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FINDing Our Way: Using Technology to Enhance Communication and Promote a Habit
of Reflection in Filipino Student Organizations

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ABSTRACT

Web 2.0 introduced forms of communication and social media that individuals have adapted into their everyday use as way to comment and reflect on the world around us. In this project, I explore how technology can be used to aid in cultural literacy. By observing and analyzing channels of communication within Filipino student-run organizations, improvement gaps can be observed so that organizations can meet their their goal of providing and imparting cultural knowledge about the Filipino heritage. For this study, I realize that geographical distance between members is an important issue and technology can provide tools that will help students plan and prepare for conferences that seek to impart cultural knowledge. One of the findings of this research is an understanding of bimodality in the way that students communicate with one another. In the conclusion, I discuss how designing a habit of reflection with technology must account for issues that already exist within Filipino student organizations.

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Introduction

Before I even picked out my first semester's classes at Penn State, University Park, I figured out which clubs I was going to join. One of these clubs was the Penn State Filipino Association (PSFA) because I was always very curious about my heritage and figured that college was a good time as any to explore this aspect of myself. Despite having made up my mind, something held me back from joining that first semester: groups of Asians walking around campus in packs. The images of groups clustered together and moving collectively as one reminded me of how the Asian kids at Hershey High School exclusively hung out together at lunch, study breaks, and after school (the library was known as "the Asian hangout"). I remembered that I didn't want to be a part of a group that would stand out as distinctively minority because to yield to such a choice seemed like a copout that perpetuated the lack of diversity found in Pennsylvania. Hanging out with just Filipinos seemed backward and I didn't want to be a part of that culture. However, I couldn't help myself because one day, I met another student who wore a shirt or a baseball cap with a printed Philippine flag on it. He asked me if I was Filipino and after I replied, "Yes," he became very enthusiastic and we both talked about the Filipino club on campus. He said, "I'll see you at the meetings then," to which I replied, "Alright, see you there." A month later and after walking past many groups of Korean, Chinese, and Kazakhstani students hanging out on campus, I ran into the same kid again. He noted that I didn't come to the meetings. I said, "I've been busy," to which he replied, "With school work? So have I." A few minutes later, my excuses to not coming to a PSFA social or meeting had run out (I already said that I was trying to work on my GPA and mentioning my involvement with the Ultimate Frisbee club didn't really

help). He finally realized I just didn't want to go to a social or meeting which drove him to ask me a question that I haven't forgotten:

“Where's your sense of Filipino pride?”

The idea that there is something called Filipino pride in the way that he said it came as something new to me because I had grown up thinking that “Filipino pride” is something to be earned by proving that through hard work and determination you can achieve success; part of this success is disproving the stereotype of the “lazy Filipino.” I realized that perhaps I need to go on a cultural adventure because my Dad's lectures on doing away with the lazy stereotype are a reactionary way of defining the Filipino identity through a western viewpoint. What if there's a non-reactionary way to look at my Filipino identity? Maybe it doesn't have to be tied to how the others view Filipinos.

“What does it mean to be Filipino? What is Filipino pride?” These are two of the biggest questions I've wrestled with for a long time and I've come to realize that while other cultures can boast of a list of accomplishments to have an easy, go-to point of reference for cultural pride, this may not be the case for the Filipino identity given their history of colonization.

I went to my first PSFA social that semester. Three years later, I became treasurer for PSFA in the hopes of bringing a more reflective aspect to the organization. A year later, I decided to take it to the national level as a proxy to the National Directors (NDs) of my district, District V (comprised of ten schools in Pennsylvania, Delaware, and New

Jersey¹). I am still figuring out a way to explain the Filipino identity. So far, the most important thing I have realized is that people are going to have their own take on the idea of the Filipino identity. Even before people ask themselves about what it means to be Filipino or have Filipino pride, we must ask ourselves about *how* to answer this question.

Background Research

In 2007, Mark Levy wrote about “culture as individual both variable and multiple” because culture is not one-dimensional and simple. Culture is understood differently by individuals and so the job of a teacher or mentor is to help a student develop their own individual perceptions about culture in the most unbiased way. On a group level, Levy wrote that culture is also seen from a dimension of group membership. The learner of a culture “must be skilled in pragmatics in order to be able to recognize contextual cues that overlay the meaning of what is actually said” since speech holds the member of a group together (108). Levy wrote that “emphasis on conduct and interpretation of speech is especially challenging online where contextual cues are reduced or absent altogether” (108). He also wrote that membership within a culture occurs “formally and informally” and is made more complex by how “technology itself is cultural” (109).

When it comes to application of technology as a learning tool about culture and identity, blogs seem to be a popular go-to. In 2009, Yueh-Min Huang found that mobile

¹ New Jersey is listed even though it may not currently manage a school at this point. We list this state because once in a while, a school from NJ reaches out to our district and we are put in charge of communication with them.

blogging applications can bring an unlimited discussion space so students can learn in a more free and easy manner. They specifically identified that use of mobile devices provides “authentic context learning”—moments when students observe a concept occurring outside of a classroom setting and share the observation with their peers via a posting which might include photos or videos. While authentic context learning seems to be the main push for blogging in a classroom setting, it seems that learning is limited without solid technology support for students with varying backgrounds in technology. Olivia Halic, Debra Lee, Trena Paulus, and Marsha Spence conducted a study on blogging and published an article in 2010 which concluded that blogging as a tool for education is effective in helping students connect out-of-class experience with in-class experience as long as there is enough technical facilitation (211).

In 2012, Dimitra Dimitrakopoulou delved into another benefit of information communication technologies (ICT): civic engagement and cultivating a culture of sharing. Dimitrakopoulou wrote about using Web 2.0 technologies in the classroom for Learning 2.0—a concept in which technology is applied to the classroom to “empower the learner.” Application of technologies such as blogging makes for a “participatory culture” because there is a low barrier to civic engagement via technologies that allow for self-publishing, a strong push towards sharing with others, and informal mentorship occurring between students as they learn to use technology platforms. All these contribute to a culture in which members have more of a stake in the learning process because they feel more connected to one another.

Beyond blogging, Anna Mavroudi and Thanasis Hadzilacos studied online classes in Europe and concluded in 2013 that adult learners from remote areas have a strong connection to their local community. Mavroudi and Hadzilacos observed that the learners all specifically preferred courses organized in small groups of 3-5 participants so that they could interact in a small class for easy collaboration without having to think about being divided into sub-groups (228).

Studying research on Web 2.0, the use of technology beyond static web pages, is useful for this project because the history about application of Web 2.0 in a learning environment coupled with research about Filipino student organizations in the northeast region of the United States will hopefully allow me to provide a suggestion for a web design or model that promotes a habit of learning beyond the classroom.

Chapter 1
The Landscape

The Filipino Intercollegiate Networking Dialogue

The Filipino Intercollegiate Networking Dialogue (FIND) is a student-run, non-profit organization that operates on a national level “to promote unity and cooperation of Filipino students at colleges, universities, vocational, and technical schools, or any other institutions of higher education.” According to their website, the following are the mission statements of the organization:

- a. To offer a channel for dialogue and action
- b. To promote and preserve the Filipino culture
- c. To further awareness of issues pertinent to the Filipino community
- d. To act as a catalyst to pool the efforts of Filipino organizations

The schools that participate are from Massachusetts to Virginia and are divided into seven districts. The district that this paper focuses on is District V, which is comprised of ten schools in Pennsylvania, Delaware, and New Jersey schools.

In order to meet its goals, FIND annually hosts two gatherings: Dialogue in the fall semesters and Conference during the spring semesters. Dialogue is structured so that participants are divided into groups of ten to twenty in classrooms where there is a moderator or two. Moderators are student peers who are in charge of facilitating discussions about the past, present, and future presence of Filipinos in the United States. In the spring, Conferences are structured so that students are given a choice to pick from a variety of speakers to interact with during five, one-hour blocks.

Despite the hard work and efforts of students to pull these events together every year, the question of reflection still comes up. In my workshop this past fall semester, the habit of reflection was a topic of discussion. The issue discussed was, essentially, “Beyond Conferences and Dialogues, when else and how often do we reflect on our Filipino identity?” One member mentioned that for her parents, it was enough that she was hanging out with other Filipinos—that by associating with Filipinos, you are supposed to learn about what being Filipino means. Beyond potlucks, cultural performances, family gatherings, etc. there isn’t really a habit of learning about issues and discussions that delve deeper than surface-level factual information.

Need for a Habit of Reflection

Observing available and popular means of communication is an approach we can use to tackle FIND’s issue of lack of reflection—of the need to encourage a *habit* of reflection. On top of having a habit, the issue of providing quality is also an issue. How do we provide a solution that makes effective use of the communication structures that are already working (at least to some degree)?

In terms of defining quality, a workshop activity from the Fall 2012 Dialogue might help. In the second workshop, the focus was on showcasing present Filipino issues. My moderators used a Prezi presentation that included numbers representing a statistical fact related to the Philippines. Three of these numbers were the following:

7,000

The presentation zoomed in on each number and participants in the classroom are supposed to guess what the number in focus represents. The first one represents the number of Philippine islands. The second represents the fact that the Philippines have one of the eight wonders of the world. The third number represents the literacy rate in the Philippines.

As you can see, the first two numbers are factual. The last number however, provided a question beyond mere factual information. What does 94% literacy mean when the Philippines have two official languages (Filipino and English)? The question was asked but nobody knew the answer.

The numbers activity demonstrates some of the limitations of FIND Dialogue and Conference. FIND's events are partially limited by the off-hand knowledge of participants (including moderators) in a given classroom, participants' skills or willingness to question information presented to them, and the presentation's ability to elicit critical thinking. Other limitations that affect what goes on in the classrooms are how often schools can meet, the amount of time that moderators can spend coming up with quality presentations (keep in mind that moderators are students as well), and the level of consistency from moderators (which would partially stem from how often moderators can communicate with one another to have similar enough information and peer-review for quality assurance before Dialogue and Conference).

Another observation is that moderators know to use pop culture to engage other students in critical thinking activities but falls short of conveying the connection between pop culture use and the use of non-pop culture resources. Generally, moderators know that using popular songs and movies allow students to think critically about their identity in a way that they might not have thought of before. Pop culture emphasizes the prevalence of mediums for reflection and with that comes the idea that there are mediums and resources that we may take for granted. Use of pop culture can teach us that we have the potential to be passive and unknowing recipients of mediums that provoke deeper thought. FIND makes good use of pop culture and at least from what I have seen, effectively teaches that resources are prevalent in media. However, this can be extended to resources that may not be pop culture. Encouraging the use of non-pop culture resources is something that hasn't happened in the FIND conferences and dialogues I have attended. From Fall 2012's Dialogue, my group and I realized that there are resources in a lot of places but people don't know about them or have the incentive to research. Since this issue seems to be tied to lack of communication, I studied FIND's communication practices.

Chapter 2
Communication Practices of FIND

From observing FIND's communication practices on a student leadership level, we gather that literacy of one's culture and development of a culture's identity is personal and collaborative, to the point that one can observe different degrees of community, an idea consistent with what Levy wrote about in 2007. Communication in FIND is very collaborative, and this can be observed in three levels: local, regional, and national. No matter which level(s) students engage in, I observed that students generally utilize the same channels of communication but use these channels differently. In general, student leaders and upcoming student leaders are the most active communicators in their respective student organizations so by studying how they communicate with one another, we can determine patterns and possible solutions for improving FIND. The three main ways that student leaders of FIND operate are through Facebook, Gmail, and face-to-face networking events (conferences and dialogues).

Facebook is a prime example of how students engage with the same tool for different purposes. To be more specific, students use the Facebook group feature in a *bimodal* way: a formal group and an informal group exist. Students use the formal Facebook groups to coordinate and invite members to events so the posts are essentially about activities that would be mentioned in an organization's general body meeting (GBM). Informal Facebook groups are used for more personal reasons and as a fun way to engage members within the culture of the organization.

This bimodality is evident on a national, district, and local level. For example, FIND has Facebook groups called FIND Inc. and National '12 – '13. FIND Inc. is a formal place to post and promote events related to student organization activities that are

a part of FIND. Students who advocate external organizations also post events of those organizations in FIND Inc. Examples of such advocacy include messages about reminders to vote during the presidential election, performances of Asian organizations, and charities such as the Advancement for Rural Kids. Members who post are mostly the executive board members or student leaders of their school's or their districts' organization because their position includes an aspect of public relations. Examples of titles include Vice President and Officer of External Affairs. Even related outside organizations like the Midwest Association of Filipino Americans (MAFA, FIND's counterpart in the Midwest) are included in this group and use FIND's group to promote MAFA-related content. There were 160 members, which is a surprise given that anybody who attends FIND events can be a part of this group and attendees of conferences and dialogue number in the thousands. Additionally, frequency of posts seems to be about once a month. Figure 1 and Figure 2 show the use of Facebook groups by national student leaders:



Mecailla Monterey
Hey FIND!!! Buffalo Fasa PRESENTS BARRIO FIESTA 2012: BALIKBAYAN!

It will be held on Saturday, November 17th in the Student Union Theater

DOORS OPEN @6:30 PM, SHOW STARTS @7:00 PM

...

See More



FASA PRESENTS BARRIO FIESTA 2012: BALIKBAYAN!
November 17 at 7:00pm
Student Union Theatre

Join · 151 people went

Like · Comment · Follow Post · November 6 at 10:33pm near Williamsville, NY

Seen by 41

Write a comment...

Jed Belaguas
Hello FIND,

I'm Jed Belaguas and I'm the Officer of External Affairs from the University of Pittsburgh.

I have recently gone to PSA's Conference FACT last weekend at the University of Illinois and we are in talks about creating a conference here in Pittsburgh linking FIND and MAFA.

...

See More

Unlike · Comment · Follow Post · October 17 at 3:11pm near Pittsburgh, PA

You, Chany Im, Matt Ortigas, Jennifer Ho and 5 others like this. Seen by 59

Karoline Panes Hi Jed, you can email our Chairperson Kevin Cabanayan at chair@findinc.org or cabanayan@findinc.org
October 17 at 3:40pm · Like

Figure 1. This screenshot shows how students promote events happening at individual schools.



Figure 2. Posts can be used for publicity leading up to the FIND Dialogues and Conferences. The next post encourages students to go and vote during the election.

National '12 – '13 (the informal group operating on a national level) only has 29 members which are made up of the National Directors and others who operate on a district and national level. Posts occur anywhere from between a few days to a month. The main difference between FIND, Inc. and National '12 – '13 is that students can use National '12 – '13 to post personal, inside jokes. Because of the informality, we observe the use of slang in Figure 3:



Figure 3. Demonstrates the use of posts as a way to cultivate inside jokes and culture through informal communication.

On the district level, I found one Facebook group that acts as both a formal and informal outlet for promoting events and generating ideas. A limitation is that I did not see other Facebook groups for districts other than mine because searches would lead me to Hunger Games-related content given the popularity of the movie and books (The Hunger Games trilogy use “districts” extensively in the texts and movie). At this time, I can only speak for my district, District V, which is made up of member schools from Pennsylvania, Delaware, and New Jersey. Because there is only one group on a district level, the District V Facebook group is semi-formal and acts as a place to post events and initiate plans. Events are mostly about what schools are performing and promoting. Other events include fundraisers (especially for victims of floods in the Philippines), district bonding events, and general body meetings. There are a lot of introductions of new student leaders about their position in their respective organizations. Such posts often include contact information as well as mentioning of goals and plans. Around mid-terms

and finals week, members like to post study-break material like fun videos and pictures. Members in this group like to post every two to seven days. This may be due to the 316 members included in the District V Facebook group.

Figures 4 and 5 show examples of posts from District V's Facebook group:



Figure 4. In the first post, we observe a student using the group in order to coordinate for an event. In the second, a National Director, Jericho Cruzado, post a follow-up to his experience in a recent FIND Dialogue. The majority of Cruzado's message is in Standard English but his sign-off was the slang, "werd."



Figure 5. Judy Lam, secretary for District 5, posts the General Body Meeting minutes. In the post below, Jed Belaguas promotes the establishment of an Asian and Asian American Culture and Resource center.

On a local level, I also observed the formal and informal groups. As a part of the Penn State Filipino Association, I belong to the groups called FLIPpin' Awesome and FLIPpin' Serious. Both are closed groups (you must be invited or added to the group). FLIPpin' Awesome was created first and members used to post general body meeting blasts about events and schedules. However, people used the group very informally to post inside jokes and occurrences every day if not every hour or every few hours so FLIPpin' Serious was created so that important reminders about events are not ignored. In other words, FLIPpin' Awesome is an outlet for posting random, often hilarious and witty posts about members hanging out. A lot of the times, students promote informal, impromptu socials. Posts about impromptu socials often come in captioned pictures or videos. While the content of the post may focus on only a few members of the organization, such posts act as a way to unify the club members so that others are caught up with inside jokes within the organization. This means that the posts add value to the organization because they allow everyone in the group to "be in" and updated about occurrences within small group gatherings.

While not everyone can socialize at the same exact time and place, the Facebook group allows people to maintain a sense of unity and belonging. During mid-terms and finals, the group also acts as a coping mechanism in order to help members stay sane.

Figures 6 and 7 are examples of posts found in Flippin' Awesome:



Figure 6. Facebook as a coping mechanism during Finals week with posts of pop culture connection to the student struggle.



Figure 7. Facebook as a coping mechanism during finals week by posting humorous occurrences due to the stress of exams.

In Figure 8 and Figure 9, we see examples of posts from Flippin' Serious, which is a group primarily for posts reminding members of deadlines and official activities:



Figure 8. The top post reminds specific members to check their emails through the use of Facebook tagging. The bottom post in this picture is from the PSFA adviser.

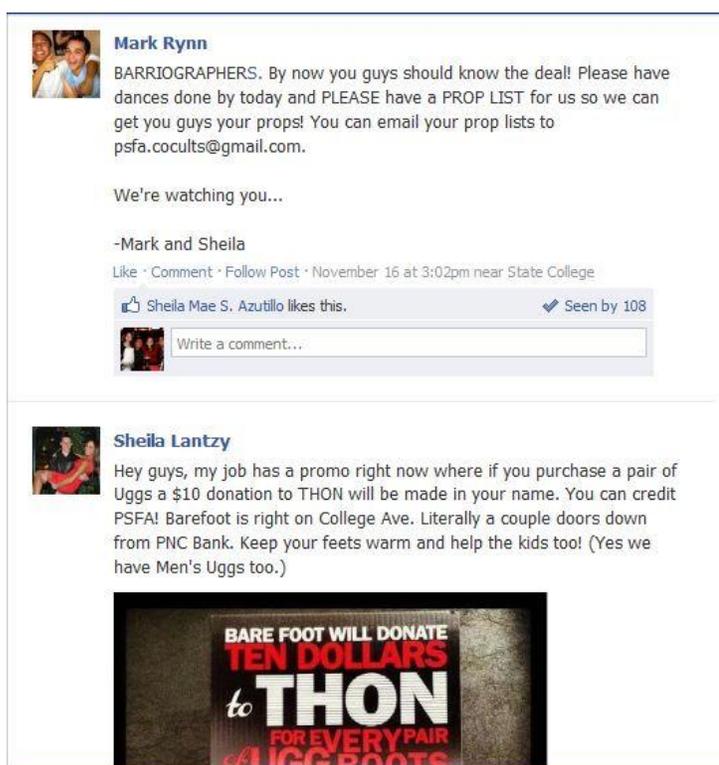


Figure 9. The top post reminds the choreographers to submit their prop list to the Co-Cultural Chairs for PSFA's Barrio, an annual performance event showcasing traditional Filipino dances and music. The bottom post is another promotion to all members of PSFA.

When it comes to using Facebook for formal communication, groups also like to create Facebook pages, which are simple ways to publicize their organization's activities to the rest of the public. Typically, these Facebook pages are linked to the organization's official website and act primarily as a PR tool to get the word out about events to people who are not necessarily participants in the organization. These pages are particularly useful during large-scale events because subscribed Facebook users can get messages leading up to the events. As a part of PR, the group shows how PSFA connects itself with the larger community through THON and participation of other Penn State promotions. The official website, on the other hand, contains more detailed information about PSFA events and projects. In Figure 10 and Figure 11, we observe that both the Facebook group and website shows off PSFA's engagement outside of the club.



Figure 10. Posts from the PSFA Facebook page show the group's engagement beyond PSFA through THON and their participation in the pop-culture dance phenomenon referred to as "Gangnam style."

PSFA's New Executive Board

By EDWARD FRANCIS CARLOS on April 18, 2012 11:32 AM | [Comments](#) | [TrackBacks](#)

I am proud to announce the new Executive Board of the Penn State Filipino Association for the 2012-2013 academic year:

President- Edward Carlos
 Vice-President- Mark Anders
 Treasurer- Nathaniel Nazareno
 Secretary- Gerjo Vilorio
 Co-Cultural Directors- Sheila Azuttilo and Mark Rynn
 Director of External Affairs- Charles Ferrer
 THON Chairperson- Kirk Delacruz
 Media Director- Kristianne Bartolome

Congrats to all of you that were elected. Thanks to all the members who came out to vote. And a special thanks to this years current E-board and the great job they did. And here's to a great year!!
 (picture of all of us coming soon)

5 Days Until Barrio Fiesta! Check out our promo video!

By RICKY SYAMSIR JABARIN on March 19, 2012 4:47 PM | [TrackBacks](#)



Figure 11. The website showcases official announcements regarding PSFA.

While Facebook groups, Facebook pages, official organization websites, and conference programs are the primary ways to communicate with the general public and general body members, student leaders use other ways to communicate amongst

themselves. Despite extensive use of Facebook, student leaders opt to use other means of communication in order to coordinate. Executive members of schools, the districts, and national directors operating on a national/regional level use Gmail and other Google features such as Google Drive (and similar document-sharing outlets such as dropbox.com) in order to coordinate standard operating procedures and guidelines.

Gmail is used as the primary use of communication for the district and national level. Students who participate at these two levels for the first time typically use their personal email accounts at the onset of joining. It's expected that student leaders use a professional personal name at this level. Usually, this personal email account is either a school email or Gmail. Gmail accounts are used for sharing and collaborating on Google documents. If a student does not have a Gmail account yet, they are expected to create one so they can engage with the rest of the group. After a certain point, students are given two official FIND email addresses that end in "findinc.org" but still run through Gmail. The first email is for a title position usually shared among those with the same title; for example, all the District V proxies have access to d5proxies@findinc.org. The second FIND email is your name; for example, one of my district National Directors is cruzado@findinc.org.

Potentially, having multiple Gmail accounts can be a pain to manage but luckily, Gmail allows you to be under multiple accounts at the same time. Users just have to be in the habit of switching to the proper account and proper language practice (choosing between Standard English and conversational English) when sending emails to

constituents, organizers, and others looking to be a part of FIND's productions (such as possible speakers and publicists).

While information communication technology (ICT) can be used to bridge gaps and provide communication solutions to issues regarding geography and lack of funding, ICTs should not be treated as the primary form of communication; if possible, students should use in-person, face-to-face communication. Student organizations have a networking aspect to them and while it is possible to replicate a face-to-face conversation through the exchange of email threads and Facebook posts, face-to-face interaction and dialogue is the root of all other forms of communication; to interact with another through face-to-face reminds people that our relationship is not with text, but rather, with people. There are many styles of communication; there are also different skill levels of communication. These styles and skill levels can be different for different people so important messages can be lost in communication. By having face-to-face along with text communication, people can clarify goals, missions, and viewpoints, in an organic way that may get lost in writing, especially when we consider the fact that students may still be figuring out how to best communicate with other people.

Probably the most important thing that gets lost in text is a person's sincerity and determination to meet a goal. While a person can bombard others with a great idea through emails and Facebook messages, the momentum can be lost due to timing. What if the idea gets lost during mid-terms week? Also, since different schools follow different schedules and different people have different workloads, an idea may not be seen at all during peak times of stress. Face-to-face interaction prevents some ideas from getting lost

and allows others to see the sincerity from a person in a way that may not come across through writing.

Through Facebook, Gmail, and face-to-face interactions, I essentially observe *code-switching* because students have to think about the level of formality they use in their communication with others. Because of Gmail's different features, different degrees of formality for different situations occur. For example, emails through FIND are pretty formal and you must use Standard English if you want to be taken seriously. However, students also like to use Gmail's chat and video features. It is through these features that one can observe a more casual way of communicating. It is through informal level of communication that students use a more slang tone, creating opportunities for bonding. I have seen this on Facebook and also face-to-face interactions.

Even though a student may know to use Facebook, emails, and face-to-face as proper channels of communication for getting an idea through, sincere and well-meaning effort can fall short especially from new student leaders who are so eager to make a difference that their ideas are not to scale with the current student culture and resources. District V National Directors Jericho Cruzado and Chany Im said that understanding how change happens over time is important for a new student leader to understand, a problem that causes organizational and collaborative issues due to a high turnover of student leaders. Cruzado and Im say that the high turnover is caused primarily by conflicting personal interests that cause a member to shift priorities. However, Steven Raga, a former FIND student leader, wrote in 2012 that the turnover is caused by "resulting matters such as quality of leadership (or lack thereof), direction of the organization (or lack thereof),

and the level of practical impact in the greater community (or lack thereof).” When students become new leaders who want to make improvements, it essentially becomes an issue of rhetoric—of being able to persuade and collaborate with other people. You can have a great idea but bouncing ideas off of others (especially more-experienced students) helps to make sure that the idea becomes a reality. This “great idea” may have flaws and limitations so talking to others makes ideas become more viable. By talking to other experienced student leaders about an idea, student leaders start thinking and considering the idea as something that is possible. In a structure where a voting process is required to make the idea happen, it’s even more important to “plant the idea” in those who are in positions to vote on such a matter before the official announcement of the idea in a public forum. Essentially, it becomes an issue of garnering supporters and hopefully, collaborators.

Chapter 3
Suggestions Based on Observations

Facebook engagement on a local level seems to work rather well, at least in District V's case. While Facebook is used by many people in order to coordinate and promote events, Facebook's true potential is yet to be harnessed in two ways. One is that student leaders can engage their constituents on a district and national level through a more concerted effort to post more consistently (perhaps by having a theme in mind) and by including more shout-outs to members who are at other schools (to foster a sense of community despite geographical distance). This sense of unity is especially an important issue for District V because unlike other districts in an urban area, District V has less available means for travel. With big schools like University of Pittsburg and the Pennsylvania State University in the west and the majority of the member schools in Philadelphia and the rest of the east (over 70% of District V is in the east), the geographical division creates a cultural gap, especially when the eastern schools and western schools only see each other during the spring and fall semester. Since 64% of the District V members are from Philadelphia schools, this division can alienate school members who are not from the city.

Another Facebook potential deals with fostering a habit of reflection about one's identity. Facebook threads allow users to replicate face-to-face dialogue when there are no easy available means to meet in person. We know this is possible given that people can post statuses that elicit feedback in the form of comments. Multiple comments are presented as threads—an easy way to follow arguments. In general, Facebook users from the Facebook groups mentioned earlier do not post paragraph-long comments. People use Facebook groups to promote events and inside jokes. Perhaps this means that Facebook

users find Facebook to be useful for only these two purposes; however, there is also a possibility for Facebook users to use this thread-like structure for more serious discussions about the Filipino identity because no matter how formally a group can be set up, there is always a push for informality. This push for informality seems to say that Facebook is a platform for open, casual discussions that foster communities. Facebook is already a popular social media outlet with many students who sign in on a daily basis. The potential is that Facebook can be used as a way to show students that reflection about identity doesn't necessarily have to be formal and serious—reflection can be done as a habit in a casual, informal way. Discussions about one's heritage don't have to only happen in an academic setting where you have to speak in Standard English. Demonstrating that this can be done through Facebook sends a message to students that learning and critically thinking about history and culture can happen outside of the classroom. This approach fosters a habit of reflection that is beneficial no matter what someone does beyond school and beyond a Filipino community.

In addition to Facebook, it would be useful for FIND to look at blogging platforms such as WordPress. From interviews with John Belk and Michael Faris, two graduate students who focused on rhetoric at the Pennsylvania State University, it seemed that while it would be easy to post reflection-worthy posts in a social media platform like Facebook, this may not be enough if the goal is to engage people. Waiting for other people to comment especially at the beginning of such an undertaking can be a slow and laborious process. When it comes to creating a community, it is important to start with a small community, a group of people who have the same goals and sense of commitment

to a project and focus on dialogue. Having other people at the onset of this sort of project means that the burden of the project's success is not just on one person; it empowers other people to partake in a leadership role by having the core group of people have a big stake in the project. It also creates a bandwagon-like effect because having a "core" group of contributors to the project shows outsiders that they would not be alone if they choose to contribute. Having a small core group of people as a desire for learning design is consistent with the 2013 findings by Mavroudi and Hadzilacos regarding learners in remote areas who have a strong connection to their local communities. While Facebook already has a mass number of people, WordPress and other blogging platforms have the ability to support this small "core" group of committed contributors (as seen through PSFA's official website). In general, blogs can be as formal or as informal as the writer(s) want, which is a similar characteristic of Facebook groups. Like Facebook, blogs also have a thread-like feature for comments.

It's only natural to then think about integrating such platforms. WordPress can be used as a place for designated "authors" to have the responsibility of finding articles and starting a conversation about the article. Chad Littlefield, a World in Conversation staff member and user of WordPress, said that the role is essentially a moderator's role in that authors initiate conversation, bring commenters back on subject, move the conversation when appropriate, "listens" to what commenters have written and throw comments back in a devil's advocate-like manner. Facebook can act as an outlet for promoting such conversations through automatic posts from WordPress to Facebook.

Chapter 4
Cultural Literacy

John Duffy wrote that “literacy is cultural.” In *Writing From These Roots*. From the Hmong narrative, “we learn that cultural ‘context’ or ‘perspective’ is not a single, inherently coherent framework but instead a number of multiple perspectives, social alignments, and processes in motion, experienced across time and distance, each with its own ways of learning, practicing, and understanding literacy” (194-195). Members of FIND understand this reality is due to the emphasis on dialogue through the annual Conference and Dialogue. Student leaders, especially National Directors, understand that in order for Conference and Dialogue to be a wholesome experience, member schools from districts need to have a sense of unity so that students can be comfortable enough to contribute to conversations regarding culture and identity.

When it comes to creating a safe and open environment to combat the issue of geographical distance, it might be helpful to look at observations found in the *Transnational Literate Lives in Digital Times* since the subjects were observed for their use of ICTs. The work observed that on a local and global level, “participants tended to possess a rich set of linguistic resources.” Another observation is that “individuals’ attitudes toward digital technologies and their use are highly dependent on cultural ecologies that the participants inhabit,” which is useful for FIND especially for focusing on the issue of geographical distance. When coming up with solutions on a more national level, accounting for language use and cultural ecologies is important to keep in mind especially when one of FIND’s main goals is to extend awareness of a specific ethnicity. Another observation is that “appropriate use of technology...allows for understanding the

complexities of forging identities across global and translingual landscapes” and would “benefit students with more limited exposure to other peoples, cultures, and literacy practices, extending their understanding and awareness of difference and the range of communication resources.” This finding can be applied to FIND especially when one considers the different cultures even within a group of people of the same heritage. Heritage is just one aspect of a culture. Another aspect is what people do with their heritage in the context of their location and resources. Diversity is not just about the different national heritages; it is also about nuanced differences given other factors that create differences within the same ethnicity.

While this paper has focused on the use of ICTs to tackle the issue of identity on a collaborative, community level, it is important to understand that the goal is to help people (especially young people) discover a personal definition of what it means to be of a particular heritage so that they may more confidently traverse other possibly more-complex social structures while in the role of an identity that may not be as visible as race or ethnicity.

Chapter 5
Conclusions

While the focus of this work has been in highlighting where ICTs can be used for improving the FIND experience, it is important to realize that ICTs are not entirely the solution. Development of any identity, not just the Filipino/Fil-Am identity needs to be approached on a *holistic* level. ICTs can help but in order for ICTs to truly help, student leaders need to integrate them with other channels of communication such as face-to-face conferences and dialogues. ICTs can enhance conferences and dialogues in order to foster a habit of reflection about one's culture leading up to these face-to-face events; during these face-to-face events, conferences and dialogues can make sure to mention these ICTs (such as blogging) in order to encourage their uses. This comes back to the issue of encouraging a habit of reflection and how sometimes, this means showing people how to find these resources.

That said, a design or model for a website for the student groups in FIND is not so much an issue of planning the interface, but rather, an issue of sustainability and insurance of technical and academic support that can last for a set number of years given field research about Filipino student communication practices as well as academic research regarding effective application of student blogging from Dimitrakopoulou, Huang, and Halic. FIND can certainly benefit from Huang's "authentic context learning," a concept that Halic also refers to by emphasizing the importance of having facilitation. A blogging platform, such as WordPress should be committed to for a set number of years in order to combat the high turnover of leaders and to provide some sort of stability and usefulness for the organization. When it comes to academic support, the outside-of-conference technology for promoting reflection should be handled by mentors rather than

student leaders since the problem with high leadership turnover should be kept as separate as possible from the leadership of the reflection platform. Since Facebook seems to be a popular platform, a way to integrate the chosen blogging platform with Facebook should be a primary concern for the learning design. Another concern is that the blogging site should be promoted in other channels of communication and especially through face-to-face events such as conferences. Given bimodality within FIND, we can anticipate the blog to have both formal and informal communication. The learning design should account for this bimodality to support the kind of communication that will cultivate meaningful, reflective (more academic) discussion while also supporting the sort of informal communication that allows for the participants to have a sense of culture and belonging. Accounting for bimodality will go towards making the website sustainable.

Why does this project matter? It's not just about the Filipino identity or the Filipino-American identity. It's about how people, especially students, learn and work within the structures that they are given to participate in a community. The habit of reflection fostered by projects and programs such as these may only seem to tackle questions of ethnic identity. However, it is more than this. Questions of identity—especially visible identities such as race and gender, are common but the habit of reflection is invaluable and transferable to topics that may be more complex and difficult to recognize. Beyond one's visible identity, the habit of reflection and discussion can be applied in other settings so that learners can more confidently navigate other cultures and structures to which they may become a part of later in life.

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Academic Vitae

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Education

The Pennsylvania State University | Schreyer Honors College Graduation: May 2014
Bachelor of Arts in Information Sciences and Technology
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Academic Teaching and Research Experience

Penn State College of the Liberal Arts | Teaching Assistant

Jan 2014 - present | *IST Consulting Capstone Course (IST440W)*

Penn State College of the Liberal Arts and IST | Teaching Assistant

Aug 2013 - present | *Intro to Rhetoric (ENGL 30)* and *Writing in the Humanities (ENGL202B)*

Specialty Search Engine - University Park, PA | Research Assistant for the College of IST

Aug 2012 - Aug 2013 | Created a prototype of a specialty search engine for poetry in a team of 4 students

Leadership

FIND (Filipino Intercollegiate Networking Dialogue) | National Director Proxy

Nov 2012 – May 2013 Community outreach to 10 schools within Pennsylvania, Delaware, and New Jersey

Penn State Filipino Association (PSFA) | Treasurer

April 2011 - May 2012 Fundraised and managed large event budget \$5,000 used to showcase Filipino arts

Association of Residence Hall Students (ARHS) | Cinemas Chair

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Awards and Recognition

Student Leadership Scholarship Recipient from Penn State
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