



Calling in Call-out Culture: An Analysis on Call-out Culture and its influence on Filipino Twitter

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Abstract: Call-out culture has become a questionable phenomenon in and out of Filipino Twitter due to the differing ideologies that participants have perpetuated, separating Filipino communities based on their standing on certain topics on the internet. The reason it has become dubious is due to the bullying that occurs because of the call-outs. Previous research had stated that call-outs have started shifting from being a tool used to oppose abuse into an accessory for building fame on the internet. The researchers used Foucauldian Discourse Analysis to analyze several replies, tweets, and quoted tweets from Filipinos on Twitter. The data was put under the lens of the synopticon theory and Althusser's concept of the Ideological State Apparatus. The analysis has led to the conclusion that there is an evident divide between Filipino communities, and, amid the discord with themes of colonialism and racism, public figures can use it as a device to manipulate the mindset of the masses.

Key Words: call-out; Twitter; Filipino entertainment; Filipino diaspora; controversy

1. INTRODUCTION

'Calling out' refers to the practice of using social media as a platform to criticize any action seen as morally reprehensible (Duchi, 2019, p. 2). The causes of call-outs are oppressive behavior to the breaking of generally accepted social norms but also used by digital activists to campaign for a more equal society. Although used for a good purpose, there is toxicity present. "Criticism enacted through "call-outs" is often perceived as needlessly ferocious and often disproportionate to the action criticized. In such cases, it is described as 'bullying', a particularly toxic consequence of calling out." (Duchi, 2019, p. 16). While some use it to make a name for themselves, call-outs started shifting in purpose. In which they used to be tools to fight against abuse, people began using it to build a name for themselves through call-outs (Duchi, 2019, p. 29).

This study aims to contribute a more academic perspective on call-out culture and its causes and effects on the Filipino landscape, adding more to the limited amount of studies on the topic. The researchers also aim to contribute more knowledge related to the potential ramifications of call-out culture on a global scale, providing a more in-depth understanding of call-out culture and its possible effects on society.

1.1. Conceptual Framework

1.1.1 Ideological State Apparatus

In Marxist theory, the State Apparatus includes the government, military, police, courts, prisons, and more. Together, these make up what Althusser calls Repressive State Apparatus (RSA), which uses violence in order to function. Althusser (1970) said this is to be differentiated from the Ideological State Apparatus (ISA), which functions ultimately without using violence despite having the same elements because it makes use of ideologies instead.

1.1.2 Synopticon

Mathiesen's (1997) form of surveillance, the "synopticon," which he developed from Foucault's interpretation of the panopticon, emphasizes a situation in which "the many" see "the few." He cites the notions of the consciousness industry (Enzenberger, 1974; Tuchman, 1981) and the culture industry (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1947;1969) wherein mass media influences the actions and behaviors of the public. Consequently, the public or better known as "the many" may then interact with "the few" using the "two-way medium" of the internet, such as through cyberactivism or call-out culture (Doyle, 2011; Tucker, 2018).

2. METHODOLOGY

To evaluate the ramifications of call-out culture and understand its effects, the researchers will use Discourse Analysis as a means of assessing



the phenomenon. Specifically, Foucauldian Discourse Analysis has been used as it can be utilized to understand a sequence of “representations, practices, and performances through which meanings, [knowledge, and subject positions] are produced, connected into networks, and legitimized” (Gregory, 2000, p. 180, as cited by Johnson & McLean, 2020). Furthermore, Discourse Analysis has proved to be the appropriate method of investigation in this circumstance as it allowed the researchers to identify the phenomenon based solely on online discussions and analyze its intricacies.

Along with this, the researchers have also applied Mathiesen’s theory on the synopticon. The researchers have utilized this to analyze a “call-out” tweet that has been interacted with multiple times by Filipino internet users. From this tweet, several of its quote retweets and replies have been gathered as well.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. *Kontraversies in Philippine Entertainment*

During Halloween in October of 2020, a Filipino band named MYMP held an online event wherein the band members dressed as prominent figures in music while performing their music. As the band works in the entertainment industry and is relatively popular, they are considered a part of Filipino Mainstream Entertainment (FME). Chin Alcantara, the band’s leader, dressed as Jimi Hendrix by wearing a colorful shirt and headband and wearing dark makeup. Individuals called him out through the comments section, with many telling him and others in the stream to “educate yourselves.” There were also mentions of the Black Lives Matter Movement, wherein Alcantara noted that it was “propaganda” and that instead of Black Lives Matter, he says that all lives should matter (Rappler, 2020). It should be noted that the researchers chose the MYMP situation as it was recent when it was chosen and analyzed (being only a month old) and is a relevant example of the normalization of racist acts by FME.

A recording of the livestream was posted on Twitter by user paz_ango (Figure 1), and the tweet garnered numerous engagements at 1.5K retweets, 13.4K quote tweets, 12.7K likes, and 590 replies. The notions of public space and surveillance are present here, with Twitter being the public space or arena in this situation where people have discourse and the concept of surveillance being exhibited by the traction attained by the post as people seem attentive and watchful over the actions of public figures.



Figure 1.

The issue became a discussion on the site after multiple users expressed their opinions on the racist views of Alcantara in the livestream. It shows that some users manifest certain ideologies (in this case, anti-racism) through knowledge and the use of that knowledge in critically calling out those who have made mistakes or contributed to the problem. This critical perspective can be attributed to how call-out culture has positively shaped the way users interact with injustices they see (Figures 2.1-2.3).



Figure 2.1



Figure 2.2

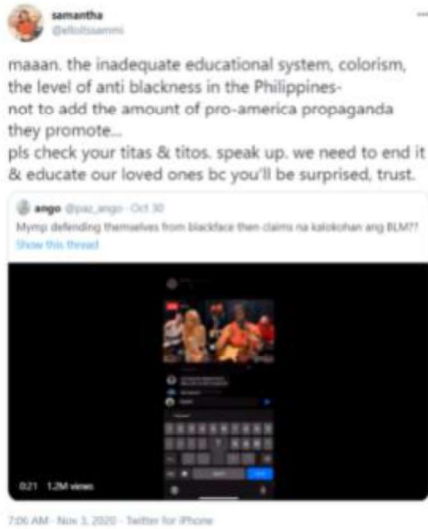


Figure 2.3

Meanwhile, there are also users who either vehemently oppose Alcantara’s beliefs by outright saying that they will boycott their music (Figures 3.1-3.2) or are ignorant to the racist actions that Alcantara has done by defending him or providing excuses for his actions (Figures 3.3-3.4).



Figure 3.3



Figure 3.4

Furthering the latter notion, many participants in the discourse have been shown to defend Chin Alcantara’s statements with some deriding differences in political beliefs (Figure 3.4), advocating his belief of the BLM movement being propaganda (Figure 3.1), and even saying how blackface is an issue foreign to Filipino culture and should not be taken in the Philippines (Figures 3.2 & 3.5). It should also be noted that some of these tweets have gained some traction, such as likes and retweets, showing the multitude of like-minded users. This shows the opposing views of some of the Filipino Twitter (FT) population, shattering any idea of unified opinion, as well as showing that there are users on FT with less progressive views. This expression of ideas and the division that ensues is a showcase of interpellation, which is the process wherein an individual embodies an ideology (Althusser, 1971). Its deepening showcases the manifestation of ideologies and their formation on opposing and conflicting sides.



Figure 3.1



Figure 3.2



Figure 3.4

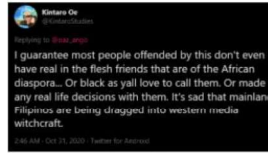


Figure 3.5



Figure 4.1



Figure 4.2

Due to the divide in the views of FT and FME, a medium for call-out culture presents itself. The latter's continuous lack of vigilance in avoiding the depiction of controversial and harmful acts, like blackface, due to the lack of awareness and sensitivity essentially provides phenomena for the former to call-out.

3.2. *Pili-pino: The Divide between the Filipino Mainland and Diaspora*

The Filipino Diaspora are Filipinos who have migrated to other countries, and according to Merriam Webster, diaspora can be described as “people settled far from their ancestral homelands.” This includes the Fil-Ams and other Filipinos who have migrated to other nations. There are approximately 4.1 million Filipinos in the United States on the latest census, while the total population of America is estimated to be 330 million as of 23 January 2021 (Inquirer, 2019). This shows that approximately more than 1% of the population of America consists of Filipinos, compared to the population of the Philippines of 108 million (The World Bank, 2019), around 5% of the population is equivalent to the number of Filipinos in America, and they have a different lifestyle compared to the mainlanders.

The term “divide” was heavily used to describe the social awareness gap between FT and the entertainment industry concerning Chin Alcantara's blackface controversy. This issue arose due to some native Filipinos indirectly defending Alcantara by stating that blackface is not a problem in the Philippines as it is “not even something culturally related to the Philippines.” (Figure 4.1). This argument had a discursive influence on Fil-Ams to support it and impose this stance on Filipinos and call-out Ati-Atihan itself, leading an FT user to address the issue (Figure 4.2). Ati-Atihan is an annual festival to commemorate the Sto. Niño every third Sunday of January in the town of Kalibo, Aklan.

Despite their righteous intentions, the spread of the issue does not always lead to just informing others of the problem; it may also lead to instigating unnecessary commentary from other users. As previously discussed, Fil-Ams only joined the discussion shortly after the argument that Ati-Atihan contributed to blackface as well. The more it circulates among their separate network of fellow Fil-Ams, the more that a sense of interpellation starts developing among them. However, this is also the case for those not belonging to the Diaspora. Filipinos also fall victim to embodying a sense of obligation to continue to call out those that they deem “wrong” by their standards. This is attributed to Althusser's claim on interpellation in which he states that the “category ‘subject’ is created by the interpellation,” implying that the very reason call-outs exist is due to that sense of obligation (Cockshott, 2019).

Colonialism has changed how mainland Filipinos and Fil-Ams view each other, highlighting cultural and social friction between the two. This is due to the lingering influence of Western ideals and their imprint especially on the Fil-Ams on Twitter, which then allows them to present themselves as being a superior version of the Mainland Filipino who they deem as needing to be educated.

3.3. *Bagong MO: Ulterior Motives in Controversy*

Controversies, as discussed in the first two sections, are a quick way for a person or an issue to capture the attention of others. The concept of surveillance supports this as people observe and contribute toward the issue happening by expressing their views on it. Through the people's participation, the controversy and those involved in it suddenly become points of discussion, especially when carried out in a public space such as Twitter.

Theoretically, the chances of MYMP using the controversy as a publicity stunt are slim as it



brought more harm than good. However, the attention garnered from this can easily be manipulated by the perpetrators themselves. To quote Bibo Reyes, “these people do these things to get a reaction,” (Figure 5).



The page that FT users were calling out in Figures 6.1-6.3, Pilipinx Against Colonialism, has been rumored to be a satire page. The page is speculated to have been created by conservative Filipinos from the Philippines who aim to spark controversy between Mainland Filipinos and the Filipino Diaspora. As seen in the discussion in the previous section, its goal was successful.



Figure 6.1



Figure 6.2



Figure 6.3

It is possible that public figures like MYMP and the rumored-to-be-satire Pilipinx Against Colonialism page use call-out culture and one of its by-products, controversy, as a means of manipulating the public mindset. This is supported by the potential ulterior motives of both groups, which are to gain publicity and cause friction between the Filipino Diaspora and the Mainland, respectively.

4. CONCLUSIONS

This study has focused on the phenomenon of call-out culture and its influence on Filipinos through the social media platform Twitter. Through the use of the ISA and the synopticon as a lens to analyze instances of call-out culture in FT (which mainly relate to themes of colonialism and racism), the researchers have made three notable discoveries: (1) There is a divide present between the FME and FT wherein the former proliferates racist ideas and concepts that the latter call out on; (2) Colonialism has affected how Filipinos (mainly Mainland Filipinos and the Filipino Diaspora) view each other; and (3) Amid the chaos, public figures can use call-out culture and, as a byproduct, controversy to manipulate the public mindset (especially FT) for their own agendas. This research has hoped to serve as the beginning of a meaningful discussion on the issue of call-out culture in Filipino social media and as a foundation for future researchers to build upon.

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