QUILTED SIGHTINGS

SPECIAL EDITION

SPARK TALK, IGNITE CHANGE!

Tesa Casal de Vela
Lalaine P. Viado

EDITORS

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The Women and Gender Institute (WAGI) is the Miriam College's specialized center for advocacy on women's issues, gender equality, and gender-fair education. It is an institute that offers a cross-disciplinary perspective on women's empowerment and gender equality that is interlinked with democracy, human rights, and value formation. WAGI is committed to promoting critical analyses and leadership among young women and students through curricular, research links with other sectors, organizations and institutions at the local, national, regional, and international levels, as it strives to contribute to efforts at increasing equality between genders, together with respect for democracy, human rights and value-based governance and leadership.
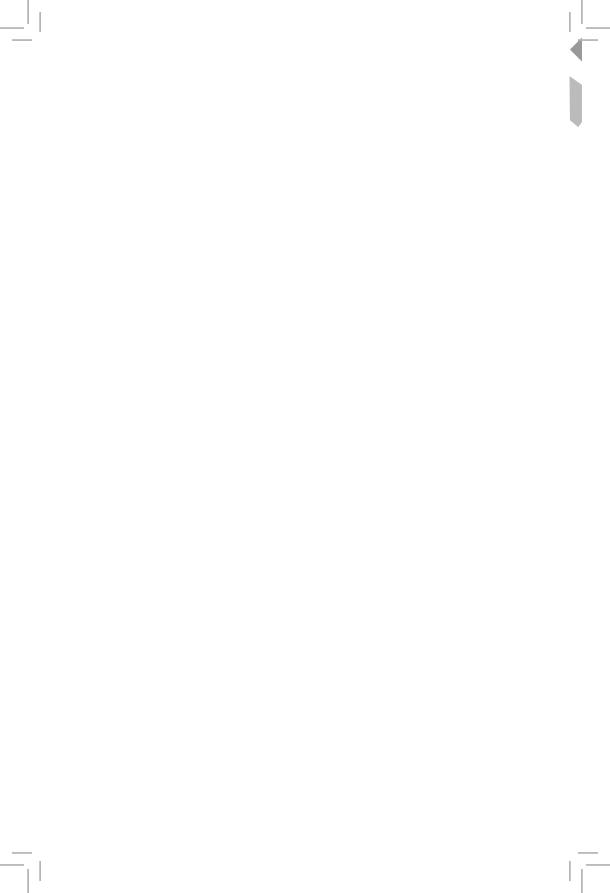
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The Rallying Call

by Aurora Javate de Dios[1]

In celebration of women's month 2019, the Miriam College - Women and Gender Institute (WAGI), in partnership with Oxfam Pilipinas, launched **'Spark Talk, Ignite Change! An Intermovement, Intergenerational Feminist Interchange.'** The event brought together selected individuals and representatives of women's organizations, human rights organizations, community-based women and human rights groups, LGBTIQ+ advocates, media, academe, church-based groups, youth, and students for a two-day semi-structured conversation on strengthening feminist practices.

The Philippines' celebration of women's month is the longest of any country: for the enire month of March, we take pride in the accomplishments, gains, and advancements made by women.

Compared to those of the past, this women's month is unlike any other. We live in a very precarious time, where a culture of misogyny, violence, and impunity is prevalent and normalized. Continued extra-judicial killings, and the demonization of the media and of NGOs that are critical of government have eroded the rule of law, the justice system, and the Philippines' standing before the international community.

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Even more alarming is the seeming acceptance by the public of this type of governance by fear, intimidation, and violence. Fear, however, has its limits, and can only go so far. Despite continuing threats to opposition groups from different sectors, many civil society groups — including women's groups — have been organizing and resisting this unacceptable order of things, using democratic spaces that still exist.

This special edition of **Quilted Sightings,** titled **Spark Talk, Ignite Change,** captures the discourses, debates, and critical reflections of the two-day event. What can women do in the face of misogynistic attacks that are meant to limit, restrict, and silence our voices, and demean women's capacities by unfairly excluding women leaders from governance? The Philippine women's movement has shown that in moments of crisis, such as during martial law, women bravely and defiantly resist and fight even the most brutal dictatorship. In this critical juncture of our history, when our freedoms, rights, and values are undermined and eroded, women are challenged yet again to make a principled position, taking both big and small steps to assert our rights. Following the lead of our foremothers, may we all continue to be disruptive, defiant, and brave!

Why a Feminist Interchange?

Tesa Casal de Vela[1] and Lalaine P. Viado[2]

The state of sexism and misogyny at multiple levels and spaces across the country is alarming. We have in government an authoritarian leadership that unapologetically uses sexist and misogynist leadership to gain and maintain its popularity and legitimacy. We have a church hierarchy that has been largely quiet in its critique of our government's exercise of authoritarianism, and is almost completely silent on sexism and misogyny. We have media practitioners who serve as mouthpieces of the government, or otherwise risk being threatened, bullied or killed for doing their jobs.

Sexism and misogyny in the Philippines, as currently condoned and exercised by the state, has become more blatant and rampant. Everyday forms of sexism and misogyny continue unabated in institutions, in organizations, in communities, in conflict areas, in homes, in schools, in the streets — everywhere; and they are largely excused, reinforced, and normalized. As we face the resurgence of blatant sexism and misogyny, its political legitimation, and its

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normalization in Philippine culture, we are challenged with the erosion of the gains made by the Philippine feminist movements that have worked tirelessly to institutionalize feminism and gender mainstreaming for decades. Such challenges need to be met with renewed strategies to protect our political gains.

'SPARK TALK, IGNITE CHANGE! An Intermovement-Intergenerational Feminist Interchange' was a two-day semi-structured conversation organized by the Miriam College - Women and Gender Institute (WAGI), and Oxfam Pilipinas, as part of its sustained efforts to strengthen feminisms and gender justice, and to establish feminist practices as the cultural norm in Philippine society.

This gathering of feminists provided a steady counter-narrative to shameless sexism, and to this administration's attempt to normalize authoritarian, sexist, and misogynist culture in the Philippines. Re-energized and challenged, women's groups found new forms of resistance, new advocacy strategies, and a stronger commitment to building social movements for social change. Feminist resistance to sexism and misogyny comes in the form of girls and women advocating against machismo, calling out those in positions of authority for sexist acts, or for inaction against sexist acts, and speaking out against sexual violence and the culture of violence.

Feminist resistance, feminist counter-narratives, and feminist discourses need to be supported at varying levels of engagement. The intention of the interchange was to strengthen and support feminist practices, not only to challenge sexist and misogynistic leadership, but also to establish feminist practices as the cultural norm in Philippine society. Applying Mohanty's (2003) levels of feminist practices, the interchange was framed at three levels: (1) feminist practice in daily life, (2) feminist practice in collective action, and (3) feminist practice in knowledge production. The intermovement-intergenerational feminist interchange was directed at problematizing feminist practices. Using the innovative facilitation techniques adopted from the Art of Hosting, specifically the Open Space Technology and World Café strategies, the program included selected feminist conversationalists to ignite conversation and arouse imagination around feminist practices and their possibilities at multiple levels.

Seeing the value and importance of the discussions beyond the event itself, WAGI decided to publish a collection of the papers presented,

and the discussions that transpired among the participants. This collection was organized in the same way those conversations took place. First, there were three plenary conversations spearheaded by three feminists, with two serving as the main conversationalists under the topics "Feminist Practices In the Everyday," and "Feminist Practices In Knowledge Production"; and one as an audience member of the conversation on "Feminist Practices in Collective Action." There were also three presentations at parallel convoshops[3] on "Orphaned Children, Memory Work, and Developing an Ethics Protocol," on "Changing the Talk of Movements," and on "Social Media Activism and Its Glitches."

This collection begins with a paper by Dr. Mira Alexis Ofreneo on **"Feminist Practice In the Everyday."** Through the opening conversation, and now, through a paper included in this special edition of Quilted Sightings, Dr. Ofreneo lit the first spark by engaging in the everyday talk, experience, and practice of feminism. The author went beyond a simplistic presentation of the ordinary and mundane, and presented the reflexive positions and the intersectional identities that inform the particularity of everyday experiences. And despite the varying historical, cultural, and structural contexts that limit us all, it is within these same contexts that the feminist practice of personal agency lies. This is the agency that carves out freedoms, breaks silences, *rescripts* everyday talks, and changes norms and culture in everyday increments.

Lorna Q. Israel authored **"(Feminist) Knowledge and the New Patriarch,"** inspired by and crafted from her presentation on "Conversations on Feminist Practices in Knowledge" during the opening plenary. Israel argued about the dangers and trappings of universalizing knowledge coded as established knowledge, deliberately ignoring the complexities and specificities of truths belonging to women at particular times, spaces, contexts, and experiences. The same holds true in espousing feminist truths and knowledge where "universalist feminists" simplistically account for women as "suffering women" as the endpoint of feminist knowledge.

At the plenary on "Conversations on Feminist Practices in Collective Action" led by Dr. Sylvia Estrada-Claudio, the paper, **"Of Differences and Vulnerabilities: Reflections on Feminist Collective Action"** came to light. Authored by Anna Kristina M. Dinglasan-Richardson,

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3   For reference, a convoshop is a portmanteau of the words conversation and workshop.

the paper serves as a think piece, a reaction paper, a window to the thoughts and meanderings of the audience during this session. Anna outlined Dr. Estrada-Claudio's inputs at the session, and came up with her own think piece on the topic. This paper is a product of an exciting attempt at germinating ideas through an interplay between the thoughts of the presenter and the participant. The product is an example of how collective action commences, from the meeting of brilliant minds, to their departing from each other.

Pacita Dechavez Fortin and Merlie "Milet" B. Mendoza co-authored **"Orphaned Children, Memory Work, and Developing an Ethics Protocol."** This paper was culled from both the convoshop conducted by the authors at the break-out session of SPARK TALK, IGNITE CHANGE!, and from the memory work research they conducted as part of the larger inquiry on the bloody war on drugs by the Duterte administration. As the title suggests, the co-authors laid out the process for crafting, developing, and observing an ethical way of doing research, especially with vulnerable groups, such as with children orphaned by the drug war. Through it, the authors contributed more depth, and a more practical application of ethics protocols in social work.

Mira Ofreneo and Nico Canoy tackled **"Changing the Talk of Movements,"** another convoshop, in the afternoon session of SPARK TALK, IGNITE CHANGE! The paper takes an unconventional approach, recognizably different from the rest of the pieces in this collection, though still extra enriching and appealing, we wager, even to the most rigorous of the intelligentsia. The paper is an almost-verbatim record of all the "talk" during the convoshop, remaining true to the topic of the convoshop – how movements talk. Well-attended by feminist scholars, academics, LGBT+ activists, the convoshop showed how some of the "movers and shakers" walk the talk.

This collection of papers ends with **"Social Media Activism and its Glitches"** by Justine Balane and Regina Rebueno. The young authors explored the digital terrain of young people, explaining how social media can be a double-edged sword. Social media is, on one hand, a potent digital force for activism, but on the other, a tool for so-called "slacktivism." By outlining social media trends and campaigns that achieved relative political success in the country and internationally, including feminist campaigns, such as #EveryWoman,

the two authors showed how social media remains a dangerous terrain for political and ideological enemies. With the rise of social media-disseminated disinformation, fake news has proliferated at a faster rate than credible source of information can handle, leaving the fourth estate (the press and news media) in a defensive stance, and in jeopardy.

As we see the richness and uniqueness of each paper presented in this special edition of the **Quilted Sightings: Spark Talk, Ignite Change,** we see that they form a web of knowledge and information that show the varied ways we can promote feminism. We uphold that it is through feminism that we can challenge existing authoritarian rule that is currently besetting our country, a rule marked by shameless misogyny and sexism. Social movements and multi-generational activism across varied issues — such as in social media, in social work, and in movement building — may borrow from the feminist practices of the everyday, in collective action, and in knowledge production, to effectuate a more encompassing and humane approach to the work that we do. With feminist practices across all contexts, times, and spaces, new forms of resistance shall continue to evolve as we challenge machismo, authoritarianism, and patriarchy in societies like ours. These feminist resistances shall always be the cracks to this otherwise seemingly fortified rule which erodes our hard-fought battles and threatens our own democratic institutions.

Feminist Practice in the Everyday

Dr. Mira Alexis P. Ofreneo[1]

What Is Feminism For You?

My assignment for this conversation is to talk about feminist practices in the everyday.

I will begin by asking all of us to engage in reflection by asking ourselves the very questions I was tasked to answer: "What is feminism for you? How do you practice that feminism? How do you practice that feminism in the everyday?"

My own answer to these questions come from my own students in the classroom, and from the students in our own school, Ateneo de Manila University. I see our young students practice feminism to counter gender cultures they have inherited from our generation that continue to bind and oppress. I see the strong practice of feminism in the young heterosexual women in our own university that call out sexual harassment and all forms of violence against women and men. I see it in the young heterosexual men in my class who join pride

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marches to show solidarity and express affinity with the struggle for respect and acceptance of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT+) people. I see it in young LGBT+ people who come out to tell their stories, to brave stigma, and to be beacons of hope in a heteronormative world. It is in these real-life examples that I ground my own understanding of what it means to practice feminism in the everyday.

My Own, Our Own Intersectional Reflexive Positions

The examples I will share have their own particularity. While we recognize the commonality of the global struggle for gender equality and gender justice, our experiences are made specific by our own contexts and settings. The intersections of our struggle locate us in positions of power and privilege, alongside marginalization and oppression. With this, I acknowledge my own positions of privilege as a member of the academe, a teacher in a private university, as a middle-class citizen living in an urban city center, and as a feminist in her 40s coming after the herstory of our mothers (and grandmothers), and coming before the herstory of our children (and grandchildren).

Some of the examples I will give may be shared in your own context and setting. Some may be global, some local. What we acknowledge is the specificity of experience embedded in our shared struggle. And while the examples may resonate with your own everyday experiences, they may also be limited in application, given the particularity of your experiences. With this, I return to the question, "What is feminism for you? How do you practice that feminism? How do you practice that feminism in the everyday?" We must acknowledge that your answers to these questions come from your own intersectional reflexive positions.

I am 44. I acknowledge the feminists of old that have come before us (and are still here living the struggle), and the young feminists at the forefront of our struggle. In this moment of history, of herstory, of ourstory, the meaning and meanings of feminism and feminisms have evolved. There are moments when people have been turned off by the F-word. There are those who have rejected it or renounced it. There are those who say that it is difficult, or even problematic and detrimental to one's cause or advocacy to use the word 'feminist,' and with it, the word 'feminism.' It is as if feminism has lost its essence, with its origin in the collective struggle against women's shared experience of oppression and violence. Such oppression and violence were —

and are — immense and pervasive: the global count of women who will experience some form of violence in their lifetime is one in three. When we see that the heaviness of oppression and violence against women remains an everyday reality, how can we turn away from the F-word?

The challenge, perhaps, is how to reclaim or reimagine feminism. The challenge is how to give new meaning to feminism and feminisms, recognizing ourstory of the past, living ourstory in the present, and imagining ourstory in the future. Rooted in its origin story, will you claim a feminist identity? Is being feminist an identity? Is it an identity tied to our gender? Is it an identity tied to our advocacy and struggle? Is it an identity you own for yourself?

In trying to conceptualize or define feminist practice in the everyday, I return to our original struggle, and how we live out this struggle in everyday life. Let us first recognize and constantly remember that there is a struggle for gender equality, for gender justice, and against gender-based violence. It is the gendered nature of this struggle that makes feminism distinct from other struggles, social movements, or advocacies.

How does gender manifest in the everyday? In who we are? In what we do? In who we can become? In what we can do? How do we see gender at work and at play? How do we experience gender in our homes, in the streets, in the workplace? How are we confronted by issues of gender? How are we shaped by gendered structures, norms, and expectations?

We return once more to our diverse intersectional reflexive positions. I return once more to my own position of privilege, where my experience of injustice and violence may not be as pervasive. What is everyday life like when the nature of injustice and violence is chronic, like a life in deep poverty? Or a life of unimaginable abuse? Or the lives of families affected by *tokhang* or the war on drugs? Or the lives of children sold for sex online? These are realities far from my own. What are the issues of gender in the face of the everyday struggle to live and survive? What is the meaning of gender justice in these contexts? What is the meaning of gender equality in these settings?

How Do We Exercise Agency Vis-à-vis Structure?

In my own class, I teach how feminist practice in the everyday is to negotiate agency vis-à-vis the social structures that impinge upon our

everyday lives. By 'agency', we mean our capacity to be an agent, to be agentic, to be in control. To what extent are we in control of our lives? To what capacity do we have the freedom to exercise agency? To what degree can we make choices? Do we have the capacity to choose? Can we choose? Do we even have a choice? Put another way, to what degree are we limited by structures, by norms, and by expectations that dictate what it means to be a woman or man, heterosexual cisgender or LGBT+, what it means to have gender, and to be gendered? To what degree are we constrained by our own intersectional positions of being young or old, rich or poor, parent or child, student or teacher, gay or straight?

Within the confines of social structures such as the economy, or the family; and cultural norms, scripts, and expectations (to not question earning a wage that cannot provide for a decent life, to not challenge the abuse of one's parent who provides) that constitute social reality, I pose the question of agency. How do we exercise agency in the everyday? How do we carve out freedom? How do we create choice in a world where there is so little choice, in a world that confines and constrains you, in a world that limits our capacity to live and be?

Structures/Isms: Culture of Normalization, Culture of Silence

I call social structures 'isms.' There is, for example, sexism, heterosexism, classism, ageism, and more. Within our local cultures, there are unique 'isms:' tomboy-ism, *bakla*-ism, Manila-centric-ism, white-skin-ism, English-speaking-ism. What I wish to highlight here is sexism, and the current political climate and culture that normalize this 'ism.' When your political leaders exhibit and speak sexism, then it becomes acceptable to be sexist. Young men and boys feel legitimized to speak and do sexism. Within a culture of normalization, it becomes okay to make a joke about rape. It becomes okay to rape. And alongside this culture of normalization is a culture of silence. With a vow of obedience comes a vow of silence; a culture that makes women endure, makes women martyrs, makes women silent. How can we transcend these social practices that perpetuate 'isms?'

Agency: Changing the Norm, Breaking the Silence

To exercise agency vis-à-vis structures is to change the norm as we encounter it in the everyday. Structures, norms, and expectations must be enacted, activated, and produced in social interaction. It is in that social interaction, conversation, or talk where norms are produced and reproduced. And in this same interaction, conversation, and

talk, we can exercise our capacity to be agentic by challenging, confronting, changing the norm. We do this by changing our script, and our line or our role in that script — by *rescripting*.

The question for us is whether we are actively changing norms in the everyday, or inadvertently perpetuating them. Are we confronting gendered expectations that bind and limit us, or are we complicit? How are we changings norm? How are we changing scripts? How are we changing talk? How are we rescripting? How are we changing the way we relate and interact with each other as parent and child, as romantic partners, as teacher and student, as friends? Whether it is with a significant other or with a stranger, with a figure of authority or a peer, if we feel violated or offended by the other, how do we call out a violation or offense? How do we rework a conversation to stop gender-based violence from happening? How do we reconfigure a relationship to prevent sexual harassment? How do we negotiate agency?

Changing the norm requires breaking silence in the everyday. A global and local example can be found in women (and men) who are breaking the silence around sexual harassment, by calling out the men (and women) who have inflicted harassment in a very visible and vocal way. There are movements such as #Time'sUp, #MeToo, #EveryWoman, and #BabaeAko. There's a global campaign to break the silence surrounding gender-based violence and violence against women. In our own university, young women have organized a campaign to give voice to students who have experienced harassment. Our student council, the Sanggunian, created its own Commission on Anti-Sexual Misconduct and Violence (CASMV) that put together a project they called *Hilab, Hilom, Halinhan,* translated to Rise, Recover, and Reform. Theirs was a call to rise, to recover, and to change the norm so that our own university will be free of gender-based violence. Together with the students, we, the faculty, professionals, administrators, and staff pushed for a Gender Policy in our university, a policy that commits to building a gender-inclusive, a gender-responsive, and a gender-safe school. With this policy, my own office, the Loyola Schools Gender Hub, was born. In collaboration with our students, we continue to break the silence by encouraging young people to "Speak Out, and Speak Now."

ReScripting Gendered Scripts, Norms, and Isms

In my own experience as a teacher and advocate, I focus on how we can change scripts in the everyday that perpetuate gender inequality, injustice, and violence.

There are calls to change scripts in global examples, such as the body positivity and sex positivity movements. These movements call to change the script to embrace one's body, resist body-shaming, and make sex positive for women. They call for us to talk about desire and pleasure, and not just risks and dangers, as well as, to move from sex-negative scripts to sex-positive scripts, and to counter slut-shaming.

There's the Good Men project that advocates that "real men cry." The project teaches boys to feel and express their emotions, and teaches parents to tell their sons that it's okay to cry. The project also teaches men that the capacity to cry allows them the capacity to empathize, and that empathy is key to human relating and to healthy emotional relationships.

There's the message of self-love and self-care, which advocates practicing kindness and compassion for the self. It teaches that to know one's self-worth is not tied to the many (gendered) expectations placed by society on the self. More importantly, it teaches that a woman's worth is not dependent on a man, or what society says a woman should be like.

Simple scripts like "boys will be boys" will define the identities of boys, shape young men, and make a lasting impact on how men relate with the world. Simple scripts that separate girls into "good girls" and "bad girls," "virgins" and "sluts," will define girls and young women, and how they experience sexuality. The structures and the norms in the everyday are found in these simple scripts, in the lines we say to each other and to ourselves, in our words, in our talk. It is in our capacity to change the way we talk to each other and ourselves, to choose the words and lines we tell each other and ourselves. It is in our capacity to change the gendered scripts that define us, confine us, and break us.

ReScripting Scripts that Perpetuate Sex- and Gender-Based Violence: "Let's Talk Consent, Baby"

I started with the idea of rescripting as a workshop in my gender class. I would ask students to think of a gendered script that leads

to a form of gender inequality, injustice, or violence. This can be a rule or norm that is unfair or unjust, or a scenario or encounter that is offensive or violent. I would ask my students to role-play the script as it would usually happen in everyday life. Then I would ask them to change the script – to find a way to shift the conversation so that it will no longer lead to inequality, injustice, or violence. They would likewise role-play the new script to show the alternative scenario, the alternative reality, the alternative everyday. It is in this reimagining exercise that we discover possibilities of how the everyday can be different, more just, more fair, and violence-free.

My example of rescripting comes from our project entitled "Let's Talk Consent, Baby."

In this workshop, I would talk about dating scripts and sexual scripts. I would talk about rape as an example of sexual gender-based violence, and about how to understand rape as unwanted sex. I would then talk about consent: for one to two hours, we would try to understand the meaning of consent, how to ask for consent, how to give consent, how to know if there is or isn't consent, how to know if there's capacity to ask or give consent, how to express consent. All these are unpacked from conversations that take place between people in a date, in a sexual encounter, in a party, in a bar, between friends drinking, between partners negotiating, between peers, classmates, orgmates. In unpacking how sex is negotiated (or not negotiated) in talk, we undo scripts that can lead to unwanted sex or rape.

Why scripts? In the everyday, in that date, that sexual encounter, that moment, all we have is our capacity to navigate a conversation, an interaction, a script. We are negotiating agency in that moment. We are trying to ensure respect for each other's agency. And while rape may happen with a stranger, it is more often experienced with a person one knows: a partner, a friend, an acquaintance, a neighbor, a relative. The sad reality is that rape too often happens when two people know each other. And sometimes, there is an unawareness that the sex is unwanted, or that there was no consent. Too often, a young woman will say that she was violated, and yet the young man will say that he had no idea that she was or had felt violated. She will say that she did not give consent, but he will say that the sex was consensual.

These sexual encounters can be messy, with each coming from his or her own script. In these moments, we try to examine each other's scripts. What we see is that the asking and the giving of consent is often not in these scripts. Where is the step for asking consent? Where is the step to go away or to leave the person alone if the person has no capacity to give consent?

One young man in one of our workshops shared that the idea of sex is out of the picture if he knows he will be drinking. Here is an example of a script that says "no sex, just drink" in a drinking situation. He explained that he knows he may get too drunk to ask for consent, and the other party may be too drunk to give *real* consent. "If ever," he asked, "what kind of consent will that be?"

In unpacking scripts, we create new scripts. We try. We practice. The intent is, when young people find themselves in those encounters — drinking or partying, negotiating sex, having a date, hooking up — that they will now have scripts not just for consent, but for a mutuality in sexual desire and sexual pleasure.

How do we identify consent? Is "maybe" a "yes," or a "no"? While the feminist slogan has been "No means no," we also say that "maybe," "I don't know," "I'm not sure," no reply, no answer, or silence, is still a "no." Someone can say "yes" in the beginning and then say "no" later on, and that is still a "no." We examine how anything and everything else that is not a "yes" is still a "no." Not saying anything is still a "no." We follow the new feminist slogan: "Only yes means yes."

We rescript for these moments because often, there is no script. We ask boys to do a step-by-step check and a script to stop and leave the girl alone.

Step 1. Can she give consent? If not, go away.

Step 2. Did she give consent? If not, go away.

We ask girls to do the same, and when they can't say "no," or when they don't know, they must have a script to leave the room or to stop the conversation. For girls, the conversation may not even be about consent, but about not knowing their own desire at that moment. They may not even want it. They may not even know if they want it.

Step 1. Did he ask for consent? If not, go away.

Step 2. Did you give consent? If not, go away.

We go through these everyday scenarios, and just tell students to leave or go away if they don't know what do because there's no script. What is disturbing is how these everyday encounters can lead to unwanted sex just because people don't have the scripts to stop them from happening. Young people end up just doing it, just having sex, without question or without asking. And things just happen — things that can become heavy and difficult, traumatic and life-changing, violent and oppressive, immense, and pervasive.

The struggle against violence and oppression is in the everyday. And in one particular moment, that one encounter, that social interaction, changing the script could have changed the outcome. And things would not have been so heavy.

(Feminist) Knowledge and the New Patriarch

Lorna Q. Israel [1]

Introduction

Let me begin by telling two stories about knowing and its importance to ignorance. These stories are quite familiar, but familiarity has concealed their virtue: knowledge is the bearer of ignorance.

The Biblical Eve succumbed to the serpent's temptation to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge. The fruit was food for thought — it would make Eve and Adam wise, or, in other words, give them the ability to know good from evil, right from wrong. It was actually god's plan to make ignorance knowable by providing instruction against it, by strictly forbidding Adam and Eve not to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge. In this story, the operation of ignorance is seen — ignorance is not a lack of knowledge but instead, choosing a certain kind of knowledge "while ignoring others" (Grasswick, 2011, p. 63). As punishment, so the story goes, Adam and Eve were expelled from

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the garden of no problem (or the garden of Eden) and made to suffer death, sickness, and physical labor.

The Buddha, on the other hand, devoted a lifetime to knowing the cause of suffering. He went straight to examining the process of thinking itself. He discovered that the mind was really ignorant. He did not want to "subject himself to the stupendous task" (Kalupahana, 1999, p. 19) of enlightening others with his *dhamma* or teachings. For the Buddha, what delights is what makes people suffer. When asked what his mind discovered, Buddha said, "Nothing" (Ibid.). All that one needs to know is right in front of one's eyes, but one chooses to ignore it.

What Eve and the Buddha had learned finds an apt summary by Peat, a physicist, who points out that "everything that could be known was already known" (Peat, 2002, p. ix). The knower pursues the known by locating or searching for it systematically. Siddhartha, the novelistic Buddha, differentiates searching from finding. In searching, the goal is seeing only the object of the search. Finding, on the other hand, means "being free, being open, having no goal" to see those "which are directly in front of your eyes" (Kalupahana, 1999, p. 67).

The searcher is popularly known today as a discoverer, researcher, scientist, or scholar. Feminists, according to Rosaldo (1987, p. 280) have "successfully discovered women" and with it, launched a field of knowing what Eve and the Buddha had already encountered: suffering.

The privilege of the 'suffering women'

Following Peat's principle of 'knowing the already known,' some feminist scholars point out that the 'suffering women' sprung from Marxist thought. Explicit in the writings of socialist feminists, the 'suffering women' is an appropriation of the 'oppressed proletariat.' The suffering or oppressed class holds the epistemic privilege of their situation (Bar On, 1993). Only the workers (women) have the 'correct version' of their oppressive relationship with the capitalists (patriarchy). Conversely, Halberg (1989, p. 4) challenges feminists to explain why their views on women is the 'correct version' and why "they are only ones who enjoy this privileged position."

The feminist privileging scheme works by postulating a post-Edenic world featuring unforbidden knowledge, and inhabited by women professed as suffering. In such a world, the environment is hostile to

women due to the 'male way of knowing.' To date, there is no known man who has claimed this male way of knowing. Credit goes to feminist thinkers for having known the so-called male way of knowing.

One must not forget that many renowned men have made many claims about women. In men's post-Edenic world, women are either explicitly mentioned, or not at all. Marx is a prime example: he did not have anything to say about gender relations. However, Marxist class analysis became a feminist tool in figuring women as an oppressed and suffering class, by creating a 'blind' Marx. Below is a familiar example of how the male way of knowing becomes discoverable to a feminist (Federici, 2018, p. 471).

> "Marx does not see the wageless [women] as central subjects of capital accumulation and anti-capitalist struggle. He was subject to the 'wage illusion…' *Why this blindness*? Certainly, in the case of housework we can see a masculine bias that naturalises reproductive activity (italics supplied)."

Federici's reading of Marx on his 200th birthday operationalizes what Buddha meant when he showed how one is at risk of becoming blind to what is already in front of one's eyes. She recounts how feminists, rejecting domestic work, read Marx "searching for a theory capable of explaining women's oppression from a class viewpoint" (Federici, 2018, p. 472). She realizes that in searching, "we had to turn Marx upside down" (Ibid., p. 473) to start an analysis from whom Marx supposedly ignored or excluded. The act of turning Marx upside down brings an untidy and messy consequence: Federici ignores what she has already found. Marx could have not seen women's housework because "the working-class family was engaged in factory labour and *little housework* was done in the home" (Ibid., p. 471; italics supplied).

Nevertheless, Federici maintains Marx's blindness on that "little housework" by magnifying it as "the most problematic consequence" (Ibid., p.471) because it failed to grasp the value of unwaged women. Among universalist feminists, women's unpaid domestic work would attain importance by its attribution as one of the many causes of their suffering.

The privilege of knowing women's suffering

It is quite ironic that the more feminists try to know women's oppression, the more they do not know about it. Cherniavsky (2011,

p. 155) admits the oppressed or the subaltern represent "what we *do not already* understand" (Italics supplied). Intellectuals fantasize about their aspirations, and in that fantasy, the oppressed become a blank space filled by thoughts about them. Spivak (2000) would conclude that to read about the oppressed is to read what's on the mind of those who want to know them.

We really know nothing about the oppressed, but we know who render them as such. Spivak (in Cherniavsky, 2000, p. 156) would call them the "sovereign elite" whose reports on the marginalized contained none other than these intellectuals' thoughts on the marginalized. Spivak, like other feminists, would credit a man, Gramsci, for bringing to her attention the notion of subaltern that cannot speak.

Womanhood became a social identity (instead of an individual characteristic), thereby making women a subject of feminist studies in the post-Edenic world. Such social identity made women recognizable as an oppressed group. Because of this oppression in the post-Edenic world, there are very few empowered or non-oppressed women. One philosopher calls it "epistemic exploitation," or when "privileged people compel the marginalized to educate them about their oppression" (Berenstain, 2016, p. 569).

In her review of feminist writers to discover their approach to 'non-oppressed, non-feminist women,' Andrews (2002) realizes how these women have been ignored through the homogenization of all women as oppressed, to conform to writers' research agenda. Dotson (2011, p. 237) calls this "testimonial smothering," a form of self-censorship by which the oppressed speak only on what the privileged wanted to hear. Mahalingam and Leu (2005) realize that they had to de-privilege women's oppression. They note that Indian and Filipino women immigrants in America viewed positively negative or essentialized notions about them (such as being family-oriented) as having contributed to their "self-esteem and sense of well-being" (Ibid. p. 856) They even felt that their cultures were 'superior' to that of white Americans.

Feminists reject essentialism because it fixes women's femininity and makes femininity vulnerable to denigration and discrimination. Indian and Filipino women immigrants seemed to have found their own power against a dominant group. Braidotti (in Lindstead and Pullen, 2006, p. 1289) asks an obvious but unsaid question: "if women

do not identify themselves as oppressed, how is it possible to both represent their experience, and to claim for them the position that they do not claim for themselves?"

In another work, Spivak questions the virtue of making women recognizably oppressed. She hypothesizes that basing women's demands for justice on their oppression is simply an "alibi" (Spivak, 1993, p.4) that makes women's existence as an oppressed group a hoax. Spivak wants a diagnosis of the claim of women's suffering lest it becomes an excuse to dispense punishment.

The apparently undiagnosed claims to justice on the grounds of oppression have found a term in what Bernstein (2007, p. 137) calls "carceral feminism." She defines it as the "commitment of feminist activists to a law and order agenda" (Ibid., p. 143) within which there stands a "carceral state as the enforcement apparatus for feminist goals" (Ibid., 2007, p. x). Halley (2008, p. 3) considers carceral feminism as belonging to the genre of "governance feminism" She found it in feminists' involvement in criminalizing 'sexual wrongs' against women in the 1990s.

Governance feminism regards criminal justice, in contrast to social justice, as the most efficient way of 'righting' the wrongs against women. Governance feminists "prefer the criminal law as a vehicle for reform" whose goal is "not to warn, but end impunity and abolish." (Halley, 2008, p. 5). For governance feminists, justice is also knowledge, and to invoke women is also to call on feminists. In such a call, Halley (2008, p. 31) would define the feminist:

> "It is I, not they, who designate them "feminist." I do so on the grounds that they treated women as a distinct social group, saw women as subordinated to men at least some of the time, and shared the goal of finding for subordinated women some relief from, if not cessation of, their subordination."

'They' refers to the women and men who advanced the 'feminist cause' in the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia and for Rwanda. In examining texts and proceeding related to these criminal tribunals, Halley finds how prosecutors treated feminism as a claim to both knowledge and justice. Moreover, she detects a 'new' strand of feminism. She calls it "feminist universalism" where women "are not a particular group of humanity but a universalist of their own" (Halley, 2008, p. 62).

The Feminist Universalist

A feminist universalist is likely to view a world where just about everything works against women, where women's rape in the hands of a specific belligerent group could be generalized as a "global war against women" (Halley, 2008, p. 6). Such a conjured global war on women creates a criminogenic world that makes laws all the more important; it produces a putative criminal.

Enlisting the law to serve the feminist universalist has assumed a global proportion, particularly with regard to sexual crimes against women in the last two decades (Delpla, 2014). Just as women's participation in mass violence, otherwise known as war, remains unacknowledged, so does violence against men. Violence against men exists, but "it is hard to believe" (Malik and Nadda, 2019, p. 35) particularly in a male-dominated country like India.

The belief that women are the primary victims of violence makes it hard to believe that amidst the global women's #MeToo movement, there exists a 'Men, Too' phenomenon. The National Baseline Study on Violence against Children on the Philippines (2016) reports the incidence of "polyvictimization," or the experience of physical, psychological, and sexual violence among Filipino youth. The report indicates "a higher proportion of [young] males reported these experiences" (Council for the Welfare of Children and UNICEF Philippines, 2016, p. 9).

The report visualizes the belief that women are the target of violence. Its executive summary comes with six photographs of two girls directly facing the camera, along with the crestfallen face of a lone boy. The report speaks the neutral language of statistics, concealing the fact that boys were likelier than girls to experience "severe physical violence, neglect, or cyber violence" (Council for the Welfare of Children and UNICEF Philippines, 2016, p. 4) in their lifetime. The report's attempt not to give prominence to boys as victims is apparent in its adoption of a gender-neutral stance. It emphasizes how all the victims were children, and violence against them is a "global problem" (Council for the Welfare of Children and UNICEF Philippines, 2016, p. ii).

As the so-called global sexual crimes against women magnetizes the public's attention, Friedersdorf (2016) names women committing sexual crimes as 'female sexual predators.' A feminist who studied this already-known but shocking phenomenon in the United States of

America (USA) has also found that there are more men being raped than women. Thus, Stemple (with Meyer, 2014, p. e-20) argues:

> "The assumption that feminist theory requires disproportionate concern for female victims. Indeed, some contemporary gender theorists have questioned the overwhelming focus on female victimization, not simply because it misses male victims but also because it serves to reinforce regressive notions of female vulnerability."

Indeed, why the disproportionate focus on women's victimization? This question is the muted version of another question: how have men become the victimizer of women? This unspoken question speaks volume in the recently-enacted law in the Philippines called the Safe Streets and Public Spaces Act (RA 11313), which carefully speaks the language of governance feminism. It invokes the state policy of "recognizing women's role in nation-building" (but does not articulate the role of men).

Republic Act 11313 ensures gender equality before the law by referring to women and men as 'persons' in its provisions. Then, it criminalizes behaviours associated with men (without mentioning them) that would practically tie their tongues (these include cursing, wolf-whistling, catcalling, misogynistic, transphobic, homophobic, sexist slurs). The Philippine President, accused of misogyny, sexism, and of foul language against his critics, signed the law in July 2015.

The Safe Streets and Public Spaces Act creates a criminogenic world where women are potential victims and men potential offenders. In such a world, the President, who made this law possible, is eternally a misogynist and a sexist. Such words sound harsh, but not when hurled against men whose existence the feminist universalist can guarantee. When women throw such words at men, they are hailed because it is a 'privileged' act on account of their victimhood.

Men's existence in the feminist universalist comes in the now-familiar but largely unquestioned term invented by feminists: patriarchy. A feminist scholar, Toril Moi (1985) defines patriarchy as that which makes possible feminism's words to thrive. Unlike the suffering women who need to subject themselves to the feminist way of knowing their suffering, men need not do anything to justify their patriarchy. The feminist way of knowing will gladly do it for the men — if only to argue (and this is the only argument) for women's suffering.

Conclusion

In the post-Edenic world, the feminist universalist reigns supreme over both women and men. Women are universally suffering — from men as their eternal tormentors: this is the very definition of gender equality for a feminist universalist. A victim (woman) needs a victimizer (man) with such feminist acting as judge, jury, and executioner at once. These are the trappings of power by a universalist feminist who confines women and men to such form of gender equality.

In the post-Edenic world, a reversal of ignorance takes place. Feminists have long documented how women have been ignored or devalued. These same feminists would use the same to ignore non-feminist women (who refuse to identify themselves as victims), predatory women (who victimize men), or fellow feminists (feminist universalists accuse them of being un-feminist for refusing to support women's victimhood).

In the post-Edenic world, there lurks a dangerous feminist who can only see dangers looming over women. Beware of such feminists — they are likely to figure you as a suffering victim. No, a post-Edenic world is not post-feminist. Such post-feminist figures must step outside feminism to see how they have simply rendered women as victims, thus, revictimizing them. The post-feminist must be able to see that a new patriarch is already on the loom: (some) feminist themselves. They wear the trappings of judge, jury, and executioner, wielding feminist knowledge as a claim for justice.

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Of Differences and Vulnerabilities: Reflections on Feminist Collective Action

by Anna Kristina M. Dinglasan-Richardson [1]

This think piece is a reflection of the conversations that transpired during the two-day event, 'Spark Talk, Ignite Change!' held in Miriam College last March 2019. The event was designed to create open spaces to encourage feminist conversations and reflection on the current political context. Fraught with sexism, impunity, and violence, national- and local-level politics have rendered women as subjects of misogynistic narratives, and as direct victims to these narratives' cruelty and machismo.

As feminists, we are now, more than ever, compelled to come together in the face of unrelenting misogyny and sexism in our everyday lives.

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This paper is a reflection about feminist collective action — what it truly means, what it entails, and how it can be sustained. As I write my thoughts, I am guided Dr. Sylvia Estrada-Claudio's interrogation of feminism as a uniting force, and by my own musings about what has sparked joy in my 15 years of experience working within feminist movements.

Feminism as a uniting force

The first point that Dr. Estrada-Claudio raised was the need to de-homogenize the women's movement. People carry varied and multiple identities, which constantly shift during their everyday practices, creating a diversity of experiences that they necessarily bring into movements. As we seek to form a collective identity, it is important to recognize that in many instances, the process of uniting toward a common cause tends to homogenize us. We are often expected to set aside our differences for the sake of a common agenda or good. But the diversity of our identities and experiences certainly means that our struggles and issues are just as diverse. Even today, and in our context, Audre Lorde's (1984, p. 2) words aptly describe how problematic the tendency towards homogeneity can be:

> "As women, we have been taught to either ignore our differences, or to view them as causes for separation and suspicion, rather than as forces for change. Without community, there is no liberation; only the most vulnerable and temporary armistice between an individual and her oppression. But community must not mean a shedding of our differences, nor the pathetic pretense that these differences do not exist."

Chandra Mohanty (1991) also challenges the idea of universalizing experiences and oppression, and appeals for the dismantling, deconstructing and rebuilding of [third world] feminism. We see this also in Chimananda Ngozi Adiche's 2009 TED Talk as she warns against the dangers of universalizing experiences into a single story or meta-narrative.

The second point raised by Dr. Estrada-Claudio is that de-homogenizing the movement entails the practice of a more radical form of democracy — one in which a space for the continued negotiation of identities and power is created, nurtured, and sustained. In Dr. Estrada-Claudio's words, there is a need for a kind

of democracy that is "accepting, mediating, giving space for people to express these identities." This, she said, entails "a proper analysis of power around our actions… for a politics that insists on the idea of long-term commitment and non-contradictory loyalty — and makes a hierarchy of which struggles are better than others — is unrealistic and undemocratic."

We know that identities play a crucial and central role in mobilizing and sustaining participation in collective action. We join movements because collective interests and identities align with our own, and the radical kind of democracy that Dr. Estrada-Claudio talks of is what allows social movements to make assertions of collective identity without suppressing difference. It is the same radical democratic practice that allows us to make strategic and tactical choices within movements, and to understand and appreciate these choices as the deployment of numerous identities (Polleta & Jasper, 2001).

Feminist bargains: compromises and concessions

I suppose this kind of democracy is also what makes it possible for us to make compromises and concessions within and outside of feminist movements, to prioritize interests depending on the political, social, economic, and cultural contexts we operate in. Judy El-Bushra (2007, p. 135) affirms the often unstable and fluid nature of collective action in her article, 'Feminism, Gender, and Women's Peace Activism.' She notes, "women do not necessarily speak with one voice [on issues of war and peace]… They are divided by political identities and allegiances." She points to the dilemma of uniting for a common agenda within women and peace movements: in many instances, women are divided by the same political schisms that created war, while their oppression and struggles are often seen as universal.

This reminds me of what was, at certain points, a problematic definition of women's representation and political participation in the peace process, especially for a gender and peace network in the Philippines. Comprised of various organizations and individuals both in feminist and peace movements, the network was committed to increasing women's participation and leadership in the Bangsamoro peace process. While negotiating language on women's political participation in the formerly known Bangsamoro Basic Law, network members, including Muslim women's groups, agreed on the importance women's formal representation, but were locked in debate about the extent of this representation. Feminists within the

network were arguing for at least a 50 percent quota, but Muslim groups the network opposed this, stating that 50 percent was too much to ask.

I was puzzled by this opposition, but later found that among Bangsamoro women, peace must be the first victory to be won. The above-mentioned debate was happening at a crucial time, when peace was within reach. As women who have had to live through the atrocities of war, they knew that asserting such language within the parameters of a conservative Muslim society would mean shaking an already rocky process. They appealed to us to let them win the peace first, so they can better work at ensuring women's political participation. Witnessing that process was both frustrating and painful, as we tried to take advantage of an opportunity that was, to the minds of some women's rights advocates, a chance to redefine an oppressive status quo. In the end, language about women's meaningful and active participation was adopted into the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL), ensuring one reserved seat for women as a sectoral representative, and the appointment of at least one woman in the Bangsamoro Cabinet. Though not detailed, the BOL also ensures the fundamental human rights of women, reaffirms a commitment to the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination (CEDAW), and ensures the enactment of specific laws to uphold this commitment (Bangsamoro Organic Law, 2018). This should be considered a huge victory for women, regardless of their number and positions within the Bangsamoro government, because they are now formally recognized as legitimate actors in the peace process.

Though several years have passed since then, I continue to ponder about the concessions we had to make, and continue to make in our feminist assertions, particularly in creating alliances with other feminist or non-feminist movements when it might be "preferable to compromise on one's principles to some extent, and to be effective, rather than retain them and be marginalized" (Ray & Kortweg, 1999, p. 64). In an essay she contributed to in a volume called 'Can We All Be Feminists?', O'Toole (2018, p. 105) shared her experiences campaigning for the right to abortion in Ireland. She argued that, in some cases, such as the abortion battle in her country, feminist movements must allow space for compromises, especially when "flying the feminist flag might well endanger women's rights." To explain this, she quoted American pro-choice writer Katha Pollit who

said; "Reproductive rights are inescapably about women. Pervasive misogyny means not only that those rights are stigmatized… but that men don't see them at all as important, while women have limited social power to promote them. And that power is easily endangered by too close an identification with all but the most anodyne feminism."

My experience as gender adviser for Oxfam in the Philippines had me working with a variety of local partners operating in conservative Muslim communities on issues surrounding care work, violence against women, and child marriages. It taught me the importance of communicating key messages in a way that does not silence or discredit the variety of experiences that arise in particular contexts. It was touch and go, and many times, close to torturous — I felt that I was compromising on many of my feminist beliefs and values. So, when we speak of radical democracy within our movements, should we allow ourselves these compromises or not?

Coalitional Politics and Tactical Alliances

According to Dr. Estrada-Claudio, our goal must be inclusiveness, rather than unity. She advocates for "a politics that recognizes that people express themselves through a number of affiliations, movements and efforts, and bring one, few, several identity positions to a question or problem, often deciding as a form of agency, which of these interests or identities they will bring to coalitions." Her emphasis on democracy is an emphasis on a practice that allows people "to work through various similarities, differences, coherences and contradictions to agree to a common goal."

Judith Butler (2019), in a recent interview with the New York Times, explained that coalitions form because of the realization of a "common social condition and a social bond that recognizes that what is happening to one life, whether violence, debt, or subjection to patriarchal authority, is also happening for others." Solidarity requires a departure from a narrow idea of identity (Butler, 2019). It entails, as Dr. Estrada-Claudio says, an ability to "accept the moral capacity of others to determine what is right for them, to make temporary compromises to allow us all towards joint action."

Dr. Estrada-Claudio likens feminist collective action to a ginger plant composed of many roots, which make up several nodes or networks. These roots and nodes connect to other roots and nodes, small or big. Some compete for nutrition, while others remain independent.

This metaphor allows us to understand that within collectives, as Dr. Estrada-Claudio said: "unities always exist, but at various levels, and are always in flux." Coalitions are temporary, and alliances shift. Feminist collective action allows space for these to be negotiated constantly, and accepts these changes, no matter how painful or frustrating they are.

Sparking and sustaining joy: keeping feminist practices relevant

I have never questioned the importance of feminism. In the 15 years that I have been involved in feminist work, I found that there are always reasons for its continued practice. What I have grappled with is how we can sustain our work, and how we can keep the feminist agenda interesting and relevant, especially to those who are outside the feminist movements. At some point during the two-day 'Spark Talk, Ignite Change' event, participants were asked: When does your feminist practice spark joy? I struggled with this question, and I continue to do so, especially since my feminist practice, as I mentioned earlier, has been more arduous than joyful.

I began my feminist journey as a young woman seeking to find my own voice within movements steered by big personalities, and 15 years hence, there are moments when I still struggle to find that voice. What I have found comforting throughout my feminist journey were spaces where such struggles and vulnerabilities were acknowledged and allowed. These are spaces where we are allowed to negotiate who we are and what we can or cannot bring to the table, openly and mindful of our biases.

When Dr. Estrada-Claudio spoke of collective action, emphasizing the temporary nature of coalitions and the constantly shifting power dynamics within and between movements, she also reminded us that as feminists, we must find better ways of defining our boundaries. Perhaps this also means getting better at identifying our goals, and keeping our focus in check. As we seek to keep our momentum going, we must remind ourselves what we are working for. As a collective, what are our goals? What brings us together in solidarity? How do all of these pieces fit into our own bigger picture?

In our current context, in which gross injustices perpetuated by misogynistic narratives abound, we must creatively spur conversation and ignite disruptive moments without creating or furthering already deep-seated animosity. We must find new allies and new

ways of expressing our collective actions. While we do so, we must constantly ask ourselves how much and what kind of compromise we are willing to make, lest we lose our capacity to set our own agenda, or are co-opted by the very forces that oppress us.

There is also a need for continuous intergenerational engagement to sustain movements and remain relevant. There is a "need for a kind of interaction between generations that strives for dialogue and ongoing conversation about differences" (Scampini, 2003, pp. 125-133), for indeed it is our differences that define us. Much has been accomplished, but certainly, a lot more needs to be done. There is a need "to acknowledge the history and wisdom of previous generations," (Wilson, 2005, pp. 224-236) as well as shine a light on the contributions of younger members of movements, while understanding that "we can still challenge each other, and recognize that at different moments, we will either give or receive inspiration, and wisdom," thereby sustaining our momentum and each other (Ibid.).

Perhaps feminist practice is about finding joy in affirming our differences, in acknowledging our vulnerabilities. The joy also comes when we constantly reflect on our own experiences, and how these have changed us as we challenge oppressive, universalizing patriarchal narratives. This joy is found in the acceptance of our failures and the celebration of our victories. Dr. Estrada-Claudio reminds us, "There is no single root in the rhizomatic network that is big enough, so that ensuring its survival is crucial to the life of the ginger plant." Similarly, we must also find joy in letting go, in moving on, and in finding or creating new networks or collectives.

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Orphaned Children, Memory Work, and Developing an Ethics Protocol

by Pacita Dechavez Fortin[1] and Merlie "Milet" B. Mendoza[2]

Introduction

Research on humans, most especially involving vulnerable populations, requires adherence to a set of ethical principles. A "good" research is evaluated on, among other things, whether it has been conducted in an ethical manner. This paper presents the ethics protocol developed for a memory work research[3] involving teenagers orphaned as a result of the Philippine War on Drugs. It argues that research, especially when it involves vulnerable communities that have been subjected to violent killings and continue to be threatened, must move away from knowledge-extraction, and towards collaborative

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2   Merlie "Milet" B. Mendoza is a humanitarian and a peace and social development worker with 30 years of experience. She served with the Office of the President's Peace Commission

knowledge production between (academic) researchers and community participants. This shift requires that researchers recognize the community as partners in the research process, and as producers of knowledge, rather than mere sources of information or object of research. It also takes into account the security and protection issues that confront participants' communities. This paper concludes that community-engaged research must be viewed as an emancipatory project that aims for empowerment and social justice. It advocates a process that is consciously sensitive to the existing security risks that may potentially aggravate participants' realities, including the trauma that the teenage orphans may be suffering from.

Orphaned Children: A Memory Work Research

In 2016, the Duterte administration launched an aggressive nationwide campaign against illegal drugs, known as the War on Drugs. As of 2018, this campaign left about 18,000 to 30,000 orphaned children and their families living in a state of deep vulnerability and insecurity (Delizo, 2019). While the stories of these children and their families have been featured in local and international media, very few have documented the psychological trauma experienced by these children in either witnessing the brutal murder of one or both parents, or experiencing the pain of losing their loved ones tragically, and the ensuing instability of their homes.

A memory work research was carried out to document and highlight the impact of this brutal war on adolescent boys and girls, and how they collectively constructed an image of a safe and caring environment for themselves, their families, and their communities.

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from 1989 to (from President Cory Aquino's term to President Fidel Ramos's term). She was Executive Coordinator of Tabang Mindanaw, working for programs for indigenous peoples, displaced communities in Central Mindanao, and peace and development programs in the Sulu Archipelago. Since 2007, Milet has been working as an independent humanitarian practitioner and peace worker. She is a full time volunteer program coordinator of the Diocese of Novaliches, focusing on supporting initiatives for bridging orphans' lives (SIBOL) in the midst of a cruel war on drugs led by the Duterte Administration.

3   Memory work was developed by German Marxist feminist scholar Frigga Haug and her colleagues to examine the dialectical process by which social structure impinges on how we become gendered, while acknowledging individual agency in the process of becoming (Haug, 1987). It is a social constructionist and feminist method, which begins with subjective experience as the problem to be explained in research. The method seeks for the answer not in the experience itself, nor in the individual accounts of experience, but in how the group or collective analyzes these experiences (Stephenson and Kippax, 2008). (See Crawford et al., 1992; Stephenson and Kippax, 2008; and Willig, 2001, for a detailed account of memory work as a qualitative research method).

Sixty-two (62) teenagers were involved in a memory work process — these participants were selected from urban poor communities in Metro Manila where Catholic faith-based institutions (Catholic groups) continue to implement programs for widows and orphans.

Memory work involves three phases: (1) generation of memories, (2) collective analysis of the memories, and (3) integration and theory-building (Willig, 2001). Three key objectives were identified for the memory work: (a) to provide the participants with a safe space to share their stories; (b) to allow them to undergo a process of collective sense-making and re-imagining of their shared experiences; and, (c) to give voice to adolescents orphaned by the War on Drugs.

The findings of the research revealed orphaned teenagers' memories of *tokhang*[4] as they experienced it, their narratives of the present, and their imagined future. Their memories of loss are characterized by pain and injustice, while their narratives of the present reveal continuing sadness and insecurity. For the future, there is a sense of hope and healing, and a desire to claim justice. Their lives, across time, could be seen as embedded in the home: in the past, a home destroyed in darkness; in the present, a home buried in hardship and sorrow; and in the future, a hope for a new home rising above the pain and injustice.

This research proposes a human security framework[5] in helping the orphaned children and their families attain physical and psycho-emotional well-being, and in fulfilling their fundamental freedoms from want, fear, and indignity or humiliation.

The Ethics Protocol

Clear ethical procedures which take into account the potential long- and short-term effects of the research project on youth participants, the team, the partners, and the communities were formulated prior to the memory work study.

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4   "Tokhang" fuses two words that translate as "knock and plead"—as the strategy involves door-to-door visitations by the police to request that people involved in drugs "voluntarily" surrender to the authorities and cease their drug activities (Amnesty International, 2017). The youth themselves do not refer to this government initiative as a 'war' but use the local word for it, "tokhang." The children in the communities call it "tokbang" because a knock on the door is followed by a 'bang-bang' (shooting).

5   A human security framework espouses the protection of the vital core of all human lives in a way that enhances fundamental human freedoms and human fulfillment – freedom from fear, freedom from want, and freedom from humiliation or indignity (Ogata, 1999). In this study, this implies that interventions must address the interlinkages of these core freedoms.

Ethical concerns identified in the study included: (a) the possibility of exposing research participants and church volunteers to safety and security risks, considering the controversy and political sensitivity of the research topic; (b) the possibility of re-traumatizing participants during phase one of memory work (generating memories); and, (c) the observation that when research is done in the community, it often becomes an extractive process rather than a mutually beneficial knowledge-generating practice, in which both the researchers and the participants benefit from the research project (Wilmsen, 2007).

Developing the Ethics Protocol

The research team drafted an ethics protocol based on the Social Science Ethics Review Board (SSERB) Guidelines for Ethical Research in the Social Sciences, by the Philippine Social Science Council (PSSC)[6].

A research team member was assigned to develop the protocol, and to present it to the entire team for feedback and approval. Each of the principles were defined and discussed, and the measures to apply and implement them were agreed upon by the entire team, ensuring that they adequately address the ethical concerns raised. Written assent and consent forms were also prepared and commented on by the team.

The protocols and the consent forms were also presented to the memory work facilitators for comments. The facilitators and the research participants all reside in the same communities, where facilitators also serve as volunteers of a faith-based institution extending assistance to the orphaned children and families. They suggested that the ethics protocols and the forms have a Filipino translation, and that a memory work facilitator's manual be developed for their use.

Based on the feedback on the ethics protocol, some adjustments to the research design were made to ensure that the data collection process creates a safe space for the teenagers to come together, bond with each other, and create a sense of solidarity as youth with a collective experience of being orphaned by tokhang. This process

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6   The funder of the research did not require an ethics clearance from the research team, and no budget was allocated for such purpose. The institution where the principal investigator is affiliated had yet to form a Research Ethics Committee at the time when the project was awarded.

of group-bonding and community-building was facilitated through games and expressive arts, following the tenets of critical arts inquiry[7].

The Memory Work Research Ethics Protocol

The ethics protocol lays out the principles, procedures and tasks, and serves as a guide to ensure that the research project meets ethical standards and requirements. It aims to ensure that short- and long-term effects of the research project on people, places, and natural and social environments under investigation are taken into account, and the various risks associated with the conduct of the research are addressed. It applies to all those involved in the project: research team members, community facilitators and documenters. The SSERB guiding principles are integrity, confidentiality, privacy and anonymity, informed consent, beneficence (do good and do no harm principle), social justice, cultural and gender sensitivity, and protection of vulnerable populations.

Integrity

This refers to researchers' commitment to accuracy, intellectual honesty, and truthfulness in conducting and reporting studies. Integrity concerns the professional competence of researchers to carry out the research — from the design conceptualization and implementation to the dissemination and utilization of results — as well as their personal and professional intents and motivations for engagement. It also involves the management of economic, political, or institutional self-interest, or those of the study's sponsor or funding agency.

Several measures were put in place to ensure the integrity of the research: first, research team members, including data collectors or community facilitators, explicitly expressed their motivations, intents, and purposes before they could engage in the project. Second, research team members' curriculum vitae reflected expertise in the area of research. Third, the Terms of Reference (ToR) specified the role of each team member and their specific contributions to the project, as well as how they will be acknowledged in the final report. Fourth, research team members were required to disclose organizational or institutional affiliations which may cause potential

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7   The games, including community building and expressive arts activities, played a very critical role in the entire data collection process, and enabled the research team and the memory work facilitators to gain the trust of the participants, allowing for a freer and richer sharing of stories, memories, and experiences in a safe and nurturing environment.

conflict of interest. Finally, the research team discussed and agreed upon the basis for the order of authorship of the research.

Confidentiality, Privacy, and Anonymity

These principles are concerned with the research participants' right to take control of the information they voluntarily shared with the researchers, including how the information will be used, and to whom the data will be made available. These principles prevent distress, embarrassment, indignity, and other psychosocial harm on the part of participants, arising from the possible misuse of information, or the adverse implications in case a participant's identity or research is revealed.

On confidentiality and anonymity, these guidelines and measures were put in place: first, all data gathering was done in a private, safe, and secure place. Second, no photos or videos of the participants were taken; however, photos of their outputs were allowed. Third, the identities of individuals, groups, or organizations participating in the study were not revealed in the research project, and may be revealed only when written permission is obtained from them. Likewise, communities or their locations will not be identified; as context in the analysis of the study, socio-economic descriptions were used. Finally, research team members, including the community facilitators as data collectors, signed individual Terms of Reference, with specific provisions on maintaining the confidentiality, privacy, and anonymity of participants, as well as on complying with security protocols.

On the matter of privacy, two measures were put in place. First, only information that was deemed most relevant to the study was gathered. Except for particular socio-demographic information (e.g. age, gender, educational attainment, birth order, number of family members, etc.) pertinent to the data analysis, no other personal identifying information was collected from the participants. Second, the solicitation of specific data or information related to specific drug-related killing case (e.g., identity of those who committed the killings) which may pose actual or potential harm to the participants was strictly prohibited.

On data security and privacy, the following measures were put in place: first, data files will be kept under the personal possession of the principal researcher for the duration of five years. Second, data files will be accessible to the principal researcher and research team

members only. Security measures to safeguard files (e.g., password or encryption, number of and access to computers or laptops, contingencies for files in transit, etc.) will be put in place.

Informed Consent

This principle signifies voluntary participation in the research, without coercion or undue influence.

For the research, a number of measures were set up and implemented: first, prior to the actual conduct of the data-gathering activities, the research team conducted a courtesy call with leaders of the community partner organization, to explain the purpose and nature of the research project, and to solicit their support and assent. Second, the research team, through community liaisons, coordinated with the community partner organization regarding data-gathering schedules. Third, all research participants were required to sign an assent form (translated into Filipino). Parents or guardians of participants who were involved in the research were also asked to give their written consent for their ward's or children's participation in the research project. The consent/assent form was explained in detail to the research participant and their guardians by the community facilitator, prior to their signing of the form. Fourth, informal consent[8] was solicited before the beginning of each data-gathering activity. Throughout the data gathering process, consent was solicited, as needed. Fifth, community facilitators keenly observed participants' behaviors for any signs of distress, embarrassment, or any form of discomfort during the memory sessions.

Beneficence (Do Good, Do No Harm Principle)

This principle ensures that participants are protected from potential harm, including physical, medical, psychological, and social damage (such as distress, embarrassment, or social stigma), and financial,

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8   Aside from the written assent form signed by the participants, "informal" consent was elicited throughout the data gathering process – this meant asking questions related to (dis)comfort, such as "Are you still doing okay?" before the start of each session. As needed, participants were assured that that they are free to share whatever they are comfortable to share, and that they can withdraw anytime they want. They were requested them not to force their co-participants to share if they choose to be quiet, or wish to do something else rather than share. The participants were also given enough time to share, without being rushed, and allowing for pauses or silences. The facilitators assured participats that whether or not they continue with the research, they are free to eat meals, draw, play, or sit in the room with others. Any sign of discomfort, withdrawal, or extreme distress (ex. crying), especially while sessions were ongoing were considered as indications of non-consent, which required intervention from process observers (e.g. participants were temporarily taken out of the room).

criminal, or civil liability. Their welfare and well-being and the improvement of their situation were guaranteed in the careful assessment of the benefits and risks of participation in the study.

Measures to ensure beneficence were set in place. First, each session started with introductory trust- or confidence-building exercises that put the research participants at ease with each other. Each session also ended with a closing ritual, to foster a sense of solidarity among the research participants. Memory work (Phase one on generating memories) was done using the third person perspective, to allow the participants some emotional distance in the re-telling of their personal experiences. Second, community facilitators ensured that a relaxed and safe space for participants throughout the memory work sessions was created. They also conducted debriefings at the end of each day's session to relieve stress associated with the conduct of the sessions, as well as to gather insights on the day's activities. Third, community facilitators keenly observed participants' behavior for any sign of distress, embarrassment, or discomfort during the memory work sessions. Research team members who are licensed psychologists or social workers also joined the sessions as process observers, and assisted in providing psychological first aid, as needed. Finally, the research team identified appropriate agencies or partner organizations which may provide assistance to participants, and referred participants to these, as needed.

To ensure the safety and security of the research team, the team selected and worked with research participants from community organizations or parishes who were already assisting families affected by the War on Drugs. The academic research team members, including the community data collectors who were church-based volunteers and trained on memory work, visited the community in pairs, after being provided with logistical budget for private transportation. Schedules of community visits or data-gathering activities were coordinated with the community partner organization ahead of time.

Social Justice

This refers to the consideration for the fair allocation of burdens and benefits to research participants and their community. Measures to ensure that the research project does not exacerbate inequities and inequalities in the community must be put in place. Aligned with this principle, the research aimed to give voice to orphaned teenagers by documenting their narratives of survival; highlighting their strengths

and their imaginations of the future; and fostering a sense of hope and solidarity with other survivors and their families. The research results will be used to design of inclusive, sustainable, gender-responsive community-based interventions, and to provide policy recommendations that will alleviate the burdens of the orphans and their families.

To realize this principle, several measures were set in place: first, community leaders, facilitators, and data collectors were provided with training on a research methodology, which could be useful for future community work. Community facilitators also received a fee for their time and participation in data collection. Further, the research participants and their accompanying family members were provided with reimbursements for meals and transportation during the three-day data gathering sessions. As tokens of appreciation, school supplies were also given to the research participants at the end of the entire data gathering process. Finally, a donation for the use of the venue was given to the partner community organization or parish.

Cultural and Gender Sensitivity

This principle removes biases and stereotypes, and prevents exclusion and discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, income class, or age, providing consideration toward the norms, traditions, conventions, and practices of the population under study.

Measures set in place to fulfill this principle include the following: first, data collectors selected for the study were community leaders or volunteers who are already familiar with the norms, traditions, conventions, and practices of the research participants and the community. Their feedback and input on the research and ethics protocols were solicited to ensure that these are context-specific. Second, a research team member served as liaison between the team and the community. Finally, the research included the narratives of both boys and girls, aged 13 to17, affected by drug-related killings. Data on boys' and girls' narratives were collected separately to highlight similarities or differences in their meanings, experiences, and insights.

Protection of Vulnerable Populations

This involves ensuring the protection of individuals, groups, sectors, and populations who are in vulnerable circumstances, including

children, women in difficult situations such as survivors of domestic violence, elderly, persons with disabilities, and persons engaged in activities that may invite stigma, such as prostitution or selling drugs, among others. The ethical guidelines developed by the research team to govern the entire research project were formulated and adopted for the purpose of ensuring that all participants, including the research team, data collectors, and documenters, are protected from any form of harm or threat to their security, safety, and well-being due to their involvement in this research.

Ethical Issues and Dilemmas

In the course of the research, the team encountered several issues, hereafter phrased as questions. First, if the identities of participants affected by injustices are kept confidential, private, and anonymous, how can they claim redress for the wrongs committed against them? Would the act of speaking on participants' behalf to advance their causes not deprive them the opportunity of voice? The research team clarified the aims and purpose of the research, and took the participants' safety and security as the key priority.

Second, the principle of informed consent states that consent must be freely and voluntarily given, without coercion and undue influence. Before securing the consent of participants, the purpose, use, nature, extent of participation, risks, and benefits of the research were thoroughly explained. Would giving economically poor research participants incentives to participate be a form of exerting undue influence? Not providing them any form of incentive, including free meals, transportation reimbursement and tokens in exchange for their time, effort, and willingness to participate may also violate the social justice principle. The team upheld the right of the adolescent teens to participate in, or withdraw from the research, regardless of their reasons, in recognition of their evolving capacity to make informed choices about their decision for research involvement (UNICEF, 2017). The provision of incentives to the participants was considered by the team as a form of assistance to alleviate participants' perceived immediate needs, and as a form of logistical support to the research participants, without which the data collection would not have been possible.

Conclusion

This paper argues that social science research, especially those involving vulnerable communities or communities at risk, must move

away from knowledge extraction, and toward collaboration between academic researchers and the community participants in knowledge production. Such shift requires that researchers recognize the community as partners in the research process, and as producers of knowledge, rather than as mere sources of information, or objects of research.

By developing an ethics protocol for a memory work research with orphaned children affected by a government-initiated drug war, the researchers ensured that their engagement with the participants will contribute to some improvement in the situation of orphaned children and families, and not cause undue harm, or reinforce existing inequalities caused by power differentials in knowledge, socio-economic status, gender, or political orientation.

The ethics protocol served as a moral compass for ensuring that the requirements of a "good" research are upheld; for meeting the rigors of scholarly study, while at the same time, setting a venue for dialogue; and for fostering a sense of solidarity with participants who come from marginalized, outcast communities. This study affirms that community-engaged research should be used as a tool to advance social justice, and be viewed as an emancipatory project towards empowering of vulnerable populations and communities, while at the same time, managing security risks.

Feedback from Participants of the Convoshop

Convoshop participants highlighted the following: (a) the need to identify the enabling conditions to build resilience in community, and to ensure that community contexts, capacities, and perspectives are taken into account in intervention designs; (b) the need to address power imbalances when academic researchers enter the community as outsiders; (c) the need to present the narratives and perspectives of law enforcers such as the Philippine National Police (PNP), to provide a more nuanced understanding of the drug war and its impact, not only to survivors but also to those who implemented them; (d) the need to engage with strategic partners to find solutions to the issues surfaced through the research. Some identified strategic partners included media, the corporate sector, international non-government organizations (NGOs), and friendly factions of the government.

One participant shared anomalies and corrupt practices within the PNP arising from the drug war, such as the looting of properties after

tokhang, and the extraction of exorbitant fees imposed on families seeking to retrieve their deceased loved ones' bodies from funeral homes, one of which was found to be owned by a police official.

There is a shrinking space for NGOs and civil society organizations (CSOs) to engage with the government, primarily due to the lack of trust and a high sense of fear and insecurity, according to another participant.

The challenge of engaging the government remains, especially given that the government itself perpetuates abuse and violence. Where would the poor run to, if the government that is supposed to protect and serve them is the one violating their rights, and causing their fear, insecurity, and poverty?

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Changing the Talk of Movements

by Dr. Mira Alexis Ofreneo[1] and Dr. Nico Canoy[2]

In writing this piece, we (the conversationalists) wanted to capture the convoshop as it unfolded to share the conversation with readers as it happened. As this convoshop talks about talk, we wanted to make the reader hear the actual talk as they read through the transcription of the convoshop.

By bringing talk during the convoshop to the reader, and making it as close to the actual conversation as possible, we attempt to re-construct and re-create our shared reality from that moment with the reader of this text. In so doing, we wish to give life to the collective engagement of the participants in the conversation that unfolded. This same conversation eventually created our shared insights with regard to how we, as movement actors, construct our messages, position and counter-position, we respond to and re-direct storylines, and use talk to achieve our intended outcomes.

We argue that understanding how movements talk is key understanding how movements co-construct and co-create

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social reality. Introducing positioning theory as a frame by which talk is understood, we ask how storylines are created, and how conversationalists or actors can position themselves in ways that will shape both the present and the future, both actors and the audience and publics listening in on coversations. We ask how we can be strategic in a post-truth context, when both reality and talk are in constant flux. We hope that this is only the beginning of our conversation toward constructing imagined futures.

The 30-page verbatim transcript of 15,722 words was categorized by key idea, summarized, and reduced to 12 pages or 8,788 words. The transcript appears like a play, with the speaker and the words in sequence, as they appeared during the convoshop. A summary of the storyline appears with each talk sequence. The original mix of English and Tagalog was translated into English. Utterances were edited for grammatical composition and sentence construction.

We would like to apologize to our participants if the editing and translation did not fully capture their original positions. Without their talk, this outcome would not have been achieved.

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Introducing the topic

Mira: This is the 'Changing the Talk of Movements' convoshop. Our intent is to introduce a frame to understand how we talk as movement actors, or how we send our messages across in our advocacy. This can be constructed as a messaging workshop that looks at how we craft our messages towards our intended outcome. The frame we're using is a discursive frame called positioning theory. We will first introduce positioning and share examples from our own research work on how we understand talk, by looking at how actors position in their talk and the social consequence of acts of positioning. Then we will have an exercise using episodes from public talk when Pacquiao called LGBT people "worse than animals" and when Duterte's apologists defended his rape jokes. From these examples, we examine how we can counter-talk. What do we say in these episodes? What messages will achieve our intended outcome? How do we position if we want to make heterosexist, homophobic hate speech, and sexist, misogynist, disparaging humor stop? In the end, the point is to examine our advocacy, and how we talk. What messages work? What messages do not work? And if they did not work, how can we change the talk of movements?

Positioning Theory and how social reality is constructed in talk

Nico: First, let's highlight key principles of the frame, with examples to crystallize these principles. Then, let's reflect on our own practice using the frame. The approach that we are sharing is a way of being attentive to conversations, where conversations take place, and how we change conversations to achieve our intended outcome. Positioning theory is one approach within discursive psychology. It asserts that our social reality is constructed or created in talk, in conversation, in language. Within a broader social constructionist

paradigm, it tells us that social reality is always embedded in our relationships and social interactions. A discursive approach attends to how social reality is produced in talk or conversation. It is in paying attention to these discursive practices or patterns of talk that we can understand ourselves and our social lives. It's useful at this point to reflect on where talk takes place or the place of talk. At home? In school? Private? Public? Inside the movement?

Nico: Positioning theory is a discursive tool that allows us to attend to talk in everyday life. What is useful here is the assertion that life is in constant flux. It is fast and slow. It is changing, and changing rapidly, while also being captured in moments or episodes. A metaphor to life here is the teleserye (telenovela), shifting and changing, seemingly never-ending, but captured in episodes, episodes in our lives. There are episodes of talking to your mother, riding the car, bedroom talk, classroom talk, dining table talk — these are episodes. Life unfolds in episodes. And in understanding the conversation in these episodes, we understand how people construct reality and life, and how we can change this reality, how we can create change in life, through talk.

Nico: Positioning theory came about as a critique to role theory, which saw life as a set script, and people in set roles. According to role theory, roles are fixed static, tied to institutions, culturally endorsed, difficult to change. Positioning theory argued that the space for change is located in talk. Instead of playing fixed roles, people are engaging in acts of positioning in talk or conversation. People are positioning themselves and others. And these positions can change from one episode to the next. Positions are fluid, changing, deriving power from the very act of positioning. While roles can be enacted in acts of positioning, positions allow roles or seemingly fixed parts to change.

Nico: In the basic formulation of positioning by Harre, there are three key elements to an episode: storylines, positions, and speech acts. The storyline is the story of the conversation; for example, the story of domestic violence. Within a storyline, positions are where people find themselves located in the story; for example, the victim, the perpetrator, the hero, the savior. Within a storyline, people position and are positioned. They occupy or may be forced to occupy positions. And in those patterns of positioning are speech acts or the force of talk. Here, language or talk has force. It does something. It is performative. It acts. What is the talk doing? This is the speech act. Is it legitimizing or justifying violence? Is it trying to blame?

Nico: Positions are attributes that we ascribe to people, ways by which we describe people, like calling a student smart or stupid. These words have weight. By being positioned in particular ways, people are implicitly assigned rights or duties. Here, the possibilities of action become defined. By referring to a person's moral or personal attributes in a conversation, positioning limits what people can say or do in a given social episode. For example, a student positioned as smart may be given the right to speak in class, while a student positioned as stupid may be given the duty to listen. Through positioning or being positioned, a person is given corresponding rights and duties. Positions are often relational: with the strong comes the weak; with the sinful comes the pure; with the victim comes the perpetrator. With each position comes either a right or a duty. For example, being positioned as strong comes with the right to lead, while being positioned as weak comes with the duty to follow.

Positioning in domestic violence: A discursive pattern of blaming

Nico: We applied positioning theory in the context of domestic violence among heterosexual couples in an urban poor context. We combined positioning and role theory, as we recognized the fixed roles of husbands and wives, enacted in acts of positioning. We labeled domestic violence as *pambubugbog* (one-way) and *bugbugan* (two-way) to also show the fluidity of violence. We asked, "What is the discursive pattern of positioning underlying a one-way male-to-female violence, or *pambubugbog*, and two-way violence, or *bugbugan*?" We also asked, "What is the structural pattern that sustains violence?" Here, we focus on the discursive pattern. In one-way violence, we found a discursive pattern wherein the husband positions the wife as not being a good wife for failing to budget, while the wife positions the husband as not being a good husband for failing to provide. The couple attributes the violence in their relationship to lack of money, or being poor, the pattern of talk before violence is blaming, or finding fault in each other.

Mira: In applying positioning, the idea is to look at the pattern of talk that happens before violence takes place. The pattern of talk is blaming each other, *"Ikaw kasi, ikaw kasi* (It's your fault, it's your fault)." But it's supported by gender role enactment when the wife says, *"Alam ko naman, ako martyr dito* (I know I'm the martyr here);" that is, to acknowledge, "I will take it," the violence. If we change the talk, will we be able to change the outcome? If we change the blaming

pattern, if we change positioning as martyr, will the violence stop? Will changing the pattern in talk change the outcome?

Counter-positioning to stop violence

Nico: In two-way violence, we see the same pattern of blaming each other for failing to fulfill their duties as husband and wife. But here we see that the wife changes the pattern of talk by saying, *"Sige, subukan mo. Para i-ano kita sa barangay.* (Go ahead, just try to hurt me. So I can report you to the authorities)." This makes the violence stop. The wife positions the husband as a criminal within the context of the law.

Nico: While there is a pattern of gender role enactment in the talk, there are also shifts in positioning, like when the wife positions the husband as a criminal for inflicting violence. This is one value of positioning — to look at counter-positioning or counter-storylines, to change the outcome of talk. A final example is the wife who positions the self as an equal partner, or *katuwang*. She said, *"Hindi ba katuwang mo ako?* (Am I not your partner here?)" This ascribes equal power, and the right to be treated as an equal.

Positioning sexism in public talk: The case of Senator De Lima

Angelique: Now we give examples from a conversation that took place in a public space online. This comes from a research on sexist humor directed at a Filipina politician, in this case, Senator De Lima. We looked at the characteristics attributed to De Lima. How was she positioned? What are the consequences of these positions? What rights did she lose and what rights did the public claim?

Angelique: This is in the context of her alleged sex video with her former bodyguard, Ronnie Dayan, during the congressional hearings about De Lima's alleged link to drugs in the Bilibid Prison. The analysis focused on public comments online that used sexist humor and disgust. The results show that the female politician was positioned as *mataba* (fat), *matanda* (old), *hindi tao* (non- human), which further divides into *hayop* (animal) and *halimaw* (evil monster), *manyak* (sexual deviant), and *masyadong sekswal (*hypersexed).

Angelique: While there's thinking that comments are just comments, we were sensitive to what the talk does or what happens when people position a woman leader in this way. Positioned as sexually undesirable for being fat and old, the talk creates a social force to make people laugh, but also to open women's weight and age to

evaluation. And when the public talks this way, they're claiming the right to be disrespectful, and to ridicule fat and old women. De Lima loses the right to be respected as a woman, consequently losing the right to be a legitimate senator. Her sexuality is now linked to her credibility as a senator. Positioned as an animal, she becomes less human. Positioned as a woman, and monster, she becomes evil. Positioned as a threat to the state and the public for having animal-like and monster-like qualities, she further loses the right to legitimate rule. While sexist humor targets a woman, in a political context, it can delegitimize a woman from holding political office. Positioned as a sexual deviant, she loses the moral authority to lead, and becomes the target for delegitimization. In being made the target of sexist humor and disgust, she loses respect as a woman, and loses legitimacy as a senator. In an online public space, the implications of talk go beyond the original conversation, to limitless audiences beyond space and time.

Identities of those involved in the talk

Jelen: In online spaces, the identities of the actors making comments also matter. For example, our organization gets attacked online by a combination of bots and real people, men — macho men, pretend men. For example, men will write, *"Re-rape-in ko 'yan* (I will rape you)" every time we say something against Duterte. Did you see the connection between identities and comments?

Angelique: The thinking behind positioning is not to focus on the identity of the speaker, but on the speech; not on the speaker being male, but on the speech being macho. What is the talk doing? What is the talk performing? In the utterance "I will rape you," the focus is on the talk being macho without having to return to the person.

Jelen: We see a pattern in the identities of the actors making comments. For example, Bong always starts. It's always a male name, a macho name. The names recur. And their role is to attack women. They always carry the same macho image, macho culture, the same set of responses.

Angelique: The question, perhaps, is what responses were effective in countering this macho messaging.

Responding to sexist talk for multiple audiences

Mira: Also interesting in public spaces is having multiple audiences listening or watching the conversation unfold. One is not only responding to the actor making comments; one is also responding to the public watching. While we can respond to the macho commenter, say, Bong, we have an unintended audience listening or watching how we respond to Bong. And so, we ask, "What outcome do we want? What influence do we want to make on the wider public? What is the social force of our talk?" How do we want to respond to the Bongs?

Jelen: One can be strategic and have a strategic response, also a set response. We did this when we had to reclaim the hashtag #TakeBacktheTech. The battle at that time is to always have a counter-response to every response, but that is difficult. Sometimes, it is not strategic. Sometimes, it's more strategic to target the main source of sexist comments, the producer of sexist ideas. But having a counter to every comment is difficult. It takes up time; it takes up resources, and we do not have the people.

On counter-positioning and re-positioning

Mira: I think we all get the idea of how we are changing talk, and we're now in, "How do we counter?" or "How do we re-position?" There is that possibility of countering point-by-point, that for every time the commenter positions, you also counter-position. Sometimes you can position the person. Sometimes you can position the issue. Sometimes you can redirect the story, the storyline. You can change the direction of the conversation. While you're trying to answer this person, you can intentionally shift the conversation to something else, to your agenda, or your counter-storyline. For example, you can say, "This is what you are saying but this is what we should be talking about. This is the more important issue. What can you say about that?" Something to this effect can redirect the storyline into the outcome or agenda you want.

Mira: Let's use the example of Pacquiao's utterance that targeted LGBT people, because the impact of his words was deeply felt by the LGBT community. There was such a strong emotional response. There were repercussions on people's private lives; there was a shift in how LGBT people were accepted by friends and family. All of a sudden, their family and friends were repeating or agreeing with Pacquiao's utterance, and LGBT people realized that they were not really

accepted fully as LGBT persons. People lost friends, and relationships were altered, online and in-person. The question is, "How do we respond to something like this?" Pacquiao's famous line was, *"Kung lalaki sa lalaki, babae sa babae, eh mas masahol pa sa hayop ang tao.* (If people engage in male to male, female to female relations, then they are worse than animals.)"

Mira: The response to Pacquiao's words comes from Boy Abunda, one of the first public LGBT figures that countered Pacquiao. Within the day, he responded by saying that, "Kung ang ibig sabihin po ng mga hayop ay gumagalang, ang ibig sabihin ng hayop ay nagmamahal, then yes, I am an animal. (If what it means to be an animal is to show respect, if what it means to be animal is to love, then yes I am an animal.)" And then Boy Abunda shifted the storyline by saying, *"Hindi kami titigil… ipaglaban ang aming karapatan to equality, to dignity, dahil ninakaw ito sa amin.* (We will not stop… fighting for our rights to equality, to dignity, because these were stolen from us.)" He is saying that dignity is ours. "I am not begging Manny Pacquiao for dignity… for my humanity, because you do not own my humanity. *Akin yon* (that's mine), that's my birthright." This is one of the strongest counters.

Brian: The re-positioning is: "I own my own dignity. No one can take it away." The power shifted from the public, or Pacquiao, to the self of LGBT people, "Affirm me or not, it's my dignity."

Jelen: My question is, "Was it easy to counter Manny Pacquiao because of the low opinion of him?" Because there were really so many responses against him online at that time. Even women's groups, feminist groups responded. He really could not engage in discourse.

The impact of words and shifting storylines

Mira: But it was also interesting that there were responses that shifted the storyline to minimize his words like, "Pacquiao is a national treasure. *Ang laki ng nagawa niya para sa Pilipinas. Pambansang kamao* (He has done so much for the Philippines. He is the national fist.). *Pabayaan na yan.* (Let it go.)" These responses kept support for Pacquaio and minimized the impact of his words on LGBT people. In the end, the issue died. Pacquiao won. His ratings fell for a few weeks in surveys, but he still won a seat in the Senate. There was no real consequence on him. But what about the consequence on LGBT people?

Ryan: I think part of shifting the storyline was when Pacquiao met a group of LGBT activists in GenSan to say, "I didn't mean what I said, I support the LGBT community."

Eleanor: I see what we're talking about — the messaging in Boy Abunda's response, because he responded at all levels of the attack, and he transcended it. He looked for commonality, humanity. That was very strategic, very political, because then, that draws in others beyond the LGBTIQ community. It was not tit-for-tat, attack, and then counter-attack. Among us advocates, activists, feminists, we have to be clear about our primordial message which reflects who we are and our understanding of life, of people. This is why this struck me. And even if the issue has passed, I wish that his message marked the hearts and minds of people. "This is my humanity, this is mine, no one can take this."

Women's sexuality and LGBT storylines

Ted: With the De Lima case on social media, there was mob aggression. Is it the technology? Why did it not happen in the case of Pacquiao targeting LGBT people? Is it a different platform? Is it because there is no identity online? Are people less accountable? Or is it because of trolls?

Jelen: In my experience, from a feminist lens, it was easy for people to attack De Lima because they were attacking her sexuality. With Pacquiao, it was against LGBT rights. It was obvious that he was wrong. People will not join him because he was going against rights. But with De Lima, there were many things about her sexuality that were being attacked. It was easy to counter Pacquiao because people had a low opinion of Pacquiao, and the LGBT community being attacked was united and strong. On Facebook, all the pages were full of reactions against Pacquiao. Even long after, people would still rejoice when he would lose a boxing fight, because they really took his statement against him, women, men, LGBT. People have not forgotten the statement. But with De Lima, it was so easy to join her attackers because sexism is so normalized in the Philippines. Sexism is so common. It was easy for people to join in attacking De Lima's sexuality, but not with LGBT rights.

Mira: But there were also people who sided with Pacquiao, like Tulfo, who said that LGBT people should not be granted rights. The bottomline always is religion. They use the Bible to say that to be

LGBT is immoral and can never be accepted, not in this country, not in this world. They tell LGBT people to just leave the country and go.

Ryan: The other difference I think is that Pacquiao's statement targeted a group of people, not just one person like with De Lima, so it seemed abstract. Now I feel that the responses of the LGBT community were not able to highlight direct verbal violence coming from the statement like parents telling their children, *"Ma-Pa-Pacquiao ka* (You will be Pacquiao-ed)," meaning beaten up, if you were LGBT.

Brian: I think there were a lot of attacks against De Lima because there were a lot of assumptions about what it is to be a respectable woman, a respectable senator. A woman is supposed to be pure and chaste, not sexual, at her age. They used assumptions about gender against her.

The context of the talk and storyline

Lalaine: It is really easy to target sexuality across all other human rights issues, but we also need to take note of the time it happened. The Pacquiao statement was during election time. It was not yet Duterte's time.The attacks against De Lima happened during Duterte's administration. This is the context of that talk. It happened during the time of Duterte, when his administration had a big project to demonize Senator De Lima, and legitimize the war on drugs and tokhang (drug-related killing). This is now the troll system. The comments are weaponized. You don't even know if they are people, but if you look at the discourse of people, they are projecting it as the Philippines, as the Filipino people, as the majority opinion. All of these aspects – the context, the timing, the person — are not just focused on her being a senator or a woman. It's really to legitimize Duterte's drug war. This is the bigger context.

Creating new storylines

Nico: Coming from De Lima, we now look at Duterte's rape jokes, and how his apologists defend him. The social force is to trivialize the rape jokes as just jokes. The intention is to figure out how to counter rape jokes. From Pacquiao, here is the President speaking. We will look at the patterns of positioning made by bloggers known to be Duterte apologists and presidential spokespersons, and reflect on how we can counter-position. In one example, the Duterte apologist positioned Duterte as an accountable commander-in-chief, accountable to his soldiers. If soldiers were to rape, Duterte positioned himself as

accountable for their actions. This was one example of how they defended Duterte. The storyline was Duterte was a responsible commander, and supportive of his troops. Maybe we can reflect on the space for repositioning, or creating new storylines, or engaging this storyline.

Mira: What social force do we want to achieve? How do we make people stop accepting rape jokes? How do we call it out and say it's not okay? Positioning Duterte as an accountable and responsible leader makes people stop calling out the President for the rape joke. There are public apologists defending him every time he makes a sexist remark.

Jelen: What we've noticed is with the rape jokes, all the counter-positions to defend or excuse Duterte have been exhausted, from being *Bisaya,* being *masa* (one with the masses). People can identify with these. He really has a set of people that are strategists. The way they package counter-positioning Duterte's rape jokes has been strategized for the masses.

Jelen: How we responded to this was to attack him in terms of accountability, saying that those statements normalize sexual violence. And as the President, you are the agent promoting that sexual violence is okay. You can't just attack. You have the think of how it's presented. Our attack is on being an accountable person. When we write a statement, a lot of human rights language is used because you need to be exhaustive. People also expect you to release a statement as a feminist organization, a women's organization. It's hard because we are just a small organization, but Duterte has a lot of people who will counter for him, and there are also women's groups supporting him. It's difficult because you are also countering women, feminists, on his side, like Sass, Mocha. Sass identifies as a feminist, and she was part of our networks before she flew to the other side.

Mira: That's an interesting situation where you are expected to give the feminist position, you have the duty to speak for women. These are words being uttered in a very public space. We're talking to everybody. We're not just talking to the apologists like Sass. We're also thinking of everyone watching the conversation and listening and waiting for our response. We're also talking to the public, to all Filipinos; to the Duterte side, but also, to our side, the feminist side. In this case, we enter an accountability storyline, even if we're not for

Duterte. How do we message that we are not anti-Duterte, but anti-sexist? How do we target the specific action of using talk that is sexist, but not be identified as anti-Duterte? Being labeled as anti-Duterte does not work.

Mira: It becomes a political strategy to not identify as anti-Duterte. Have we counter-positioned, "If you're accountable to your soldiers, then be accountable to your women?" Will that work? We've not heard that. "Yes, you're accountable to your troops, to your soldiers. But are you being accountable to women? We're asking you to please be accountable." I don't know if we've made that claim, if we've asked Duterte to "Please be accountable." What often comes out first is an anti-Duterte position that "I will not support this President." That stops people from listening. Asking him to be accountable sounds like aligning with him politically. But all the talk of the apologists is persuading the public listening to the conversation to remain supportive of the President, including being tolerant of his sexism, his rape jokes. The focus here is how to stop rape jokes, how not to make people tolerant of rape jokes, how to counter the normalization of sexual violence without losing the public or the audience that supports Duterte.

Angelique: Another position defending Duterte is that Davao City is a trailblazer in upholding the rights of women, that when it comes to policies on women, Davao is recognized.

Nico: Duterte is positioned as pro-women.

Jelen: The counter was, "It's an insult to the women's movements in Davao City who worked hard for these policies." Duterte just signed it. Even women's groups in Davao City countered the claim that it was Duterte who made all these things possible.

Jelen: But the difference is he has apologists with many followers and it's easy to get the number of likes, the number of followers on Facebook. If we post a statement, we need to think of the drama, the picture, to get likes. Our statement is long and hard to read. People will not share. But our target is to come out with a statement.

Public reacting to the talk: the social force of the talk

Mira: In that case when they said, "He is really pro-women," let's imagine the public's response to the talk. "Ah! So he is really pro-

women (in action). Let's not mind his (anti-women) words." Then the counter was, "That's an insult to women's groups." How was Duterte positioned there? What is that talk doing? Is saying "That's an insult to women's groups" saying Duterte is anti-women? Is this saying he's not pro-women? Let's look at the effectiveness of the messaging. With their positioning of Davao, it reminded the public that he has done a lot for women in terms of action or policy. They can just counter, "He still signed the policies! He still supported! He's still pro-women." We look at it from storyline to storyline, position to position, from the public's perspective. What is the talk doing? While we may think we are in the right because we carry the feminist position, the activist position, the talk is about winning the public's support, the public opinion.

Mira: And that is the social force of talk, the outcome we want to achieve. We want our message to get picked up. We want to enter the conversation. We want the public to listen. What would be that counter-position? Can we say, "If you're really pro-women, can you be pro-women not just in your actions, but also in your words?" You may not really believe that Duterte is pro-women but you're entering a messaging, a storyline that the public holds on to. Because they believe he is pro-women. So we say, *"Please, hindi lang sa gawa, pati sa salita"* (not just in actions, but also in words). But no one has used that.

Brian: If I was a supporter who wasn't really thinking about what this means and you say, "Make him support women also in words," it's shorter but it's clear. You can pick up on it. People will not read long statements but will only pick up the main message. That's what they remember. It's very clear.

Social media and the "battle of the minds"

Eleanor: Their use of social media now is very organized, very systematic, compared to the progressive movement's energy, the traction of posts. In one forum, Duterte's line was, *"Tinetest ko lang yung threshold"* (I was just testing the threshold) or the sense of sensibility. I realized it's planned, very nuanced. And you look at the women's groups doing so many things, projects, advocacies, and having to monitor social media every night, and having to counter. You look at the movement's energy, the traction of posts. To me, these are the strategic questions: first, how valid is the premise that we are touching or reaching out to people's still unbiased minds, That

there are many still unbiased minds out there? Second, are these the platforms to reach out to those so-called still open minds out there? Third, what is this about, really? It's really like a "battle of the minds," the way people construct and interpret realities and how they will, in the future, live those realities. That is one concern that really breaks my heart.

Ryan: Sometimes the pro-Duterte statements are being mediated by the army of disinformation. Is it really worth it to engage in a conversation online? For example, I see homophobic posts, and I track that they're from a computer-internet shop. There are reports that the misinformation army is engaging all these computer-internet shops to spread misinformation. There may be other ways to attack rather than online. I am also concerned that we are depleting our energy (online).

Eleanor: Maybe it's not either-or because we might exclude something. It's in everything, and it's really sophisticated discourses.

Present talk as just one episode – affecting larger conversations in the future

Mira: And it's interesting what you said about this moment, this episode, which is a fragment of the continuity of life. The episodes will continue to the future, after Duterte, with the young generation watching, listening to all the talk. It's beyond us. It's beyond our present advocacy. We are in this episode, this moment, but what we are fighting for in this particular moment has repercussions for the future, forever. The public sphere has changed. Words will stay on. People will not. Whoever said this or that may be lost, but words like "masahol pa sa hayop (worse than animals)" are now part of history, and will stay forever. Ten years from now, we will still have LGBT people being referred to in that way and young people making reference to these words. These words have entered our shared social space. They have constructed our social reality. Can you imagine? In one utterance, in one word, reality has shifted for LGBT people.

Mira: And we're seeing this too in a series of jokes about rape. The words have shifted the public space for women and how people see rape. And now, people can just casually say, *"Rape kita, eh. Pa-rape kita!* (I'll rape you. I'll have someone rape you.)" How did this become acceptable behavior?

Mira: On one hand, we are countering. But on the other hand, we are creating something that people can hold on to, something they can return to, so that the words that will live on are not just *"masahol pa sa hayop* (worse than animals)" or *"pwede kang mang-rape ng babae* (you can rape women)," but our words. Even if these are the minority voice, even if they're small. The ideal is for the message to get picked up by the public, for it to shift public opinion, to change the conversation. But even if we're unable to, our words become part of the larger conversation, of the present, and of the future generations.

Value in responding at different levels: Activitating the nodes

Jelen: Maybe the way to counter now is different. It's not just the individual, but also the community. It's not just national, but also regional. There are also many levels, and different levels of engaging. You can work in offline spaces. Do your community work. There is value for some individuals to go online and respond. Compared to before, there are more people speaking now, which is why I could not leave Facebook. There are many activists on Facebook. And you think about whether you can still influence and raise awareness online. I still follow friends who are now pro-Duterte, to know their posts and the story that will unfold. Every time they have a statement, there's a cover up, and we ask ourselves if we will engage or not.

Jelen: I think this is where movements can converge, and think critically on how we can complement each other. If this is your field, then do that. If our space is offline, then we do that. Just knowing some of us are doing something, and that there's someone with you in this fight is enough. There's value to knowing there's a movement that is fighting, a movement that is countering, whatever force we have.

Mira: This is what Dr. Guy (Sylvia Estrada-Claudio) called activating the nodes. It would be strategic if one node, actor, group, message, can activate other nodes; that if one node answers, all nodes answer. Imagine the impact of that. Different groups, different actors, speaking in one voice, position, storyline. That's impact! To say, "one hundred group sall saying this!"

Jelen: Like with the #MeToo Campaign, #EveryWoman, *#BabaeAko,* the value of hashtag campaigns is that you don't have to be part of an organization, but you can easily join the campaign. There were

prominent individuals that identified with the campaign, and people found it easy to connect with them. We need to also study that.

Locating our message in the post-truth era

Lalaine: Going back to the messaging, there's a level of persuading also within the movement. We don't always have a united front. There are strengths and weaknesses in big movements. In the case of cat-calling Leni (Robredo), there were prominent women's rights groups that said, "That's not cat-calling!" The strength of our message is weakened. We are looking at allies, sections of the women's movement, who spoke outside of the movement.

Lalaine: My second point is the level of exhaustion. It cannot be tit-for-tat, respect this, respect that. There's the frustration and exhaustion in counter-messaging. It's just one bad thing to the next, one bad thing after the other. Where do we position? And then you have less and less allies. The messaging now is, *"Kaya pa ba, mga kababayan?* (Can we still carry on, our country's people?)" What else can we say? There's the exhaustion. We also have to recognize that we live in a time of post-truth, a time of fake news, so there's no traction, because if you speak the truth, people will also not believe you. We need to know where to locate our messaging within that era of fake news and post-truth. We might be engaging in a battle that will be for the long-term.

Jelen: The apologists know the discourses. They've studied them, the positions, the discourses. They know our language, of the academe, of activists, of feminists. It's very easy for them to manipulate the discourse, and to use it against us. They appeal to the masses. They really use the language of the masses. I always tell LGUs that our language is no longer our language. They use our language. *"Kaming mga aktibista* (We the activists). *"Kaming mga Pilipino* (We Filipinos)." They use human rights language. Our discourse has been deconstructed and used against us. The way to frame it is so hard.

Eleanor: In our small group yesterday, we were talking about dualities, oppositionality, extremes, and what we call the "transcendental" or "expansive." I'm relating it now to messaging and the use of social media. It is also possible to think about creating new messages. The purpose is to help us, to help people begin to construct in their minds an alternative reality, to imagine a society, Philippine society, the Filipino people. These are the values that we uphold. We are

losing here and now. We're exhausted. They will tire us. We will lose. Let's bring it to another level where we are outside of this. There's still choice, but it's clearer. That's the tougher part, the more constructive part. These are times of chaos, the ways ahead are in flux. Do we follow the current or hold on? Get to your center of stillness and find the strength to work as individuals, as movements, as peoples. Then let the outside world be. That's where we will draw strength.

Mira: Thank you, Eleanor, for closing. A call to create new storylines.

Jelen: A message of hope.

Lalaine: After everything is said and done, I think we really need to go back to the center; who we are and what we do. Go back to the basics. Position ourselves. Where do we position ourselves? This can be the bigger context, to go back to our roots.

Ryan: There's this article I read about how whenever there is a violation done, human rights groups would attack the state. "You shouldn't do this. You shouldn't do that." Instead, the article says to bring a message of hope, so it's transcendental. "We're not against, but this is the change we want to achieve." Develop a message around that. It's also an invitation to the public to be part of that change.

Nicky: For Metro Manila Pride, we really engage digital spaces. My worry is, "Are we penetrating the echo chambers?" The people we reach, we're already an echo chamber. We all think the same. It's like preaching to the choir. It's good to have that exchange. But what is the metrics of success? That we talk to our people? Our community? Like us? Or to penetrate them? The people outside who keep on countering us? And those who have a huge, well-oiled, well-funded machine?

Nicky: Second, I really believe in the importance of developing our messaging, because there's so much going on. Like, we are all volunteers. We miss out on issues because we need to also take a break, and we are not always able to release a statement, but people are looking up to us to have a statement. We play catch-up. And what we see in our communities is that there's just so much fatigue amongst those who are not necessarily activists. They can be advocates, or they just like our page, or just follow us. And the thing they always ask, "So, yes, this is happening. So, what do we do?" We cannot

answer everything. When we release something, we try to make a call to action.

Nicky: Hope is good. But, at some point, it dissipates and it feels like you're grasping at straws. They have nothing concrete to hold on to, with De Lima, with Marcos. All of these statements are coming out, but what do we do now? Do we rally? Do we just show up there? What do we do after that? So many people are asking me, "What will we do now?" It's so important to develop a culture, a counter-message of hope and all these things. But what will we do so they move with us?

Jelen: In the end, we connect our message with everyday lives of women. In our community work, we ask the women, and we connect it to their everyday lives. We can make the message concrete. These are not seen in online spaces, but what you're doing in offline spaces. Although fragmented, we can create new stories and counter-arguments.

Eleanor: As I said, it's not an either-or. Our actions have different areas of strength, different levels. We do so many things, but we choose what to risk, what to push for. I think I need to clarify what I said earlier. I don't think messaging of hope is messaging of hope. What I meant is constructing a future. And that, for me, is a very concrete call to action.

Mira: Thank you. Thank you.

Social Media Activism and Its Glitches

by Justine Balane[1] and Regina Rebueno[2]

It's no news that the use of social media has grown rapidly in the last nine years, from 1.97 billion users in 2010 to 2.82 billion in 2019 (Clement, 2019). Social media is most commonly associated with the "tech-savvy" youth, who connect with friends and keep up with worldwide trends through the internet. However, entrepreneurs, organizations, politicians, and even activists and feminists utilize social media to get the online reach needed for businesses, campaigns, and causes.

According to Hootsuite (2019), a social media management platform based in Canada, there are currently over 4.388 billion active internet users all over the world. That is 9.1 percent more compared with last year's 4.21 billion. In the Philippines, active use of social media has risen from 67 million active users in 2018, to 76 million in 2019. According to the Global Web Index (2019), Filipinos spend the most time on social media among people worldwide, averaging three hours and 57 minutes per day on social media — because of

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1   Justine Balane is the secretary general of Akbayan Youth. He loves his mom and 2 sisters who taught him so much about Feminism.

2   Regina Rebueno is a feminist, advocate, and activist. She dedicates her work to her country and her 10 rescued cats.

this, the country was nicknamed the social media capital of the world three times in a row beginning 2017.

Both the influence and function of social media have evolved greatly — citizen participation online ranges from connecting with friends and relatives, to linking with like-minded strangers in the creation of massive social movements. Lately, voices of dissent and concern have been heard all over the world through the growing medium provided by social media platforms.

Social media activism is a kind of activism that utilizes non-mainstream media (such as Facebook and Twitter) and other communication technologies to create socio-political movements (Deterline, 2019). It puts pressure on political leaders, journalists, and even business icons. This pressure is a necessary 'push' for solutions and answers on issues (Garcia, 2016).

Cases of Social Media Activism

Black Lives Matter, United States of America (USA)

Several studies have noted that the #BlackLivesMatter (BLM) movement in the United States has become an archetype for political discourse on social media (Anderson, Toor, Rainie, and Smith, 2018). An analysis of public tweets by the Pew Research Center found that almost 30 million Twitter users have used the #BlackLivesMatter hashtag. Discussions around this hashtag mostly focused on issues of race, violence, and police brutality in America. The impact of this online movement is undeniable. For example, through the BLM movement, the U.S. Department of Justice was pressured to release reports that affirm the presence of police corruption in predominantly black communities, such as Chicago, Baltimore, Ferguson, and Cleveland (Roberts, 2018).

Marcos Not A Hero, the Philippines

In the Philippine context, social media activism is very much alive. Young and old activists in the Philippines have begun to utilize social media to take on issues without the need for physical space. Given the current Philippine administration's efforts to shrink democratic spaces, expanding political spaces and spaces for discourse is important for activists.

In 2016, one of the biggest online protests emerged after the Supreme Court released a decision allowing the burial of the late

dictator Ferdinand Marcos in the *Libingan ng mga Bayani,* despite his disturbing record of human rights violations within 20 years of authoritarian rule. Anger and disgust both online and offline grew when the dictator was discreetly buried on National Heroes' Day, just a week after the decision, despite the strong dissent of the people. Just moments after the controversial news broke, the hashtags #MarcosNOTaHero and #OccupyLNMB trended on Twitter (Tan, 2016).

The online protest was immediately brought to the streets on the same day Marcos was buried. Schools and colleges in Metro Manila, including the University of the Philippines (UP) - Diliman, Miriam College - Quezon City, St. Scholastica's College - Manila, and Ateneo de Manila University (ADMU) took to the streets to demonstrate their dissent and anger. This snowballed into a series of youth-led protests all over the Philippines: schools, political organizations, and civil society organizations simultaneously held rallies in their regions and cities. These rallies persisted until November 30, 2016 (Pasion, 2016).

EveryWoman, the Philippines

Another online campaign called #EveryWoman also became widely popular in the Philippines. The campaign trended on social media to as users showed dissent against the sexist shame tactics President Duterte used against Senator Leila De Lima. The President and his allies threatened to publicly show her alleged "sex video" with a former lover in an attempt to prove the several drug charges against her (Elemia, 2018).

Feminist activist Dr. Sylvia Estrada-Claudio was one of the first people to initiate the campaign. In a Rappler (2016) interview, Estrada-Claudio said that "#EveryWoman is a self-incrimination for solidarity." The main message linked with the hashtag was "I would like to testify in the HOR. It was me in the sex video." Thousands of women tweeted the same sentence to symbolize that showing De Lima's — or anyone else's — alleged sex video in public would not only violate her privacy and disrespect her dignity, but also violate the privacy and disrespect the dignity of every woman. The #EveryWoman campaign ranked third among trending topics in the Philippines just a few hours after it was introduced (Valencia, 2016).

The success of these online campaigns and rallies could be attributed to the convenient and people-friendly features of social media.

Social media is borderless, free, and, fast — a campaign could reach the other side of the world in a matter of seconds.

However, social media activism isn't a perfect means to promote campaigns, or to show dissent. Social media activism is also sometimes called armchair activism or "slacktivism" (Ozard and Clark, 1995) — people forget, or don't bother to bring the campaign to the streets, thinking that a like or a comment on a post is enough of an impact. The joint United Nations (UN) Program on HIV/AIDS (2010) also defined 'slacktivists' as people who support a cause, but are not truly engaged or passionate enough to create significant change. Social media activism also does not reach grassroots communities, which are in most cases, the main victims of systemic oppression and abuse. Only those with smartphones, computers, and stable access to the internet can actively participate in online campaigns and protests.

Disinformation as a Phenomenon

Social media is a challenging terrain for activists now that some governments and political groups have gained control of it to disinform the public, or censor or tame discourse. What was known as the 'democratizer' during the protests in Tahrir Square[3] in 2010 became the platform that led autocrats to the bully pulpit today. In less than a decade, social media has become host to toxic content that seeks to confuse, manipulate, and divide the population on social issues. Disinformation tactics became so common that 'fake news' became the Collins Dictionary word of the year in 2017.

Disinformation, according to the Global Disinformation Index (2019), is the use of "deliberately false content, designed to deceive for financial or political gain." Disinformation led to the anti-immigrant Brexit campaign in the United Kingdom (UK) (Spring and Webster, 2019), the ethnic killings in Burma (Mozur, 2018), and the election of autocrats in the United States (US), in the Philippines, (Avendaño, 2018) and in many other democratic countries.

Elections around the world have become a favorite target of the disinformation wave. In 2018, a political consulting firm called Cambridge Analytica was exposed for illegally harvesting Facebook users' personal data. The firm was accused of amassing Facebook data to target people in political messages (Vox, 2018). The campaigns

3   Tahrir Square in Cairo, Egypt is the iconic venue for the revolution that put to an end to President Hosni Mubarak's 30-year autocratic rule (BBC, 2011).

of US President Donald Trump and Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte were allegedly among the firm's projects — both their social media campaigns were marked by populist and misogynistic content (Time, 2016). Cambridge Analytica, which has been subjected to investigations in the US and the UK, has also been involved in more than 100 campaigns in 30 countries (QZ, 2018).

'Fake news' became a widely-used term in the early parts of President Duterte's term (New York Times, 2017). Ellen Tordesillas, a Filipino veteran journalist, labeled the President as the number one source of fake news in a 2018 hearing on the proliferation of disinformation in the Philippine senate. Among Duterte's statements include a hazy claim that the country has four million 'drug addicts' when official government data only counts 1.8 million drug users in the Philippines (Rappler, 2018).

Social media has also been used to foment ethnic violence in countries such as Burma, where the military was accused of using pop star fan pages to spread disinformation about Muslims (New York Times, 2018).

Social media activism has also become the target of disinformation campaigns. In Syria, groups protesting Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad[4] had their hashtag campaigns hijacked by bots, which share unrelated images and sports scores (NED, 2018).

Disinformation has great societal costs too. In a study by the European Parliament (2018) on the impact of disinformation on the Digital Single Market[5], disinformation on social media led to compromised integrity in information and in elections, bringing up costs and increasing distrust in institutions.

Disinformation has also moved discourse away from humanitarian policy issues, toward more exclusivist, xenophobic sentiments. In Berlin, a deceitful story about a young Russian woman raped by Middle Eastern immigrants played up by Russian media led to protests with strong anti-immigrant sentiments in Germany (The

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4   Bashar Al-Assad has been the President of Syria since July 2000. Al-Assad has been holding on to power for more than seven years in despite the rebellion by a big part of the Syrian population (BBC, 2018).

5   The Digital Single Market Act is an adopted resolution by the European Parliament. The objective of this act is to open up digital opportunities to citizens and businesses and also to elevate Europe as the leading digital economy of the world.

Guardian, 2016). Berlin's chief of police claimed the story was fake after interviews with close relatives of the girl were conducted, and a series of medical examinations were done. Despite this, Russian foreign minister Sergey Lagrov jumped on the disinformation campaign, and accused the German government of covering up the story.

Fourth Estate in Jeopardy

There is also growing distrust in media, a weakness targeted by online disinformation networks in politics. Only 47 percent of people globally believe that the media is able to do what is right, according to the 2019 Edelmann Trust Barometer. From the same study, 73 percent of people fear that fake news is being used as a weapon. Autocratic governments in Myanmar, in the Philippines, and in some states of the European Union have been accused of employing disinformation strategies for political gain, and have also resorted to persecuting journalists.

With all the documented abuses of social media for political gain, civic groups are fighting back to reclaim democratic spaces both online and offline.

Media groups have begun to work with social media platforms such as Facebook to fact check content flagged as false or misleading. Groups such as Rappler and Vera Files are among Poynter's International Fact-Checking Network, which is tasked to expose false content, and trace the spread of disinformation from different pages and groups to originators (CMFR, 2018).

Academics have also formed hubs to hasten the pace of keeping track of disinformation, and exchange ideas in addressing it with public policy. Universities which have studied the rise of disinformation in the Philippines have teamed up with news sites, bloggers, and non-government organizations (NGOs) to open discourse on fighting "fake news." The Consortium on Democracy and Disinformation is continuously hosting roadshows and public forums to better inform interventions against disinformation networks (FNST, 2018).

Social media platforms have been taken to task by different governments and civic groups, and have been pressured to do more to take down deceitful content. In March 2019, Facebook removed 200 pages, groups, and accounts for coordinated, inauthentic

behavior (Facebook, 2019). The removed content network is linked to Nic Gabunada, Duterte's former social media campaign manager, whose strategies, as cited in previous studies, include the use of bots and disinformation.

Social media activists have begun to fight disinformation networks online, and, at the same time, reclaim democratic spaces through social media channels. Groups such as the Mobilization Lab train activists and movements to use digital spaces to push more positive narratives (Judd, 2011). In New Zealand, activists and campaigners launched the People's Commission on Public Broadcasting and Media to improve the state of public interest media. Through this, the public can chime in with suggestions to fight disinformation and fake news (The Spinoff, 2017).

Voices of the Participants of the Conversation

All the participants of the 'convoshop' (a play on the words 'conversation' and 'workshop') were women, and most of them were Baby Boomers, a generation that did not grow up using the internet. Questions and points of discussion mostly revolved around basic and proper usage of different social media platforms. Participants also mentioned that they wanted to learn how to use social media to further promote their different advocacies, especially since trolls, and even their own friends and relatives attack their posts that criticize the current Philippine administration.

Conversations about how social media is becoming a hostile environment for political discourse emerged during the convoshop. Participants asked the speakers for advice on how to deal with trolls and loved ones who share violent and misogynist posts, and fake news that target progressives.

One of the participants, a student of Miriam College, said that online practices and stories shared on social media are like the millennials' version of oral tradition. These posts and stories can influence trends, and even become newsworthy content.

Conclusion

Social media evolves through time; therefore, it is important that people, especially activists and advocates who wish to maximize this platform, take time to study its complexities and avoid its pitfalls.

What was once a space for advocacy, activism, and discourse is now also vulnerable to the threats of fascism and populism. There is no doubt that the internet created a great avenue for progressive discourse, and even lobbying. However, the rising popularity of disinformation ensures that those who perpetuate it will always find their victims — and the cycle will go on. Youth activists today, and even allies from older generations, should continue the fight for democracy both online and offline, to combat the influence of dictators and fascists who wish to dominate these spaces. They evolve and adapt at the same pace as we do — and so the fight must continue.

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