they are offline.

Table 5 presents the Filipino Gen Y's frequency of Facebook usage. Seven out of 10 or seventy-three percent (73%) of the respondents are accessing Facebook several times a day, 21% are visiting the site about once per day while 6% are logging in 3-5 days per week. The usage pertains to posting of updates or pictures, checking news feed, or using the site to communicate or socialize. Though Pempek, Yermolayeva and Calvert (2009) reported that most young people are online every day, this data, however, strengthen in detail the online presence of young particularly the Filipino Gen Y's frequency of Facebook usage.

In Table 6, most Gen Y actively seeks to manage their privacy and management in Facebook by untagging photos with 90%, deleting comments with 91%, restricting access to profiles with 90%, selectively adding friends with 89% and unfriending someone or blocking someone with 89%.

3.2.Filipino Generation Y's System of Exchanging Information in Facebook

Facebook provides multiple ways in keeping up with one's friends in the site, regardless of their profile. One can choose the best method of communication depending on the type of message that you plan to send. Below are the different ways in the system of exchanging information in Facebook.

1. Facebook direct message. This functions like an email within the Facebook application. It is one of the private ways to communicate within the Facebook website. When one uses this method of communication, only the sender and the person or persons receiving the message are able to see it. The message may be sent to more than one person.
2. Facebook wall. Any message which may comprise of words, pictures and videos can be sent and be placed on the wall of a friend. These messages can be in form of status updates, sharing of photos and videos, indication of place where one is and revelation of life events. This is "similar to posting a note on a bulletin board to your friends. When you post the message, all of that person's friends can see the message. Others can also comment on your messages through the wall system" (Arthur, 2012).
3. Facebook chat. This is similar to other instant messaging applications such as Windows Live Messenger , Yahoo! Messenger or Skype. The value of this is in communicating with friend within the site in real time.
4. Facebook tagging. Tagging is the process that links a photo with a Facebook user's profile. Once a user is tagged in a photo on the site, a copy of the image appears in the Photos tab of

her profile and a post about it is generated in one's wall where one's friends can view it (Webster, 2012).

Tagging on Facebook provides a wonderful method for keeping friends connected and informed. If it is an accepted notion that a picture is worth a thousand words, a tag of a picture or a video in Facebook is naturally communicating a lot.

In the interview, many Filipino Gen Ys reveal that they commonly tag to share a photo to several others. "In a party or an event, a person who has taken a photograph, may upload it and share the photos by tagging friends who are in the photograph". The tagged friend would receive a notification and the image would appear in her photo album on Facebook. Tagging in a video works exactly the same way. A poem or article excerpts that have resonated deeply are also shared through tagging function, and this appears in their profile page and their news feed.

5. Facebook "like". "Like" is a way to give positive feedback or to connect with things you care about on Facebook. You can like content that your friends post to give them feedback or like a Page that you want to connect with on Facebook. (What is the "like" feature , 2012). Clicking Like under something you or a friend posts on Facebook is an easy way to let someone know that you enjoy it, without leaving a comment.

In the interview, many Generation Y respondents significantly consider the privacy of communication with friends in Facebook. When they send a message, they consider who else will see the message. If the information you need to send is meant to share with everyone, then a wall post makes sense. If you need to discuss a private matter with one of your friends, a direct message or the chat option is the best alternative.

In Table 7, the features of Facebook that are mostly used are Facebook wall with 96%, Facebook chat with 95%, tagging pictures with 90%, clicking like with 96% and Facebook direct message with 85%.

There are four levels of communication that may happen in social networking sites including that of Facebook, namely phatic, gut-level, factual, and evaluative. Phatic is the small talk of communicating, consisting of short, quick sound bites of information. Factual is the sharing of information, based on events, observation and knowledge gained. Gut level is the sharing of personal and emotional feelings, usually shared with close relatives and friends. Evaluative offers opinions, ideas and judgments on specific topics and on other people. Twitter is effective in phatic and evaluative communications while Google + and Facebook is valuable on phatic and gut-level of communications. Furthermore, email is helpful for factual communications while a blog is of great use for factual and evaluative communications (Social cast, 2011 as cited by Peck, n.d.).

In Table 8, the level of communication of the Filipino Gen Y in Facebook is 94% phatic, 92% are gut-level, and 90% factual level. The least is evaluative level of communication with 53%.

3.3.The Social Transformations facilitated by Facebook on Gen Y

The bracketing of themes in the answers of the participants on the social transformation facilitated by Facebook on their ethos yield six constructs: cultivation of superficial friendships, socializing selectively, projecting a puffed- up self, over-sharing, communicating and socializing easily, and the flaunting of material possessions or luxurious experiences. The text visualization below shows the emphasis or the highlights of the responses of the participants on the patterns or themes on the data gathered.

1. Cultivation of superficial friendships

Most respondents have a considerable list of friends in Facebook. They revealed that they have initially "added in Facebook their close friends, family members and relatives, and friends that they have lost contact with. They have answered that, "(we) have searched in the site our grade school or high school friends in Facebook and added them as friends." However, the respondents have also admitted adding in the their list of friends in Facebook the people they meet once or twice in person, referrals from friends and the people they know only in the virtual world. Many of the respondents said, " I added people without knowing them personally." This theme from the answers of the respondents is substantiated further with Table 1 which presents the total number of friends in Facebook of Filipino Gen Y and Table 3 which presents the profile of friends of Filipino Gen Y in Facebook. In Table 1, seventy-one percent of the respondents have 751 or more friends in the social networking site, detailed as 41% of respondents has 751-1000 friends while 30% of the respondents has above 1000 friends in Facebook. Only six percent of this generation has 251-500 friends. No Gen Y surveyed has friends below 250. The average friends of Filipino Gen Y in Facebook is 872. Furthermore, the roll of friends that the respondents have is populated by people whom they have not initially connected in Facebook. In Table 3, sixty-three percent (63%) of the friends of Gen Y are the people they know in the virtual world (23%), referrals from friends (21%) and people they meet once or twice in person (19%). The minority of their friends is family members and relatives with 9%, regular friends with 12% and while 16% are friends with whom they have lost contact.

Citing the research of Nancy Baym who evaluates details of relationships created on social networking sites to determine their significance, depth and potential, Nauert (2009) ascertained that sites as Facebook and Twitter have revolutionized interpersonal relationships for the digital age. Within these online communities, users share status updates, self-generated media, journal entries and other interpersonal communication with an ever-growing cadre of online friends. The purpose is to reinforce established friendships and form bonds with new friends. However, these online range from close relationships with strong ties to looser affiliations with less connectivity — but both types of friendships are useful. Online friendships what having a lot of weak-tie relationships is giving you access to a lot of resources that you wouldn't otherwise have.

2. Socializing selectively

Though many respondents have many friends in Facebook, they admitted that they "do not communicate or socialize with all of them. Whenever we upload new pictures, we tag only selected friends in Facebook, not all of them." This theme is supported by Table 2 which presents the people whom Filipino Generation Y interacts with in Facebook. Nine out of ten (9 out of 10) people connections of Facebook of the respondents are regular friends , family members and relatives. In fact, 98% are regular friends and 92% are family members and relatives. The other interactions that they have are with friends they have lost contact with 78%, co students with 36%, The least that they interact with are the people they meet once or twice in person with 12% and referrals from friends with 11%.people they know in the virtual world with 2%.

3. Projecting a puffed- up self

Filipino Gen Y provides a venue for self-aggrandizing. Respondents used the networking site to update their profiles and their activities to show off. Most of respondents revealed, "(we) post selected pictures (probably altered by Photoshop) that will draw attention to our best physical qualities or possessions to solicit admiration, awe or approval," "I posted in my wall my newest phone", "Tag my friends when I went shopping", and "I love posting my vacation escapades".

4. Over-sharing

Ireland (2012) refers to this as the "communication overload". Facebook makes it too easy for people to keep in touch and communicate. The site makes it customary that a mere acquaintance's life can be known in every detail. Many respondents have admitted posting the following mundane and bizarre happenings in their lives which includes new hair cut, newly painted toe nails, body scrubs, shopping of clothes, gifts that are given, food cooked or eaten. Furthermore, many respondents have posted in their walls their emotions or feelings of the day or towards some event, something or someone.

In addition, Ireland (2012) realized that the online abbreviation "TMI" (too much information) could be applied to the general usage of Facebook. Sometimes, it can be difficult to form real and lasting relationships with people who you only share a superficial connection with online. Sharing too much information can also be dangerous, putting your identity and private information at risk.

Ireland (2012) also warned that there are serious repercussions when spouses or friends or family members vent their frustrations and angst, or when employees air their complaints about their jobs and bosses. The Facebook as a sounding board may seemingly be simple and harmless, but this is far from reality. Vulgar and muddled communications in Facebook may happen that may worsen an already worsening relationship. A posted criticism have even caused the termination of employees. Clarke (2010) cites the upheld case in Canada where two employees were for their posting on Facebook of disrespectful, damaging and inappropriate comments about their co-workers and employer.

Facebook communications shouldn't replace actual communication between family, friends and acquaintances, nor Facebook should encompass private talks and moments.

Hook (2012) pointed out an instance when she read another ridiculous Facebook status update. A girlfriend shaved her husband's back and then posted before and after photos. "There was thick black hair in places there really shouldn't be and I promise you—it was not pretty. But this was one of those Facebook moments that seem to occur daily and not just with this one friend", she said.

Furthermore, Hook (2012) revealed that daily, she encounter friendship and relationship drama, unfounded rumors, public humiliation and one-upmanship among peers on Facebook. The number 1 foul in her list are the TMI (too much information) status updates and photos. She cited examples when Facebook friends posted pictures of their child being potty trained or posted wall updates on their child's first bowel movement no matter how much work it took to accomplish it. This also includes facts that you had sex last night or had gone into salon to have something shaved are clearly examples of over-sharing.

5. Communicating and socializing easily

Facebook provides a venue for communicating easily with close friends, family members and relatives, and friends whom you have lost contact. It also provides a venue for socializing easily with referrals from friends, people that you met once or twice in person or people that you met in the virtual world. The communication and socialization may be synchronously or asynchronously as different tools of Facebook provides for either real time communication or communication not occurring at the same time. These tools include Facebook wall, Facebook chat, tagging of pictures, clicking like and Facebook direct message. Confirming this theme, Table 7 presents the system of exchanging information in Facebook which shows that Filipino Gen Y used extensively the following Facebook tools: Facebook wall with 96%, Facebook chat with 95%, tagging of pictures

with 90%, clicking like with 96%, and Facebook direct message with 85%. Table 4 presents the reasons of the Filipino Gen Y for using Facebook. It appears that Facebook is used by the most respondents as a communication and socializing tool in the web. In details, eighty-six (86%) used Facebook for staying in touch with 86%, learn/ update about my regular friends with 77%, learn about the latest trends with 76%, chatting on line with 73%, upload/sharing of photos with 73%, sending messages with 69%, re-establishing old contacts with 67%.

6. Flaunting of material possessions or luxurious experiences.

Most Filipino Gen Y show off their latest material possessions that includes, but not limited to new clothes, shoes, mobile phones, tables, computers, cars, and bikes. They also exhibited in Facebook the places they have gone to, the food that they have eaten and leisure activities that they have experience. Many respondents admitted, "I posted in my wall the moment I have my iphone 5", "I let my friends know that i have my Samsung galaxy s4", and " I took a picture of me having as background the Universal Studios when my family went in Singapore last summer."

Turkle (2011) revealed that much of our modern life leaves us less connected with people and more connected to simulations of them and encounters dissatisfaction and alienation among users: teenagers whose identities are shaped not by self-exploration but by how they are perceived by the online collective, mothers who feel texting makes communicating with their children more frequent yet less substantive, and Facebook users who feel shallow status updates devalue the true intimacies of friendships.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. Most Filipino Gen Y has more than 751 friends, with 4 out of 10 respondents having more than a thousand friends in Facebook. No Filipino Gen Y has friends below 250. The average Facebook friend of the respondents is 872.
2. Most Filipino Gen Y interacts with regular friends, family members and relatives and friends they have lost contact. They interact least with people they meet once or twice in person with, referrals from friends and people they know in the virtual world.
3. Most of the friends of Filipino Gen Y in Facebook are people they know in the virtual world, referrals from friends and people they meet once or twice in person.
4. The main reasons of the Filipino Gen Y for using Facebook includes staying in touch, learning/ updating about my regular friends, learning about the latest trends, chatting on line, uploading/sharing photos, sending messages, and re-establishing old contacts.
5. Most Filipino Gen Y is accessing Facebook several times a day.
6. Most Gen Y actively seeks to manage their privacy and management in Facebook by untagging photos, deleting comments, restricting access to profiles, selectively adding friends with and unfriending someone or blocking someone.
7. The features of Facebook that are mostly used are Facebook wall, Facebook chat, tagging pictures, clicking like and Facebook direct message.
8. The level of communication of the Filipino Gen Y in Facebook are mostly phatic, gut-level, and factual.
9. The social transformations facilitated by Facebook on the Filipino Gen Y include: cultivation of superficial friendships, socializing selectively, projecting a puffed- up self, over-sharing, communicating and socializing easily, and the flaunting of material possessions or luxurious experiences.

It is recommended that further studies be made focusing on virtual identities, on online and offline friendships, meaning of "friend" and "unfriend" of Gen Y or other generations across nationalities or groups are abounding resource for future researches. Furthermore, an open discussion of the advantages and disadvantages as well as the results of this study with Generation Y and other generations may yield a productive usage of this wonderful social media.

Tables and Figures

Table 1. Total number of Facebook friends of Filipino Generation Y (n= 200)

Number of Facebook Friends	%
Above 1000	41
751-1000	30
501-750	23
251-500	6
Below 250	
Total	100

Table 2. The people Filipino Generation Y interacts with in Facebook

	%
Regular friends	98
Family members and relatives	92
Friends with whom you have lost contact	78
Co- students	36
People you meet once or twice in person	12
Referrals from friends	11
People you know in the virtual world	2

Table 3. The Profile of Friends of Filipino Generation Y in Facebook

	%
People you know in the virtual world	23
Referrals from friends	21
People you meet once or twice in person	19
Friends with whom you have lost contact	16
Regular friends	12
Family members and relatives	9

Table 4. Filipino Generation Y's Reasons for Using Facebook

		%
1.	stay in touch	86
2.	learn / update about my regular friends	77
3.	learn about the latest trends	76
4.	chat on line	73
5.	upload/ share photos	73
6.	send message	69
7.	re-establish old contacts	67
8.	get people to learn about myself	56
9.	check out people have met socially	54
10.	play online games	53
11.	pass time	52
12.	connect with people I would have never met	40
13.	upload/ share videos	52
14.	make or organize social plans	50
15.	listened to music	40
16.	connect with people living near me	36
17.	sell products/ services to contacts	30

Table 5. Filipino Generation Y's Frequency of Facebook Usage

		%
1.	several times a day	73
2.	about once per day	21
3.	3-5 days per week	6
4.	1-2 days per week	
5.	Every few weeks	

Table 6. Filipino Generation Y's Privacy and Reputation Management in Facebook

		%
1.	untagged photos	97
2.	deleted comments	91
3.	restriction of access to profiles	90
4.	selectively added friends	89
5.	unfriended someone or blocked someone	89

Table 7. Filipino Generation Y's System of Exchanging Information in Facebook

		%
1.	Face book wall	96
2.	Facebook chat	95
3.	Tagging of Pictures	90
4.	Clicking Like / Unliking	96
5.	Facebook direct message	85

Table 8. Levels of Communication in Facebook

Levels of Communication	Description	%
phatic	Small talk of communicating, consisting of short, quick sound bites of information.	94
gut-level	Sharing of personal and emotional feelings, usually shared with close relatives and friends	92
factual	Sharing of information , based on events, observation and knowledge gained	90
evaluative	Sharing of opinions , ideas and judgments on specific topics and on other people	53

*Figure 1. Word cloud on the social transformations facilitated by Facebook
 on the Filipino Gen Y*

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