

Narrating Human Rights in the Philippines: Collective Memories of the Filipino Youth on the Marcos Regime

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Abstract

The 2016 national elections in the Philippines have been regarded as the most revealing and consequential democratic practice to the human rights situation in the country for two reasons. First, the overwhelming election of Rodrigo Duterte to the presidency was because of his campaign promise to rid the country of drugs and criminality within “3 to 6 months” through bloody and violent means. Second, the son and namesake of the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos, whose authoritarian regime in the 1970’s was responsible for countless human rights violations, narrowly lost his vice-presidential bid by a mere 270,000 votes. These turns of events beg the question: how could Filipinos, who experienced a bloody and violent regime at the hands of a dictator, choose to elect national leaders widely associated with human rights violations?

This paper addresses this question through the use of in-depth interviews with Filipino college students in key cities in the Philippines in order to describe the Marcos regime from the perspective of the generation that did not experience the period. The research aimed to understand how memories of past human rights violations are formed and shaped, how these memories are crucial to the improvement of the human rights situation in society, and how to ensure that mistakes of the past are not repeated.

The study found that widespread revisionist notions about the Marcos regime can be attributed to the absence of meaningful martial law and human rights education in the country. However, the study also found that young Filipinos regard the social institution of education as the most trustworthy bearer of information on human rights and violent regimes. This highlights the crucial role of schools and educators in promoting human rights in society.

Keywords: *Collective Memories, Martial Law, Marcos Regime*

I. INTRODUCTION

“If I become president, I advise you people to put up several funeral parlor businesses because I am against illegal drugs[...]I might kill someone because of it,” Rodrigo Duterte warned during his campaign in 2015.¹ Despite this and other

¹ Santos, Rudy. “Duterte: If I win, better put up more funeral parlors”, (26 November 2015), online: <<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2015/11/26/1526317/duterte-if-i-win-better-put-more-funeral-parlors>>.

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controversial pronouncements during the campaign period, Duterte, a confessed mass murderer,² was elected the 15th president of the Philippines, marking the end of the post-Marcos democracy.³ Because of this, the 2016 presidential elections in the Philippines has been regarded as the most revealing and consequential democratic exercise to the human rights situation in the country for two reasons. First, the overwhelming election of Rodrigo Duterte to the presidency promises to rid the country of drugs and criminality within “3 to 6 months” through bloody and violent means. Since then, Duterte’s anti-drug campaign has claimed more than 12,000 lives,⁴ mostly urban poor, in what the Human Rights Watch concludes as amounting to “crimes against humanity.”⁵ Second, the son of the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos whose authoritarian regime in the 1970’s was responsible for countless human rights violations (torture, forced disappearances, unjust imprisonment, etc.) was almost elected to the vice presidency, losing by just 270,000 votes.

These two reasons, in turn, begged the question: how could Filipinos, who experienced a bloody and violent regime at the hands of a dictator, choose to elect national leaders widely associated with human rights violations? These turns of events have generally been attributed to a widely invoked rhetoric that Filipinos easily forget the sins of the country’s past. Scholarly literature that attempts to substantiate this claim, however, has generally been limited to rhetorical analyses without the benefit of empirical research. This paper addresses this gap through the use of in-depth interviews with Filipino university students in six key cities in the Philippines to describe the martial law from the perspective of the generation that did not experience the Marcos Regime.

This paper, therefore, provides an overview of the collective memories of the Filipino youth on the martial law and the mechanisms through which these memories have been narrated to them. The next section provides a description of the concept of collective memory and its significance to human rights and martial law in the Philippines. Next, the data collection process and the research sites are described. Following the description, the research findings are then presented in four parts: (1) the collective memories of the Filipino youth on the martial law, (2) the human rights violations that occurred during that period according to them, (3) the mechanisms in which these memories were constructed, and (4) the

² Curato, Nicole. “We Need to Talk About Rody” in Nicole Curato, ed, *A Duterte Reader: Critical Essays on Rodrigo Duterte's Early Presidency* (Cornell University Press, 2017) 1.

³ Casiple, Ramon C. “The Duterte presidency as a phenomenon” (2016) 38:2 *Contemporary Southeast Asia: A Journal of International and Strategic Affairs*.

⁴ Human Rights Watch. “Philippines: Duterte's 'Drug War' Claims 12,000 Lives”, (18 January 2018), online: Human Rights Watch <<https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/01/18/philippines-dutertes-drug-war-claims-12000-lives>>.

⁵ Human Rights Watch. “Philippines: Police Deceit in 'Drug War' Killings”, (2 May 2017), online: *Human Rights Watch* <<https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/03/02/philippines-police-deceit-drug-war-killings>>.

trustworthy bearers of knowledge and information about the period. This paper concludes with the compelling findings of study, particularly on how the Marcos regime and the human rights situation during that period is narrated and transmitted to the Filipino youth.

1. Collective Memory, Human Rights, and Martial Law

Collective memory generally refers to “the shared meaning a group of people gives to the past” with the basic premise that memory extends beyond the individual mind and private recollections of the past can be examined and understood as a social artifact.⁶ These memories are then demonstrated in how individuals participate and consume materialised repositories, such as culture-specific symbols, myths, commemorative rituals, and grand narratives.⁷ As such, significant researches affirmed the importance of shared experiences in the development of a group’s collective memory.⁸ For example, shared experiences in commemorating independence day by using, for one, culture-specific symbols, such as traditional attire, contribute to the development of a collective identity. In this paper, collective memories are examined in terms of how and whether or not the Filipino youth subscribe to the symbols, commemorative rituals, and grand narratives about the martial law.

The definition of collective memory as an object or collection notions about a person or events commonly accepted by the group was the initial depiction of the concept.⁹ Recent works, however, have treated collective memories as more of a process that involves integrating personal remembrances to be shared by all.¹⁰ This framework for understanding collective memories recognizes and emphasizes that personal remembrances may hold multiple and contradictory visions of the past and that these visions may interact and influence other members of a group.¹¹ More importantly, this framework emphasizes the characteristic of collective memories as something that is reconstructed in relation to the present. This is

⁶ Edy, Jill. “Communication and Collective Memory”, (30 August 2016), online: Oxford Bibliographies <<http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199756841/obo-9780199756841-0126.xml>>.

⁷ (a) Schwartz, Barry. “Introduction: The expanding past” (1996) 19:3 *Qualitative Sociology*.
 (b) Zerubavel, Eviatar. *Social mindscapes: an invitation to cognitive sociology*, ed (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009).

⁸ Gongaware, Timothy B. “Collective Memories and Collective Identities” (2003) 32:5 *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 483.

⁹ Halbwachs, Maurice & Lewis A Coser. *On collective memory*, ed (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

¹⁰ Kuhn, Annette. “Memory texts and memory work: Performances of memory in and with visual media” (2010) 3:4 *Memory Studies* 298.

¹¹ Schuman, Howard & Jacqueline Scott. “Generations and Collective Memories” (1989) 54:3 *American Sociological Review* 359.

apparent because notions by different individuals about the past are negotiated into a common contemporary understanding.¹² Recent scholarship on this subject, therefore, adopts a social-constructionist perspective in which meanings assigned to the past are dynamic and commonly influenced by current circumstances.¹³

Collective memories are also explored through the lens of cultural memories by Assman and Czaplicka, who emphasized the role of social institutions and cultural artifacts in transmitting memories of the past to succeeding generations and sustaining these efforts.¹⁴ These cultural memories that narrate the past and carry the meanings assigned to it are embodied and maintained through literature, [commemorative] rituals, monuments, and institutionalized observances.¹⁵

On the mechanism of negotiating memories of a violent past into a comprehensible form that can be transmitted to younger generations as part of their identity, Shahzad's examination of the construction of collective memories of Canadian youth on the war on terror offers a possible explanation.¹⁶ Shahzad introduced the role of mnemonic tools which serve as carriers of memories and meanings of Canada's participation in the war on terrorism. He proposes three directions in which memories are constructed: (1) remembering and forgetting, (2) affirmation and opposition and (3) suppressing and revising. Shahzad also conclude that the youth's interpersonal relationships with their friends, teachers and family are integral to the processes of mediation and interpretation of these memories. The non-linear interrelationship among these three social groups shape collective memories as dynamic, fragile, multiple, contested, and distinct from individual memory.¹⁷ The presence of these three features also creates a multi-dimensional characteristic of collective memories of the Canadian youth on the war on terror. This is the reason why there can be different narratives about a single event. As Shahzad articulates, collective memories are complex constructions.

Memory has been cited as a necessary foundation of human rights as evidenced by various social movements¹⁸ that aim to counter re-occurrence of past human rights violations through constant remembrances of the terror

¹² Hayashi, Isao. "Materializing Memories of Disasters: Individual Experiences in Conflict Concerning Disaster Remains in the Affected Regions of the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami" (2017) 41:4 Bulletin of the National Museum of Ethnology.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Kidron, Carol. "Memory", (28 November 2016), online: Memory - Anthropology - Oxford Bibliographies <<http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199766567/obo-9780199766567-0155.xml>>.

¹⁵ Assmann, Jan & John Czaplicka. "Assmann, J., & Czaplicka, J. (1995). Collective memory and cultural identity" (1995) 65:1995 New german critique.

¹⁶ Shahzad, Farhat. "Collective memories: A complex construction" (2011) 5:4 Memory Studies 379.

¹⁷ *Ibid* at 387-388.

¹⁸ Human Rights Watch. "Never Again", (23 September 2008), online: Human Rights Watch <<https://www.hrw.org/news/2005/01/23/never-again>>.

experienced during a violent regime .¹⁹ Human rights advocate and Nobel Peace Prize laureate, Liu Xiaobo, understood the mechanisms through which social institutions, in this case the communist regime in China, can effectively exploit memories of past human rights violations.²⁰ Speaking of the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre, Liu warned:

“The combination of terror, indoctrination and distortion of history, combined with the analgesic effect of prosperity and personal profit, has effectively washed away national memory. The truth can be hidden by the power of the rod; memories can be replaced with lies; common sense can be warped by clever wordplay; and an individual’s conscience can be bought with money[...]The generation of people who lived through 1989 is unwilling to discuss June 4th publicly, and the vast majority of people born after 1989 don’t really understand June 4th.”²¹

Acknowledging and integrating past human rights violations in education has been regarded as imperative in creating a just and humane society. How contemporary Europe deals with the holocaust is an example of how entire societies ensure the remembrance of past human rights violations. The holocaust is the most vivid and potent example of state-sponsored, human rights violations. Looking into how contemporary societies in Europe deal with this past is crucial in understanding how other societies that experienced similar state-sponsored violence can honor the victims and avoid its re-occurrence. Severe sanctions and punishments for denying the holocaust and revisions on how it should be understood and accepted are embedded in European laws. However, without diminishing the purpose of anti-negationist (of the holocaust) laws, recent observations argue that education is the more effective mean in ensuring memories of the holocaust.²²

The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) proclaims the indispensable role of education in aiding “young people to have a better understanding of the past” and in preventing any form of

¹⁹ Jelin, Elizabeth. “The Politics of Memory” (1994) 21:2 *Latin American Perspectives* 38.

²⁰ Reiss-Andersen, Berit. “Statement by Ms Berit Reiss-Andersen, Chair of the Norwegian Nobel Committee”, (13 July 2017), online: NobelPrizeOrg <<https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/2010/statement/>>.

²¹ Xiaobo, Liu. “Remembering June 4th for China’s Future” (2005) 4 *China Rights Forum*.

²² (a) Heinze, Eric. “Law and Historical Memory: Theorising the Discipline”, (2018), online: *Verfassungsblog* <<https://verfassungsblog.de/law-and-historical-memory-theorising-the-discipline/>>.

(b) Bunch, Kelly, Matthew Canfield & Birte Schöler. “The Responsibility of Knowledge: Developing Holocaust Education for the Third Generation”, (2005), online: *Humanity In Action* <<https://www.humanityinaction.org/knowledgebase/226-the-responsibility-of-knowledge-developing-holocaust-education-for-the-third-generation/>>.

recurrence of the holocaust.²³ UNESCO further recognizes the importance of valuing memories of the holocaust as follows:

“Understanding how and why the Holocaust occurred can inform broader understandings of mass violence globally, as well as highlight the value of promoting human rights, ethics, and civic engagement that bolsters human solidarity at the local, national, and global levels [...] The Holocaust illustrates the dangers of unchecked prejudice, discrimination, antisemitism and dehumanization. It also reveals the full range of human responses—thereby raising important considerations about societal and individual motivations and pressures that lead people to act as they do—or to not act at all.”²⁴

In this section, the concept of collective memories, its significance to the discourse of human rights, and the role of education in its transmission is introduced. The next section discusses briefly how the Philippines’ experience of state-sponsored violence, in the form of the Marcos regime, is being examined through the lens of collective memories.

2. Memories of Filipinos on the Martial Law

Except for commentary articles published in national broadsheets and news websites²⁵ and a few critical essays published as scholarly articles²⁶ that diagnosed and reflects on the “historical amnesia” of Filipinos on the martial law, there has been no venture that provides primary data to examine collective memories of Filipinos on the martial law. However, martial law “memory entrepreneurs”²⁷ and

²³ Ch’oe, Su-hyang, Alexander Leicht & Karel Fracapane. *Education about the Holocaust and preventing genocide: a policy guide*, ed (Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2017).

²⁴ *Ibid* at 7.

²⁵ Such as:

- a) Remoto, Danton. “Martial law memories”, (22 September 2017), online: philstarcom <<https://www.philstar.com/opinion/2017/09/22/1741731/martial-law-memories>>.
- b) Royandoyan, Ramon H. “The Ninoy Aquino legacy: Martial law for millennials”, (29 November 2015), online: Inquirer Lifestyle the Ninoy Aquino legacy Martial law for millennials Comments <<https://lifestyle.inquirer.net/214579/the-ninoy-aquino-legacy-martial-law-for-millennials/>>.
- c) Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism. “Memory, Martial Law, and Ninoy Aquino”, (20 August 2014), online: The PCIJ Blog <<http://pcij.org/blog/2014/08/18/memory-martial-law-and-ninoy-aquino>>.

²⁶ Such as Claudio, Lisandro E. “Memories of the Anti-Marcos Movement” (2010) 18:1 South East Asia Research 33.

²⁷ Quinsa, Sharon. “The Marcos Dictatorship, Historical Remembrances, and Collective Memory”, (25 February 2016), online: Mobilizing Ideas

contemporary scholars agree on a similar observation on the presence of a dominant and persistent discourse that portrays the Marcos regime as the “heyday’ or period of economic prosperity and social harmony” in the Philippines.²⁸

This narrative, that paints the Marcos regime as the golden age in Philippine history, gained a following and traction in the 2016 national elections when Ferdinand Marcos, Jr ran for vice president. In making sense of why the Philippine electorate seemed poised to elect the heir of a dictator, Arguelles points to the “absence of an inclusive national collective memory of the Marcoses’ rule.”²⁹ Arguelles recognized the crucial role of the country’s social institutions, such as schools, media, family, and state, in transmitting memories about the Marcos regime. The quality and content of the transmitted memories, so far, is revealed in the popularity and almost election of Marcos to the second highest elected post in the country. Arguelles further suggests that Rodrigo Duterte is playing a major role in shaping the Filipinos’ memories of what the Marcos regime was.³⁰ By devaluing the commemoration of the People Power Revolution that ousted Marcos and authorizing the burial of the same dictator in the Heroes’ Cemetery, Duterte is re-configuring how Filipinos deal with their past martial law. Plainly said, Duterte is manipulating his constituents into evaluating the Marcos regime as a period of economic prosperity and social harmony.³¹ Considering that Duterte himself declared martial law in Mindanao less than a year into his presidency, Arguelles’s argument is moving closer to the truth.

II. RESEARCH METHODS

The findings presented in this paper are based on in-depth interviews conducted between May 2017 and February 2018 with 30 students from six different universities in the country. Interviews were also conducted with 10 university teachers in the social sciences, two pastoral care managers, and two student prefects. Research ethical approval was provided by the research unit of Xavier University.³²

<<https://mobilizingideas.wordpress.com/2016/02/25/the-marcos-dictatorship-historical-remembrances-and-collective-memory/>>.

²⁸ McCargo, Duncan. “Duterte’s mediated populism” (2016) 47:1 *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 142.

²⁹ Arguelles, Cleve. “It takes a nation to raise a dictator’s son”, (4 April 2016), online: New Mandala <<http://www.newmandala.org/it-takes-a-nation-to-raise-a-dictators-son/>>.

³⁰ Arguelles, Cleve. “Duterte’s Other War: The Battle for EDSA People Power’s Memory” in *A Duterte Reader: Critical Essays on Rodrigo Duterte’s Early Presidency*, ed (2017).

³¹ *Ibid* at 268-269.

³² Xavier University is the institutional affiliation of the author and which adheres to research ethical standards thru its Institutional Research Ethics Board. See: <<http://www.xu.edu.ph/university-libraries/138-memo/sy-2018-2019/3441-institutional-research-ethics-board>>.

The research sites covered in this report are listed in Table 1 and shown in Table 1 as follows:

Table 1: Research sites and number of interviews.

University	Research Sites	Data Gathering Period (2017)	No of Students Interviewed	University Associates Interviewed	Martial Law Victims
Mindanao State University- Main Campus	Marawi City	May- July	5	2	0
Xavier University	Cagayan de Oro	June- July 2017	5	4	–
Universidad de Sta Isabel	Naga City	Aug	5	3	0
Leyte Normal University	Tacloban City	October	5	3	2
Ateneo de Manila University	Quezon City, Metro Manila	December	5	0	0
Ateneo de Davao University	Davao City	February 2018	5	2	0

1. Research Sites

Key informants that provided insights on the collective memories of the Filipino youth on the martial law were socially engaged students in six key universities in the Philippines. The next section provides a brief description of these universities and the context of the research site.

Mindanao State University (MSU) is a government-subsidized university located in Marawi City. Two weeks after the data gathering was completed in MSU, the city became the site of intense fighting between government forces and the ISIS-affiliated terrorist group, Maute, on May 23, 2017. The following day, President Rodrigo Duterte declared martial law in the entire island of Mindanao. By December 2017, roughly two months since the Marawi siege was declared

over, Philippine congress voted to extend the martial law until 2018.³³ Amnesty International released their report on the Marawi siege and detailed violations of international humanitarian law (IHL) and international human rights law (IHRL) committed by both the Philippines military and the Maute-ISIS group:

“[Maute-ISIS] committed unlawful killings, pillage, hostage-taking, and mistreatment of prisoners. There were also allegations that militants used child soldiers [...] Local human rights groups documented cases of enforced disappearances and extrajudicial executions by [Philippine] government forces.”³⁴

The second research site was Xavier University in Cagayan de Oro, a city four hours away from Marawi. The university is part of the network of schools in the Philippines run by the Jesuit order and where majority of the students are Catholic. In the days leading to Marcos’s burial in the Heroes’ Cemetery, a black banner was hung in the university gates with the words “Marcos is not a Hero.” Many in the city, including its own student population and alumni, questioned this move, citing the Catholic value of forgiveness as called for in this case. In a statement released by the university, its president, Fr Roberto Yap, reminded the Xavier community that “‘moving on’ must always be in consonance with the mission to promote justice; forgiveness demands justice.”³⁵ The criticism received by the university in this episode demonstrates the gap between the values it professed to promote (truth, justice, personal care) and what is actually transferred to the students.

Universidad de Sta Isabel is another Catholic university; this time ran by the Daughters of Charity in Naga City. During the interviews, the students revealed that all the elected positions in the city were won by the Liberal Party. The Liberal Party of the Philippines is known as the electoral party of the Aquinos, the political rivals of the Marcoses. Today, Naga City is mostly known as the hometown of Leni Robredo who defeated Ferdinand Marcos, Jr in the vice-presidential race.

Leyte Normal University is a state-subsidized university in Tacloban City in the province of Leyte. Internationally, Tacloban is probably most known as the

³³ Reuters. “Battle over: Philippines declares end of Marawi siege after dozens of militants die in final showdown”, (23 October 2017), online: South China Morning Post <<https://www.scmp.com/news/asia/southeast-asia/article/2116564/battle-over-philippines-declares-end-marawi-siege-after>>.

³⁴ Amnesty International. “Philippines: ‘Battle of Marawi’ leaves trail of death and destruction”, (2017), online: Amnesty International <<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2017/11/philippines-battle-of-marawi-leaves-trail-of-death-and-destruction/>>.

³⁵ Xavier University Ateneo de Cagayan. “XU STATEMENT: Marcos is not a hero, not now, not ever”, (2016), online: Xavier University Ateneo de Cagayan <<http://www.xu.edu.ph/xavier-news/55-2016-2017/2244-xu-statement-marcos-is-not-a-hero-not-now-not-ever>>.

city badly hit by super typhoon Haiyan in 2013. In the Philippine political sphere, Tacloban is known as the birthplace of Imelda Romualdez, the wife Ferdinand Marcos. The eastern Visayas region, including Tacloban, is the political stronghold of the Romuladez clan.

Ateneo de Manila University is a private university in Metro Manila also run by the Jesuits. The university was a cultivating ground of youth activism early on in Marcos's first term in the 1960's which intensified when martial law was finally declared. In the aftermath of Marcos's reign, 11 Ateneo students³⁶ and 1 Jesuit priest were martyred.³⁷ Being the capital of the country, Metro Manila is a venue and witness to the vibrant, yet sometimes violent and chaotic, public demonstrations against the Marcos dictatorship.³⁸

Finally, Ateneo de Davao University or ADDU is another Jesuit university, this time, located in the hometown of Rodrigo Duterte. Davao City is the stronghold of Duterte where he ruled as mayor for 20 years. His daughter, Sarah, is now the mayor of the city. Just like Xavier and Ateneo de Manila, ADDU is known for its liberal, culturally centered education, and, like all Jesuit universities in the Philippines, is the most influential university in the city. In 2016, ADDU released a strong statement condemning Duterte and the Supreme Court's actions that permitted Marcos's burial in the Heroes' Cemetery.³⁹

III. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND ANALYSES

The overarching inquiry that this research aimed to resolve is “why Filipinos chose to elect national leaders associated with human rights violations.” Following Arguelles' proposal, that the answers lie in the Filipinos' lack of “inclusive national collective memory of the Marcoses' rule, this paper will now proceed to describe the collective memories of the Filipino youth on the Marcos regime and the mechanisms in which these memories were constructed and transmitted.

³⁶ Montiel, Cristina Jayme. *Living and dying: in memory of 11 Ateneo de Manila martial law activists*, ed (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2007).

³⁷ Bantayog. “ALINGAL, Godofredo B. – Bantayog ng mga Bayani”, (9 October 2015), online: Bantayog ng mga Bayani <<http://www.bantayog.org/alingal-godofredo-b/>>.

³⁸ Formerly accessed in this address: <<http://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/edsa/the-ph-protest/>> however, as of July 2018, articles from the Aquino administration have been allegedly deleted by the Duterte Administration. Source: <<https://www.rappler.com/nation/207248-official-gazette-website-down/>>.

³⁹ See Ateneo de Davao University. “APILA: Marcos Burial is Historical Injustice Rewritten”, (22 November 2016), online: Ateneo de Davao University - Davao City - Philippines <<http://www.addu.edu.ph/blog/2016/11/22/apila-marcos-burial-is-historical-injustice-rewritten/>>.

1. Collective Memories of the Filipino Youth on the Martial Law

To document the collective memories of the Filipino youth on the martial law, the research provides the meanings that the youth attach to the martial law, which largely defined the Marcos regime and the human rights violations they believed to have occurred during that period.

When asked “what does martial law mean to you,” the study documents seven classifications in the themes that emerged in the Filipino youth’s descriptions regarding the period: (1) inconclusive descriptions, (2) the regime of Marcos, (3) as a mechanism to quell civil unrest that led to state-sponsored violence, (4) a mere embodiment of Philippine politics, (5) a period parallel with Duterte’s presidency, (6) beneficial consequence and negative consequences and (7) an ambivalence to its meaning.

a. Inconclusive Descriptions of the Martial Law

Majority of the responses elicited by the question “What does martial law mean to you” could be best described as inconclusive. Many of the students interviewed seemed to struggle in describing what is martial law. This is partly because the martial law period in the Philippines was described to them disparately at different levels in their school life. As expressed by one student, “it is something disputed whether it was good or bad.” Many responses could also be described as an attempt to capture the complexity of the conditions during the martial law period. Here, the students’ responses do not conclusively describe martial law as either bad or good but alludes to an unnamed effect to the masses.

b. The Regime of Marcos

Martial law was undoubtedly the regime of Ferdinand Marcos. In the words of “Jan” from Mindanao State University, “Marcos was very intelligent. As a product of a political family, he was already wealthy. But he really wanted absolute power which was not possible in a democratic country like ours.” A number of students also alluded to a well-known theory that Marcos and/or his “cronies”⁴⁰ were responsible for the Plaza Miranda Bombing⁴¹ which was the prelude to declaring

⁴⁰ Marcos cronies refer to the loyal friends and relatives of Ferdinand Marcos who benefited from his authoritarian rule. For more information, see:

Roa, Ana. “Regime of Marcoses, cronies, kleptocracy”, (29 September 2014), online: Inquirer News Regime of Marcoses cronies kleptocracy Comments <<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/641277/regime-of-marcoses-cronies-kleptocracy>>.

⁴¹ The Plaza Miranda bombing happened during the campaign rally of Liberal Party in August 1971 at the Plaza Miranda in Manila which caused nine deaths. See <<http://malacanang.gov.ph/75022-defend-it-at-plaza-miranda-a-history-of-the-countrys-foremost-public-square/>>.

martial law. They believed that the bombing became the perfect justification to put the entire Philippines under an authoritarian rule. There were also responses which implied role of his wife, Imelda Marcos, and several students also describe the martial law as a conjugal dictatorship⁴². And, because the martial law was the absolute rule of Marcos over the entire country, the students do not acquit him of the human rights violations that transpired in his term.

c. Quelling the Civil Unrest Led to State-Sponsored Violence

A few students referenced the general purpose of martial law as provided in the constitution when asked to describe the period. For some students, the martial law was declared to “quell rebellion and civil unrest” and induce some sort of beneficial social change, but things went awry after a few years into its implementation. For them, martial law was declared by Marcos so that the government can regain control of its citizens and to induce beneficial change to society. However, in the latter years of its implementation, martial law strayed from this original purpose.

Furthermore, the students saw the declaration of martial law to be well within the powers of a president, as it was provided in the constitution of that period.⁴³ Martial law was seen as the last resort to “deal with the social unrest” and “restore peace and order” in Philippine society which, for the students, meant Marcos had only “wanted what was good for the country.” However, a few students also admitted that martial law could have been used by Marcos to justify the extension of his term as president.

d. The Martial Law is an Embodiment of Philippine Politics

The martial law seemed to have activated the cyclical run of political leaders in the country, wherein a tyrant, after a long period of rule, is eventually replaced by a liberal. Marcos’ dictatorial rule ended after 20 years when he was replaced by the wife of his political rival and democracy icon, Cory Aquino.⁴⁴ Years after, former actor Joseph Estrada was elected to the presidency but was later convicted of plunder⁴⁵, a charge that Marcos was also found guilty of.⁴⁶ In the same way that

⁴² Conjugal dictatorship refers to the joint authoritarian rule of Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos during the martial law. For more information see:

Mijares, Primitivo. *The conjugal dictatorship of Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos*, 1st ed (Union Square Publications: San Francisco, California, 1976).

⁴³ The 1935 Philippine Constitution can be accessed at “The 1935 Constitution | GOVPH,” online: Official Gazette of the Republic of the Philippines <<http://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/constitutions/the-1935-constitution/>>.

⁴⁴ Beech, Hannah. “Corazon Aquino 1933-2009: The Saint of Democracy”, (17 August 2009), online: Time <<http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1914872,00.html>>.

⁴⁵ Aglionby, John. “Philippines: Estrada to stand trial for plunder”, (21 January 2001), online: *The Guardian* <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2001/jan/21/philippines>>.

Marcos was ousted, Estrada was replaced by Gloria Arroyo in what was known as EDSA [People Power Revolution] II. And similar to Marcos, Arroyo had been accused of electoral fraud throughout most of her term.⁴⁷ After 10 years, she was eventually replaced by a member of the Aquino political family, Noynoy Aquino who ran on a campaign of liberal and anti-corruption platform. In the 2016 elections, Filipino voters elected Duterte whose campaign promises bordered on authoritarianism.⁴⁸ As one student summarized: “it’s always the rise of a tyrant, then a liberal will come.”

Furthermore, a few students pointed to the observation that the end of martial law was only instigated by elites when they themselves could no longer withstand the economic and political woes that had long been experienced by ordinary Filipinos. Only Filipino citizens and freedom activist were negatively impacted by the martial law in the form of human rights violations and therefore did not entice the political and economic elites in the Philippines to move against the Marcos regime in its early years. As one student reminded, “that’s why Marcos stayed in power so long because many of [the elites] were on his side.”

e. Finding Parallels with Duterte

The students also alluded to the parallels in Marcos’s regime and Duterte’s presidency. For Marcos, the problem he needed to deal with was communism and for Duterte it is illegal drugs. However, while Duterte declared martial law in the entire Mindanao, this is not what the students see as similar in his and Marcos’s rule. As one student from Davao City noted, “this time is different from [Marcos’s] because Duterte’s martial law is very divisive. Many people favor martial law, especially here in Mindanao.”

Instead, what the students find similar between Marcos and Duterte is that both preferred the iron-fist methods in quelling the social ills in their presidential watch, communism and illegal drugs respectively. Additionally, they found similarities in the widespread of extra-judicial killings during their presidential terms and the predominance of oligarchy during their rule.

⁴⁶ Supreme Court of the Philippines. “G.R. No. 152154. July 15, 2003”, online: Supreme Court of the Philippines <<http://sc.judiciary.gov.ph/jurisprudence/2003/jul2003/152154.htm>>.

⁴⁷ The Telegraph. “Former Philippines president pleads not guilty to electoral fraud”, (23 February 2012), online: *The Telegraph* <<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/philippines/9099960/Former-Philippines-president-pleads-not-guilty-to-electoral-fraud.html>>.

⁴⁸ Curato, Nicole. “Flirting with Authoritarian Fantasies? Rodrigo Duterte and the New Terms of Philippine Populism” (2016) 47:1 *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 142.

f. Beneficial Consequences and Negative Implications of the Martial Law

A significant number of the insights from the youth depicts the martial law period positively. The initial theme that emerged along the lines of positive depictions of the Marcos regime was public order. The description of Marcos' martial law as peaceful and orderly was first documented in Marawi City, a week before the city itself and the entire island of Mindanao was placed under martial law by Duterte. Since then, research has documented similar positive descriptions of Marcos's martial law in all the research sites which includes: "people were more disciplined [back then]," "there were less killings," and "it was more peaceful."

Other themes that emerged in the students' description of the martial law in positive light invoked the ensuing benefits of Marcos's rule: economic prosperity, the accomplishments of Marcos and the emergence of the post-Martial Law Filipino identity which valued democracy and freedom.

Despite the previous categories of responses that ranged from neutral to positive, a larger number of the youth's descriptions of the martial law still lean towards negative: corruption, violence, injustices, and human rights violations.

For some students, the martial law was defined by the widespread social injustices perpetrated during the period. Among the incidents that students believed to have been facilitated by the martial law and wherein no person was ever held accountable are the accident in the manila film centre, the Jabidah Massacre, and the *Palimbang* Massacre.

Many students attribute the current social and political upheavals in the country as one of the consequences of the martial law. A number of them conceded that Marcos might have meant well by declaring martial law, but, in the end, his regime eventually caused more harm than good. In the words of one student, "Marcos was actually a good leader, but, his martial law, for the lack of a better term, f****d us more than its good intentions."

g. An Ambivalence to the Meaning of Martial Law

Finally, an important theme that emerged in the responses of Filipino students when asked to describe the Marcos regime is their ambivalence in describing and evaluating the period for the reason that they "did not experience" it. As one student puts it, "for me, I have no right to judge because I did not experience [the martial law] in my own senses. But I also believe that what they told me is true."

2. Human Rights Violations During the Martial Law

The Republic Act 10368 (RA 10368), or the Human Rights Victims Reparation and Recognition Act of 2013, acknowledges the "victims of summary execution,

torture, enforced or involuntary disappearance, and other gross human rights violations committed during the regime of former President Ferdinand E. Marcos covering the period from September 21, 1972 to February 25, 1986.”⁴⁹ Another way that the study drew out meaningful responses from the students was to specifically ask whether they believe there were human rights violations that occurred during the martial law.

Even among those who professed support for the martial law, all the students in the study conceded that martial law was rife in human rights violations. In this portion, the students were asked to enumerate the human rights violations they felt were violated, curtailed, or suspended during the Marcos regime. It is important to note that in this portion of the interview, students were asked to freely identify or enumerate the human rights violations they believed took place during that period rather than requiring them to choose from pre-identified choices. Therefore, some of the human rights violations identified by the students do not fall within those recognized by the Philippine government in RA 10368.

According to the students, the most widespread the human rights violations that occurred during the Marcos regime are warrantless arrests and curtailment of the freedom of speech. Other prominent responses include violations of the right to assembly, right to information, right to life, right to justice, and the right to free will.

While most students negated the notion that these human rights abuses were justified, there were prominent voices which expressed that they felt these violations were necessary and unavoidable given the circumstances of that period. The following responses illustrate how students justify the human rights violations that occurred during the Marcos regime:

“If you cross the line, the government will really counteract. And then, here comes the media that [hypes] everything so martial law is immediately portrayed as human rights violations.”

“I guess it’s only right if it is constitutionally right...”

3. Mechanisms in Which the Martial Memories are Constructed, Narrated, and Transmitted

Given the knowledge and insights of the Filipino youth about the martial law that were summarized in the previous section, the next order of inquiry is now identifying and describing the mechanisms through which these insights were constructed and passed on.

⁴⁹ “Republic Act No. 10368 | GOVPH,” online: *Official Gazette of the Republic of the Philippines* <<https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/2013/02/25/republic-act-no-10368/>>.

Since some students view the martial law in a favourable light, or at least saw the human rights violations as justifiable, this section attempts to discuss the social institutions that played significant roles in forming how they view the martial law. Specifically, the social institutions examined in the study are: education, mass media, religion, and government. As previously stated, the term, “memory,” is used in this paper to describe the knowledge, opinion, attitude, and general insights of the youth on the martial that were discussed in the previous section.

a. Education

The social institution of education and the mechanism itself are identified by the students as the most influential in how they formed their knowledge and subsequent opinions of the martial law. However, some students confide that what is taught about the martial law in classrooms is contradicted by the accounts of their family members who lived during that period or teachers themselves contradict what is written in the official textbooks.

In March 2016, prior to the election of Rodrigo Duterte, the Department of Education, the Philippine branch of government that manages primary and secondary education in the country, issued a statement which assured their commitment to provide “more in-depth and enriched discussion on Philippine History which will include the Martial Law period [...] to enable learners to remember and understand the country’s history and the impact of Martial Law to the lives of Filipinos today.”⁵⁰

Without prompting, all the students interviewed for this study recounted that, at some point in their student life, martial law was discussed by one of their teachers, generally in their social science subjects. Almost all of the students confirmed that their prevailing opinion of the martial law period was largely influenced by what is written in textbooks, what was taught by teachers in the classroom, and the school activities such as seminars and symposia that discuss the period.

While studies confirm that martial law was covered in social studies and history subjects as far back as primary and secondary education, this period was only discussed as an event that occurred during the presidency of Ferdinand Marcos and in the context of why the 1986 EDSA People Power Revolution took place. As one student lamented, “we had four history subjects in [secondary] schools and it seems a waste that we did not discuss the martial law.” Some students also made the observation that how martial law is discussed depends on the leanings of the teacher and the policy of the school. While there may be a directive that attempts to ensure the coverage of martial law in the classroom, it

⁵⁰ Macas, Trisha. “DepEd vows to educate students on Martial Law period”, (3 March 2016), online: GMA News Online <<http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/nation/557703/dep-ed-vows-to-educate-students-on-martial-law-period/story/>>.

has not been missed by the students' observation that this topic is either inadequately discussed or is largely dependent on the teacher's inclinations.

The same practice is also observed in college subjects where martial law is only discussed in detail depending on the political leanings and experiences of the professor. For example, one student in Ateneo de Manila cited that her teacher in psychology narrated her experiences as an activist during the period. Another student observed: "Some teachers mention it in passing while some teachers feel strongly about the topic especially for those who were activists during that period. It also depends on the school..." In all the schools, except Ateneo de Manila University, the students revealed that there is also little information taught about the martial law in their history classes in college.

While few and sporadic, the next section provides the existing mechanisms of integrating martial law in the curriculum:

i. Philippine history

Philippine History is a required course for all college students in the country. The subject traces the development of the Philippines into a nation from pre-colonialism to the formation of its government as a republic. While all students interviewed for this study indicated this subject as among those that cover the topic of the martial law, they also confide that very minimal discussion is allotted to the topic. Whether the topic of the martial law is given substantial discussion in the semester is generally dependent on the inclinations and teaching methods of the teacher. In most cases, very little details are added to the discussion on the martial law other than it was an event that transpired during the presidency of Ferdinand Marcos.

The teachers interviewed for this study confirm martial law is considered as a "priority topic" for coverage in Philippine History; however, discussions are *pahapyaw*, or minimal, due to the time constraints in covering many topics. Furthermore, prescribed textbooks in Philippine history generally emphasize the Spanish colonization and allot only one to two pages on martial law.

ii. Other subjects that integrate the Martial Law

Aside from Philippine history, university subjects identified by students that integrate the topic of martial law in the discussion are Theology, International Humanitarian Law, Comparative Politics and/or Philippine Politics, Philippine Constitution, Philippine culture for Teacher Education students, and Sociology. The course description and the manner of integrating martial law are summarized in Table 1. A discussion on how Ateneo de Manila University integrates martial law in their curriculum is provided in the next section.

Table 2: Subjects identified by students that integrate the martial law in the discussion.

College Subjects	Generic Description	How Martial Law is Discussed in the Subject
Theology	Generally offered in Catholic universities in the Philippines which introduces students to the basic understanding of the Catholic faith.	“...based on the [biblical] scriptures what was happening during Martial Law was wrong.”
International Humanitarian Law	Commonly taken by students in a political science course. Discusses priorities and humanitarian concerns in armed conflict.	In the context of universal human rights and global organizations on human rights.
Comparative Politics and/or Philippine Politics	Commonly taken by AB Political students. This subject discusses theories in political science.	“[Martial law] was discussed as an example of the state protecting itself by suppressing its citizens” and in comparing past and present political systems.
Philippine Constitution	Usually a required subject for all college students in the Philippines. This subject discusses the 1986 Constitution.	The 1986 Constitution was enacted to replace the 1973 Constitution adopted during the Marcos regime.
Philippine Culture for Education Majors	A required course for Teacher education students, specifically those majoring Social Studies. This subject discussed the diverse cultures in the Philippines.	In the context of the plight of indigenous peoples during the Martial Law.
Sociology	Usually a required subject for all college students in the Philippines. This subject discusses sociological theories.	“Martial law as arena for inequality”

Most students qualify that the time and topics allotted in the discussions on the martial law is short and few. When asked to elaborate on the themes and topics that emerged in these discussions, the following common answers:

1. Independence and Freedom
2. Human rights violations
3. Oligarchy
4. Manipulation of the minds of the people
5. Politics and amendments to the constitution
6. Abuses of the military on the people
7. Accomplishments of Marcos
8. The premise and conditions that led to the declaration

iii. Martial Law as discussed in Ateneo de Manila

In Ateneo, the students who started college in August 2015, roughly a year before the issue on Marcos's burial in the Heroes' Cemetery, revealed that the university has always provided venues for discussion about the Martial Law. The discussions on this period just intensified and increased a year later when, by then president Duterte, declared he will allow Marcos's burial. Ateneo students revealed that they were given limited information about the martial law in their primary and secondary education, but they acknowledged that Ateneo's framing of the topic improved and changed their knowledge about the period.

In the words of the students themselves, below are examples of how Ateneo and its teachers effectively integrate the topic of the martial law in varying subjects, aside from Philippine History. These examples can also serve to illustrate how university-level education in the country can improve the knowledge of Filipino students about the Marcos regime:

- a. "In English 11, we analysed an article about a Martial Law slay victim. That was a concrete evidence. Then, we were required to make a feature article on an interview we conducted with a Martial Law victim. I took that subject way before issue of Marcos' burial."
- b. "In our Sociology-Anthropology subject, we were made to watch a film entitled 'Batch 81' in relation to the topic of deviance. In a scene, one character was asked if martial law was bad, and he did not answer. That's how my instructor inserted a discussion on the martial law."
- c. "My Psychology professor and her husband were activist during the martial law. She shared how the period caused a collective trauma to the nation."

iv. University campus activities

Finally, aside from the curricular subjects, students also identified campus activities that discussed the topic of the martial law which are elaborated as follows:

a. Public Lectures, Symposia and Round Table Discussions

Xavier University students recalled a public lecture in 2016 in which a journalist talked about her experiences during the martial law victim talked. The “*Pakighinabi* Conversation Series” is a regular round table discussion designed to provide members of the Ateneo de Davao community “a platform to discuss multidisciplinary issues and concerns in an open and friendly manner”.⁵¹ Among the matters previously tackled in this project was the Marcos burial wherein lawyers and members of an NGO discussed the issue.

b. Alternative Classes

TALAB- *Talakayang Alay sa Bayan* (Discussions for the Nation) are alternative class sessions in Ateneo de Manila where invited speakers discuss pressing social issues in the country, including the Marcos burial. Talks that delve into the martial law period intensified after issue on Marcos’ burial.

c. Art Exhibits and Film Screenings

One respondent recalled a campus activity wherein documentaries about the martial law were screened and after which family members of victims talked about their experiences during the period. The student government of Ateneo de Manila organized an art exhibit that showcased the artworks that portrayed the martial law.

Detailed in this section are the mechanisms in which the social institution of education contributed to the construction and transmission of knowledge and information and in influencing their opinions about the martial law period. At present, these mechanisms include the inclusion of the topic of the martial law period college subjects such as those within the social sciences but most especially in Philippine History. The students interviewed in the study also acknowledged that campus activities, such as public lectures and art exhibits about the martial law, also raised their awareness and influenced their insights regarding the period.

v. Human rights education in the Philippines

The prevalence of human rights violations during the martial law is commonly acknowledged even by students who gave favourable descriptions of the Marcos regime. The following section, therefore, summarizes how notions regarding human rights were formed in the consciousness of the Filipino youth through education.

In all the universities visited in this study, there is no dedicated subject on human rights. However, the students identified courses they have taken wherein

⁵¹ Suarez, Patricia. “Pakighinabi: Diversity and Freedom of Religion”, (11 July 2017), online: *Ateneo de Davao University - Davao City - Philippines* <<http://www.addu.edu.ph/blog/2017/07/11/pakighinabi-diversity-and-freedom-of-religion/>>.

they recall that human rights were discussed. A summary of these courses is provided in Table 3.

Table 3: University subject that incorporate topics on human rights education.

Academic Strand	Subject	Usual Themes/Points of Entry to Discuss Human Rights.*
Humanities	Theology**	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ On Catholic social teachings ■ “Dignity of the human person; every person has dignity and human rights” ■ “What’s happening now with the EJKs [in Duterte’s war on drugs] is taking away their fundamental right to live.”
	Philosophy of the Human Person*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Free will and freedom ■ Determinism
	Filipino	On Filipino literature that discussed human rights.
	Literature	Literary pieces such as poems, stories, novels that discussed concepts of human rights.
Social Sciences	Sociology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Culture ■ Self-determination
	International Humanitarian Law	On Universal Declaration of Human Rights
	Philippine Constitution	Human rights protected by the Philippine constitution

*Phrases enclosed in quotation marks are direct quotation.

**These subjects are required courses in Jesuit universities.

vi. College activities

Aside from the college subjects identified above that incorporate concepts of human rights in the instructional delivery, the students recalled campus activities which discussed human rights. They are as follows:

1. Symposium organized every semester by students taking up International Humanitarian Law.
2. Community-based activities that conduct seminars on democracy and principles of utilitarianism organized by Political Sciences majors.

3. Forum that discussed the emerging issues in Duterte's presidency especially the extrajudicial killings and human rights violation.

To summarize, Filipino college students interviewed in this study affirmed the significance of education in the formation of their knowledge about the martial law and human rights.

b. Family

The family is the strongest social institution in Filipino society. Examinations on the social life in the Philippines identify the family as the “all-dominating unit” and is even acknowledged in the 1987 Philippines constitution, which explicitly refers to the “Filipino family” as the “foundation of the nation.”⁵² This overreach of the family's influence in how the youth's insights of the martial law are constructed has been documented in this research. A few students confide that, while they have one or two family members who express favourable descriptions of the martial law, their insights on the Marcos regime is largely influenced by what has been taught in schools or accounts from books. The youth's insights on the Marcos regime is still largely the product of the country's educational institutions because, as articulated by one student from Tacloban City, “[martial law] is not a household topic.”

c. Skepticism on the Portrayal of the Martial Law by the Mass Media

While a few students acknowledged that their knowledge and opinions of the Marcos regime were partly influenced by the documentaries and shows that feature interviews with martial law victims, the overall assessment of the youth's regard of the mass media is that of skepticism. There were students who felt the media's portrayal of the martial law is either presented purposefully out of context or tilted towards an angle that serve their own interests.

Another student deplored, “the media is also partly to blame why the public forget and do not care about the martial law period anymore. They do not continuously remind the public on the martial law. The media only cares about what is ‘trending;’ they also do not focus on the direct victims of the period.”

d. Religious Institutions

Similar to the family, religion in the Philippines is an important part of social life. A 2017 survey by the Social Weather Station revealed that religion is important to 85% of Filipinos.⁵³ The proportion of those who say religion is very or somewhat

⁵² Miralao, Virginia. “The Family, Traditional Values and the Sococultural Transformation of Philippine Society” (1997) 45:1 Philippine Sociological Review.

⁵³ Santos, Krisia & Marie Marchadesch. First Quarter 2017 Social Weather Survey: 48% of Filipino adults attend religious services weekly; 85% said religion is important, tech. (Quezon City: SWS, 2017).

important was highest among members of Iglesia Ni Cristo at 96%, followed by Catholics and other Christians (both at 85%), and Muslims (71%).

Religious institutions in the Philippines are no stranger to the horrors of the Marcos regime. The infamous Palimbang massacre took place in a mosque where, one survivor recounted, more than 1,000 people were locked up inside and never seen again.⁵⁴ Religious men and women, including priests, nuns, and pastors who died in their fight against the dictatorship are recognized in the *Bantayog ng mga Bayani* or Monument of Heroes.⁵⁵ Images of the EDSA revolution that eventually ousted Marcos in 1986 always include the religious groups that mobilized the larger population. In 2016, the Catholic Bishop's Conference of the Philippines stated its strong dissent and staged protests against the hero's burial accorded to Marcos.

This study attempted to gauge whether the significance of the religious institutions in Philippine society, particularly the Catholic Church and its stance against the Marcos regime, have something to do with how Filipino youth understand the martial law. Indeed, interview responses document that the Filipino youth are aware that religious institutions, most prominently, the Catholic church, were among the victims of the Marcos regime. Furthermore, they acknowledged the role of religious groups in the ousting of Marcos through the EDSA People Power revolution. However, the study also reveals that these realizations do not necessarily mean that they consider religious groups or the Catholic church as influential in their perceptions of the martial law. As one student shared, "I've been educated in elementary and high school in schools run by priests, but their religious teachings do not really have an influence on me." Another student from a Catholic university offers an explanation to the youth's indifference of the Catholic Church's pronouncements about the Marcos regime: "I am not religious, so I am not influenced."

e. Commemorations and Testimonies of Martial Law Victims

The indifference of the youth on the influence of religious groups and the mass media to their perceptions on the martial law extends to the testimonies of the victims and commemorations. One student pointed out that even before martial law was declared, student activists were already being raided which only intensified later.

The general sentiment of students on the commemorating any event related to the Marcos regime such as the anniversary of the declaration the martial law and the EDSA People Power revolution is indifference. One student argues that, if the reason for these commemorations are, "just to appreciate human rights and equality, it is [not worth] opening up old wounds of the past." Another student

⁵⁴ See: <<http://verafiles.org/articles/vera-files-fact-sheet-palimbang-massacre-and-marcos-other-tr>>.

⁵⁵ See: <<http://opinion.inquirer.net/107302/priests-religious-fought-marcos-tyranny>>.

pointed out that commemorating martial law related events, such as the anniversary of its declaration, is also dependent on the agenda of the sitting administration. The contribution of commemorations to the construction and transmission of the Filipino youth's insights on the martial law is summarized by one student: "[they] only serve as an attachment to the past, but it does not influence [our] opinion. It's only an event to look back."

4. Trustworthy Bearers of Knowledge and Information

The first part of this paper established that the youth have inconclusive conceptions of the martial law and received conflicting descriptions of the period from social actors such as family members, teachers, mass media personalities, etc. The second part then summarized the existing mechanisms through which these knowledge and information are passed on to the youth by social institutions such as the family, education system, religion. This next part identifies the bearers of knowledge and information about the martial law that the Filipino youth acknowledge as trustworthy and credible. The basic question here is: do they trust or find credible the social actors or institutions if they talk about the martial law. The specific social actors and institutions identified in the questioning are: mass media, schools, teachers and/or professors, and the religious officials.

a. Skepticism Towards Television Media Including News Shows and News Anchors

A recurrent theme that emerged was a general skepticism of the youth on how mainstream news channels such as ABS-CBN and GMA-7 portray martial law. One student admitted that, "mainstream television is really the easiest source of information on social issues; the problem is whether the viewers are critical." The same skepticism is expressed by students on news personalities such as news anchors and reporters: "news anchors do not have an effect on me, not even one of them. Reporters perhaps, [I trust], because they are on the field."

For the most part, students acknowledged the essential role of news outlets in society, but many assert that news media's role must be confined to broadcasting current events and not to influence viewers' opinions.

b. Print media

If the youth are generally skeptical of television news shows, they are more likely to trust print media such as newspapers and books. Print news media identified by the students as trustworthy in presenting the martial law are broadsheets such as Manila Bulletin and Philippine Daily Inquirer as well as local newspapers like Sun Star. One student recommended that, "the best way is to read all articles involved,

and see whether they validate each other, though this can be tedious and time consuming.”

Many of the students identified “books as the source of information they are more likely to consider as trustworthy in portraying the martial law period. As one student justified: “one of my professors said that books have lesser mistakes because they [have] undergone peer review [before they are published].”

c. Schools/academics/professors

While there were a few students who expressed doubts in the pronouncements of their teachers and professors about the martial law, many still professed trust in the information taught in schools. The students alluded to the credibility of the professors and of their university as well as the discussion seminars organized in the campus.

d. Church

On the credibility of religious institutions, such as the Catholic Church and, in some cases, the Islamic community, the students profess that they find them credible in as far as the humanitarian and social issues but not on political issues such as the Marcos burial and the martial law in general. For those who believe that the Catholic Church must not meddle with political affairs, they describe religious institutions as being “too conservative” in their perspectives, “have no firsthand experience [on the issue],” and not being critical.

e. Firsthand Accounts or People who Experienced the Social or Political Phenomenon

Generally, when asked to name a social institution or a person whom they feel are trustworthy sources of information and knowledge about the martial law, majority of the students responded: those who are victims of the Marcos regime and any person who had firsthand experience of the period.

Some of the students believe that that the martial law victims “will not gain anything if they lie; but [the public also] also need to be critical before believing in their accounts.” As what one student says: “[I have more trust] in ordinary people like drivers because what appears on TV is not always credible.” Another student claims that he gets more credible accounts from “one on one conversations and interactions with ordinary people in society.”

f. Government or Elected Officials

Majority of the students interviewed for this study expressed a general distrust of government officials, including the elected officials, appointed officials, and politicians in general. One student alluded that, “their agenda always depends on

the political spectrum they belong to.” To summarize, when it comes to the bearers of truth about the martial law, while there is no resounding or unified response from the youth, but many of them professed trust in the information sourced from the print media, their schools, and their professors.

IV. CONCLUSION

This study primarily sought to document the collective memories and memory-making mechanism of the Filipino youth on the martial law period. The research aimed to provide insightful descriptions of the martial law period from the perspectives of young Filipinos whose knowledge of the period rely heavily on the social institutions of family, schools, mass media, the religious institutions, and the government.

This research found that how the martial law should be regarded whether it was a shameful violent past that Filipinos must sought to prevent from re-occurring or as an ordinary policy implemented in the 1970’s, is not fully settled. While all the students interviewed here confirmed that they are aware of the human rights violations that occurred during the martial law, placing the blame squarely on Marcos himself, there were also significant voices that believed these transgressions were either justified or unavoidable.

While the branches of the Philippine government that oversee the basic education and universities in the country announced the measures to ensure that younger Filipinos are educated adequately on the martial law and human rights, the students in this study revealed that they received little to no education on these two important matters. This might account for the misconceptions of this generation on the issue of martial law and ultimately of human rights. For example, the researcher received the most surprising, but telling, insight from a student early on in the data gathering: “there are [extra-judicial killing] now, but they are good [extra judicial killing].” Moreover, not a few of the students enumerated beneficial consequences which they believed are squarely attributed to the martial law. It is therefore not surprising why Ferdinand Marcos Jr, the dictator’s son, is now on the brink of gaining back his family’s political stature.

Because the primary respondents of the study are college students, it might account for why they attribute their insights on the martial law to what has been taught to them in schools. In other words, since both martial law and human rights have not been adequately taught in schools, the students in turn do not have adequate and meaningful knowledge about these matters.

However, this research also shows that learning about the martial law and human rights in college is not too late and it does not have to be demanded by a government decree. In the case of Ateneo de Manila, the school effectively integrates these two topics in courses such as English, Sociology, and Theology. The impact of these efforts is evident in a student who described himself as “politically indifferent” due to his Chinese background but was so moved that he

joined the anti-Marcos rallies in 2016, and he was not alone. On the day the Supreme Court of the Philippines released its decision to allow Marcos's burial in the Heroes Cemetery, Ateneo students walked out of their classrooms and practically dragged their teachers to the streets to protest. These actions may be taken as evidence of the impact of human rights and martial law education to the social awareness and participation of the youth.

Other social institutions examined in this study as to their contributions to the construction and transmission of martial law memories to the youth are the family, religious institutions, the government, and the mass media, all of which did not figure prominently in the youth's consciousness in contributing to knowledge and meanings they attribute to the Marcos regime and human rights.

Additionally, the youth profess value in the social institution of education as trustworthy bearers of knowledge and information about the martial law and human rights. This might be taken to mean that the martial law and human rights education has not been adequately given attention in the past and is largely the reason for the Marcoses gaining traction again in Philippine politics. At the same time, it also provides direction on where the Philippines can start in correcting misconceptions about the martial law and the meaning of human rights in the classroom.

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