Neo-Filipino: A Study on the Impact of Internet and Mobile Technology on the Identity of Selected Filipino Third Culture Kids

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Abstract

Filipino Third Culture Kids (Fil-TCKs) are children who experienced a cross-cultural upbringing – being raised and lived outside the Philippine culture. As a result, Fil-TCKs have a unique way of forming their identity that brought pride and confusion. It is also interesting to note that the youth such as TCKs are among the first to grow up with the popularizing use of technology. Hence, this phenomenological study investigates: (1) how TCKs form their identity with the use of internet and mobile technology; and (2) the impact of internet and mobile technology on the multi-cultural identity formation among selected TCKs. This research uses the theoretical concepts of Pierre Bourdieu, namely the habitus, the field, and the habitus clef to analyse the relationship of technology and TCK identity. The result of the study explains the difficulty of TCKs to form their identity successfully – identity crisis – that was caused by their multicultural mobile lifestyle. Using Bourdieu’s theoretical concepts, this study concludes that the internet and mobile technology impact the TCK identity formation by acting as an ‘embodied habitus’ that illustrates how their identity is performed, rather than in a constructive one.

Keywords: Third Culture Kids, Filipino, Identity, Internet, Mobile Technology
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This thesis is about individuals who grew up outside their parent’s culture and spent most of their lives living in multiple places and multicultural environment – cross-cultural kids (CCKs). Third Culture Kids (TCKs) is a kind of cross-cultural kids but what differs TCKs to other CCKs is that there is an expected repatriation to their home country or passport country after a few years of residence in the host country (D. C. V. R. Pollock, Ruth E 2010). To elaborate the situation of TCKs, Third culture kids or sometimes referred to as “global nomads” (Bonebright, 2010; Stultz, 2002; Danau Tanu, 2008), are children who travel with expatriate parents and spend significant portions of their growing years in a culture other than their home cultures (D. C. V. R. Pollock, Ruth E 2010). The term “Third Culture Kids” was originally coined by American sociologists, John Useem and Ruth Hill Useem back in the 1950s. Third Culture Kids are seen as acculturated subjects in neither parent culture nor their host culture (Keuss, 2009; D. C. V. R. Pollock, Ruth E 2010; Useem, 1963). As an effect, Third Culture Kids are undeniably global citizens for they can feel at home anywhere and because of that, nowhere (Byttner, 2012).

Statistically, there are twenty-one percent (21%) of surveyed expatriates are raising children abroad (InterNations Survey Report, 2015) globally. But in the context of Filipino Diaspora, statistics showed that in 2012 alone, there were over 27,000 overseas Filipinos aged 19 and below (Commission on Filipino Overseas, 2013). Moreover, the number of foreign citizens in the Philippines was 177,365, as of May 2010 (Census of Population and Housing, 2012). True enough, there is an overlooked population of Filipino Third Culture Kids (Fil-TCKs) and their struggles, despite the increasing number of Filipinos migrating abroad (Battistella, 2013;
Philippines Statistics Authority, 2012). As a result, there is a minimal research interest towards the TCK population in the Philippines or what this study would like to call as “Neo-Filipinos,” or the modern day Filipino (Facundo, 2013; Poarch, 2009; Sinogba, 2010).

Another trend to study is the usage of expatriate Filipinos in Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), specifically the internet and mobile technology across different cultural worlds. The internet and mobile technology have created a wider discussion and research interest in relation to migration (Crush, 2011; Cruz, 2015; McGregor, 2013; OECD, 2011). The internet can present a narrative of how identity processes work in a digital context (V. Miller, 2011). It creates a wider discussion about the role of the internet in forming social networks and online communities. Existing literature show a positive relationship between the Filipino migrants and the internet for it offer immediate communication to their families; thus, maintain good relationships that can be correlated to the individual’s identity (Alampay, 2012; Figer, 2014). As for the context of Filipino Third Culture Kids, internet and mobile technology can provide an immediate communication and link between his or her host country and the Philippines (Crush, 2011; Hamel, 2009; McGregor, 2013; OECD, 2011). This communication and interconnection play a determining role in the construction of migrant identities e.g. TCK identity (Ros, 2007).

This study looks into the broader discourse of the following: First, how the Filipino Third Culture Kids form their identity with the usage of ICTs – the internet and mobile technology. And second, this paper dwells on the impact of Third Culture Kids usage on ICTs in a social and cultural dimension. Adela Ros et. al. (2007) defined the social and cultural impact in transnational migrant as “the maintenance of close ties and exchanges between the sending and
receiving countries.” Hence, the social and cultural impact covers the management of identities and practices a cross-cultural world has to offer.

**Literature Review**

This paper seeks to provide an understanding on the lifestyle, challenges, and major realities of the Third Culture Kids (TCKs), this literature review is divided into three parts describing the emerging research trends and needs in the collected literatures: (1) *Defining Third Culture Kids*, which comprises the detailed discussion about the TCKs; (2) *Multicultural identity development*, which discusses the complexities of identity formation; and (3) *The internet and mobile technology*, which entails the role of technologies in identity formation.

**Defining the Third Culture Kids**

The gathered literature in this part give various themes and experiences that comprise the life of a Third Culture Kid (TCK). This section introduces who the targeted participants are in this study, as well as it gives a glimpse of what the participants have experienced, currently experiencing, and will be experiencing in their TCK life. The reviewed literature also designs the context and milieu of this paper that is essential in understanding the whole TCK population and phenomenon. Moreover, the literature shows that despite the growing population of Third Culture Kids, there is a minor focus and interest in the Asian context, specifically the Filipino Third Culture Kids.

Third Culture Kids had long existed but not much attention had been given unto them and that they were largely invisible (D. C. V. R. Pollock, Ruth E 2010). It was until in the 1950s, Ruth Hill Useem and John Useem studied the American expatriates who worked and lived in India. It is where the two social scientists first coined the term “third culture”. According to the Useems (1963), the first culture is the home/passport culture in which where the parents (or
adults) came from. The second culture would be the host country where the family lived, and the “third culture” would be the created and shared way of life of the expatriate community. The third culture kids do not mean that they are currently children (Smith, 2011); in which as a matter of fact there is another population group called the Adult third culture kids (Bonebright, 2010; Espinetti, 2011). It is instead while they were children or during their developmental years, they lived and raised in a country outside their parent’s country.

In the book written by David Pollock (2010) entitled, “Third Culture: Growing Up Among Worlds,” he wrote and developed a further definition of Third Culture Kid:

“Third culture kid (TCK) is a person who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside the parents’ culture. The TCK frequently builds relationships to all of the cultures, while not having full ownership in any. Although elements from each culture may be assimilated into the TCK’s life experience, the sense of belonging is in relationship to others of similar background.” (p. 24)

**TCK as a Cross-cultural Kid.** This experience of growing up in a multi-cultural setting is becoming a widespread phenomenon as a result of the continuous expansion of globalization (Hongladarom, 2002; R. L. Miller, 2010; Stultz, 2002), not only for TCKs alone but for many others as well. As a matter of fact, third culture kids is one of the many types of cross-cultural kids (CCKs) i.e. children of immigrants, refugees, border-landers, or minorities, children from bi/multiracial homes, and international adoptees (D. C. V. R. Pollock, Ruth E 2010). Ruth Van Reken (2010) further clarified that each category listed under CCKs could have additional subsets just as TCKs – being dependent on the question of where CCKs grow up such as outside the home or passport culture.

**TCK Subpopulations.** This unique sub-group are referred and known by a variety of terms, namely “global nomads” (Bonebright, 2010; Stultz, 2002; Danau Tanu, 2008),
“missionary kids” or the “sacredly mobile youth” (Bikos, 2009; Davis, 2013; Keuss, 2009; Klemens, 2009), and the “military kids” or the “overseas brats” (D. C. V. R. Pollock, Ruth E 2010). Missionary kids and military brats are the so-called traditional TCKs but the most common term used are internationally mobile sojourners (Hoersting, 2011; Peterson, 2009) and Third Culture Kids (TCKs). Each subpopulation has its own distinction from the whole TCK population. The first subpopulation is the traditional Third Culture Kids that are of foreign service kids, corporate brats, military kids, and missionary kids (D. C. V. R. Pollock, Ruth E 2010). Foreign Service kids are those kids whose parents work in an embassy or basically a diplomat. The corporate brats are those children of expatriates who are involved in business or corporate matters. Military kids are also referred as military brats or overseas brats, whose parents are involved in military work and/or service. Missionary kids or sacredly mobile youth are children of parents who are involved in spiritual work or mission overseas. Second, there are also domestic TCKs whose parents have lived among different subcultures within the child’s home country. These groups are few of many other possible types of Third Culture Kids. That is to say that not all Third Culture Kids have the same experiences for it often vary because of the existing TCK sub-population.

**Asian Third Culture Kids.** Given the definition of third cultures kids and its subpopulation, there is very few research in the Asian context and the existing literature often overlooked the effects of ethnicity/race, culture, class, and gender on the TCK identity formation (Danau Tanu, 2008). There were studies on the Japanese third culture kids called the kaigaishijo and kikokushijo or the overseas/returnee children (Fry, 2007; Podolsky, 2005). In addition, there were also studies in the context of South-East Asia, specifically in Indonesia (Fechter, 2007; Danau Tanu, 2013, 2014; Utomo, 2014).
Multicultural Identity Development

In this section of literature review, there is a discussion on the challenges and matrix of a multicultural identity. The gathered literature discussed the multicultural identity of TCKs that provide feelings of pride and uniqueness, but also leads to confusion of social roles and values as well as competing for cultural expectations. Also, the literature discoursed the context of Third Culture Kids, having to experience situational changes i.e. migration to a new country that causes an imbalance between the TCK and their cultural identity.

Identity and culture are interrelated, in such a way that culture serves as a negotiated space between ourselves and others; and therefore, this negotiated space creates an appropriate range of social roles e.g. values, norms, and perception, by which a person can validate their identity (Breugelmans, 2011; Erik H. Erikson, 1968; Spencer, 2006). But when people move into culturally unfamiliar contexts, such as when a person go abroad to live or study, the person often experience some challenges to their sense of identity (Spencer-Oatey, 2009). Furthermore, these people frequently report such internal conflicts of identity; and they continue with this pain until they are able to develop a coherent conception of themselves (Sokol, 2009; Spencer-Oatey, 2009). In intercultural contexts, people can experience a range of feelings and reactions because of the perceived and actual difficulties in a life including language, education, work, intercultural interactions, values, and worldviews. John W. Berry (2011) explains this situation as multiculturalism and integration:

“Thus, a mutual accommodation is required for integration to be attained involving the acceptance by both dominant and non-dominant groups to live as culturally different peoples within the same society. This strategy requires non-dominant groups to adopt the basic values of the larger society while at the same time the dominant group must be prepared to adopt
national institutions to meet better the needs of all groups now living in the plural society. This latter arrangement is called multiculturalism.”

But the process of multiculturalism still depends on the individual’s preference of others to either facilitate or constraint integration (J. W. Berry, 2011; Modood, 2013; Spencer-Oatey, 2009). This perceived or actual incompatibility between one’s culture of origin (home culture) and the second culture (host culture) can be a point of either major distress or development. For example, people may obtain new cultural traits that are different and/or against from their culture of origin or have additional perceptions and views as to how given social roles should be fulfilled in the second culture. It is not a problem of changing one’s identity but rather it is a question of expansion and development (Bhabha, 1990; Mio, 2009; Modood, 2013; Spencer-Oatey, 2009).

Developing a coherent conception of identity in a multicultural world undergoes a process of sojourner adjustment such as “culture shock” (J. W. P. Berry, Ype H.; Breugelmans, Seger M.; Chasiotis, Athanasios; Sam, David L., 2011). According to Oberg (1960), culture shock happens when a sojourner e.g. a Third Culture Kid indicates difficulties that arise from exposure to an unfamiliar environment. These difficulties are the strain of making new adaptations, a sense of loss, confusion about one’s role, and feelings of anxiety, as well as frustration that can impede social interactions (J. W. P. Berry, Ype H.; Breugelmans, Seger M.; Chasiotis, Athanasios; Sam, David L., 2011; Hoersting, 2011). The problems involved in trying to live with multiple cultural identities helps to generate endless discourses about the process of finding or constructing a coherent identity (LaFromboise, 1993).

In today’s multicultural societies, people have more complex cultural identity but the real challenge is how to develop necessary skills for success in a multicultural world – a multicultural identity. And having a multicultural identity has the potential to enhance our lives because it
creates a sense of self-efficacy (Schwartz, 2013; Wiley, 2013) and support social change and development in a multi-cultural world (Marcu, 2014; York, 2011).

**The Internet and Mobile Technology on Identity Development**

This section of the literature review discusses the role of the internet and mobile technology on identity development. The existing literature argues for examining the impact of internet and mobile technology on the society, whether the technology is shaping contemporary society, or the society dictates how technology is used, or the possible consequences that may result from the interaction between society and technology.

As initially discussed, identity was defined by one’s nationality, social relations and networks, and roles within a specific type of society (Erik H. Erikson, 1968; R. L. Miller, 2010; Spencer-Oatey, 2009). And with the emergence and development of Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs), it served as the new medium to create new types of identity. The influence of ICTs like the internet, therefore, affected the identity construction and formation of individuals in various ways. Therefore, one of the impacts of ICTs to identity is that it influences how individuals construct and maintain their identity. In the case of being online and digital, identity is becoming ‘re-centered’ as the online virtual space has moved into a popular mass medium e.g. the internet and social media (V. Miller, 2011). The re-centering of identity happens when an individual creates such cohesive representations that relate to their core identity and performs this representations or roles to other people, in other words, it is dramaturgical (Castells, 2010; Goffman, 1959; V. Miller, 2011).

In the book written by Vincent Miller (2011) entitled, “Understanding Digital Culture,” theorists such as Howard Rheingold, Roseanne Stone, and Mark Poster summarized the four aspects of online environments where constructed identities play. First, the online environment
caters a degree of anonymity in which cannot be catered by the offline environment. Second, an individual can perform different roles or identity because the online environment offers a self-descriptive text to which they can create any identity they wish to become (Lister, 2009; V. Miller, 2011). Third, the created multiple identities can be explored in parallel, creating an environment of identity shifting, hybridity, and fluidity. Fourth and lastly, identities created in the online world are identities that are impossible in the offline world.

It can be seen, therefore, that the created and presented identity in the age of the Internet offers a new context for re-thinking of identity because online identities are less restricted from traditional and cultural sources (Castells, 2010; Mansell, 2012; Modood, 2013; Murphie, 2003). For example, the diversity of friendship networks on Social Networking Sites come from different cultural contexts or locations (Anderson, 1991; V. Miller, 2011). As a result, the shaping of identity is influenced by constant interactions among virtual communities between the online and offline world. (Green, 2010; Lister, 2009; White, 2014). Thus, the online and offline world serves as the private and public spheres where people interact and communicate.

**Literature Gap**

This literature review discovered the following gaps in two contexts: (a) in the global context, and (b) in the Philippine context. In the global context, most of the international studies focused on the lived experiences of the Third Culture kids where most of the researchers used a qualitative research design called phenomenology. Even though the researchers focused on the lived experiences of the third culture kids, it only covers only the “what” TCK experiences and challenges are (Danau Tanu, 2008). Limited attention has been paid to the empirical understanding of “why” the Third Culture Kids are struggling with issues of identity as well as “how” do the Third Culture Kids address these complex issues. One good example of “how” the
TCKs deal with issues and problems is the possible relevance of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) as means of integrating identity or giving a sense of belongingness. There were limited attempts to integrate ICTs to describe the lives of the migrants (Janzen, 2012; Lijadi, 2014; Purnell, 2014; Stultz, 2002) but no significant study was written primarily on the relevance of ICTs in their identity formation. But then because of the continuous expansion of globalization and increased number of Third Culture kids, there has been a steady demand for further research on their lives and their changing realities, as well as the key issues that cling them (Lambiri, 2005).

While on the other hand, no relevant study has been done specifically for the Filipino Third Culture Kids given its limited focus (Facundo, 2013; Poarch, 2009; Sinogba, 2010). Interestingly, the existing international literature also overlooked the effects of ethnicity or race i.e. Asian Third Culture Kids (Danau Tanu, 2008). There is a notable small number of available Asian TCKs studies, such as the Japanese TCKs i.e. kaigai and kikoku-shijo (Fry, 2007; Podolsky, 2005) and Indonesian TCKs who are treated as elite international citizens (Danau Tanu, 2013, 2014; Utomo, 2014) – but no research interest yet was given on the Filipino Third Culture Kids. All in all, there should be a broader discourse on TCK identity and migration in relation to the growing relevance of information communications technology (ICTs).

**Research Questions**

This study is a sociological inquiry that imposes the following questions:

1. How do the selected Filipino Third Culture Kids form their identity with the usage of the internet and mobile technology?
2. What is the impact of internet and mobile technology to the Third Culture Kid identity formation?
Theoretical Lens and Framework

Fields, Habitus, and Habitus Cleft of Pierre Bourdieu

Pierre Bourdieu is a French sociologist who developed the notion of habitus and fields—the dynamics of power in society and how the power is transfer to maintain social order (Ritzer & Douglas J, 2004). With this kind of theorizing, the sociology of Pierre Bourdieu has not only been widely referenced but also engaged substantively and critically (Gorski, 2013). His theories and concepts have become useful in researches and theoretical discussions.

One of the important concepts of Bourdieu is the “habitus”. Bourdieu (1986) defined habitus as the dispositions that are both shaped by past events and structures, and that these two shape and conditions current practices and very perceptions of the individual. In other terms, habitus is neither a result of free will, nor determined by structures, but created by a kind of interplay between the two over time. So as an individual with a distinct acquired habitus lives and acts in a society, the individual also enter sub-spaces called, “fields.” Bourdieu (1980, 1984) explained the concept of fields as sub-spaces that make up the multi-dimensional space of society. These fields can be in any different number of contexts such as institutions, workplace, and other social spaces. People often experience different situations depending on which field they are in at a given moment, so context and environment are key influences on habitus. He then further explained the tensions and contradictions that arise when individuals encounter challenges of shifting different contexts (Pierre Bourdieu, 1980).

To explain these tensions on differing fields, Bourdieu (2007) wrote in his book entitled “Sketch for a Self-Analysis,” his constant struggle to reconcile the disjuncture between his original habitus and the new habitus that was caused by the changing fields he was in. It is because each field have its own “doxa” or set of rules that evaluates the individual and describes
his or her legitimate position in the field (Pierre Bourdieu, 1986). These varying doxas sometimes causes a mismatch to the habitus of an individual because their habitus does not follow the set of rules or structure of the field. Therefore, it creates a cleft or disjuncture.

Such a mismatch between habitus and the field may lead to a “habitus cleft.” Habitus cleft happens on the process of conversion that individuals have to undergo when moving from one field to another (Pierre Bourdieu, 2007). It is also a solid presumption that crossing social boundaries or contexts go along with significant changes in the habitual practices of a highly mobile individuals. Therefore, habitus can be then defined as a collective shared set of dispositions, and individual attitudes and behaviours that can change in the course of a person’s biography.

**Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework below serves as a guide in framing the study (See Figure 1). It uses the theoretical concepts of Pierre Bourdieu to explain the lives of the selected Filipino Third Culture Kids. To illustrate, the theoretical concepts guide in explaining the selected Filipino Third Culture Kids’ lived experiences and narratives on the usage of the internet and mobile technology by using: (1) the ‘fields’ as the home and host country, (2) ‘habitus’ to represent the identity formation, and (3) ‘habitus cleft’ to elaborate the relationship of the internet and mobile technology to the TCK identity formation.
Methods

This study employs a qualitative research design known as phenomenology. This research design is focused on wholeness and essences of experience, and viewing these experiences as an integrated and inseparable relationship of subject (Moustakas, 1994 in Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004). In addition, its aim is to gain an understanding of the phenomenon by bracketing preconceptions or époche (Babbie, 2014; Creswell, 1998). It is understanding the ‘constructs’ people use in everyday life to make sense of the world and uncovering meanings contained within conversation or text (Snape, 2003). Through this research design, the information or data coming from the perspective of the Third Culture Kids (TCKs). The narratives or stories gathered presents how the TCKs form their own identity through the use of the internet and mobile technology. Thus, the stories tell and construct the relationship of the internet and mobile technology in forming the TCK identity.

The respondents are selected by non-probability sampling called purposive sampling. It is a method used to identify the most suited participants, who have had experiences in the phenomenon being studied. The selected participants come from a Facebook group page called,
“TCKid Philippines.” In order to find additional participants, snow-ball sampling is practiced. In order to select the most suited participants for the study, the inclusion criteria are the following: First, the participants must be currently a citizen of the Philippines; Second, the participants must have moved in at least one or more host country during their developmental years – from birth to eighteen years of age with an expected repatriation (D. Pollock & Van Reken, 2010; Useem, 1963). And lastly, the participants must be between the ages of 18 and 30 because this specific age group are considered as the late adolescence to early adulthood – the key point in identity development and lays the foundation for adult identity (E.H. Erikson, 1959).

The data for this research comes from eleven Third Culture Kids. This study conducts a semi-structured in-depth interview either face-to-face, phone call or through Skype. Face-to-face interviews are conducted when the participant lives around Manila area while Skype interviews are employed when the participants live outside Manila or abroad. However, if distance and internet connection inhibits Skype or face-to-face, phone call interviews are used as an alternative. Skype and phone call interviews are done to provide the respondents with the opportunity to participate in the study given their distance and highly mobile lifestyle (Liamputtong, 2006 in Purnell & Hoban, 2014). Furthermore, all interview methods are digitally recorded through the use of phone audio recorder. It is then transcribed verbatim by the researcher or with the help of a paid transcriber.

Prior to the conduct of the research, the following ethical considerations are administered: First, an informed consent is given to the potential respondents prior the said interview. Second, the potential respondents are treated as autonomous agents with an assigned pseudonym to protect his or her confidentiality and anonymity. Third, the potential respondents are told about the full disclosure of the general nature of the study, as well as about any possible
risks, benefits, and alternatives that the study may cause. Fourth, the potential participants are assured of confidentiality, and they are also told that they are free to ask questions or to decline participation from the study at any time. And lastly, the results and conclusion of the study are made available to the respondents should they wish to receive them.

The method of data analysis uses analytical methods such as data immersion, open coding, categorization of coded data, and consolidating themes. As part of phenomenological research, bracketing, epoche, and phenomenological reduction are used as a form of analysis whereas the researcher suspends any theoretical beliefs or presuppositions that make the themes become apparent when reviewing the data (Psathas, 1989). Moreover, all gathered data are analysed through the use of NVivo, a qualitative data analysis computer software.

**Results**

This study presents the data collected over series of in-depth interviews through face-to-face, Skype, and phone call. These are: (1) the lived experiences of the selected Filipino Third Culture Kids and (2) the narratives of the TCKs in using internet and mobile technology in their identity.

**Theme 1: Sojourning experiences of Third Culture Kids**

The gathered lived experiences of the selected Filipino Third Culture Kids describe the benefits and challenges of their highly mobile lifestyle. As show in Table 1, there are various benefits in the TCK sojourning experiences, namely cross-cultural enrichment, adaptability, rich international networks, and expanded worldview. To further elaborate the benefits, the following are the detailed description of each benefits:
Table 1.
The benefits of Fil-TCKs' sojourning experiences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefits</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Ref. Count</th>
<th>Selected Statements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cross-cultural enrichment</td>
<td>A sense of ownership and interest in many cultures</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>“Social perspective because I feel like since I have been accustomed to having you know, different races that surround me, I feel like, I could associate myself better with different kinds of people.” – Andre, 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expanded Worldview</td>
<td>More culturally sensitive and less prejudiced to cultures</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>“I’m aware that all cultures are different but I am not the type of person who judge and have specific stereotypes towards a person just because of their race.” – Jean, 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adaptability</td>
<td>Ability to adjust in different cultures and to be conversant individuals</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>“I’m able to acknowledge and understand cultures. I guess somehow, I can adapt pretty easily in my surroundings and I blend just in.” – Alana, 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rich International Networks</td>
<td>Wider range of relationships especially to fellow TCKs and other people of the same background</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>“I’m more closed to my fellow TCKs because there’s a certain bond that you’re all in the same boat. It’s like you end up in this third culture and everyone understands what that feels.” – Judy, 22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

First, the selected Filipino TCKs (Fil-TCKs) are able to attain cross-cultural enrichment where they usually have a sense of ownership and interest in different cultures. Fil-TCKs might have potential to access greater cultural capital by attending to international school system and by being active travelers. Moreover, Fil-TCKs tend to have the ability to bridge boundaries by finding commonality amongst cultures. Second, Fil-TCKs acquire such expanded worldview that makes them understand people from different vantage points. Because of their multicultural exposure, Fil-TCKs have a wider social perspective and abilities on how to look the world such as well-roundedness, mindfulness of big cultural differences, and inquisitiveness of socially accepted norms. In addition, Fil-TCKs tend to be more culturally sensitive and less prejudiced to other cultures because of their awareness and understanding on the thinking or reasoning of people from different cultures.

Third, Fil-TCKs develop some degree of cultural adaptability as a primary tool/skill for surviving the frequent changes of cultures such as adjustment skills and, social and linguistic
skills. The adjustment skills of Fil-TCKs had become a constant phase they have to live with, and in effect they can acknowledge their origin and heritage. Also, Fil-TCKs acquire social and linguistic skills just by being bilingual or multi-lingual people. As conversant individuals, Fil-TCKs might see how learning languages is an expansion of their world, rather a limitation. They recognize that language is a key to relate to different people and know their Filipino descent. Hence, it increases their confidence and social acceptability that is essential in fully immersing and adapting to cultures.

And lastly, Fil-TCKs usually develop a wider range of relationships as they or people around them habitually go. Their relational patterns are culturally rich and diverse, where they form bonds with different people, especially to fellow Third Culture Kids. Most of their long-term and most valued relationships happen with fellow TCKs because it gives a sense of connectedness and relativeness. It creates a ‘third culture’ space that makes it easier to build relationships and expand social networks. Interestingly, Fil-TCKs also have long-lasting relationships with the Filipino locals but tend to be very limited or selected. It is because there is still a cultural gap they usually encounter, so in effect Fil-TCKs form relationships with the locals either: (1) after the transition period ceases where relationships are formed through shared common interests or views, or (2) during the transition where some Filipino locals are willing to overlook their situation and actually help them blend in.
Another sub-theme discovered is on the downside of the lived experiences of the Fil-TCKs. As shown in Table 2, this sub-theme outlines the following difficulties or challenges of the selected Fil-TCKs:

First, Fil-TCKs experience a sense of rootlessness where it is described to have struggles on belonging everywhere and nowhere. The frustration comes when answering the question, “Where are you from?” and explaining their background. For them, belonging in a ‘home’ is might be rather an emotional place than a geographical state. In a way, this situation can cause a feeling on unsettledness. There is a mix-up of decision on where to settle and at the same time a difficulty in making long term life plans such as choosing a workplace. In addition, having this rootlessness can also take an effect on their relationships. As an individual who move frequently, there is an obstacle on family and personal life through multiple loses, temporary one, and difficulty in sustaining relationships. There is a feeling of alienation and disconnectedness on their relationships because of an unguaranteed social bonding caused by their highly mobile lifestyle.
The second struggle Fil-TCKs face is the unfamiliarity to the home culture, i.e. Philippines. It is commonly describe as the unawareness and misunderstanding of Fil-TCKs to their home culture’s values, norms, and practices. As a result, the perceiving and performing ‘Filipino-ness’ is not the same, where there is an issue with the social expectations to conform to the rigid definitions of a Filipino identity. For example, Fil-TCKs lack fluency and confidence in understanding and speaking in Filipino (or Tagalog) that can be a barrier to fully adjusting to the Philippines. Problems also arise with how Filipino locals deal with Fil-TCKs, where they often mocked Fil-TCKs for being native English speakers and not all can speak Tagalog. Because of this, Fil-TCKs may appear arrogant for being different from others such as: (1) having a foreign accent when speaking in Tagalog, (2) disagreeing on certain Filipino customs or accepted social rules, (3) or even experiencing negative perception on their privileged mobile lifestyle.

In total, the rootlessness and unfamiliarity to the Philippine culture have caused a bigger challenge to every Fil-TCKs – having an indefinable true cultural identity. Fil-TCKs ability to blend in is both a blessing and a curse where shifting from one cultural identity to another causes a problem of figuring out their values system from the multicultural mix. The selected Fil-TCKs acknowledge their constant struggle on defining their identity on what culture or country they truly belong. They tend to become uncommitted to any of the cultures and might hide a part of their personality because of the difficulty in explaining themselves.

Theme 2: Narratives of Fil-TCK on using Internet and Mobile Technology

The second part of the gathered data is the narratives of the selected Fil-TCKs on how they use Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), specifically the internet and mobile technology in their sojourning experiences or lives. It is found in the gathered data that the usage of the internet and mobile technology can be both advantageous and disadvantageous
to the lives of Fil-TCKs. As shown in Table 3, there are two possible advantages of using the internet and mobile technology:

**Table 3.**
Adantages of the Fil-TCKs usage of the internet and mobile technology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Ref. Count</th>
<th>Selected Statements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Establishing connections                | Expresses sociability and network and assists in cultural learning either informational or instrumental | 70         | “It opened up more doors. Like, it has made it a lot easier to keep in touch with friends and family, to keep up press on with what’s going on with their lives, and in general just kind of being present.” – Judy, 23
“I guess it has helped me become more culturally literate because I can immediately gain the feedback of people once; rather than just pure trial and error.” – Joshua, 24
“So you form multiple identities and none of them is fake because all of them are just different aspects of yourself but the formation of different groups allows you to practice those identities a little bit more.” – Alan, 30 |
| Practicing Social and Interpersonal Skills | Exercise reflexivity to think more freely about who they are and practices acquired cross-cultural skills e.g. adaptability | 29         | “It helped me contextualized things better and to be more tact with what you are saying because I feel like you have to be more cautious with how you deliver the message.” – TJ, 23
“First, the internet and mobile technology can establish connections in terms of maintaining and/or forming relationships, and being informed to the place Fil-TCKs are in or going to. Fil-TCKs use the internet and mobile technology to express sociability and maintain or create connections and bonds through chatting, calls, or joining online groups. All of these ways of ‘catching up’ can reach out and sustain social network through the maintenance of a continuous communicative presence with others. The connection can be either in a more personal and private communication (by one-to-one) or in an online community or network of support (by shared groups). At the same time, TCKs use the internet and mobile technology to create new (typically, online) friends. Internet platforms such as online dating or online games are used to initiate new relationships. Furthermore, the internet and mobile technology can establish
connections by giving Fil-TCKs a space to learn and retrieve information such as news, facts, places, etc. that is either about the host culture or home culture. Fil-TCKs uses these technologies to assists themselves in any cultural adjustment problems by: (1) experiential or the recollection of past experiences through photos or merely interacting with other people online, or (2) informational about the cultural resources and references through websites, articles, facts of the home country, host country, or the world in general. This aids the TCKs difficulty in understanding various cultural reference points.

The second advantage of using the internet and mobile technology is that Fil-TCKs can exercise and practice acquired social and personal skills through using online chats or calls because of the different set of norms and social rules. These skills can be exercised in two aspects: (1) Action and function, where the internet and mobile technology can give an exposure to a variety of cultural resources and experiences. It acts as a different medium of interaction for Fil-TCKs, therefore presents a whole different set of rules such as text language, emoticons, etc. In effect, Fil-TCKs are more meticulous in understanding and reading people from different cultures such as their cultural sensitivity and ability to contextualize the situation. (2) Reflection, where the internet and mobile technology can let the multicultural identity of Fil-TCKs be maintained and practiced through experience opinions, ideas, and perspectives in a global scale. So in a way, the internet and mobile technology can give a sense of reflexivity to think more freely about themselves.
Table 4.
Disadvantages of the Fil-TCKs usage of the internet and mobile technology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Ref. Count</th>
<th>Selected Statements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of physical presence</td>
<td>Demands face-to-face interaction in order to establish attachment to the person</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>“I always say that you know you can only live in the internet so much. If you don’t combine it with the actual first hand experiences it’s not the same.” – Carol, 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burdens self-disclosure</td>
<td>Problems on vulnerability, dishonest communications, and issues of trust</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>“It doesn't sound right like, just no. Because there's this boundary, like you can't tell if that person is lying or not.” – Rachel, 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of rootedness</td>
<td>Offers insufficient rootedness or embeddedness in terms of relationships, interaction, and even by experiences</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>“I think attachment will only come if you have encountered them personally. But, if it were just online, I think no. Because, you know, I do not think that you can really share that deep sense of the relationship unless you really encountered them face-to-face.” – Theo, 22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Alongside with the advantage, the internet and mobile technology can also have limitations. As shown in Table 4, the following are the possible disadvantages of the Fil-TCKs in using these technologies: First, Fil-TCKs argue that face-to-face interaction or physical presence is a must before establishing belonging or attachment to a person. Second, Fil-TCKs feel there is still an insufficient rootedness in terms of relationships, interactions, and even by experience in using the internet and mobile technology. Fil-TCKs may contend that relationships initiated online can be discontinuous where people can simply disappear and the connection can be tenuous. Lastly, Fil-TCKs sees using internet and mobile technology have problems on vulnerability, dishonest communications, and issues of trust. It is where the anonymity of online interaction encourages greater efforts of expression and that self-disclosure may seem sketchy or suspicious.

Discussion

This study aims to explore the usage of the internet and mobile technology in forming the identity of selected Filipino Third Culture Kids (Fil-TCKs) and the impact of these technologies to the whole identity formation process.
Through the existing literature

The first theme explores the lived ‘sojourning’ experiences of the selected Fil-TCKs where it presented the benefits and challenges of living in the home and host culture. Having to experience such situational change, the benefits and challenges present that Fil-TCKs have a culturally diverse identity that causes both enrichment and imbalance to their sense of identity. It is where the selected Fil-TCKs see themselves as being able to associate with different cultures or adaptability that caused was caused by their cross-cultural enrichment, expanded worldview and rich international networks. In effect to this, they have trouble figuring out what values system to follow that was caused by their rootlessness and unfamiliarity to their home country. One strategy the selected Fil-TCKs use is associating themselves to cultural norms that are only favourable to them and discard all cultural practices that are disadvantageous. But not all the time Fil-TCKs can choose what culture to favour because there is still a continuous demand to juggle all of the cultures. This may indicate that the selected Fil-TCKs may have a constant identity crisis because of their struggle on figuring where they truly belong. Fil-TCKs might have an increased global understanding but may also have a difficulty in establishing sole true cultural identity.

According to the existing literature (Erik H. Erikson, 1968; R. L. Miller, 2010; Thatcher, 2003), cultural context is an integral part of identity where it provides people with: (1) appropriate range of social roles which to select who they will become and (2) a process by which they can validate their identity by providing means for recognizing themselves in their chosen role. Hence, it can be seen that identity is a social and collective process and not just a unique and individual process (Lawler, 2008). In view of that, the identity formation process of Fil-TCKs may be factored by: (1) living a cross-cultural world and (2) a highly mobile lifestyle;
because their focus is on adjusting to their changing environment rather than their intrapersonal identity formation.

The second theme delves on how Fil-TCKs use the internet and mobile technology in their sojourning experiences. It is found in the gathered data that there are advantageous and disadvantageous usage of the internet and mobile technology in lives of Fil-TCKs. It can be advantageous because the selected Fil-TCKs use internet and mobile technology to serve as a common ground to establish connections through interaction and exploration across different countries. It is where the selected Fil-TCKs can transcend barriers of space, place, and time to express ideas and desires, explore cultures, and other constricted circumstances. According to Vertovec (2009), the usage of internet and mobile technology creates ‘trans-local understanding’ or the cultural and political ramifications, not only for the practices but for the places as well. This just goes to show the possible flexibility of Fil-TCKs in a multicultural world, with the help of the internet and mobile technology. In addition, the internet and mobile technology become more of an avenue to maintain and practice the cross-cultural, social, and interpersonal skills they have rather than developing it further. For example, the selected Fil-TCKs contend that their cultural sensitivity is practiced and maintained through the different ‘socio-techno’ practices (Vertovec, 2009; Wallis, 2010) represented by the internet and mobile technology.

In total, the internet and mobile technology may be of a great use in the identity formation. The selected Fil-TCKs describes their usage of these technologies to reflect and practice their identities; where Fil-TCKs imagine and enact such identities and self-expressions that are both virtual and grounded in their everyday lives. It is because the technology-mediated connections and constant interactions create an efficient vehicle to have a sense of community and collective identities across the multicultural world (Mackie, 2004; Yeoh, 2004). Existing
literature also argues that the identity is a product of messaging interaction in which messaging and other online technological platforms increasingly embed human identities (Castells, 2010; Green, 2010; Hartley, 2012; Lister, 2009; V. Miller, 2011). Hence, the internet and mobile technology may somewhat form and maintain not only a specific standard of self-presentation but also networks and relations.

While on the other hand, the usage of the internet and mobile technology can also be disadvantageous. It is where all the experiences of Fil-TCKs on these technologies may pertain to possible anonymity; where there is a lack of accountability (physical presence) and trust (self-disclosure) that weakens the level of connection and intimacy in relationships. Although there is a lack of intimacy, the self-presentations of the identity establish an extensive network of temporary ties where people communicate and use each other because of a specific instrumental function such as

**Through the theoretical lenses**

Above the aforementioned insights, the identity formation and internet and mobile technology usage of the selected Fil-TCKs can be further explained through the theoretical lenses of Pierre Bourdieu (See Figure 1).
Habitus as identity. Habitus and identity are very rarely conceptualised together, although they are undoubtedly close to each other. In sociology, habitus is acquired in early childhood to adolescence, and it attempts to describe and explain current practices and very perceptions of the individual. Habitus groups together individuals according to their shared or similar positions in the wider social space; while identities provide ‘labels’ for the belonging to groups. Therefore, the integration of Fil-TCKs’ identity as a habitus presents that Fil-TCKs have cross-cultural dispositions. As a result, Fil-TCKs may have an indefinable cultural identity because the supposed position in the social space as well as the label for belonging to a country is in disparity and conflicting.

Fields as home and host cultures. In the setting of this study, there are two fields where Fil-TCKs dwell – the host country and the home country (i.e. Philippines). As initially mentioned, context and environment are key influences on the habitus. Hence, Fil-TCKs experience tensions and frustrations when shifting to different fields which can be either in the setting of repatriating to the home country or transitioning to the host country. These tensions are caused by the mismatched of habitus and doxas (or set of rules) in varying fields. To
contextualize, in the process of repatriating to the home country, a Fil-TCK who have an old habitus that is formed according to the doxas of the initial field i.e. host country, may have a problem on adapting to the new field i.e. Philippines because their old habitus is not in accordance to the doxas of the home country. Therefore, it creates a disjuncture or cleft.

**Habitus cleft as an identity crisis.** Habitus cleft occurs when an individual move from one field to another and as a result, there is a mismatch between the original habitus and the new one. It often happens with the Fil-TCKs where identity crisis commonly occurs because of their struggle on figuring where they truly belong and difficulty in establishing solitary cultural identity. Also, having a highly mobile lifestyle creates a search for identity that cannot only be extended over time but also partially confused. Therefore, the constant flux of Third Culture Kids’ lifestyle causes a habitus cleft.

**Technology as an ‘embodied’ habitus.** As initially discussed, the internet and mobile technology might form and maintain not only a specific standard of self-presentation but also networks and relations. Therefore, it can be noted that all the technological ways of self-presentation and establishing networked relations is a form of habitus. According to Sterne (2003), technologies are “crystallizations of socially organized action.” Hence, the use of internet and mobile technology becomes a ‘performative’ avenue and technological dimension of the habitus. It is where these technologies are embodied in lived practice through habitus. And so, Fil-TCKs can form their identity through the internet and mobile technology by managing a way of experiencing and negotiating the varying fields. In a way, these technologies become a set of habitual practices that can cause the identities of Fil-TCKs to be constructed, reformed, or transformed.
So in effect, the embodiment of the internet and mobile technology as a habitus have an impact to the whole identity formation of Fil-TCKs. The internet and mobile technology might impact the TCK identity formation by giving them various ways to structure their behaviours and to facilitate social interaction that are essential for a holistic multicultural identity. Therefore, in the case of Fil-TCKs, the ‘embodied habitus’ of internet and mobile technology serves as a coping mechanism against the likely cultural identity crisis by bridging and establishing connection between the host country and the home country.

True enough, technologies may influence or impact the identity, but the identity are still structured by enduring dispositions of the person or the actual ‘lived’ habitus. In this study, the internet and mobile technology only acts as an – ‘embodied’ habitus – it illustrates how identity (or the acquired dispositions in the offline world) is performed, rather than in a constructive one. Therefore, technology may contribute to the shaping of the Fil-TCK’s identity, but the identity is still primarily shaped by their cross-cultural world and highly mobile lifestyle.

**Conclusion**

This study is able to describe the lived experiences of Filipino Third Culture Kids which represents the kind of identity Fil-TCKs have. It is found in the study that their identity formation is factored by living in a multicultural world and having a highly mobile lifestyle. This situational life of Fil-TCKs has caused an identity crisis because of their struggle on figuring where they truly belong and difficulty in establishing a solitary cultural identity. Also, this study is able to explain how the Fil-TCKs use the internet and mobile technology in their identity formation, despite the recurring identity crisis. It is found that Fil-TCKs use these technologies to structure their behaviours and to facilitate social interaction that are essential for a holistic
multicultural identity formation. So in a way, it bridges the cultural gap and disjuncture between the home and host culture.

However, this study is limited by the time frame and duration since it aims to examine the identity formation of TCKs. It is recommended to administer a longitudinal study in order to have a clearer understanding on the complexities of identity formation as well as the complications of the mentioned identity crisis. In addition, this study uses a sociological perspective and concepts such as the habitus. Thus, it calls for a study on merging together the sociological concept of habitus and the psychological concept of identity to present a deeper analysis on the TCK identity formation. Moreover, this study looks at the social and habitual practices of the internet and mobile technology as a form of habitus. Therefore, it invites a study how the internet and de-territorialized online world can be a form of ‘field,’ since online cyberspace may also be a form of social sub-space.

Despite the aforementioned limitations, this study is significant on the theoretical level for it contributes to the Third Culture (TCK) research as well as to the Philippine transnational research. It serves as a future reference on the subject of TCK research both in the Asian and Philippine setting. Also, this study is significant on the social policy level because it helps the intercultural community of academics and practitioners for three reasons. (1) It gives a roadmap in understanding the lived experiences of some Filipino Third Culture Kids. (2) It reveals the possible significant role of the internet and mobile technology on the Fil-TCKs’ identity formation. And most importantly, (3) it depicts that Third Culture Kids can be a legitimate sector that needs recognition and awareness; as well as resources and infrastructure to accommodate TCK’s unique experiences.
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