Encountering death on Facebook: A digital ethnography of pandemic deaths and online mourning

Noreen H. Sapalo

Abstract

Referred to as *digital mourning* (Babis, 2020), the use of social networking sites to mourn seems to have become more prevalent amid the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic, causing observers to describe their Facebook timelines as resembling "virtual obituaries" (Cruz, 2021, para. 3). Using digital ethnography and computer-mediated discourse analysis, this paper illustrates the discourses on COVID-19 deaths as well as the digital mourning practices of Filipino Facebook users. The study found that Filipinos primarily tended to stick to their pre-digital cultural script and virtues when reacting to and mourning deaths on the social networking site. The discourses and reactions of Filipino FB users reflected and mimicked "offline" responses and reactions to death, thereby effectively mediatizing traditional death and mourning rituals. At the same time, newer mourning practices are also emerging in the digital sphere. Tied to the responses and comments regarding death were discourses on COVID-19 denial and folk medicine, as well as emotionally-laden articulations of alignment and disalignment with other Facebook users. These findings make apparent how Facebook news posts on COVID-19 deaths cultivate emotional exchanges and generate pockets of culture-specific networks of mourners and commiserators by circulating news of death, mediating discourses on death, and facilitating various expressions of mourning and commiseration. Through these networks, Facebook actively contributes to the reconfiguring and extending of offline mourning rituals in the digital sphere.

Keywords: COVID-19 deaths, digital platforms, Facebook, mourning

Plaridel Open Access Policy Statement

As a service to authors, contributors, and the community, *Plaridel: A Philippine Journal of Communication, Media, and Society* provides open access to all its content. To ensure that all articles are accessible to readers and researchers, these are available for viewing and download (except Early View) from the *Plaridel* journal website, provided that the journal is properly cited as the original source and that the downloaded content is not modified or used for commercial purposes. *Plaridel*, published by the University of the Philippines College of Mass Communication is licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/legalcode).

How to cite this article in APA

Sapalo, N. H. (2023). Encountering death on Facebook: a digital ethnography of pandemic deaths and online mourning . *Plaridel*. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.52518/2023-01sapalo

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in millions of deaths across the world, leaving scores of bereaved families and loved ones in its wake (Sapalo, 2021a). The stringent protocols and restrictions on mass gatherings have made it increasingly difficult for the living to pay respects to their dead—that is, to adhere to the prescribed social norms, practices, and rituals tied to death that societies have collectively developed through time. Many have been forced to find alternatives to traditional mourning rituals and practices. One alternative mode of mourning to emerge in recent decades is referred to as *digital mourning*, or the use of social networking sites to mourn (Babis, 2020). This practice, which seems to have become more prevalent in the past months, has caused observers to describe their Facebook timelines as resembling "virtual obituaries" (Cruz, 2021, para. 3).

Although death, grief, and mourning were already actively mediated on Facebook before the pandemic (Kohn et al., 2012), the use of social networking sites to express grief and mourning became more pronounced during the coronavirus lockdown (Kiel, 2020). Recent data states that 6 out of 10 people worldwide now use the internet, with 332 million people coming online for the first time in 2020 (Kemp, 2021). Meanwhile, in the Philippines, it was found that the number of internet users from the country increased by 4.2 million just between 2020 and 2021, bringing the total number of active social media users in the Philippines to 89 million (Kemp, 2021). Major factors behind this spike are the pandemic lockdowns, stay-at-home policies, and mobility restrictions (Lalu, 2020). Kemp (2021) also revealed that Filipinos spent an average of almost 11 hours per day on the internet in 2020 alone, making the country the "Social Media Capital of the World" for the sixth year in a row.

Digital practices, online reactions, and expressions of commiseration toward COVID-19 deaths are still a nascent and unfolding subject of inquiry. It is then important to investigate the ways that people talk about, deal with, and react to death when it is mediated by digital platforms. As Tamara Kohn et al. (2012) have stated, social scientists "have the challenging and fascinating task of understanding how notions of death and dying are replicated and refigured in and through social media and its affordances" (p. 228). Particularly in the Philippines, there remains a wide gap both in the local literature regarding pandemic deaths and on the mediatization of emotions such as grief and mourning. This research aims to address this gap by studying the emergent digital discourses and practices involving death as well as mourning and commiseration on Facebook in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mediatization of emotions

Mediatization is a concept and theory on the growing influence of media on culture and society (Hjarvard, 2008). It refers to the tendency of almost all parts of society to be influenced or impacted by the media (Klinger & Svensson, 2014). Indeed, new technologies have penetrated our lives at the personal, social, and global level (Döveling & Knorr, 2018). As a result, social relations are now "hybridized" (Serrano-Puche, 2016), since we have increasing presence both in offline and online spheres. On this topic, Amparo Lasén (2014) commented:

> New mediated practices resume past performances, speeches, values, interactions and situations: We do what we used to do (flirt, gossip, coordinate, stay, harass, etc.) but with new participants (phones, computers, apps, smartphones...) and in this reconfigured environment, different ways, different times, places, meanings and subjects emerge, involved in similar activities, relationships and interactions. (p. 10)

Due to these technologies, the flow of information has now become an indispensable part of our everyday lives (Livingstone, 2009). Moreover, according to M. Luisa Gómez-Martinez (2012), the emergence of digital technologies and our consequent interaction with them gave rise to cyberspaces and technospaces, realms where "the human being intersects with the machine" (p. 33). These cyberspaces, when viewed as an ontological device, is able to "produce new realities or to transform already existing ones by revealing new dimensions of the same" (p. 34). She added:

> Cyberspace has become a key element both for constructing and understanding the new subjectivities linked to the body, to materiality and virtuality, to the subject and the identity, to space and time and to all the factors that define Cyberculture as such. (p. 34)

Further, Catherine Bell et al. (2004) stated that the virtual communities present in these cyberspaces develop new forms of human interaction, which "heralds in turn the emergence of new cultural discourses by which such behavior can be conducted, understood and disseminated" (p. xiii). However, emerging technologies do not only spawn an exchange of rational information and opinions, but also an exchange of emotions (Döveling & Sommer, 2018. Since they "foster a globally mediatized emotional exchange," new technologies "construct pockets of culture-specific communities of affective practice" (p. 1).

Much like Katrin Döveling et al. (2018), Javier Serrano-Puche (2016) argued that the digital realm is an emotional space. Like traditional social life, digital social life is a "space-time regime" that is "accompanied by a corresponding emotional regime" (p. 20), that even the mere usage of digital technologies evoke emotion in people:

> By becoming 'archives of feelings', i.e. 'repositories of feelings and emotions, which are encoded not only in the context of the texts themselves but in the practices that surround their production and reception'...the device awakes an affectionate response in the owner, usually characterised by attachment or dependence. (2016 p. 6)

While Döveling et al. (2018) contested that the "affective flows" in the digital terrain may have different "logics" than that of emotional flows outside the digital terrain, they make it clear that they do not subscribe to a binary or a dualistic mode of thinking about the online and the offline realms:

> On the contrary, we view the online as embedded in the offline and the practices in these realms as being intertwined and mutually constitutive. However, it is worth considering how these spaces, respectively, might foster divergent conditions for emotional resonance among distant individuals and how the technological affordances of new media facilitate the speed of dispersion of emotion as well as help construct alliances of emotional and relational congruence. (p. 7)

In a similar vein, Korina Giaxoglou and Döveling (2018) stated that the study of "social mediatization" or the "mediatization of emotion and affect" online must pay attention to digital practices and the formation of "affective publics" or networked publics which "are mobilized and connected, identified, and potentially disconnected through expressions of sentiment" (Papacharissi, 2016, p. 311, as cited in Giaxoglou & Döveling, 2018).

Serrano-Puche (2016) explained that although one might argue that the digital realm is somehow "emotionally colder" and that it "impairs the expression of emotion" (p. 11) due to the absence or lack of bodily and face-to-face interaction, literature actually disproves this. Daantje Derks et al.'s (2008) study on computer-mediated forms of communication, for example, found that positive emotions are expressed at the same level as face-to-face interactions, while intense negative emotions are expressed even more overtly in digital media than in face-to-face scenarios.

The mediatization of death

Johanna Sumiala (2013) identifies four main functions of traditional death and mourning rituals: these social practices help us (1) cope with loss, (2) facilitate the process of dying and transitioning into the "afterlife," (3) aid us in coping with our fear of death, and (4) help us manage the social and cultural consequences of death. Barbara Myerhoff (1984, as cited in Sumiala, 2013) also highlighted the importance of rituals in "all areas of uncertainty, anxiety, impotence, and disorder" and states that the repetitive character of rituals provides "a message of pattern and predictability" (p. 151).

What, then, happens to rituals when they are mediatized by the secular, "modern" world? Catherine Bell (1997) admitted that in contemporary societies that are profoundly mediatized, ritual is consequently and markedly impacted by media. She argues that the media greatly alter how the ritual is performed and experienced by individuals and communities. Meanwhile, Simon Cottle (2006) coined the term "mediatized rituals" to underscore the fact that the media, in the general sense, are not merely featuring rituals such as deaths; but rather, the media are "performatively enacting" them. He suggests that the role of the media as a "ritual agent" is most observable in connection with public death where accounts of tragic, violent deaths are reported on mainstream media and social network sites. Additionally, Sumiala (2013) stated that public death is pervasive and is "performed" in various media platforms and genres that range from news to works of fiction:

> We watch people die all the time, participate in their funerals and empathize with the loss of human life, whether 'real' or 'fictional' (cf. Seaton 2005). In a word, the mediatized performance of public loss plays a significant role in constituting the ritualization of public death today. (p. 94)

Sumiala (2013) added that even rituals of death are mediatized, since:

> [T]hey are mediated by the media; but at the same time the media contribute to shaping rituals of death in many ways. Rituals of death happen in and through the media: they are circulated from one media to another and they often overlap in the media. Viewers, too, are drawn into the catastrophe via ritualization taking place in and via the media. (p. 97)

As Amanda Lagerkvist (2013) has noted, from being medicalized in the past decades, "death has made a mediated return to the public sphere" (p. 9).

This "ritualization" in and through the media makes social network sites important spaces for mourning (Wagner, 2018). Thus, as an emerging sociocultural phenomenon, Jessa Lingel (2013) asserted that, "it is instructive to place online grief in a larger context of mourning rituals" (p. 190).

Digital mourning on Facebook

Jed Brubaker et al. (2013) stated that Facebook expands death-related experiences in three specific ways. The first one is temporal expansion, where there is an increase in the immediacy, availability, and breadth of information about the deceased that the social media site can provide rather quickly, alongside "everyday" social media topics and experiences. Secondly, the use of Facebook to talk or post about death, even at a distance, results in "spatial expansion," since the social media site dissolves geographical barriers and allows bereaved friends and families wherever they may be to participate in memorials and commemorations of the dead through live videos, status updates, comments on posts and photos, and the like. Whereas traditional face-to-face wakes are circumscribed in time, space, and participants (Kohn et al. 2012), digital mourning practices do not necessarily have the same limitations or characteristics. Lastly, Facebook also contributes to the "social expansion" of death, which results from "the broad dissemination of information and grief practices throughout these social network sites" (p. 159). Since Facebook users often are "Facebook friends" with different sets of people—from relatives and friends to casual acquaintances—this has led to what Alice Marwick and danah boyd (2010) termed "context collapse," where people from multiple social circles and contexts are collapsed together, forming "commonly distinct audiences" (Marwick and boyd, 2010, p. 2) in the digital realm of social network sites. Additionally, social expansion happens due to the ability of users to accommodate and include the deceased in conversations and through digital memorialization even after their death.

Building on Brubaker et al.'s (2013) work, Wagner (2018) proposed a fourth type of expansion of death-related practices on Facebook, namely "cultural expansion." She suggested that both the nature of mourning on digital platforms and the use of social media are dependent on the cultural world in which a user is embedded in, thus, there are culture-specific norms for mourning—that is, "culture-specific customs and rituals" that are core to the way people mourn, express their grief, and remember the dead" (p. 2). Wagner adds that these culture-specific mourning practices are constantly put on display and negotiated through and within social media, leading to the "expansion in the array of rituals and practices that might be adapted or neglected for mourning" (p. 2).

Offline and online mourning in the Philippines

Many scholars have noted the varying cultural practices and reactions of Filipinos toward death. Mary Catherine Bateson (1968), for example, found that there was a stark bicultural contrast between Americans and Filipinos when it comes to death. Whereas Filipinos tended to behave in a way which Americans might describe as "brutally frank" in their expression of emotions, Bateson states that Americans "can only be called euphemistic and indirect, going to great lengths to avoid emotional outbreaks" (p. 612). She was also able to observe the degree of sociality of Filipinos during wakes or *paglalamay*, and noted how in the same room, the kin and guests of the dead "gathered, expressing condolences and offering money and then standing and gossiping, the young boys and girls playing word games and flirting at the door, the gambling tables and barbecues set up around the outside of the house" (p. 610). Maria Caridad Isidro (1978) also observed how death instantly makes the house of the bereaved family the center of focus and activity, since close relatives and members of the community join the immediate family in the various preparations. The head of the family or an elder "goes to the church to have the news announced to the town by the ringing of the church bells in a particular way known as the *dubla*" while "others attend to the sponging and dressing of the corpse" (p. 363). Additionally, Isidro noted that the *lamayan* or *lamay* [wake] instantly becomes a reunion of relatives and friends, where the passing of a family member becomes a "more compelling reason for a homecoming than a fiesta or other festive gatherings, such as a baptism or marriage. It is an event where they are expected, where 'they will be missed if they do not come'" (p. 371). Sabanban-Yu (2009) also importantly pointed out that Filipinos do not die alone. In contrast, death in the Philippines "is a matter of community – death creates community" (p. 233). This rings true even in the experiences of indigenous communities in the Philippines (Cagat, 2015).

Since most mourning rituals require the physical togetherness of relatives and family friends, it comes as no surprise that the COVID-19 pandemic, together with the stringent health protocols and restrictions on movement, has sorely affected the ability of Filipinos to mourn in culturally accepted ways (Sapalo, 2021a). To cope with their situation during the height of the pandemic, Filipinos engaged in digital mourning, or the use of social media platforms to mourn (Sapalo, 2021b). However, this is not an entirely new phenomenon. Prior to the pandemic, Deby Babis (2020) researched about the digital mourning practices of Filipino migrant workers on Facebook where she found two different practices and "norms" of digital mourning. She found that the death of a caregiver's employer is grieved upon and shared in his/her personal Facebook account. Meanwhile, the death of a

fellow migrant worker is grieved and shared in private community groups which other caregivers and migrant workers are members of, and which gather thousands of comments of condolences. She calls the first practice ”personal digital grief,” while the latter she terms ”communal digital grief.” She differentiates the two:

> Personal Digital Mourning results from a personal knowledge of the bereaved with the deceased person, expressing his/her pain digitally. Off-line grief is thus transferred to the on-line world through posts shared by the bereaved, which therapeutically contribute to their grieving process. This process is reinforced by the digital support that the bereaved then receive from the community...Communal Digital Mourning, on the other hand, is a form of communal grief for a deceased person who is not personally known by the members of the Facebook group. (p. 11)

Babis (2020) points out that these communal post-death rituals, which strengthens feelings of belonging and community, are a new mode of mourning which does not necessarily unfold in the offline world. Aside from Babis’ study, inquiry into the modes and practices of digital mourning of Filipinos, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, have been lacking.

Digital ethnography as research design

In studying the discourses of pandemic deaths and mourning on Facebook, this research makes use of digital ethnography which employs a mixed methods approach consisting of in-situ observation and computer-aided discourse analysis. Robert Kozinets (1997) defined digital ethnography as a method which draws upon textual and visual computer-mediated communications or network-based data to achieve an ethnographic understanding of a social experience or cultural phenomenon in the digital sphere. It “captures archival and emergent social and individual online interactions” (Jong, 2017, page?), allows scholars an opportunity to study novel or developing social phenomena or areas of social life (Nind et al., 2011 Boellstorf, 2013), and enhances their “understandings of meanings, and how they come to be assigned to technology and, the cultural experiences that enable and are enabled by the digital medium” (Hine, 2000, as cited in Kaur-Gill & Dutta, 2017, p. 2). Additionally, Postill & Pink (2012) emphasize the relevance of social media ethnography as a method that “brings new routes to knowledge” (p. 126). Hence, the goal of digital ethnography is to “try to understand relational and behavioral patterns and orders in the digital sphere” (Kaur-Gill & Dutta, 2017, p. 2).

Research methods and principles utilized by anthropologists doing digital ethnographies have been adopted in this study. For example, following firstname Miller (2013), this researcher intends to abandon the idea of a distinct or stand-alone "virtual" domain and the simplistic idea of the "dualism" of online and offline "life." Instead, the study treats the online sphere "as integral to everyday communication and self-representation as is the telephone or television" (Miller, 2013, p. 10). However, as much as the "online" and "offline" are porous and continuous (boyd, 2014), certain elements of "traditional" ethnographic research like the notion of a geographically confined or territorially bounded "field" may not be applicable to the ethnographic study of the digital sphere and has in fact been challenged in previous decades (see Gupta & Ferguson, 1997; Appadurai 1990; Marcus 1995). For Christine Hine (2000), places of ethnographic research in the digital sphere are negotiated and constructed by ethnographers through their practices; this is similar to Sarah Pink's (2009) idea of "ethnographic places" not being bounded localities but a collection of things that have been intertwined through the research process. Meanwhile, Richard Rogers (2009) asserted that researchers must develop methods organic to the digital environment and media rather than simply adapting offline qualitative techniques to gathering data online. Hence, in addressing the question of the "field" in online spaces, this researcher heeds Jenna Burell's (2009) advice of conceiving the "online" field site as a network comprised of observable connections between and among participants. Burell, following George Marcus's (1995) concept of "multi-sited ethnographies" and "para-sites," also recommends identifying "entry points," instead of searching for "sites" as anthropologists do in traditional ethnography. In this case, the entry points of this study are (1) the online interviews; (2) the public Facebook pages of established news outfits such as ABS-CBN News, GMA News, Rappler, INQUIRER.net, and CNN Philippines; and (3) the public Facebook comments on these posts.

Discourse analysis

As part of this digital ethnography, this researcher employed a computer-mediated discourse analysis on 18 public Facebook news posts of mainstream media outfits which contained multimedia content about COVID-19 deaths. Discourse analysis is a research method concerned with an analysis of written or spoken language and its use in a specific social context (Salkind, 2010). A minimum of two representative Facebook posts per month were selected over a span of eight months (from March to December 2020) from the public Facebook pages of major news outfits. The 18 posts included hundreds or thousands of multi-media reactions,

comments, and responses to the posts—all of which demonstrated various types of reactions to death and expressions of mourning or commiseration among Filipinos.

All comments on public Facebook posts were gathered using an automated tool written in Python (see also Guillermo, 2021). HTTP Archive Format (HAR) files corresponding to the Facebook posts were downloaded. The HAR files were then processed using a tool written in Python. The data extracted was formatted into a spreadsheet file which contained (1) the anonymized names of the posters, (2) their gender, (3) the total number of reactions, (4) the number of different reactions, and (5) the texts of the comments. Non-textual elements (like emojis and GIFs) were removed from the text data. Since meaning is prioritized in the analysis, stop-words were not filtered out and incorrect spellings were not altered to maintain the intelligibility of the text.

The posts were selected in accordance with the following criteria: (1) the post must have more than 1,000 reactions and at least 100 comments; (2) the post must have been posted from March 2020 (when COVID-19 was declared as a global pandemic and the Philippines was put on lockdown) to December 2020, covering a period of eight months; and (3) the post must be about Filipinos who have died from COVID-19.

Table 1. Facebook posts data set

	DATA SET: FACEBOOK POSTS				
Code	Date of Posting	Category	News Outfit	Type of Media	Date of Retrieval
P01	March 11	First Filipino Death	CNN Philippines	Photo	02/10/2021
P02	March 15	Additional 11 COVID-19 deaths	ABS-CBN News	News report	01/12/2021
P03	March 31	World War 2 Veteran	ABS-CBN News	Photo	01/12/2021
P04	April 20	Former Senator Heherson Alvarez	CNN Philippines	Photo	01/12/2021
P05	May 8	Muslim burial	GMA News	News report	01/12/2021
P06	May 11	Filipina mother in the US	GMA News	News report	02/10/2021
P07	June 18	Father and Police Officer	GMA Public Affairs	Video	02/10/2021
P08	June 21	50 OFWs to be buried in Saudi	GMA News	News report	02/10/2021

	DATA SET: FACEBOOK POSTS				
Code	Date of Posting	Category	News Outfit	Type of Media	Date of Retrieval
P09	July 25	Young female athlete	ABS-CBN News	Video	02/10/2021
P10	August 11	Former COMELEC Chair	Rappler	Photo	02/10/2021
P11	August 12	Former Manila Mayor	GMA News	Video	04/01/2021
P12	August 26	Former Archbishop	Rappler	Photo	04/01/2021
P13	September 6	Youtuber/ Influencer	ABS-CBN News	Photo	05/21/21
P14	September 22	Elderly Parents of PGH Spokesperson	ABS-CBN News	Photo	03/05/2021
P15	September 25	Young Male Nurse	GMA News	News report	03/25/2021
P16	October 25	Batangas Mayor	Inquirer.net	News article	03/25/2021
P17	November 1	Undas Com-memoration and tribute to front-liners	ABS-CBN News	Photo	04/10/2021
P18	December 17	Pres. Duterte's friend	Inquirer.net	News article	04/10/2021

Upon selection of the Facebook posts to be used in the study, this researcher took the time to "immerse" herself in the comments section of each of the 18 posts and duly observed conspicuous patterns and significant attributes. This researcher wrote down (1) the details of the post, (2) the caption, (3) the reactions to the post, (4) the number of comments or shares, and (5) anything that was easily observable. The study focused on doing an integrated observation and analysis of the ecology of multimedia elements, posts, reactions, and comments. However, the main basis of analysis came from the textual data derived from the comments on the post, as well as the open coded data from my field notes.

This researcher then used AntConc to process the large amount of textual data (comments) and prepare it for discourse analysis. AntConc is a freeware tool that helps to find word clusters (frequency patterns of word sequences), word concordance, and/or n-grams (sequences of n words) within a specific corpus or document. Using these types of digital tools to aid in discourse analysis allow for the understanding of phenomena that are not easily or readily observable; it also allows for a deeper and richer analysis

of the ethnographic data by allowing researchers to quantify the frequency of words and their co-occurrences in a large textual corpus. According to Macgilchrist and Van Hout (2011), the close analysis of language and discourses facilitated by digital tools enable “the tying down of ethnography to concrete situated instances of practice” (p. 6). Following David Silverman (1999), they argued that the entire process yields an “aesthetic of smallness and slowness,” which “can give rise to surprising features of social data and lead to sophisticated analyses and theorization” (p. 414).

Using AntConc, two types of lists were generated for each Facebook post: A wordlist and an n-gram list. The wordlist counts all the words in the data set (in this case, the Facebook comments for each post) and presents them in an ordered list that shows which words were used the most frequently in a particular data set / Facebook post. The table below, for example, shows the word list generated in AntConc using all the Facebook posts selected for discourse analysis. The word “rest” ranks fifth overall and appears 1,342 times in the data set.

Meanwhile, n-grams are a sequence of contiguous, co-occurring words within a given data set. Examples of this are ‘rest in peace,’ a 3-gram (three words that co-occur together), and ‘condolence to the bereaved family,’ a 5-gram (five words that co-occur together). Both 3-gram and 5-gram were found to occur frequently in the data set. This study generated 2-grams, 3-grams, 4-grams, and 5-grams for each Facebook post. However, a survey of these n-gram lists suggests that sufficient insights and themes could easily be identified through the 3-gram and 5-gram lists, and thus, analysis was limited to these.

The wordlists, 3-gram, and 5-gram lists were all manually studied. Salient or key patterns were highlighted, and insights were recorded as field notes. The initial key patterns were then coded accordingly. The codes were reconciled with the preliminary field notes written before the analysis of these lists. Patterns and themes were also recorded and labeled.

Together, the wordlists and n-gram lists aided in analyzing phenomena and large-scale discourses that would not be readily apparent to a researcher who merely reads the material (Baker 2006; Touileb & Salway, 2014). However, Touileb and Salway (2014) have noted that automated or computer-assisted analyses are not sufficient, and that it must be complemented with other forms of analysis and a consideration of the data set’s context. Thus, the field notes and in-situ observation are advantageous in providing a more holistic and comprehensive understanding of the research topic.

Discourses on pandemic deaths

The following section discusses the discourses, main themes, and patterns that emerged from an analysis of the data set. It aims to illustrate how Filipino FB users reacted to and expressed commiseration over public news of COVID-19 deaths on Facebook. The 18 FB posts that make up the data set will be referred to in this section by its code (see Table 1). Quotations were paraphrased to ensure untraceability and anonymity. Keywords and word clusters that appear or are related to each theme will also be featured.

Condoling with the bereaved and expressing wishes for the dead

Much like the offline responses of Filipinos to news of death, expressing sympathies and extending comfort to the bereaved family members of the deceased seem to be the most standard reaction to news of death on Facebook. At times, they also directly address the dead on Facebook. Filipinos have several ways of doing this on the platform, all of which involve the act of leaving comments on news posts: they extend their condolences to the bereaved and directly express their sadness and grief for the loss, and at times, they subtly prescribe what the bereaved can/should and/or share their own experiences of loss. They also offer prayers and words of encouragement and hope to the grieving family. Meanwhile, and usually occurring alongside comments which contain expressions of sadness and condolences, Facebook users also speak directly to the dead and offer wishes of peace or eternal rest.

In extending their sympathies, Filipino Facebook users most often comment the keyword "condolence," which appears in all posts except P02 (Additional 11 Deaths) and P18 (President Duterte's Friend). Its non-appearance in P02 and P18 may be due to the fact that (1) P02 had no specific object of grief, while (2) P18 was appropriated by Facebookusers as a platform to raise comments and points directed to the Philippine President. "Condolence" ranks 17th in the aggregate wordlist and occurs 483 times in the entire data set. It usually occurs with the word "family" (as in "condolence to the family"), which also figures in all posts except P02 (Additional 11 Deaths) and P17 (Undas), both of which are posts about anonymous deaths. It also occurs rather frequently (24 times) with the word "prayers" (as in "prayers and condolences to the family"). "Condolence" also appeared 8 times alongside the Tagalog word *naiwan* (left behind; as in "condolence *sa kanyang naiwan"*) which often refers to the bereaved family that the deceased has left behind. "Condolences," meanwhile, appear in the data set 246 times and often comes before the words "my" ("my condolences"), "our" ("our condolences"), or "deepest" ("deepest condolences").

Notably, the Tagalog word *pakikiramay* [I sympathize] which comes from the root word *-ramay*' or *damay* [sympathize] does appear in the data set, but only has 25 occurrences. Much like how "condolence" usually appears with the word "family," variations of the word damay appear frequently with the word "*pamilya*" [family]. However, "pamilya" also tends to appear alongside condolence (as in "condolence *sa pamilya*"). It occurs in 17 posts and is used 78 times throughout the data set. The frequent occurrence of the keywords "family" and its Tagalog equivalent "pamilya" alongside expressions of sympathy and condolences demonstrates that the notion of family is central to death for Filipino Facebookusers. These findings from the discourse analysis are validated by the data from the qualitative survey: When asked about what they usually commented on public news posts about COVID-19 deaths, most of the survey respondents answered that they usually type in the word "condolences." This is followed by comments with words or phrases like "nakikiramay" or "pakikiramay sa pamilya," and "prayers."

Aside from offering sympathies to the grieving family, Filipino Facebook users also tend to express their wishes for the dead through the comments. An example of this is the frequent usage of the key phrase "rest in peace." Sometimes preceded by the words "may" and "you" ("may you rest in peace"), this phrase is often directed to the deceased and can be found in all the 18 posts in the data set. The aggregated wordlist also shows these three words in the top 10 most frequently used words in the data set ("in" ranks 4th overall and occurs 1,495 times in the entire data set; "rest" ranks 5th overall and occurs 1,342 times; and "peace" ranks 9th overall and occurs 1,085 times). R.I.P. and RIP, abbreviated versions and variants of "rest in peace" also occur frequently (536 times and 45 times, respectively) in the data set. Aside from these, other variants of wishes for the dead usually begin with the keyword "eternal," which appear in the data set 78 times and is usually followed by the words "light" ("may eternal light"), "peace" ("rest in eternal peace"), "repose" ("eternal repose of the soul"), and "rest" ("eternal rest grant unto thee").

Meanwhile, the Tagalog word "nawa" also figure in this cluster of keywords expressing wishes for the dead. "Nawa" is an Austronesian word that relates to the world of spirits (Blust, 1995). It is close to the Tagalog "kaluluwa" [soul] and is often used to express a wish. "Nawa'y," a contraction of the Tagalog words "nawa" and "ay" and a variant of "nawa" appears in P05 (Muslim Burial) and P14 (PGH Spox Elderly Parents), while "naway" ("nawa" without the apostrophe) appears in P02 (Additional 11 Deaths) and P08 (50 OFWs in Saudi). Occurring frequently with "nawa" are other Tagalog words such as "langit" [heaven] and "kaluluwa" [soul].

Examples of phrases that include a mix of these words are found in P08 (50 OFWs in Saudi) ("nawa ay makarating kayo sa langit" [I wish you get to heaven] and P17 (Undas) ("nawa ay sumalangit ang inyong kaluluwa" [I wish your soul ends up in heaven]). Striking here is how the keywords and phrases used by Filipino Facebookusers to express sympathy and wishes for the dead are usually written in English. Although Tagalog words like "pakikiramay'/'nakikiramay," "nawa," "langit," and "kaluluwa" – words that are often used together to express wishes for the deceased, do appear in the data set, their frequencies ("pakikiramay" = 2; "nakikiramay" = 18; "nawa" = 4; "langit" = 13; "kaluluwa" = 12) are remarkably lower as compared to the English words used to convey similar sentiments.

Some Filipino Facebook users also tended to share their personal experiences of loss in an attempt to commiserate with the bereaved. Examples of this can be found in P07 (Father and Police Officer): "Condolence sa family. Nawalan din ako ng magulang a few years ago … Grabe nga ang pain" [Condolence to the family. I also lost a parent a few years ago. The pain was too much] and in P10 (Young female athlete): "My condolence to the family. I know how you feel because I also lost my daughter years ago." Other users were also inclined to dispense advice to the bereaved, as seen in P07 (Father and Police Officer): "Dapat huwag ka malungkot, ipagdasal mo na lang ang tatay mo dahil nasa langit na siya."[You should not be sad, just pray for your father because he is now in heaven]. These were usually followed by comments that encouraged the bereaved to stay strong despite their loss. Particularly in P07, where the bereaved were children who lost a father, the phrase "God is good" appears 8 times and was followed by words of encouragement and advice (i.e., "God is good, just pray to him."). The word "strong," often preceded by the words "stay" or "be" (as in "stay strong" or "be strong") as a means to encourage the bereaved to maintain strength despite their loss, also appear in the data set 69 times. But it most often occurred in P07 (Father and Police Officer; 51 times) and P14 (PGH Spox Elderly Parents; 12 times) – where the bereaved are children of the deceased. Other notable words that appear several times in the data set which signify encouragement for the bereaved are "tatag" [strong] (appears 16 times) and "laban" [fight] (appears 31 times).

Speaking good things about the dead

In EPICAC (1968), Kurt Vonnegut's short story that features a fictional supercomputer, the human protagonist uttered the Latin phrase *De mortuis nihil nisi bonum* [Of the dead, [say] nothing but good] upon the passing of his machine friend. This mortuary aphorism, variously translated as "speak no ill of the dead," was first recorded in Greek and was supposedly first

uttered by Chilon of Sparta (ca. 600 BC). Nowadays found in many cultures across the world, it emphasizes the almost universal virtue of respecting the dead. Filipinos are no exception here. In fact, in the Philippine's Revised Penal Code (Republic Act No. 3815), blackening or dishonoring the memory of the dead is considered libelous and therefore a criminal offense.

Even in the digital sphere, Filipinos continue to uphold this virtue, as found in an analysis of their Facebook comments on public news posts about Filipinos dying from COVID-19. In particular, Filipinos have a tendency to leave praises or compliments for the dead, especially lauding those who they deemed were of service to the country (e.g., politicians, war veteran, frontliners). If they knew the dead through associations or because of personal ties and experiences, they usually bring this up in the comments, too. After sharing positive comments about the deceased, Facebook users go on to affirm that they indeed have led a meaningful life, and thus, can finally rest in peace. Usually found along these strings of comments are notions of and beliefs in the afterlife.

Notions of service were perceptible throughout the data set. These comments are usually marked by the keyword "salute," an expression of admiration, which appears 49 times in the data. It was most used in P07 (Father and Police Officer; 14 times) but can also be found in P03 (WW2 Veteran; 13 times), P04 (Former Senator; 6 times), P12 (Former Manila Mayor), P15 (Young Male Nurse; 2 times), P09 (Comedian and Frontliner; once). All the posts where the word 'salute' appears in are about Filipinos whose former jobs were perceived or presented in the post to be related to being of service to the country. In these posts, the comments with 'salute' are followed by phrases that characterize the deceased and/or his traits related to his former job. Examples of these are "Highest salute to a legendary war veteran" (P03), "Salute to Mayor Lim!" (P12), "Salute to a great political leader!" (P04), "Salute! Thank you for your dedication and sacrifice" (P15). In P07, (Father and Police Officer), "salute" is addressed to both the deceased ("A dedicated father and policeman. Salute!") and his bereaved children ("salute to you children, for being brave!"). "Salute" also appears in P05 (Muslim Burial; 6 times), although it is directed to Muslim frontliners (and not the deceased) who assisted in burial rituals for Muslims who died of the virus. In P17 (Undas), it also appears once, but is also directed to COVID-19 frontliners who passed away. Meanwhile, saludo, the Tagalog equivalent of "salute" appears a total of 24 times, and is usually followed by the words "ako" (as in "saludo ako" [I salute you], "kami" (as in "saludo kami" [we salute you]), or "po" (as in "saludo po"). Interestingly, the way it is used in P05 (Muslim Burial) does not fall under notions of service. Instead, it functioned as a compliment directed to Muslim Facebook

commenters who, in the process of engaging other commenters, stood their ground regarding respecting Muslim mortuary rituals that uphold burials and prohibit any form of cremation even amidst the pandemic: "Saludo ako sa inyong paninindigan lalo tungkol sa insensitibong paglilibing sa mga namatay" [I salute your principled stand regarding burying your dead].

Directly related to "salute" and saludo are the keywords "thank" (occurs 103 times) and its Tagalog equivalent salamat (64 times), "service" (42) and its Tagalog equivalent serbisyo (5), "country" (61) and its Tagalog equivalent bansa (6). These words are often used together to convey gratitude for the service rendered by the dead to the country, as in "thank you for your service to the country" or in Tagalog, "salamat sa inyong serbisyo para sa bansa." However, the word "country" was used in a rather different context in P05 (Muslim burial) and P08 (50 OFWs in Saudi), both of which contain comments and exchanges about Muslim funerary customs. Bansa in these two posts also did not refer exclusively to the Philippines, and instead were used to refer to other Muslim countries as examples of nations with strict adherence to Muslim funerary rituals: "Kahit saang bansa, ang Muslim dapat inililibing ng kapwa Muslim. Bawal sunugin ang bangkay, ayan ang utos ni Allah" [No matter where they are, deceased Muslims must be buried by fellow Muslims. Cremating the body is prohibited, that is Allah's order]. Other instances when bansa was used in these posts was when Facebook users commented about what they thought in relation to existing pandemic protocols: "Sana mauwi ang namatay, kahit ash na lang. Basta maiuwi lang sa bansa" [I hope their bodies can be taken home, even just their ashes. As long as they can go home].

Statements about the deceased that are not marked by "salute" and its variants or related words but still signify notions of service also appear in the data set. Facebook commenters who knew the deceased personally or had personal encounters and experiences with the deceased usually bring this up in their comments. In P04 (Former Senator), for example, commenters described the deceased in various ways, calling him "one of the Pillars of Philippine democracy" or a "champion of Agrarian reform programs." This can also be seen in P11 (Former COMELEC Chair), where the dead was called "a man of honor and dignity" and "isa sa pinakamagaling na COMELEC chairman" [one of the best COMELEC chairman]. Some commenters also bring up government projects spearheaded by the deceased, like in the case of P12 (former Manila Mayor): "Dahil kay Mayor, anim ang ospital sa Maynila. Good job Mayor!" [Because of Mayor, there are six hospitals in Manila. Good job Mayor!].

Some commenters who personally knew the dead tended to directly address the deceased or his/her relatives, as in the case of P03 (WW2

Veteran): “Rest in peace and salute po! Wala nang ka-mahjong ang aking tatay” [Rest in peace and salute! My father won’t have a playmate in mahjong anymore]. Other commenters share their good memories or encounters with the dead, like in the case of P04 (Former Senator) where the commenter seemed to be have been guided in his career by the deceased: “My deepest condolences and sympathy to the family of the late Senator who in a way has helped me personally along the way in my career path. I’m in deep gratitude to you. May your soul rest in peace.” In the same post (P04) was another commenter who knew the deceased to be a suki [frequent visitor / buyer of goods] of their store: “Rest in peace po, sir. Isa po kayo sa mga customer namin na madalas bumili ng books” [Rest in peace, sir. You were one of our avid customers who always buys books].

It was also observed that a few commenters who shared about the good deeds of the deceased ended their comments with the phrase “mission accomplished.” This phrase appears in P12 (Former Manila Mayor), P13 (Former Archbishop), and in P09 (Comedian and Frontliner). Particularly in P13, “mission accomplished” followed phrases such as “Rest in peace now in God” and comments about his good deeds such as “Your deeds stay in our minds.” Meanwhile, in P09, a commenter states, “Your life on earth was meaningful, you accomplished your mission well.” These comments imply that accomplishing one’s “mission” in life (being a good person or living a life of service) would mean that they deserve / can rest well in the afterlife, thereby foregrounding beliefs about the connection of good deeds and a peaceful death.

Other beliefs about the afterlife also occur in the data set, but do so infrequently. These are captured by the words langit (heaven; appears 13 times) and kaluluwa (soul; appears 12 times). In P17 (Undas), for example, the two words are often used together to express a wish for the dead (“Mapunta sana sa langit ang inyong kaluluwa” [May your soul go to heaven]) or to affirm that they indeed are already in the afterlife (“Ang kaluluwa nila ay nasa langit na” [Their souls are now in heaven]).

Criticisms about the dead also appear, but are often few and far between. More notable are the replies of other Facebook users to these criticisms. In P11 (Former Manila Mayor) for example, a comment reads: “Finally, namatay din! Sakim ‘yan at marami ginawang pagnanakaw sa bayan” [Finally, he is dead! He was greedy and stole so much from the nation!]. The comment gained three angry reactions and four replies from other Facebook users. One user answered: “’Wag ka ganyan, be afraid of karma! Instead of badmouthing ipagdasal mo na lang, masama ang magsalita ng ganyan. Digital na ang karma ngayon” [Don’t say things like that, be afraid of karma! Instead of badmouthing, just pray for him. It’s bad to talk about

the dead like that]. Another user insisted: "Igalang mo naman ang namatay!" [Respect the dead!]. In P09 (Young Female Athlete), a commenter blamed President Duterte and called his COVID-19 response a failure. Another Facebook user replied to the comment and said: "The family is grieving, please don't mention politics here." These comments indicate that offline norms when it comes to death—specifically, avoiding speaking ill of the dead and treating death as political, also extend to online platforms. Norms in this study are defined as the "grammar" of social interactions; it can be implicitly or explicitly agreed on and it guides the conduct, behavior and beliefs of a certain group (Burnett & Bonnici, 2003). These norms are verified and supplemented by the findings from the qualitative survey, which attempted to do an initial exploration of the norms governing the mourning practices of Filipino Facebook users. It asked the respondents about what Facebook users should and should not comment on public news posts concerning Filipinos who died from COVID-19. Many of the respondents selected "Condolences," "Prayers for the family," and "Rest in Peace" as the most appropriate comments to public Facebook posts about COVID-19 deaths. Meanwhile, majority of the survey respondents think that any comment not directly related to the deceased should be avoided, as well as jokes and political comments. However, a minority of respondents who think that commenting political opinions on Facebook posts about COVID-19 deaths is appropriate believe so because to them, COVID-19 is political.

Expressing *hinayang* (regret) or *awa* (pity)

Apart from extending condolences and sharing positive memories or comments about the deceased, some Filipino Facebook users also express panghihinayang [regret] and awa [pity] especially towards news of death of Filipinos who are deemed too young or too prolific, as well as news posts about Overseas Filipino Workers dying from the virus. The keyword sayang, which can mean "what a waste," appears 40 times in the data set and is used in several contexts. It occurs most frequently in P10 (Young female athlete; 15 times), usually alongside the words bata [young] and nakakalungkot [too sad] ("Condolence. Sayang siya na bata" [Condolence, what a waste, she is so young]), ("Sayang, malayo pa naman ang mararating niya. Nakakalungkot" [What a waste. She could have gone far. Too sad]) to signify regret about the athlete dying at 17 years old. The word sayang also occurs in P03 (WW2 Veteran; 4 times) and P11 (Former COMELEC Chair; 3 times), but not in relation to their age (both are senior citizens). Instead, sayang is used to express regret about the deceased succumbing to COVID-19: "Sayang. Namatay sa virus, hindi sa matinding giyera" [It's a shame, he survived the

war, but he did not survive the virus] “Sayang. Namatay lang siya sa Covid” [What a shame. He died just because of Covid]. Sayang also appears in the comments in P04 (Former Senator; 4 times), P12 (Former Manila Mayor; 8 times), and P13 (Former Archbishop; 2 times) to suggest that the deceased was a great loss: “Sayang naman. R.I.P., Senator” [What a waste. R.I.P., Senator]; “Sayang, paborito ko si Archbishop” [What a waste, Archbishop was my favorite].

Notably, Facebook users also used *sayang* in a more insidious manner. In P18 (President Duterte’s friend), sayang was used in the comments to express regret that it was the President’s friend who died and not him: “Sayang, bakit kaibigan mo pa? Sana ikaw na lang” [What a shame, why did your friend die, instead of you?]; “Sayang, hindi ka pa isinama ng kaibigan mo” [What a shame, your friend should have taken you with him]. This expression of regret about someone dying instead of others are also present in P12 (Former Manila Mayor) (“Bakit siya pa, marami namang ibang walanghiya” [Why him? There are so many shameless people out there]), P11 (Former COMELEC Chair); (“The good ones are dying, the bad ones are surviving”). Implicit in these comments are notions about who “deserves” to die and which deaths can be considered to be *sayang*. Thus, deaths are “sayang” or a waste if the deceased passed away at a young age, or was considered a good person or a great loss, while deaths are “deserved” if one is considered a bad person.

Meanwhile, comments expressing *awa* or pity were aplenty in P08 (50 OFWs in Saudi) and in P05 (Muslim burial), both of which carried discourses about funerary protocols and customs. In P08, Facebook users expressed pity over the fact that the corpses of the 50 OFWs who died from COVID-19 will be subjected to the protocols of the Saudi Arabian government regarding the handling of dead bodies, and thus will be buried there. The keyword *kawawa* (how pitiful) appears in the post 23 times and were interspersed with comments about the plight and conditions of OFWs: “Kawawa talaga ang ating mga OFW. Hindi na nga sila nakauwi nang buhay, ayaw pa pauwiin kahit patay na” [I pity our OFWs. They couldn’t go home alive; now that they’re dead, they still cannot go home]; “Diyos ko, kawawa … hindi talaga biro ang maging OFW, totoo talaga na nakabaon na ang isang paa mo sa hukay” [My Lord, how pitiful. Being an OFW is not a joke, it’s like you have one foot in the grave]. In these instances, “kawawa” signifies commiseration and a recognition of the OFWs’ efforts to give a good life to their families despite the challenging nature of their work. Other times that kawawa was used were alongside comments about the protocols concerning the handling of the body, and the fact their bodies won’t be repatriated back to their homelands: “Kawawa naman, baka pwedeng i-cremate at maiuwi

sila sa Pilipinas” [How pitiful, maybe they can be cremated and sent back home to the Philippines]; “Kawawa ang ating kababayan! Hindi man lang sila masisilayan ng mga pamilya nila kahit sa huling pagkakataon” [I pity our countrymen! Their families won't be able to see them for the last time]. These comments emphasize the centrality of the body / the corpse (or its remains) and of the viewing of the dead body as a means of closure in Filipino funeral rituals.

In P05 (Muslim burial), Filipino Facebook users debated about Muslim and Christian beliefs and funerary practices in relation to the pandemic. Kawawa appears 8 times, and in one instance was used in reference to what happens to the corpse of Catholics when it undergoes the process of cremation: “Kawawa naman talaga ang mga namamatay sa religion niyo, walang natitira sa kanila hahaha nagiging abo na lang” [I pity those who die in your religion, there is nothing left of them hahaha they just turn into dust]. A (supposed) Catholic Facebook user engages this commenter and uses the word *kawawa* as well: ‘Kayo ang kawawa kasi hindi ninyo kilala ang sinasamba niyo’ [You are more pitiful, you don't know who you are worshipping]. Instead of encouraging comments of commiseration in the face of death, the post became a platform for a charged debate about the respective religious beliefs and practices of Filipino Muslims and Catholics.

Notions of “bad” deaths

Fenella Cannell (1999) observed in her fieldwork that Bicolanos were inclined to speak about the circumstances surrounding the death of their “kapwa” during wakes. In fact, death can be adjudged to either be good or bad depending on how the deceased encountered death and how the corpse looked like in the coffin or during the wake. As Cannell observed, good deaths are deaths that were unthreatening and “neither unexpected nor preceded by long-drawn-out or gruesome illness” (p. 150). The dead's standing in his/her community—if he/she was respected and liked enough and left no resentments in the barangay—mattered as well. Meanwhile, “bad” deaths are characterized by prolonged illness and signs of struggle and pain. These notions of good and bad deaths extend to the digital sphere and can be found in the comments section of public Facebook posts about COVID-19 deaths.

Filipino Facebook users' notions of good and bad deaths were usually bound up with comments about the pandemic protocols. Keywords such as libing, cremate, agad, bangkay, and bawal are instructive here. Libing [burial] occurs in the data set 83 times, and most frequently in P05 (Muslim burial; 54 times) and P08 (50 OFWs in Saudi; 25 times). In both posts, libing was used in the context of protocols concerning the handling of the body

of a COVID-19 patient and was coupled with the keyword agad. In P05 (Muslim burial), a commenter suggests that the corpse should be buried immediately, in accordance to Muslim funeral rites: “Dapat libing agad para hindi na makahawa” [It should be buried immediately so that it won’t infect anyone]. While in P08 (50 OFWs in Saudi), a (supposed) Catholic commenter argues that the corpses of the OFWs should be brought home instead of being buried: “Hindi pwedeng ilibing agad dyan! Dapat maiuwi sila” [You can’t bury them there! Their remains must be sent home]. In both instances, libing and agad were used in comments that suggest that the proper way of handling of bodies must be in accordance with the dead’s religion.

The keyword “cremate” was used in a similar manner. Occurring in the data set 19 times, “cremate” in the comments offered prescriptions regarding the management of the body. In P05 (Muslim burial), for example, an Facebook user says: “Hindi dapat cremate basta, bawal iyan sa Islam” [You should not cremate the body, that is prohibited in Islam]. While another user in the same post, who seem to be Catholic, suggests that the protocol of compulsory cremation of the dead for Catholics is unfair. In P12 (Former Manila Mayor), “cremate” can be found in comments expressing pity for the family: “Kawawa ang family ni Mayor, cremate agad! Hindi nila nakita muna” [I pity Mayor’s family, he was cremated immediately! They did not get the chance to see him]. Also occurring frequently with “cremate” are the words bangkay and bawal: “Masama na i-cremate ang bangkay, bawal sa amin ang ganyan na practice, mabigat iyan” [It is bad to cremate the body, that is prohibited in our religion, it is a heavy thing for us]. These comments indicate that the mishandling of the body, the manner of its disposal (especially when it disregards the dead’s religion), and the lack of opportunity for the bereaved to pay respects to the dead all contribute to an expanding notion of bad deaths, particularly due to and amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Remembering the dead

All Saints’ Day and All Souls’ Day are collectively known and celebrated in the Philippines as Undas. Majority of Filipinos traditionally observe this holiday by coming together as a family to visit and remember their dead. On November 1 and 2, they flock to cemeteries to offer prayers, flowers, candles, and food to their dead; they also clean and repaint the graves of their loved ones and bring packed food to share with others for the entire day. However, this long-held tradition was put to a halt during the COVID-19 pandemic. To avoid and curb the spread of the virus, the Philippine government issued the closure of all public cemeteries, memorial parks, and columbariums

from October 29 to November 4. But despite this, a significant number of Filipinos still opted to visit cemeteries ahead of Undas in an attempt to pay respects to their dead in spite of and amid a pandemic (Agence France Press, 2020). This demonstrates that the act of remembering and paying respects to the dead are highly important practices for Filipinos. It comes as no surprise then that this virtue extends to and is manifest even in the digital sphere.

P17 (Undas) is a news post that specifically encouraged Filipino Facebook users to pray for loved ones who died from COVID-19. Often occurring in the comments were keywords such as "remembering," "prayers," "souls," hindi, and makakalimutan. The word "remembering" in particular appeared 30 times in the post, and often in conjunction with the user's object of remembrance: "Remembering my father," "Remembering my parents," "Remembering our loved ones." Also evident was the practice of offering prayers for the dead, which Facebook users tended to verbalize. "Prayer," which appear 12 times in the post, usually occurs with the word "soul": "A prayer for all the reposed souls of my loved ones," "Prayer for the soul of my husband.'"

The word hindi (no/not) which at first did not seem to be part of the theme of remembrance, appeared several times throughout the posts and was found to be quite significant to the theme. Its use implies a resistance to and a recognition that some people die and may be forgotten. Hindi usually occurred alongside variants of the word malilimutan [forget] and in comments that were addressed directly to the dead: "Hinding hindi po namin kayo makakalimutan, nanay" [We won't forget you, mother]; "Palagi kayong nasa isip at puso namin. Hindi ka namin malilimot" [You are always in our minds and heart. We won't forget you.] There were also instances when Facebook users talked to the dead and explicitly stated that they remember them despite not being able to visit their graves due to the existing pandemic protocols: "Hindi naman kayo nakakalimutan, Tatay, kahit na hindi kami makadalaw sa inyo ngayong taon. Sana po ay maunawaan ninyo kami" [We won't forget you, father, even if we can't visit you this year. We hope you can understand us], "Hindi man namin kayo madalaw, hindi ibig sabihin nalimot ko kayo" [Just because we can't visit you doesn't mean we have forgotten you]. Observable here is the insistence of Filipino Facebook users that they indeed remember and honor their dead despite not being able to visit them in the cemeteries, thus demonstrating how the act of remembering the dead is still a very important virtue for many Filipinos. At the same time, these examples highlight a difference between in-person commemoration (i.e., eulogies) and digital remembrance. Whereas pre-pandemic and face-to-face commemorations tend to be formal and usually

address an audience of mourners, Filipino Facebook users can be observed to often speak publicly, and informally and directly to the dead, as if the latter were still alive (Sapalo, 2021a). This suggests that Filipino Facebook users may have developed unique ways of posting about and remembering the dead on the platform, changing our mourning and remembrance "vernacular" in the process.

Denial of COVID-19 as Cause of Death

The denial of death, according to Ernest Becker (1973), is one of the most basic characteristics of humans across cultures. He claimed that in an effort to escape death and our seeming awareness of its inevitability, we constantly devise or engage in various strategies in accordance with our beliefs about the possibility of immortality. Forty-eight years after the publication of Becker's seminal work, we see that the denial of death indeed still operates in various cultures, even extending, albeit in a different form, to digital and social networking sites like Facebook.

In the study, Filipino Facebook users were found to initially react to news of Filipinos dying from COVID-19 with denial. The denial is particularly directed to the cause of death (the virus and its complications) and not necessarily the event of death itself. This denial of the virus as the cause of death of fellow Filipinos can be further broken down into sub-themes: to the Facebook users, the deaths of their fellow Filipinos were not due to COVID-19 but because of either (a) other illnesses or co-morbidities; (b) old age; or (c) was deliberately manufactured by media, government, or the Philippine health system-at-large for various reasons and agenda.

Filipino Facebook users primarily denied or cast doubt on the existence of COVID-19 when news about the first few COVID-19 deaths reached Facebook. During this initial period, they tended to attribute the cause of deaths to the existing illnesses and co-morbidities of the deceased. This can be observed in posts P01 (First Filipino Death), P02 (Additional 11 Deaths), P12 (Former Manila Mayor), P15 (Young Male Nurse), and P16 (Batangas Mayor). For P01, a news report about a 67-year old Filipina succumbing to the virus, the comment with the most number of likes [42] is one that says, "May ubo lang tsaka pulmonya, tapos naging Covid na agad?" [He just had cough and pneumonia, how can that be COVID-19?]. This was followed by comments such as, "May sakit naman na iyan noon pa" [he had illnesses even before]. Although P02 (Additional 11 Deaths) was a video report about eleven anonymous individuals dying from COVID-19, a comment suggesting that these people died from illnesses other than COVID-19 was still present: "Mas marami naman yatang namamatay dahil sa ibang sakit, kumpara sa sinasabing virus na iyan" [So many people die from other illnesses,

compared to that virus]. Another comment states that these people might have died due to pneumonia: "Tiyak na namatay iyan dahil sa pneumonia" [I'm sure he died of pneumonia]. Meanwhile, a few commenters on P12 (Former Manila Mayor) suggest that the deceased passed away not because of COVID-19 but because of kidney complications. In the video report, P12 was indeed said to have died due to kidney complications brought about by the virus, but the lack of clarity in the report regarding the relationship of COVID-19 to co-morbidities may have contributed to these comments. For P15, a news report about a young male nurse, a commenter attributed the death to "nerbyos," a Filipino folk medical condition which denotes a mix of anxiety, psychosomatic discomfort, and fear: "Ninerbyos siya nung nalaman na positive siya, kaya siya namatay" [he got nervous when he found out he was positive, and that caused his death]. In the same post, commenters also tried to counter the denial and attribution of death to other illnesses by sharing their personal testimonials and experiences of losing loved ones to the virus. Examples of this are: "Totoo po ang Covid ha! Ang husband ko ay nagkaroon n'yan" and "I believe in Covid, I have friends who caught the virus" [Covid is real! My husband caught it. I believe in Covid, I also have friend who caught the virus].

In a parallel manner, these forms of denial and countering-of-denial can also be found in P16 (Batangas Mayor), where a commenter affirms that the mayor had an existing illness before contracting COVID-19, implying that he did not die due to the virus. Other commenters replied to this by affirming that the late mayor did have diabetes, but continued to explain how it was aggravated by COVID-19: "Yes, he has diabetes, but the virus makes it worse—because it is a co-morbidity. If you have a co-morbidity, it is more likely that you will die if you get the virus." A keyword that marks this theme is the word agad (as in "Covid agad?"), which denotes disbelief or cynicism that COVID-19 was the likely cause of death. Agad appears in P01 (First Filipino Death) 16 times, in P02 (Additional 11 Deaths) 2 times, in P15 (Young Male Nurse) 3 times, and in P16 (Batangas Mayor) once. In these contexts, agad functions as an interjection that demonstrates the Facebook users' feeling that the news reports hastily jumped into conclusion about the patient's cause of death. It did not help that testing for COVID-19 suspected cases was painfully slow during the first few months of the pandemic (Lema & Morales, 2020). Agad also occurs in P12 (Former Manila Mayor) 22 times, but it does so in relation with the dead's age (which will be discussed in the ensuing paragraphs).

Another salient sub-theme of COVID-19 denial is denial citing old age as reason. This is most observed in P01 (First Filipino Death), P04 (Former Senator), P11 (Former COMELEC Chair), and P12 (Former Manila

Mayor)—all of which are news reports regarding older adults / senior citizens who succumbed to the virus. In P01, comments relating to the age of the deceased (67 years old) were frequent. Examples of such are: "May edad na kasi" [he's old already] and "Matanda na siya kaya mahina na" [he's old already, which means he is weak]. Similarly, in P02, comments regarding age and its relation to illnesses can be observed: "Kapag may virus ang mga senior na namamatay, ito ay dahil mahina na ang katawan at may ibang sakit na sila" [when older people contract viruses and die, it's because their bodies are weak and they have other illnesses as well]. P04, P11, and P12, all of which featured former public officials who died as older adults, contain comments attributing their passing to their age: "Covid raw ang ikinamatay? Dahil iyan sa katandaan" [He died of Covid? He died because of old age] "Inubo lang ang matanda, COVID-19 na agad? Namatay siya sa katandaan" [He just had a cough, how can he have died of COVID-19? He died because he was old]. For P14, a post about the passing of the PGH spokesperson's elderly parents, there was only one comment related to age, and it was directed to the spokesperson: "Wag natin idahilan na Covid, matanda na ang iyong magulang, talagang mamamatay na" [Let's not use Covid as reason, your parents are old already, they are meant to die]. This garnered three angry reactions from other Facebook users. Interestingly, comments that attribute death to old age were not available in P13, a Facebook post containing news of the passing of an archbishop, who was then 85 years old. One possible reason for this may be his affiliation with the Catholic church, a revered institution in Catholic-dominated Philippines. Comments relating his death to his being elderly may not be deemed suitable and may appear out of line or disrespectful to the church. A keyword closely related to this theme is tanda, which appears in P01 (First Filipino Death) 9 times, in P11 (Former COMELEC Chair) 3 times, and in P12 (Former Manila Mayor) 9 times.

Another strong sub-theme of COVID-19 denial is due to the belief that the virus was manufactured or invented. At the start of the pandemic, vague or general comments that were not necessarily addressed to an institution but imply that COVID-19 was indeed invented were already evident. One such example can be found in P01 (First Filipino Death): "Sino ba ang may kagagawan nitong COVID-19!" [Who manufactured this COVID-19 virus!]. This denial of COVID-19 as the likely cause of death of the Filipina may partly be due to the lack of medical data about the virus. Another possible reason may be the manner of presentation of COVID-19 deaths via media platforms, which anonymizes the names of patients due to medical protocols: "Why do you use 'Patient 1, Patient 2, Patient 3'? Why can't you name them, so we know it's real?" However, as the pandemic went on, Facebook commenters conspicuously started to mention three significant

institutions as possible “manufacturers” of COVID-19: the Philippine media, by the Philippine government, or by the Philippine health system-at-large.

In P01 (First Filipino Death) and P02 (Additional 11 Deaths), remarks about the Philippine media were easily detectable. Journalists were distinctly called out in the comments: “Journalists are worse than COVID-19!”; “Journalists ang dahilan ng sakit at trauma ng mga tao!” [Journalists are the reason why people are sick and have trauma!]. Facebook users blamed the media for allegedly causing trauma, panic, and fear-mongering among Filipinos: “Dahil sa inyo kaya nag-papanic ang mga tao*!*” [It’s because of journalists that people are panicking!]. Commenters also suggested that the media should cover more “good” news to allay the fears of the public: “Report good news please, don’t cause fear!”; “Too much news about death!” The keyword “media” appears in P01 (First Filipino Death) 11 times, and in P02 (Additional 11 Deaths) twice.

Hunches about how COVID-19 was invented by the Philippine government were also present in P01 (First Filipino Death) and P02 (Additional 11 Deaths). To some commenters, COVID-19 was a diversion created by the Philippine government and was just “fake news”—a term that rose in popularity under President Duterte’s reign due to the spread of disinformation through salaried “troll armies” on social media: “Fake naman ang Covid, imbento ng gobyerno” [Covid is fake, it was invented by the government]; “Kailangan ng funds ng government kaya ginawa ang covid” [the government needs funds, so they created covid]. The keyword “fake” appears in both P01 (First Filipino Death) and P02 (Additional 11 Deaths) thrice.

Meanwhile, comments about the Philippine healthcare system can be found in P02 (Additional 11 Deaths), P11 (COMELEC Chair), P12 (Former Manila Mayor), and P16 (Batangas Mayor). A commenter argues that the COVID-19 patients died due to the lack of equipment in hospitals and neglect: “Walang equipment ang ospital at baka walang paki ang doctors, pinabayaan lang ang pasyente” [Hospitals have no equipment and the doctors do not seem to care, they neglected the patient]. Meanwhile, some Facebook users argue that healthcare institutions and workers profit off of declaring that the cause of death of patients is COVID-19: “Pag Covid ang cause of death, may incentive na pera*!*” [If you state that Covid is the cause of death, you will be given financial incentives]; “Baka may porsyento sa crematorium!” [Maybe they share a percentage with the crematorium]. Commenters also refer to Philippine health institutions such as the Department of Health (DOH): ”May sabwatan ang DOH sa mga elite, kaya kunwari may Covid lahat ng namatay” [There is a connivance between DPH

and the elite, so they tag everyone who dies as a Covid case]. Meanwhile, coinciding with the posting of P11 (COMELEC Chair) and P12 (Former Manila Mayor) is the 15 billion-peso corruption controversy involving PhilHealth (the Philippines' health insurance corporation). Aware of this piece of news, commenters were quick to talk about it in the comments: "Malaki siguro makukuha ng mga ospital at doctor sa PhilHealth" [Hospitals and doctors might get a big sum of money from PhilHealth]. Keywords such as pera (money) appear in P01 (First Filipino Death) and in P11 (COMELEC Chair) twice, while "PhilHealth" appears in P12 (Former Manila Mayor) 6 times. Meanwhile, the keyword "budget" can be found in P02 (Additional 11 Deaths) 3 times, and in P12 (Former Manila Mayor) once.

The denial and disbelief that COVID-19 was indeed the cause of death of the Filipinos in the data set may be due to the scarcity of empirical data and reportage about the virus during the early months of 2020. However, even before the pandemic, Filipinos already knew about the phenomena of disinformation, "troll farms," and propaganda campaigns, where alleged government officials deliberately spread "fake news" either to discredit activists (Guest, 2020) or to seed political propaganda (Curato et al., 2019) for the elections. Knowledge of these, along with the government's ineffective crisis communication strategy (Ranada, 2020), fueled and contributed to the cynicism of the public with regard to COVID-19 reportage.

Other observations: Popular and folk notions of health and illness

An interesting pattern that falls under the sub-theme of denying that COVID-19 causes death is the sprouting up of popular and folk notions about medicine and health, especially in relation to the virus. This is demonstrated in the occurrence of keywords such as "mahina"; "immune"; and variants of the word "resistensya," "asin," and "suob" in the comments section of the data set. Mahina [weak], for example, appears in the data set 31 times and is usually used along with the words "immune" and resistensya. It was most frequently used in P01 (First Filipino Death; 11 times) and in comments that insist that the deceased might have died due to a weak immune system: "Baka mahina lang resistensya, hindi kinaya." Meanwhile, resistensya and its variants (resistensiya, resistenxa) were often used with the words asin and suob in comments containing prescriptions about what the public may do to avoid contracting or dying from the virus: "Dapat palakasin lang ang resistensya, mag gargle lagi ng asin." "Suob lang pampalakas ng resistensiya." These comments suggest that popular and folk notions of health and disease circulate on Facebook, even in posts about COVID-19 deaths. This then draws attention to the nature of Facebook as a social networking site and platform that facilitates and encourages the circulation of these comments.

It is therefore important to consider the social effects that these comments might have to ordinary Filipino Facebook users whose primary source of information is Facebook.

Articulations of alignment and disalignment with other Facebook users

It is also worth noting that throughout the data set, Filipino Facebook users tended to use specific keywords that functioned as markers which established either a sense of alignment or disalignment with others. Examples of attempts to align with "similar others" are the words kabayan, its variant kababayan, and kapatid. Kabayan, which conjures an idea of a "nation" on which our sameness and affinity is hinged, and often used to refer to Filipino migrants and workers, appears 24 times throughout the data set. However, it was most frequently used in P06 (Filipina Mother in the U.S.; 6 times) and P08 (50 OFWs in Saudi, 18 times). Kababayan also appears in the data set six times. Both kabayan and kababayan were used in comments that discussed the plight of OFWs, such as in P08: "Nag-aabroad and nagpapakahirap ang napakarami nating kababayan para lang sa families nila." They were also used in comments by OFWs who offer wishes for their fellow overseas workers who passed away: "Rest in peace co-OFW and kabayan." In using the term, Facebook users somehow establish a sense of fellowship or solidarity with OFWs.

Meanwhile, the keyword kapatid was used 56 times throughout the data set, but most notably in P09 (Comedian and Frontliner; 16 times) and P05 (Muslim burial; 15 times). In P09, Facebook users made use of kapatid several times to refer to the deceased, a gay comedian and volunteer frontliner: "Kapatid, pahinga ka na. RIP," "Nakakabigla. I can still remember the first time I watched you was in The Library. Condolence sa pamilya ng aming kapatid na pumanaw." Filipino LGBTQIA+ occasionally refer to each other as kapatid, to emphasize their being part of a community. Thus, in deploying the word kapatid to address the deceased, the Facebook users assert an affinity or tie to him/her. In P05, kapatid was also used by Muslims to refer to their fellow Muslims: "Mga kapatid kong Muslim, wag tayo mawalan ng pag-asa at manalangin tayo kay Allah." However, kapatid was also used to signal a difference between Muslims and Catholics while they were engaging in an argument about Islam funerary protocols: "Wag na ninyo patulan mga kapatid na Muslim ang mga mangmang na Katoliko." Another instance when kapatid was used was when an Facebook user referred to a (supposedly) Catholic commenter, albeit sarcastically: "Bakit andami mo ding sinasabi, kapatid? May sama ng loob ka ba sa aming mga Muslim?" Thus, in these two examples, kapatid functions as an emotionally charged word marker. It was used either as a social adhesive (in the case of

P09) or as a means to show disalignment with "different others" (in the case of P05).

Summary and Conclusion

From the data set, it becomes apparent that Facebook news posts on COVID-19 deaths foster emotional exchanges and generate pockets of culture-specific networks of mourners and commiserators. Through these networks, Facebook actively contributes to the reconfiguration and extension of offline mourning rituals on the digital sphere. The social networking site circulates news of death, mediates discourses on death, and facilitates various expressions of mourning and commiseration. By doing these, Facebook reconfigures both (1) how the rituals of mourning are done (rendering it hypervisible to the public) and (2) how it is experienced (it allows unacquainted mourners and commiserators to offer sympathies and personal anecdotes of grief and mourning, thereby rendering less evident the distance among strangers/Facebook users). The dead are publicly commemorated by a crowd, potentially on a scale larger than offline commemorations. Furthermore, Facebook's affordances also expand and extend offline mourning rituals to the virtual. The most standard comments and replies to news of death mimicked offline responses and reactions to death: the extending of condolences primarily to the bereaved family, the expressing of wishes for the dead, as well as directly addressing the dead. Most virtues regarding the dead were also exhibited on Facebook: avoiding speaking ill of the dead, making efforts to say something good about them, and even commending them for their service (in the case of politicians).

However, some new death and mourning-related discourses and practices were also observed: present in the Facebook posts were comments denying that COVID-19 was in fact a real disease. This was supplemented with arguments that the disease may have been manufactured by either the government, the healthcare system at large, or by Philippine mainstream media outfits. Popular and folk notions regarding illness and health also surfaced in the comments. This means that Facebook, as a social networking site built to foster interaction among users, amplifies the circulation and facilitation of folk knowledge among Filipino Facebook users. This might have grave social effects, especially in a country where a huge percentage of the population relies heavily on Facebook for information. Also observed were attempts by FB users to align themselves to "similar" others while disaligning themselves with different others, as captured in emotionally charged words like kapatid and kababayan. In these examples, we see that mourning-related practices in online platforms may still take different

forms when compared to offline practices, and this is due to the unique features and pecularities of social media.

Some posts may also indicate a change in our mourning vernacular. While in-person eulogies tend to use formal language and usually address a crowd of mourners, Filipino Facebook users were observed to speak publicly, informally, and directly to the dead, as if the latter were still alive. This suggests that Filipino Facebook users may have started to develop unique ways of posting about death on the platform, changing our mourning "vernacular" in the process.

The findings also confirm that, much like any other social space, Facebook is governed by specific norms or rules of conduct regarding death and mourning. The social sharing and sustained engagement in the selected FB posts have not only generated social interaction but also triggered emotional exchanges among its users as well. According to Larissa Hjorth and Michael Arnold (2013), each social media platform has been found to foster its own affective culture and produce a distinct "affective public," that is, publics that "come together and/or disband around bonds of sentiment" (p. 2) and are discursively produced by mediated interactions. Since they often produce "mediated feelings of connectedness" (Papacharissi, 2015, p. 2), affective publics have also paved the way for the construction of "digital affect cultures," (Döveling et al., 2018) or online cultures produced through the exchanges of emotion or affect in/through digital technologies. Hence, this initial exploration of death and mourning-related norms gives us an insight into the emerging "digital affect culture" of mourning of Filipino FB users on Facebook. Additionally, the findings from this study then firmly support the claim of media scholars regarding the internet as a place of subjectivity, emotions, and affect (Giaxoglou & Döveling 2018; Serrano Puche 2016).

References

Agence France-Presse. (2020 October 28). Filipinos flock to cemeteries ahead of Undas closure. *Rappler*. https://www.rappler.com/nation/filipinos-flock-cemeteries-ahead-undas-closure-october-28-2020

Appadurai, A. (1990). Global Ethnoscapes: Notes and Queries for a Transnational Anthropology. In Fox, R.G. (Ed.). *Interventions: Anthropologies of the Present*. Santa Fe: School of American Research, 191-210.

Babis, D. (2020). Digital mourning on Facebook: The case of Filipino migrant worker live-in caregivers in Israel. *Media, Culture & Society*, *43*(3), 1-14. https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443720957550

Babor, E. (2007). Heidegger's philosophy of authentic existence and the Filipinos: Temporal and historical dimensions. *Kinaadman: An Interdisciplinary Research Journal, 18*(2), 1-38. https://philpapers.org/rec/BABHCO

Baker, P. (2006). *Using corpora in discourse analysis*. Continuum.

Bateson, M. C. (1968). Insight in a bicultural context. *Philippine Studies*, *16*(4), 605-621. https://www.jstor.org/stable/42720521

Becker, E. (1973). *The denial of death*. Free Press.

Bell, C. (1997). *Ritual: Perspectives and dimensions.* Oxford University Press.

Bell, D., Loader, B., Pleace, N., & Schuler, D. (2004). *Cyberculture: The key concepts.* Routledge.

Blust, R. (1995). The prehistory of the Austronesian-speaking peoples: A view from language. *Journal of World Prehistory*, *9*, 453-510. https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/BF02221119

Boellstorff, T., Nardi, B., Pearce, C., & Taylor, T. L. (2012). *Ethnography and virtual worlds: A handbook of method*. Princeton University Press. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.cttq9s20

Brubaker, J. R., Hayes, G. R., & Dourish, P. (2013). Beyond the grave: Facebook as a site for the expansion of death and mourning. *The Information Society, 29*, 152–163. https://doi.org/10.1080/01972243.2013.777300

Burell, J. (2009). The field site as a network: A strategy of locating ethnographic research. *Field Methods, 21*(2), 181-199. https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X08329699

Burnett, G. & Bonnici, L. (2003). Beyond the FAQ: Explicit and implicit norms in Usenet newsgroups. *Library & Information Science Research, 25*(3), 333-351. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0740-8188(03)00033-1.

Cagat, K. A. (2015). Beyond the fields: ethnographic explorations onnotions and practices of sustainability in Ifugao, Philippines [DoctoralDissertation, University of London.] SOAS Research Online

Cannell, F. (1999). *Power and intimacy in the Christian Philippines*. Ateneo de Manila University Press.

Cottle, S. (2006). Mediatized rituals: Beyond manufacturing consent. *Media, Culture and Society*, *28*(3), 411–32. https://doi.org/10.1177/01634437060629

Cruz, J. (2021, April 22). Virtual obituaries and distance(d) mourning. *Philippine Daily Inquirer*. https://inqyoungblood.com.ph/2021/04/22/virtual-obituaries-and-distanced-mourning/

Curato, N., Ong, J. & Tapsell, R. (2019 August 9). *The changing face of fake news*. New Mandala. https://www.newmandala.org/disinformation/

danah boyd. (2014). I*t's complicated: The social lives of networked teens.* Yale University Press.

Derks, D., Fischer, A. H., & Bos, A. E. R. (2008). The role of emotion in computer-mediated communication: A review. *Computers in Human Behavior, 24*(3), 766–785. https://doi.org/10.1016/J.CHB.2007.04.004

Döveling, K., Harju, A. A., & Sommer, D. (2018). From mediatized emotion to digital affect cultures: New technologies and global flows of emotion. *Social Media + Society, 4*(1), 1-11. https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305117743141

Döveling, K., & Knorr, C. (2018). Media logic as (inter)action logic—Interaction interdependency as an integrative meta-perspective. In C. Thimm, M. Anastasiadis, & J. Einspänner-Pflock (Eds.), *Media logic(s) revisited. Transforming Communications – Studies in Cross-Media Research*. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-65756-1_7

Giaxoglou, K., & Döveling, K. (2018). Mediatization of emotion on social media: Forms and norms in digital mourning practices. *Social Media + Society*, *4*(1), 1-4. https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305117744393

Guest, P. (2020 October 29). *In the Philippines, fake news can get you killed*. Rest of the World. https://restofworld.org/2020/in-the-philippines-fake-news-can-get-you-killed/

Guillermo, R. (2021). *Python code for scraping Facebook .har files (FBHarfileScraper)*. https://researchgate.net/publication/352350422_Python_Code_for_Scraping_Facebook_har_Files_FBHarfileScraper

Gupta, A., & Ferguson, J. (1992). Beyond 'culture': Space, identity, and the politics of difference. *Cultural Anthropology*, *7*(1), 6–23. http://www.jstor.org/stable/656518

Hine, C. (2000). *Virtual ethnography*. SAGE Publications Ltd. https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9780857020277

Hjarvard, S. (2008). The mediatization of society: A theory of the media as agents of social and cultural change. *Nordicom Review, 29*(2), 105-134. https://doi.org/10.1515/nor-2017-0181

Hjorth, L., & Arnold, M. (2013). *Online@AsiaPacific: Mobile, social and locative media in the Asia–Pacific*. Routledge.

Isidro, M. C. (1978). Death in Baras. *Philippine Studies*, *26*(4), 363–390. http://www.jstor.org/stable/42633506

Jong, S. (2017). Netnography: Researching online populations. In P. Liamputtong (Ed.), *Handbook of research methods in health social sciences* (pp. 1-17). Springer Nature Singapore. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-2779-6_17-2

Kaur-Gill, S., & Dutta, M. J. (2017). Digital ethnography. In J. Matthes, C. S. Davis, & R. F. Potter (Eds.), *The international encyclopedia of communication research methods* (pp. 1-10). https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118901731.iecrm0271

Kemp, S. (2021). *Digital 2021: The Philippines.* https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2021-philippines

Kiel, P. (2020 May 28). *Covid-19 and death in the digital age*. London School of Economics Blog. https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/religionglobalsociety/2020/05/covid-19-and-death-in-the-digital-age/

Klinger, U., & Svensson, J. (2015). The emergence of network media logic in political communication: A theoretical approach. *New Media & Society*, *17*(8), 1241-1257. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444814522952

Kohn, T., Nansen, B., Arnold, N., & Gibbs, M. (2012). Facebook and the Other: Administering to and caring for the dead online. In G. Hage & R. Eckersley (Eds.), *Responsibility* (pp. 128-141). Melbourne University Press.

Kozinets, R. (1997). I want to believe: A netnography of the X-philes' subculture of consumption. *Advances in Consumer Research, 24*(1), 470-475. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/285771984_I_want_to_believe_A_netnography_of_the_X-philes'_subculture_of_consumption

Lagerkvist, A. (2013). New Memory Cultures and Death : Existential Security in the Digital memory Ecology. *Thanatos, 2*(2), 1-17. https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/New-Memory-Cultures-and-Death-%3A-Existential-in-the-Lagerkvist/627f60ddb15a310541945afc9d732a8e6e6f829a

Lalu, G. (2020 September 8). SWS: 45% of Filipino adults use internet; 1 in 4 read news through Facebook. *Inquirer.* https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1332871/sws-45-of-filipino-adults-useinternet-1-in-4-read-news-through-facebook

Lasén, A. (2014. Introducción. Las mediaciones digitales de la educación sentimental de los y las jóvenes [Introduction. Digital mediations of the sentimental education of young people]. In I. M. Quirós, & E. Rodríguez San Julián (Eds.), Jóvenes y comunicación. La impronta de lo virtual (pp. 7-16). Fundación de Ayuda contra la Drogadicción

Lingel, J. (2013). The digital remains: Social media and practices of online grief. *The Information Society: An International Journal, 29*(3), 190-195. https://doi.org/10.1080/01972243.2013.777311

Livingstone, S.F (2009). On the mediation of everything: ICA presidential address 2008. *Journal of Communication, 59*(1), 1-18. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2008.01401.x

Macgilchrist, F., & Van Hout, T. (2011). Ethnographic discourse analysis and social science. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, *12*(1). https://doi.org/10.17169/fqs-12.1.1600

Marcus, G. E. (1995). Ethnography in/of the world system: The emergence of multi-sited ethnography. *Annual Review of Anthropology, 24*, 95-117. https://www.jstor.org/stable/2155931

Marwick, A. E., & danah boyd. (2010). I tweet honestly, I tweet passionately: Twitter users, context collapse, and the imagined audience. *New Media & Society*, *13*(1), 114–133. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444810365313

Miller, D. (2013 January). DR 2: What is the relationship between identities that people construct, express and consume online and those offline? [Commissioned study]. DOI: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/275750/13-504-relationship-between-identities-online-and-offline.pdf

Myerhoff, B. (1984). Death in due time: Construction of self and culture in ritual drama. In J. J. MacAloon (Ed.), *Rite, drama, festival, spectacle: Rehearsals toward a theory of cultural performance* (pp. 149-178). Institute for the Study of Human Issues.

Nind, M., Bengry-Howell, A., Wiles, R., & Crow, G. (2011). *A review of the academic impact of three methodological innovations: Netnography, child-led research and creative*. ESRC National Centre for Research Methods, NCRM Working Paper Series 01/11. https://eprints.ncrm.ac.uk/id/eprint/1844/1/Review_of_methodological_innovations.pdf

Papacharissi, Z. (2015). We have always been social. *Social Media + Society, 1*(1), 1-2. https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305115581185

Papacharissi, Z. (2016). Affective publics and structures of storytelling: Sentiment, events and mediality. *Information, Communication & Society*, *19*, 307–324. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2015.1109697

Pink, S. (2009). *Doing sensory ethnography.* SAGE Publications Ltd, SAGE Research Methods. https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781446249383.

Ranada, P. (2020, May 6). 56,000 words on the virus: Duterte's crisis messaging all bluster, little science. *Rappler.* https://www.rappler.com/newsbreak/in-depth/259931-dutere-crisis-messaging-bluster-little-science-words-coronavirus/

Rogers, R. (2009). *The end of the virtual: Digital methods.* Amsterdam University Press.

Sabanpan-Yu, H. (2009). The practice of waking the dead in the Philippines. *Philippine Quarterly of Culture and Society, 37*(4), pp. 231-238. https://www.jstor.org/stable/29792686

Salkind, N. (2010). *Encyclopedia of research design* (Vols. 1-0). SAGE Publications, Inc. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412961288

Sapalo, N. (2021a). *Dying online: A digital ethnography of death, grief, and mourning amid the Covid-19 pandemic* [Master's thesis]. University of the Philippines Diliman.

Sapalo, N. (2021b September 13). Digital grief: Mourning COVID-19 deaths on Facebook. *Rappler*. https://www.rappler.com/voices/imho/analysis-digital-grief-mourning-covid-19-deaths-facebook/

Serrano-Puche, J. (2016). Internet and emotions: New trends in an emerging field of research (Internet y emociones: Nuevas tendencias en un campo de investigación emergente). *Comunicar*, *24*(46), 19-26. http://hdl.handle.net/10760/29590

Silverman, D. (1999). Warriors or collaborators: Reworking methodological controversies in the study of institutional interaction. In S. Sarangi & C. Roberts (Eds.), *Talk, work and institutional order: Discourse in medical, mediation and management settings* (pp. 401-425). Mouton de Gruyter.

Sumiala, J. (2013). *Media and ritual: Death, community and everyday life.* Routledge.

Vonnegut, K. (1968). *Welcome to the monkey house: a collection of short works.* Delacorte Press.

Wagner, A. J. (2018). Do not click "Like" when somebody has died: The role of norms for mourning practices in social media. *Social Media + Society, 4*(1), 1-11. https://doi.org/10.1177/20563051177443

Wierzbicka, A. (1985). Different cultures, different languages, different speech acts. *Journal of Pragmatics, 9*, 145-178. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166(85)90023-2

Grant Support Details

Author Contributions: All research activities and writing were done by N. Sapalo. The author has read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: The author received no specific funding for this work.

Acknowledgements: The author would like to thank Dr Soledad Natalia M. Dalisay and Dr Ramon Guillermo for their

comments on the initial draft/version of this article.

Conflict of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

About the Author

NOREEN H. SAPALO is Assistant Professor at the Department of Anthropology, University of the Philippines Diliman. She is also currently a faculty affiliate of the UP College of Social Sciences and Philosophy Folklore Studies Program and a board member of Ugnayang Pang-Aghamtao Inc. (UGAT – Anthropological Association of the Philippines). (corresponding author: nhsapalo@up.edu.ph.)