

THE SOCIOCULTURAL PERDURABILITY OF FILIPINO TRANSNATIONAL FAMILIES IN TAIWAN

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Abstract: This phenomenological study covered the lived experiences of Filipino transnational families in Taiwan on how they have been keeping their Filipino identities in the context of sociocultural perdurability on various themes like habitus, beliefs, food, practices, language, to name a few. The theoretical frameworks of the study utilized the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), Acculturation, Enculturation, and Sociocultural Theories. In the field of Applied Cosmic Anthropology, it is guided by Wilber's Integral Vision or Theory of Everything, Campbell's Hero's Journey, Matthew Fox's Creation Spirituality, and Berger and Luckmann's Social Construction of Reality. Two families with a total of six co-researchers were interviewed, and the researcher's inputs, and observations during the immersion resulted in the following insights: that me and my co-researchers never failed to keep our identities afloat despite the need to regulate them when we're around the locals; that our social identities remain intact whether we are in the Philippines or overseas as our social behaviors depend on our relationships and aspirations that somehow move our social life on constant decisions guided by our ethos; that our cultural identities respond greatly to our traditional and indigenous ways of living which make our Filipino traits layered doubly enabling our cultural identities remain enduring, and that there is a strong socio-cultural perdurability of Filipino transnational families maintained and protected by their distinct Filipino characteristics and by their instinctive and developed values, pride, relationship, experience, and spirituality. The eidetic insight of the meaning of the lived experiences of Filipino transnational families in Taiwan is: the continuity and flow of our consciousness and being is molded by our traits and aspirations.

Keywords: Filipino transnational families, sociocultural perdurability, Taiwan.

1. INTRODUCTION

It was in 2002 when I first flew to Taiwan to work as a teacher. Within that year, I learned some similarities and differences between Taiwan's society and culture from that of the general Philippines especially when compared to my hometown's atypical indigenous society and culture in Benguet. My first impression about Taiwanese people was that they're socially friendly, but not as open as the typical Filipinos. I could relate to Taiwan's high regard for privacy. I grew up in an ethnic community where we view ourselves as friendly but socially cautious when we interact with strangers. Culturally speaking, there's much to learn about the Taiwanese though I could easily tell that there were distinctions on food preparation, health and safety standards, manner of speaking and dressing, to name a few. Overall, my first experience in Taiwan was agreeable.

My overseas experience grew gradually at the start of a new life-changing chapter in my life as a wife and mother. In 2011, I got married to a fellow Igorot who was working here in Taiwan for several years already. After three years of marriage, we got a daughter. As a family, we continued building our relationship. Occasionally, we join the church's Sunday spiritual gatherings and festivities. Our values as a family are guided by our faith in our creator and our reflections from His words. Nothing much has changed in terms of our social life except that there are Igorot community festivities and indigenous

rituals back home that we can no longer attend to for obvious reasons. Nevertheless, my family feels blessed that we are living together on this side of the world compared to many other Overseas Filipino Workers whose families are waiting for them all across the Philippines. Along with other Filipino families who migrated here in Taiwan, our story adds up to the realities of Filipino families abroad, transnational families.

In 2018, I started working as a classroom teacher. Since then, my social interaction with my peers, parents of my students, and the Filipino community has grown wider but my ways of dealing with them is only on a professional level. In Benguet, we practice restraint where we talk only when necessary and so I continue practicing this value that I learned from my parents and our community up until now. In terms of language, we continue using Ilokano at home. In our workplace, a considerable number of Filipinos are employed which makes our conversation in Tagalog and English convenient. I use my native language whenever I call my family back home. I learned a few functional Chinese, and my proficiency in it remains.

There are other Filipino transnational families working and living in Taiwan, and a part of this group comes from the teaching sector. These families hail from various provinces in the Philippines, and they brought their social way of life and local culture with them in Taiwan. And I can't help asking myself this question: How are they keeping their Filipino identity intact? It is in this pedestal where I am encouraged to share the sociocultural perdurabilities of Filipino transnational families in Taipei, Taiwan...those stories of joy, positivity, and greatness of maintaining their Filipino social behavior and culture in a foreign country.

It has been many years of living in a foreign country, and we will stay here a little bit longer; my family and I really miss home in the Cordilleras. Before undertaking any life-changing endeavors, we in our village gather together for a feast before sending

someone off. Our elders give us some words of encouragement and then end their wishes where you can only listen to them intently then nod as a form of a pledge of preserving the local traditions wherever you are. In their soft-spoken words, they chanted...

“Saan yu liplipatan nu sino ken ayanna ti naggapuan yu ta dumteng tu ti aldaw nga subli-an yu dakami nga inbati yu ken biruken dakayo ti ili yu nga nangisuro kadakayo ti umiso...” (Forget not who you are and where you came from. In time, you will come back to us whom you have left behind, and the land that has taught you what is right awaits you...)

...and truly enough, I've been keeping that promise.

Background of the Study

Global Context

As a global phenomenon, migration of families all around the world came about from the advent of civilization. Mass migration, historically speaking, started as intrinsic where early people felt the need to settle in distant places. But it was in the 16th century that migration did no longer become a result of individual decision but a consequence of the intricacies of global capitalism as argued by Gerbeau (2017). It was divulged that there was an estimated number of more than 244 million international migrants in 2015. The major factor enabling these migrants to leave their own countries is the ever-changing mix of political, demographic, socio-economic and environmental situations (Castelli, 2018). Among the research interests of sociologists and anthropologists centered on transnational families in the early 19th century. Now, the exploration of understanding transnational families in a global scene continues to be investigated. Bryceson (2019) compiled case studies on the phenomenon as she included stories of Ghanaians moving to the Netherlands, Indonesians and Filipinos moving to Singapore, Bolivians moving to Spain, Cambodians moving to Thailand, Cubans moving to the Scandinavians, and Italians moving to Wales. While affluent nations attempt to restrict the migration of families from underprivileged countries, it is undeniable that such a trend is stoppable.

Asian Context

On a different perspective towards migration, it is interesting to note that Asia is the top destination of international migrants. According to the United Nations'

Migration Report in 2017, 80 million international migrants live in Asia. From 2000 until 2017, it was reported that there was a yearly increase of migrants reaching 1.8 million. However, the highest number of international migrants worldwide goes to Asia. In 2017, 106 million out of 258 million migrants were from Asian countries. Out of the 20 countries of origin of these international migrants, 12 countries are located in the Asian continent where India tops the list. Other Asian countries in the top 10 are the Russian Federation, China, Bangladesh, Syrian Arab Republic, Pakistan, and the Philippines.

The Asian-Pacific Migration Report of UNICEF in 2020 revealed that highly-skilled migration is quite high in this region where almost 36 million migrants were in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries in 2015 to 2016. The top three countries that supply highly-skilled migrants were India, China, and the Philippines. Meanwhile, migration for permanent residences also in the case of allowing family members was high in Australia, New Zealand, and Singapore. On migration for family reunification, two countries (Russian Federation and Australia) have long-term migration schemes for the migrants and their families.

Compared to migrant family reunification in Europe, there is little opportunity to do so in East Asia particularly in South Korea and Japan. There are interrelated factors that affect it including lack of rights, political culture, and migrant perceptions (Seol & Skrentny, 2009). Notably, the other factor that affects low family reunification in a general sense is due to migrants' perception that it is not necessary or very substantial to move their family to live with them temporarily knowing the difficulties and challenges that it takes. Consequently, family reunification is minimal if not zero when migrant women who work as caregivers, domestic helpers, and other low-paying jobs have no course of taking their families with them abroad. In the same case of male migrants who are employed in blue collar jobs, they too, could not afford to bring their families with them. This situation is experienced by many migrants coming from Southeast Asian countries like Indonesia, Philippines, and Vietnam.

National/Philippine Context

In the case of Taiwan's immigration and labor laws, a holder of Alien Resident Certificate (ARC) or Alien Permanent Resident Certificate (APRC) including those who obtained naturalization or citizenship may temporarily or permanently petition their family dependents to live with them according to certain provisions (Immigration Act of 2016). However, according to Taiwan's immigration and labor laws, obtaining either certificate depends on the type of employment that the foreign national has. Unfortunately, those in the marine fishing/netting, household assistant, and nursing jobs are not eligible in acquiring permanent residencies. In other words, only those professional skilled workers like licensed teachers, engineers, scientists, etc. are given such privilege. In an article released by *Becoming Taiwanese*, there were 17, 532 APRCs approved as of October 2019. Only 639 of them were granted to Filipino nationals. This is a small number of "privileged" Filipinos from an estimated total of more than 150,000 Overseas Filipino Workers in Taiwan.

Some of these Filipino workers with APRCs have brought their nuclear family to live with them in Taiwan. It is interesting to learn from their individual and familial experiences on how they keep their Filipino identities afloat despite living in a foreign land that is perceived as having different sociocultural strata compared to their own respective indigenous ways of living back home in their provinces.

There are countless studies and literature that tackle encompassing themes on the migration of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs). Among them are long distance concerns between the OFW and his or her families in the Philippines. Researches have been extensively conducted to explore the difficulties and challenges of having such situation to transnational families: the relationship between Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW) and their home families (Akase, 2020); a model of resilience for transnational families of Filipina domestic workers (Garabiles, Ofrenio, & Hall, 2017); the experience of children in the parental migratory absence (Schram, 2015); and the impact of the global crisis to migrant workers and their families-left-behind in the Philippines (Maria, Custudio, & Ang, 2012), to name a few. In a sociological term, most if not all cases are gleaned from a "precarity" notion that details the psychological, physical, social, economic, and cultural struggles of Filipino migrants and their families back home. However, it appears that there are not so many evident studies that describe how Filipino migrants and their households, as a family, keep their Filipino identities in a socio-cultural dimension. Moreover, there are no specific accounts on how a nuclear family at individual roles of being a father, a mother, and a child describe their own experience in maintaining and strengthening their Filipino values and habitus. Eventually, this research study aims to fill this research gap.

The sociocultural perdurability of Filipino transnational families opens up a different context over the norm on how they endure living as a unique Filipino family by keeping their own social and cultural identities unbroken in a foreign landscape; while most researches work on "precarities," this study introduces the "perdurabilities."

Local Context of the Study

The territorial coverage of this study is in Taipei, Taiwan where my co-researchers reside. Taiwan is an island in the western Pacific Ocean that lies roughly 100 miles (160 km) off the coast of southeastern China. It is approximately 245 miles (395 km) long (north-south) and 90 miles (145 km) across at its widest point. Taipei, in the north, is the seat of the country's

government (Copper, 2021). The distance between the Philippines and Taiwan is 721.48 miles, and Taiwan is in the north of the Philippines.

The article of Bush (2021) explained how Taiwan is rated high in terms of upholding democracy and its principles as shown by the country's clean elections and upholding political rights. On social values, Taiwanese are in majority when it comes to issues and concerns about democracy, economic development, education, and Cross- Strait relations. In terms of Taiwan culture, it is described as traditional and conservative. Chinese culture has greatly influenced the Taiwanese where the family is observed as patriarchal and patrilineal. The Japanese and indigenous cultures also shaped some parts of Taiwan's social and cultural practices. Taiwanese people highly regard their culture, and held many cultural activities (Britannica, n.d.). Traditionally, Taiwan follows a traditional social ladder where social class (education, job, positions, etc.) is a strong determination on how one is regarded. Filipinos are known in Taiwan for their labor workforce contributions to its economy.

The maps show the distance between the Philippines and Taiwan and the location of Taipei.



Figure 1. Distance between Taiwan and the Philippines

My co-researchers work and live in Taipei City. For privacy reasons, I can't provide their exact addresses. While the Filipino teachers are scattered in major cities in Taiwan, a number of Filipino teachers with their families are found in Taipei. Over the past years, Filipinos have been working as factory workers, domestic helpers, and in other blue-collar jobs. Recently though, Filipino teachers, tutors, engineers, and scholars have started to take part in the professional workforce. It is observed that younger Taiwanese generations have warmer and more open tolerance to other cultures including the Filipinos. In recent years, Taiwan has been featuring Philippine culture (festivities, food, language, art) in the community. For instance, the street parade of "Maskara" and Filipino basketball competitions are institutionalized, and they are held annually. Another strong gesture of cultural acceptance is the introduction of the Filipino language in some schools across Taiwan.

With the travel restrictions and health safety and concerns put in place due to the pandemic, I decided to identify my co-researchers in the capital city where I am also currently residing.



Figure 2. Location of Taipei

Statement of the Problem

The lived experiences that I would like to reflect on centers on the sociocultural perdurability of Filipino transnational families in Taiwan. The narratives from their sharing of their individual and familial experience on how they have been keeping their Filipino identities were the bases of my reflection.

Specifically, this study sought response to the following questions:

1. How may the lived experiences of Filipino transnational families in Taiwan in maintaining their Filipino identities be described and reflectively analyzed?
2. What are the meanings and insights derived from these experiences?
3. What implications can be drawn from the study that are relevant to the lived experiences of Filipino transnational families' ways in keeping their Filipino identities intact and to the discipline of Applied Cosmic Anthropology?

Scope and Limitations

The scope of this research covers the sociocultural experience of Filipino transnational families in the teaching sector who acquired Alien Permanent Residency Certificates (APRC) from the government of Taiwan. The time frame of this study is estimated to be completed in six months. This undertaking covers two transnational families where each of the nuclear families is usually composed of both parents with their children. In total, there are six co-researchers. The set criteria in choosing the co-researchers of this study prioritizes Filipino families whose either one or both OFW parents with APRCs have been living in Taiwan for a period of at least five years. The children of my co-researchers who are four years old and below are not required to go through formal interviews, but their interaction with their parents and other siblings, if the case maybe, is recorded for observation purposes. The qualitative method to be used is guided by a phenomenological framework called, "Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis" that aims to analyze and describe how transnational families keep and maintain their Filipino identities under the concept of "sociocultural perdurability."

During the interview sessions and observation phase, my questioning focuses on how they keep their Filipino identities intact. It is possible that my co-researchers would narrate their experiences from various contexts and different situations; thus, in the analysis phase of the data, various themes can be extracted from their lived experiences. This study is also limited only to those OFWs who obtained their APRCs in the teaching sector as they comprised the highest number of professional skilled workers who are living and working in Taipei, Taiwan. Due to the pandemic situation, all co-researchers are currently residing in Taipei City where I am also residing as limited mobilization and visits are strictly implemented.

2. METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I provided detailed discussions on interpretative phenomenology and its philosophical presuppositions; my co-researchers (research participants) and the criteria for choosing them, ways of gathering and organizing the narratives, ethical considerations; and the process I followed in doing this phenomenological study.

Interpretative Phenomenology and its Philosophical Presuppositions

Martin Heidegger's phenomenology and existentialism had a huge impact on architectural theory, literary criticism, theology, psychotherapy, and cognitive science. His "interpretative phenomenology" leans on the "Dasein" (being there or man's existence) tenet which resulted in a different approach in doing phenomenological research in explicating the lived experience of study participants. Consequently, Heidegger's philosophy substantiated the use of the "Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)" (Horrigan-Kelly, Millar, & Dowling, 2016). According to Gadamer (1975) as cited by Martinez (2013), the use of Heidegger's interpretive phenomenology is the opposite idea of Husserl's bracketing where a researcher cannot truthfully strip away his/her biases (preunderstanding) but rather can accept the fact and be aware of them, for his/her pre-understanding can be a lens by which the phenomenon can be appreciated. In doing such methodology, the researcher participates in the observation and interaction of his/her co-researchers.

With hermeneutical phenomenology, it allows the researcher not only to describe, but also to interpret and give meaning to what is expressed by co-researchers (Lechissa, 2017). The Interpretative Phenomenology Analysis (IPA) that falls under it aims to provide detailed examinations of personal lived experience in its own terms rather than one prescribed by pre-existing theoretical preconceptions (Smith & Osborn, 2015). While the use of IPA is focused on one-on-one interviews, many researchers and scholars argue that IPA is congruent in using focus groups; in fact, they were successful in using

focus groups or group interviews as they are found to be helpful in discussions and in opening new perspectives (Bradbury-Jones, Sambrook, & Irvine, 2009). The study of Buhl (2010) through a phenomenological study, added group interviews in his three-tiered data collection. Moreover, Palmer et al. (2010) revealed that using focus groups provides rich experiential data.

Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014) provided insights on how interpretative phenomenology is used as a framework. First, the IP allows the researcher to interact with the participants' experience. Second, the use of IP is also interrelated to the use of hermeneutics and idiography. The idea of hermeneutics is using both descriptive and interpretive ways in understanding the phenomenon while the concept of idiography allows the researcher to do individual interviews. The idiographic approach sets quite perfectly on the direction of my study when I intend to interact and observe individual members of the transnational family first before participating in their lived experiences as a group.

With those insights, I intend to use the IPA as my approach to present the sociocultural perdurabilities of Filipino transnational families in Taiwan as they are. In other words, the phenomenon being studied here is the "sociocultural perdurabilities." Obviously, such experience is narrated by each member of the family, but I feel that there is a need to interview them as a family. This decision is supported and proven to be beneficial by other researchers in various fields.

The use of ethnographic methods looks at people in their cultural setting with the aim of coming up with a narrative account of that particular culture. It specifically looks into deeds, words, and interactions in a given social and cultural environment. Thus, in purpose, it is closely similar to phenomenology. In terms of methods in collecting data, I am keen on using participant-as-observer observation and follow-up interviews and the data is treated using Thick Description. Meanwhile, the ethnographic component of this research abides by the principles of utilizing ethnography. Aldiabat and Le Navenec (2011) pointed out three purposes of using the methodology. But my particular study resonates with the specified first purpose which is to help "the researchers to document, understand, and describe alternative realities from the participants' points-of-view, which are salient to understanding the range of events and behaviors of people in a particular culture."

Consequently, my study that focuses on documenting, understanding, and describing the realities of Filipino transnational families in Taiwan where I have to account separately the individual experiences of the nuclear family first, and then later as familial narratives by participating in their lived experiences points out the use of IPA and ethnographic methods.

Exactly how Martinez (2013) used the combination of phenomenology and ethnography and the rationale behind it supports the context, setting, and phenomenon of my study. Simply put that the phenomenological aspect of my research deals with the narrative and observation account of my co-researchers' sociocultural perdurabilities, and the ethnographical aspect refers to the representation of Filipino transnational families in Taiwan particularly those Filipino professional teachers who obtained Alien Permanent Residence Certificates and their nuclear family.

My Co-Researchers (Research Participants) and the Criteria for Choosing them

My co-researchers belong to two Filipino transnational families. The first family is composed of the father, the mother, and their son. The second family is composed of the father, the mother, and their daughter with a total of six individuals.

The criteria in selecting my co-researchers were as follows:

1. Either or both of the parents is/are professional teacher(s) who acquired Alien Permanent Residence Certificates in Taiwan.
2. The family has either one or more children aged four years old and above who have been living with their parents in Taiwan for at least two years.
3. The family is of Filipino descent from any ethnic background.
4. The family agrees to participate willingly in sharing their lived experiences.

It must be noted that a foreign national has to be working for at least five straight years to be eligible for an APRC. The reason why only professional teachers are chosen in this study is the fact that most OFWs who have APRCs come from the teaching profession. My husband and I are professional teachers who are working in an international school in Taipei, Taiwan. He obtained an APRC many years ago. We have a 7-year old daughter who is studying where we are working. My family profile obviously fits the criteria in selecting my co-researchers, and it justifies the reason in choosing professional teachers and their households so that I can share my insights in the interpretation of their narratives, undergo stronger reflections, and fully represent the concept of sociocultural perdurability in context.

The age criterion of the children was capped at four years old and above, and as described in their development according to Raising Children website that these young children know hundreds of words and can use five or six words or more in sentences; they love telling stories and having conversations; and are actively playing and learning. Their interaction with any members of their family helps in building and contextualizing the narratives of other co-researchers. It is also important to set the number of years to two in terms of living as a family in a foreign land as I find it very reasonable to gauge the phenomenon of perdurability.

Ways of Gathering and Organizing the Lived-Experiences

I used three ways of gathering lived experiences of my co-researchers: interview, storytelling, and participant observation.

Interview refers to the essential and follow-up questions to start the storytelling and make some clarifications, ask for elaboration, and provide examples about any of the narrated lived experiences of the co-researchers.

Storytelling allows the co-researchers to narrate their lived experiences without much interruption from the interviewee.

Participant observation takes the form of observing the family's interaction during the family interview and immersion session. It also provides an opportunity to record some artefacts displayed or found at the residences of the co-researchers.

After some series of appointments, I used three sessions to conduct formal and informal interviews, storytelling, and to make some follow up and have them validate the transcriptions. The use of three sessions was necessary as it takes a daunting task to interview the individual member of the family and to get them to share their experience as a family in just one sitting. Oftentimes, when all members of the family sit together to share their experiences, they can help recall more accurate details of those experiences; thus, it becomes a sort of validating their narratives by themselves. It was also at this time when I observed how they talk to each other and see some traces of distinct Filipino traits. By immersing myself with the families, even for a short period of time, and by taking part in how they spend their day, it gave me a better understanding and appreciation of their lived experiences. A journal of observed interaction among the family members was used for the discussion of the phenomenon.

Added in the journal was a list of available artefacts or objects that are symbolic to a Filipino family found in their homes. The final session allowed me to ask some follow up questions, and I asked them to go through the transcriptions of the interviews. An interview guide question and checklist was prepared to ensure that the phenomenon of sociocultural perdurability was highlighted. All interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed verbatim.

The interpretative process of this research was guided by the principles of the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). As pointed out by Pietkiewicz, Smith, and Osborn (2004, 2014), a semi-structured interview is the best practice in this type of research. Some guide questions and checklists were prepared for all three sessions. An in-depth one-on-one interview with each member of the household revealed more storytelling. At the start of the interview process, a warm-up discussion was instigated to reduce tensions and allow me and my co-researchers to be comfortable with each other. With the right cue, the interview started with a specific and straight-forward question. In between the talks, I asked prompt, open, and expansive questions to guide my co-researchers. All interviews were recorded, and a journal to record non-verbal cues, visible artefacts or objects in their respective residences was also prepared. After all data was collected, I re-immersed myself in the analysis. The analysis followed the emic (insider's perspective) and etic (researcher's perspective) views in understanding the experiences.

During the participant observation and immersion, I focused on the interaction of all family members in their residences while taking down notes of available artefacts and objects that represent Filipino culture. The familial interaction was demonstrated in many situations from communicating with each other to helping with household chores. Meanwhile, some artefacts and objects that are commonly seen in a Filipino household were small display statues of saints, rosary, Bible, Filipino-made products, and others. These pieces of information strengthen and support the phenomenon being explored in this study.

To sum up, the first session was a one-on-one formal/informal individual interview and storytelling with each member of the transnational family; the second session was an informal family interview and storytelling with all members of the household sitting together; and the third session was a follow up interview and validation of the transcription. A paradigm on my ways to gather my co-researchers' lived experiences is presented.

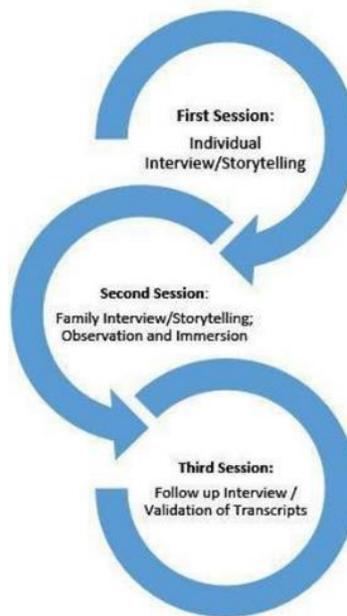


Figure 3. Data Gathering Procedures

Process of Doing Phenomenology

The six steps in doing the phenomenological study were symbolically represented by the process of a spider making its web. When I was thinking about what symbol to use for this study, I went back to my childhood memories and re-experienced nature as a child. I thought of trees, streams, and morning dews, but most of these symbols were taken by previous phenomenological researchers. I then remembered my fun memories of looking for spiders with my older brother and putting those spiders in matchboxes. At this point, I became interested in using spiders as my symbol.

Coincidentally, we also had a reading lesson in my class that was about Step- by-step Advice from the Animal Kingdom. It showed us how spiders make their web step-by-step. It instantly ignited my desire to use this in my study. I took this as a sign from the universe that a spider should be my symbol, thus, the adopted symbol was a spider web.

Step 1: Gathering of Lived Experiences (Bridge Thread): As a first step, a typical spider builds its web out in nature by making two or more strands to create the “bridge thread” in between structures, plant stalks, or any objects. The bridge thread serves as the foundation of the structure of the entire web. It is the starting point where other strands or threads are attached to. In comparison to the actual gathering of lived experiences of my co-researchers, I have to make the necessary planning before the start of the interview, storytelling, observation, and immersion. The planning stage, which is symbolized by the first strand of the bridge thread, includes preparing the semi- structured questions, doing a dry run, searching for my co-researchers, and making appointments for a series of sessions with them. The actual interview/storytelling sessions, observations, and immersions are represented by the second or more strands of the bridge thread. Just like a spider that has to walk back and forth to fortify the bridge thread by adding more strands on top of it, I have to do three sessions with my co-researchers to ensure that I have the necessary information; I’ve clarified some information; and the information have been validated by them.

Step 2: First Reflection: Text Themes (Anchor Thread): As a second step, the spider builds an anchor thread starting from the upper middle bridge thread. Here, the spider pulls a strand from the center down to the lowest middle bridge thread which forms like a “V” shape of its silk. The anchor thread tells the extent of the outer web where the spider instinctively makes the right size of the web considering the distance and flexibility of where the web is attached to, location, and other natural factors. To me the spider’s anchor thread represents my first reflection where I start the culling out of textual themes from the narratives after their transcription. Just like the purpose of an anchor thread, I can now see the extent of my work in analyzing the narratives which eventually helps me identify the themes. Based on the thematic representation of the identified experiences through a thematic textual analysis, all identified words and phrases in the narratives that signal themes of sociocultural perdurabilities are explicated rigorously.

Step 3: Second Reflection: Structural Themes (Anchor Point): This step is represented by the Anchor Point part of the web where the spider has to ensure strong anchoring of the Bridge Thread and Anchor Thread. From here on, the process of building frames inside the web is well-supported. The spider has to carefully lay ground at the anchor point while staying alert from the predators and other insects. In relation to the process of doing my second reflection where I have to set structural themes by clustering the textual themes according to their similarities in terms of content or meaning, descriptions, and interpretations, I believe that they are symbolized by the anchor point. The symbolism of the anchor point to the third step of doing the phenomenology is appropriate as my structural themes allow me to see a clearer picture of the combined lived experiences of my co-researchers, where in comparison, the anchor point enables the spider to start working on building the frames of its web.

Step 4: Third Reflection: Emerging Patterns (Frame Thread): The Frame Threads are built in between the bridge thread, anchor thread and anchor point. The spider then starts to lay the “radius.” It checks every angle between the radius to make the space in between frames almost equal; therefore, making the web sturdier. The spider uses a non-sticky silk in creating the frames and radius as they serve as a support to the spider while it walks on them freely. My third reflection looks into the emerging patterns of meaning that comprise the essential insights of my study including the salient principles and norms that describe what sociocultural perdurability is as elucidated from the lived experiences of my co-researchers. The representation of my third reflection to the frame thread is on the tedious process of ensuring that each analysis of the emerging patterns from the structural themes is carefully considered and well identified. Just like the spider checking each “radii,” I have to make sure that I did not miss any interpretations based on the identified structural themes.

Step 5: Eidetic Insight (Auxiliary Spiral): The auxiliary spiral is made from the center out to the frame of the web. The spider uses it as a reference in putting up the “capture spiral.” Here, the spider has almost completed the entire structure of the web. All it needs to do next is to follow the auxiliary spiral threads where it adds its sticky silks along the way. Since the auxiliary spiral appears to be the most difficult process where the spider connects all silks together by putting non-sticky spirals in order to locate the perfect spot for its capture spiral, I think that the process illustrates the challenging aspect of analyzing and reflecting deeply so I can capture the essence of what constitutes sociocultural perdurability. In doing so, the eidetic reduction through “variation imagination” technique may provide me various ways to reassess the phenomenological essence or eidos of this entire experience as reflected from the structural themes. The spider needs those auxiliary spirals in order to complete the function of its web: to capture its prey; and similar to mine, I need those deep reflections to finally provide the implications and possibilities of the study.

Step 6: Implications and Possibilities (Capture Spiral): The Capture Spiral is made from the sticky silks of the spider where it spirals from outside to the center. This process is a lot easier as the spider merely follows the auxiliary spiral as a guide. It is also the final step that a spider needs to do to complete its web. This final phase perfectly represents the final step of doing phenomenology as the implications and possibilities are discerned based on the entire process to present some theoretical and practical outcomes that further define, describe, and explain the sociocultural perdurability of Filipino transnational families in Taiwan. The function of the Capture Spiral is to catch prey, and the spider couldn't sense it and move easily from thread to thread without the first structures of the web. Similarly, the process of identifying implications and possibilities requires constant review and visits from steps three to five, and so I depend on the analysis, reflections, and information that I have.

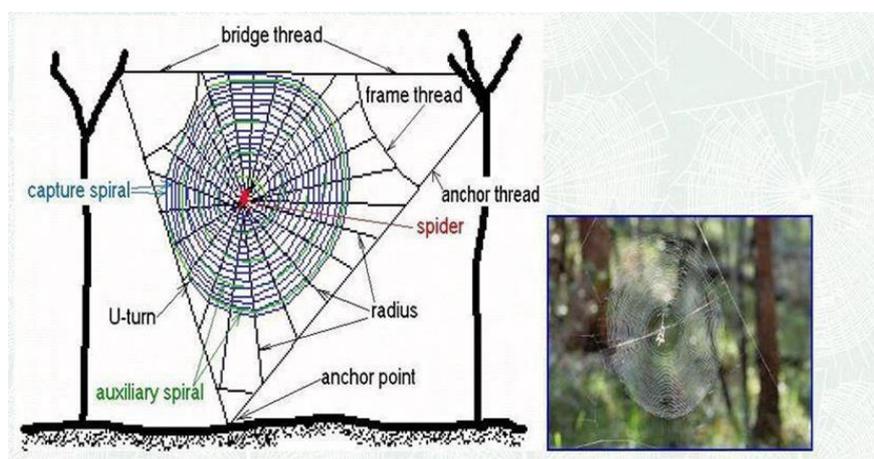


Figure 4. Spider web and its structure Credit: Brisbaneinsects, n.d.

3. PRESENTATION OF THEMATIC REFLECTIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

This chapter presents the broad and specific themes based on the narratives of the lived experiences of my co-researchers, the main insight of the study, and the implications in context of sociocultural perdurability, and in the discipline of Applied Cosmic Anthropology.

Reflection Themes

Six specific themes highlighting individual (father, mother, child (ren), and familial narratives are identified. Each specific theme is also represented with a symbol that encapsulates the meaning of the experience. The creative titles that I have chosen are common questions in Filipino street language which represents Filipino identities in the context of food, language, habits, family ties, religious practices and attitudes, and indigenous practices that are currently possessed and continued to practice by my co-researchers while living and working in Taiwan.

These specific themes are: Pinoy Ka Ba? (Are you Filipino?) captures Filipino traits that are generally known exhibited by Filipinos, and those that are individual traits practiced by my co-researchers where they were still in the Philippines and continued or discontinued to be practiced in Taiwan; Kumain Ka Na? (Have you eaten yet?) represents Filipinos' hospitality and generosity by inviting other Filipinos to share some meal with them. It also identifies the Filipino foods and ways of socializing of my co-researchers; Ano Daw? (What was it?) details the Filipino languages that my co-researchers use at home and in their workplaces. It also tells how they communicate with family, friends, acquaintances, strangers, and colleagues; Marami Kayo Sa Bahay? (How are things with your family?) is a rhetorical expression that pertains to family relationship, roles, and responsibilities; Saan Ka Nagsimba? (Which church did you go to?) is another rhetoric question that refers to Filipino spirituality; and Ano Ba Sa Inyo? (How do you do things at home?) denotes the Filipino indigenous ways of manner of speaking, doing things, and behaving in given situations. Photos of the documented artefacts are found in the Appendices section.

Pinoy Ka Ba?

The four adults whom I interviewed clearly have stronger traces of Filipino identities through their values, behavior, language, and many more, and they have learned to be flexible on what Filipino practices can be shown in a given circumstance. There are some traditional ways of doing things that are temporarily stored in their memories as they do not find them appropriate or practical in Taiwan, but they do not mean that they are forgotten. As a Filipino who is a part of a transnational family, I concur with the parents' understanding on what makes a Filipino a Filipino who is living abroad. When I reach home, I am completely 100% Filipino consciously. However, as soon as I step away from our house door, I become cautious. A part of my being a Filipino is momentarily put aside as I replace some of them with my knowledge on the culture of the locals here particularly on loudness of voice while speaking.

After my second visit to their respective abodes, it wasn't really hard to feel and see the Filipino identities from our interactions and the Filipino artefacts that I saw. Three of my co-researchers work in the same school where my husband and I teach, and I have shared the same observations and experiences when talking about some of our social and cultural practices including those situations when we have made adjustments on infusing the Filipino way of dealing with things at school.

The two children whom I interviewed are learning our Filipino traditions primarily from their parents. I am glad that their parents continue to pass down our practices despite living in a foreign land. As a parent myself, I certainly would like my daughter to embrace our own culture as it is a priceless gift. Every day whenever there is a chance, my husband and I teach her to understand, appreciate and do the general and native Filipino practices that she couldn't fully learn. Like my co-researchers' experience, we all need to live our own Filipino culture in many ways possible to maintain it while living in a foreign country that causes us to regulate some of them. They show respect to the elderly, like saying "po" and "opo" including the tone of their voices.

The meaning of the shared lived experiences of my co-researchers pertaining to the general Filipino identity is deeply rooted in their social and cultural practices that have been molded by the very first environment that they are exposed to. With these realizations, I choose to symbolize the meaning of the general social and cultural Filipino identity theme under the title, "Pinoy Ka Ba?" with an orb weaver spider that is known for its ability to preserve its life by camouflaging in order to necessarily survive through adapting to its environment as it hunts for its prey and secure its safety - - the Dolophones.

The Dolophones or also known as wrap-around spiders uses its flexible physical trait to wrap itself perfectly on a tree branch during the day time and becomes active at night. While some experts believe that they do not change their skin colors to blend to tree branches, they are not easily detectable by their prey and predators as they appear to have the same coloration like any tree branches (Stewart, 2018). Their ability to make necessary adjustments represents the adaptation skills of Filipinos. My co-researchers' social and cultural Filipino identities including my own transnational family remain intact, but we need to make some adjustments when needed. Looking at how flexible Filipinos are, it truly captures that Filipino trait. When the spider blends into its environment, I can't help but think back on what me and my co-researchers have to do to blend with the locals and their culture. There are a few trouble-free daily activities that we, Filipinos, perceive as normal like the loudness of our voices when we speak, use our local language in our neighborhood, how we don't blow dry our hair after taking a shower, eating cups of rice in all meals, etc. However, some of these practices need to be controlled if we want to entirely blend with the locals.



Figure 5. Dolophones (Wrap-Around Spider), Credit: Nicky Bay

Kumain Ka Na?

I definitely agree that eating our Filipino dishes makes us who we are as Filipinos. My family and I prefer cooking Filipino dishes whenever we can. We also teach our daughter how to use her hand when eating, stories of how some Filipino food came to be, and how to help in preparing some dishes. Beyond the description of Filipino foods and how they are prepared and eaten lies the deep meaning of “Kumain Ka Na?” on the theme of cultural practices through Filipino food and habits of eating. I believe that the meaning of the theme is family bonding. We Filipinos come together and put our differences aside when we share the food on the table. In our case as transnational families, eating together means keeping our warmth together as a family knowing that our families in the Philippines are also doing exactly the same traditions and practices as we all at some point, on the dining table, use our hands instead of those silver utensils.

When I visited the second family's house, they prepared “nilaga” (stew) for lunch. I gladly accepted to have some chit chat over lunch with them. I observed how they easily placed the rice cooker pot and the big bowl of food on the table. Just the same, we always do that in our apartment. It really felt like we're at home in the Philippines. We served ourselves and talked about how we spent our week. The husband did the cooking as the wife confessed that her husband has better skills than her. We all spoke “Ilokano” every now and then while the wife used both English and Ilokano to her daughter.

The symbol of family bonding is represented by the Social spiders. They live, hunt, and eat together. Such a bond is characterized by a way of surviving through its colony. In fact, they welcome spiders that are not from their families (Jani, n.d.). I choose these creatures to represent the perdurability of the Filipino practice of gathering together in times of feasting for the fact that Filipinos are known to be very sociable and associative individuals; a family bond that goes stronger from home to clans. The social spiders' behavior of hunting together is represented by a Filipino practice where we do potlucks. Similar to the spiders, we share our food and even casually invite our friends to attend occasions. My family has been joining some Filipino birthday parties, Christmas gatherings, and more in Taiwan, and just like in the Philippines, there's just a lot of food and drinks prepared for the entire village. My co-researchers and I share the same feelings when we take that opportunity to talk about any random topics which bring us lots and lots of laughter. Indeed, our camaraderie as Filipinos is heightened.



Figure 6. Social spiders, Credit: Chien C. Lee

Ano Daw?

In our case, we speak our second-native language, Ilokano, at home. We also use English when we speak to our daughter. When we call our families and friends in the Philippines, we use our native language, Kankana-ey, Ibaloi, Kalanguya. Indeed, using our own language even when we are living abroad is irreplaceable. During my second visit to the two families, they used their native languages. The first family used Tagalog while the second family spoke Ilokano. Every now and then, they used English.

Someone called the husband of the first family, and they used Tagalog. The wife of the second family also took time off to have a short video call to her classmates in the Philippines, and I overheard her using English and Ilokano.

The meaning of our lived experience in this theme of languages and communication is that our Filipino sensibilities are amplified through our verbal interaction with our own families and friends. Universally, communicating with each other brings us closer. However, Filipinos living abroad who talk to their families and friends, I believe, are at a different level. We have lengthy talks to almost anyone available at home in the Philippines where we give our praises, sermons, suggestions, and many more. Constant communication through any means possible with families and friends is a thing among Filipinos. The meaning of this reflection is symbolized by a species of spider called, “wolf spiders.” Wolf spiders are distinct for their unique ability to communicate with each other (Miller, 2017). But what makes these creatures’ ability truly represents the meaning of our lived experiences is that they do whatever it takes to find ways to keep the communication open and therapeutic. These spiders find a suitable place and use objects around them where they can use vibration to send out messages to each other. As Filipino transnational families, we haven’t stopped communicating with our families and friends in the Philippines, and the frequency of calling them has not really changed at all.



Figure 7. Wolf spiders, Credit: Phil Gates

Marami Kayo sa Bahay?

Our home here in Taiwan is our sanctuary and safe zone. We remain “Filipinos” at 100% as if we’re in the Philippines. Like in the Philippines, I do my responsibilities as a mother and wife. I do most of the household chores; in fact, I was a full-time mother and housewife for years. We cook our favorite Filipino dishes anytime we want, eat them the way we want,

and do our Filipino-like habits. This is our safe zone where we can express freely how we feel. Our homes here are a replication of what we have in the Philippines.

Indeed, the home atmosphere of the two families is warm and lively. Everyone acted naturally while I was there. There were a lot of laughs while we reminisced our fond memories when we first arrived here in Taiwan. As observed, I could tell that both families kept in touch closely with their Filipino families and friends. The roles of each member of my co-researchers are still influenced by Filipino tradition. The fathers make most of the decision making while the mothers, though they are also able to make decisions, still rely on their husbands in case of serious matters. Meanwhile, the children have to obey their parents, and show respect to the elderly.

The meaning of our lived experiences on the theme of family relationship, roles, responsibilities, and the place we build as our home is the thought that we get our strength to keep our Filipino identities remain in us from our relationships with each other as a family reinforced by the four walls we call home.

The symbol that I feel that best represents the meaning of our lived experiences on this theme is Darwin's bark spider. It has the ability and skill to build the strongest silks. Their webs are tough due to their elasticity, and the strongest webs that serve as sanctuary and safe zone for these creatures are a result of talent, hard work, and instinct (Choi, 2010). Any Filipino family squeezes every effort that they can to build a strong home --- a home that can withstand hardships of life. My co-researchers have full time jobs while their children go to school. Needless to say, the cost of living and education in Taiwan are higher than in the Philippines. As parents, we need to provide safe, fulfilling, and secured living conditions for our children and for us. Working at an international school is very competitive, and we are grateful that our teaching skills and other talents help us to keep our jobs. Luckily, we can find time on our busy days to be with our families. The durable silks of the bark spider are compared to every inch of our hard work; as a result, where the bark spider spins a solid web because of its silk, we too, are able to build a resilient comfortable home for our families.



Figure 8. Darwin's bark spider web, Credit: Matjaz Kuntner

Saan Ka Nagsimba?

My husband and I share the same religious beliefs and practices with my co-researchers. We belong to the Roman Catholic Church. Christianity has been a major influence to the majority of the Filipinos. Our beliefs, practices, and thinking are guided by the teachings of the Church; thus, it is not a surprise that we bring these influences with us here in Taiwan. Like my co-researchers, we share the same daily routine of our religious practices at home. There are Christian events and celebrations with similarities on how we do them in the Philippines that we occasionally participate in. Attending weekend church gatherings has also been religiously practiced by each family.

Individually and as a family, our source of strength and sobriety comes from Him through prayers and trust.

When I visited the two families, I was looking at some of the displays that they placed on top of their shelves and racks. There were small statues of Saints, images of Jesus Christ and Mother Mary, rosaries, votive candles, photos of family retreats, and Bible verses posted on some corners of the houses. All of these are typical things that you also see in a house of a Christian family in the Philippines.

The source that blesses and provides everything we do comes from our faith in God. This is the meaning of our lived experiences on the theme of religious practices and beliefs as Filipino transnational families. The symbol that I believe that represents such meaning is the unique golden orb web. It's the only web that shines even brighter when each silk is struck by sunlight. It has also been said that by just looking at it, it exudes a holy essence from its graceful presence to remind us

that there is power above us that miraculously makes the impossible possible (Harvey, 2017). Our spirituality has been well sustained in Taiwan as we continue to attend our religious activities. My co-researchers and I have strong reverence to the Roman Catholic, and the international school where some of us work is run by the Dominican sisters which supports our religious beliefs and practices. Thus, the golden orb web fits the representation of our relationship to God, and the practices that keep our spirituality remain zealous.



Figure 9. Golden orb web, Credit: Stacey Ann Alberts

Ano Ba Sa Inyo?

My husband and I belong to each of the two indigenous tribes of Benguet, Philippines. Back when we were young children, our indigenous ways were highly regarded by our families. There are a few practices that we continue to do, although modestly here in Taiwan like the way we prepare some of our dishes, and how frequently we use our native languages, but how we vigilantly regard some of our superstitious beliefs remains the same.

There was really not much to observe on this theme, but I really learned a few deep Tagalog words when I was in the first family's house. While I speak Ilokano, how the couple in the second family used some Ilokano words are difficult to understand. They use the "real" Ilokano variety while the people in the Cordillera region where I come from speak Cordilleran Ilokano which is way simpler and easier to understand. The meaning of our lived experiences on the theme of practicing our indigenous culture is keeping and treasuring our native roots wherever we are. To stay consistent with my choice of using spiders and their magnificent abilities as symbols of our lived experiences, I believed that the best representation of the said meaning would be the origin of spiders or the ancient spiders which were traced more than 300 million years ago, and a few fossils were found in Myanmar. Some experts believe that it is possible though unlikely that they continue to exist in the deepest and unexplored rainforests in Southeast Asia. This ancient spider is referred to as the "Chimerarachne" or the Chimera spider (Switek, 2018). What I also want to symbolize here is the importance of knowing, understanding, and keeping our indigenous culture. The Chimera spider is the most ancient spider species which exuded the behavior and traits of other spiders in our modern time. My co-researchers and I strive in making a few changes in our lifestyle as we are living and working overseas, yet none of us have forgotten our native culture.



Figure 10. Chimera spider, Credit: University of Kansas

Eidetic Insight

There are four essential insights that can be learned from the lived experiences of my co-researchers. The first one is that while it is the reality of Filipino transnational families that they are living in a foreign country, they never fail to keep their

identities afloat despite the need to regulate them when they're around the locals. The second essential insight is that their social identities remain intact whether they are in the Philippines or overseas as their social behaviors depend on their relationships and aspirations that somehow move their social life on constant decisions guided by their own ethos. The third essential insight is that their cultural identities respond greatly to their own traditional and indigenous ways of living which makes our Filipino traits layered doubly that makes our cultural identities enduring. Finally, the fourth essential insight captures that phenomenon of this study: there is a strong socio-cultural perdurability of Filipino transnational families maintained and protected by our distinct Filipino characteristics and by our instinctive and developed values, pride, relationship, experience, and spirituality.

The eidetic insight of the meaning of the lived experiences of Filipino transnational families in Taiwan is: the continuity and flow of our consciousness and being is molded by our traits and aspirations. To symbolize this eidetic insight, I choose the silk of a spider which is known for its strength and versatility. Spiders make use of different types of silks depending on various purposes. Thus, with the properties of the silk that determine its function, a spider is considered as one of the most fascinating and resilient creatures that can survive for many millennia.



Figure 11. Spider Silk, Credit: Jeevan Jose, 2015

The spider silk's properties like strength and extensibility makes the silk also known for its toughness. These characteristics of a silk enables the spider to build its nest lining and nest construction, guide lines, and alarm lines. With these silks' unsurpassed biophysicochemical properties and hybrid functions, the spider has a very high degree of adaptability. Similar to a Filipino transnational family, their social and cultural traits like "pakikipagkapwa, hiya, and relihiyoso" keep their Filipino identities enduringly strong with their main purpose of maintaining a happy, safe, and secured family while living in a foreign country. The silk's strength is akin to Filipinos' resilience, and its extensibility is the Filipinos' ability to be flexible in dealing with a foreign culture; thus making Filipino identities perdurable. The nest lining and nest construction refers to a spider's web and its uses to provide "sensory link" to the outside; the guide lines are silk threads that spiders use to find their way back home; and the alarm lines are also silk threads of the web that help them capture their prey or avoid their predators.

And so the physical analogy of the eidetic insight is that a Filipino who is living overseas makes use of the values he or she grew up with in order to become adaptable to the local culture he or she is in, and to keep his or her identity as a Filipino as an individual and member of a family. Certainly, he or she will not abandon his or her "being a Filipino" as it is a mark already engraved in his or her mind and heart; as expected, he or she will go back to his or her hometown in the Philippines eventually someday.

In a spiritual sense, the spider silk symbolizes the eidetic insight of the meaning of the lived experiences of Filipino transnational families in Taiwan: there is continuity and flow of consciousness and being molded by our traits and aspirations. As soon as we were born, and molded by our senses in an environment where we grew up in, we accumulate and develop anything that makes us who we are. Such accumulation and development never ends and they're being stored in us: our mind, heart and soul (consciousness and being). Despite changes in our preferences due to some internal and external circumstances, those accumulations that are stored in and developments that are experienced by our consciousness and being will continuously flow as they are interconnected and not replaced.

Implications of the Study

The implications of the study that are relevant to the lived experiences of Filipino transnational families' ways in keeping their Filipino identities intact and to the discipline of Applied Cosmic Anthropology are itemized below.

1. The lived experiences of transnational Filipino families' ways in keeping their Filipino identities intact in Taiwan generally imply that each one of us is a vessel of our identities strengthened by a holistic yet complicated interaction of our experiences, values, and ideals. Filipino families whether they are living in the Philippines or abroad carry many valuable lessons to learn from like resiliency, close family ties, nationalism and patriotism, and ingenuity to name a few. They are ambassadors of our culture. Moreover, the narratives of my co-researchers also highlight the reality that a Filipino overseas worker will always look back where he or she came from. Thus, Filipino communities through our embassies and other government and non-government agencies should strive to help Filipino citizens keep safe, healthy, and protected.
2. In relation to the discipline of Applied Cosmic Anthropology, phenomenological studies can also be conducted through group or familial interviews (storytelling), inclusion of children as participants as long as parents' consents are provided, inclusion of artefacts (objects and materials that are valuable evidences to support the study), and other approaches in presenting narratives like the use of thematic narrative and explanation building technique. The synthesis of this study's "sociocultural perdurability" also reveals that opportunities for students of Applied Cosmic Anthropology to come up with their own original concepts albeit unrefined should be encouraged.

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