PREFACE

A number of scholars have called the present age a postmodern one because it has increasingly been characterized by the fluidity of boundaries and the declining influence of any single power, in particular, the nation-state (see Best and Kellner 1991, Lash and Urry 1994, Beck 2000). Postmodern thinking recognizes the multiplicities of meanings, interpretations, and representations that such a condition creates. However, many of the trends and issues current in the Philippines remain products of modernity – they are results of the processes of modernization and the continuing hold of the nation-state over individual agency. Some of the topics covered in this issue of the *Philippine Sociological Review* are examples of these, among which are rebellion within the military, overseas workers, and indigenous peoples.

While these topics have been studied quite exhaustively in the literature, their persistence necessitates a rethinking that goes beyond traditional narratives and structural approaches. Such is the intention of this issue. In this issue, we are revisiting and re-examining 'old' themes in new ways, ways that go beyond the modern, while still acknowledging the embeddedness of these concerns within a condition of modernity.

Gerardo Lanuza starts off with a comparative analysis of C. Wright Mills' notion of the 'sociological imagination,' a response to the wars and the 'ascendancy of mass society' in the late 20th century, and Michel Foucault's poststructuralist view of the 'aesthetic of existence,' a view that Lanuza maintains, is better suited to our current postmodern condition. In comparing Mills and Foucault, Lanuza points to the significance of the Foucauldian critique and what social scientists could gain from it in terms of a 'sensibility' more relevant to examining present conditions. Like Mills, Foucault also grounds his thoughts within the Enlightenment and believes that the 'central task of the Enlightenment is to enlarge human freedom.' Both Mills and Foucault are opposed to 'grand theories' that tend to disregard the historical and social milieu of individuals. The difference between the two however, is that in talking about freedom and empowerment, Mills looks at the totality of structures in society – seeing the larger picture of how biography links to

history, personal troubles to public issues. In doing so, individuals can be emancipated from 'hopelessness.' While Foucault also recognizes the importance of locating subjects within history, he foregoes any 'total view of the structure of a given historical period.' Foucault believes in preserving the 'ethos' of the Enlightenment – rather than looking for formal universal structures, one must look at 'how subjectivities were constituted at different historical moments' (genealogy). This would allow us to see ourselves as 'subjects of what we are doing, thinking, saying.' The 'ethos' of Enlightenment, for Foucault, is not a 'promise' as Mills suggests, but an 'exit' or a 'way out' from the 'normalizing discourses of subjectivization.'

Mills and Foucault also differ in their idea of the role of the intellectual and their notion of power. While they both agree that intellectuals should intervene in political and social affairs, Mills maintains a 'grand view' of the intellectual as one who would diagnose 'modern ir-rationalities' while Foucault sees intellectuals on a more micro level, as intervening in specific sectors of society in relation to grassroots struggles. With regard to societal concerns, the question of power comes into play. Mills supports a modernist notion of power as located within nation-states. Foucault problematizes power as dispersed and found on a more minute level. As such, in his 'aesthetic of existence,' power is the ability to constantly 'change who we are.' For Mills, the sociological imagination can challenge and transform institutions, while for Foucault, change comes with the transformation of the self, and this comes with a realization of power as residing in everyday relationships.

Lanuza mentions that some of Mills' modernist arguments for a sociological imagination still holds true to our present condition. But Mills remains totalizing in a number of his views. The Foucauldian critique, which looks at specific historical junctures and the emergence/creation of specific subjectivities, could, as Lanuza suggests, provide a framework for examining how Mills' vision of the social sciences can be made more relevant to today.

Espousing both a modern focus on structures and a more postmodern emphasis on agency, **Manuel Enverga III** examines the current cultural trend of video gaming among the youth. Enverga looks, in particular, at 'game chat' among players of a popular online video game called *Defense of the Ancients* (DOTA). He argues that discursive practices among players reflect their 'creative agency' amidst the structural constraints of the game. Using text analysis of 'in-game chat'—the text that is typed in during play—Enverga shows how DOTA players make innovations within the context of the game

and appropriate popular culture references from the non-virtual world to subvert the structures of the 'game world' and push the game in their favor, thus asserting agency.

According to Enverga, the dual nature of discourse—as both reinforcing social structures and providing a vehicle for the emergence of agency—is clearly manifested during play. Discourse as reflective of the game structure can be seen in the ways players (i) evaluate the choice of characters that either their own teams, or the opposing teams, make; (ii) talk about in-game strategy such as positioning and tactics; and (iii) provide 'support talk' to team members through messages of moral support. Communication patterns in these activities are all indicative of how players interact within the context of the structures or the rules of the game and its constraints. At the same time, there are also spaces within the structure that allow players to negotiate and change the often 'unchangeable givens' of the game, including the rules. Discourse as reflective of agency can be seen in the players' use of commands, in their word play, and in the way they influence certain pre-determined features of the game, for instance, characters to be banned and game aesthetics. Players insert popular culture references such as events or songs, illustrating the 'slippage of the corporeal into the virtual,' in order to comment on the way the game is unfolding. Furthermore, agency is also manifested through the players' 'in-game politeness' despite the fact that there are no rules of propriety within the structure of the game.

In his analysis of DOTA discourse, Enverga attempts to bridge the gap between structure and agency, a primary concern in sociological thought and a theme that rings throughout this issue. The interplay between structure and agency can be seen in **Nicole Curato**'s examination of the roots of the Oakwood Mutiny, an uprising among about three hundred junior officers and enlisted men in the Armed Forces of the Philippines who, in 2003, 'forcibly took over' the Oakwood Serviced Apartments in Makati City to express their grievances against the administration of then President Gloria Arroyo. Curato situates this mutiny within a 'politics of recognition' framework. She maintains that such expression of dissent stems from 'ritualised practices of disesteem' in the military which hinder members from realizing their identities as 'honourable protectors of the state.'

The Oakwood Mutiny is essentially an issue of recognition – it is not simply a matter of material redistribution or the politicization of the military, as is commonly viewed in popular discourse, but a statement against power

relations within the armed forces, particularly with regard to norms of recognition. Despite formal rituals that acknowledge military personnel, there are still institutionalized practices that 'devalue' the officers and push them to seek avenues outside of the service to air their experiences of injustice. Within this 'culture of status subordination,' there are 'patterns of disrespect' that lead to 'poor troop morale' and the inadequacy of formal institutions to serve as channels for accommodating grievances. Aside from the lack of material and social support, a common concern that leads to low morale among troops is the tendency of higher-ranking officials to use junior officers for corrupt practices and personal gain. Furthermore, officers are discouraged from formally articulating their concerns as this would often result in stigmatization, thus rendering the officers 'voiceless.' In order to gain that voice, officers who deem themselves in similar situations hold 'gripe sessions,' a venue outside of formal structures where they can talk about their grievances without fear of humiliation or retaliation, as it is by invitation. This is an example of a 'counter-public,' a 'discursive enclave' away from the dominant public that enables officers of different ranks to forge bonds of solidarity and 'reset the terms of mutual recognition.' Such has eventually led to their entry into the broader public sphere.

The mutiny can be seen as a 'reaction to a series of contingencies' that prompted the officers to get out of the barracks and break away from the chain of command. While it generally failed, it did accomplish two things: (i) it enabled the officers to recover their voice as they were able to make their experience of suffering explicit, and (ii) it disrupted the existing power relations, thus making known the need to redefine how military officers were governed. For Curato, framing the mutiny as an issue of recognition will allow for the identification of the kinds of injustices that need to be addressed to prevent similar incidents in the future.

The interplay of structure and agency as it figures in identity construction is also a theme in the article that examines notions of 'sameness' and 'difference' among Filipino female migrant domestic workers. Looking at identity as self-perception, **Andrea Soco** argues that as domestic workers weave their way through the spaces of nation, race, class, and culture abroad, they begin identifying with people based on notions of sameness or difference that are products of this juxtaposition of spaces.' Soco calls this 'transcendent boundary work,' a kind of boundary making that goes beyond the normative boundaries of social categories, is learned in the course of migration, and is often deployed as a strategy for assertions of agency.

Filipino migrant domestic workers utilize notions of difference when comparing themselves with those who are in similar positions of marginality, such as other foreign domestic workers, in order to transcend their marginal status and be less of an 'other.' The preference for nationality-based groupings reinforces this 'difference' as many domestic workers choose to engage primarily with fellow Filipino domestic workers out of greater cultural understanding. The shared social positions among foreign domestic workers however, also lead to a shared sense of suffering which is 'race-blind.' Notions of difference are also utilized as migrants rationalize relations with employers by exploiting social and cultural distinctions among employers of different nationalities, ethnicities, and even social classes. Using these distinctions to categorize employers enables migrants to either resist ill-treatment or feel at par with employers. Notions of sameness, on the other hand, are employed when migrants compare themselves to fellow Filipinos who might have the same national identity but whose professional occupations lead to the 'othering' of Filipino domestic workers, who are in a different class position. Invoking national identity as the basis for sameness allows migrant domestic workers to equalize the circumstances, although there is still the idea of 'us' vs. 'them' when it comes to Filipino professionals.

While their subject positions as domestic workers largely determines who they deal with and how they do so, there is still choice in the formation of social networks and in the dynamics of interaction. The process of constructing sameness or difference based on an idea of who is the 'other' forms the basis of many of the migrant domestic workers' interactions and relationships, which then influence the formation and maintenance of new self-perceptions and identities.

Finally, the section on Research Notes presents **Alvaro Calara**'s study on the impacts of mining on the cultural identity of a group of Mangyans. His study details the adjustments that a group of Mangyan-Alangans had to make in order to negotiate their culture and ethnicity amidst the modernization brought about by global forces. Some of these adjustments include making certain changes in their ideo-religious practices, as in their rituals; economic practices, such as in farming, hunting, and trade; and in their socio-political observances, such as in marriage, law, and education. The Mangyans have had to make these changes and incorporate aspects of 'mainstream culture' with their own in order to participate in, and perhaps benefit from, the development brought about by globalization. According to Calara, the very act of engaging with others outside of the Mangyan community, for instance,

through a focus group discussion conducted in the area, shows how the Mangyan-Alangans are deliberately 'reaching out to the outside world' and signals their readiness to redefine their cultural heritage for a 'better future'.

Calara's article outlines recommendations on how a development plan can properly accommodate the cultural heritage of the Mangyans and as such, lead to empowerment. At the same time, Calara's research could also serve to invite readers and social scientists to further problematize the concept of ethnicity and how it figures in an increasingly postmodern world.

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