THE FILIPINO RINGSIDE COMMUNITY: NATIONAL IDENTITY AND THE HEROIC MYTH OF MANNY PACQUIAO

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By
Margaret Louise Costello, B.A.

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ABSTRACT

One of the main parallels between sport and national identity is that they are both maintained by ritual and symbolism. In the Philippine context, the spectator sport of boxing has grown to be a phenomenon in recent years, perhaps owing to the successive triumphs of contemporary Filipino pugilists in the international boxing scene. This thesis focuses on the case of Filipino boxer Manny Pacquiao whose matches bring together contemporary Philippine society into a “ringside community”, a collective united by its support of a single fighter bearing the brunt for the nation.

I assert that Pacquiao’s stature has transcended that of the sports realm, as he is constructed as a national (i.e., not just sport) hero. As such, I study this phenomenon in two ways. The first part of my analysis focuses on how a narrative of heroism has been instilled in Philippine society through the active promotion of its past heroes. Inherent to this study’s discussion of the Filipino ringside community and heroism is the notion of the *habitus*. Defined by Pierre Bourdieu as a set of inculcated dispositions which generate practices and perceptions, “a present past that tends to perpetuate itself into the future by reactivation in similarly structured practices” (Bourdieu, 6), the concept of *habitus* can be directly applied to how the need for a heroic narrative has been inculcated within Philippine contemporary society.

The second part of my analysis looks at how this narrative is manifested in contemporary Philippine society, as the heroic phenomenon of Pacquiao primarily passes through mediated discourse. With this in mind, I focus on the concepts of national heroism through an analysis of various, primarily news, texts. Using the method of Critical Discourse Analysis as a guide to analyze these texts, I assert that the construction of his heroic persona occurs through a dual process of *naming* him as a hero and *framing* him within a particular context that needs one.
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FOR ALL THAT HAS BEEN — THANKS. FOR ALL THAT SHALL BE — YES!

-DAG HAMMARSKJOLD

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CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

“Modern sport has a social and political significance, extending through the media beyond the player and the spectator.” (Billig, 120)

Pierre Bourdieu begins his essay, “How can One be a Sports Fan?” with a proposal to the reader: “It is possible to consider the whole range of sporting activities and entertainments offered to social agents…as a supply intended to meet a social demand.” (340) This statement, however, begs a subsequent inquiry: what exactly is the nature of this social demand, particularly when one situates it on a national scale?

According to the ISSP (International Social Survey Program) module on National Identity in 2003, 84 percent of Filipinos consider the country’s general achievements in sports as a fundamental source of pride (Mangahas, par. 3). This statistic may appear startling; for instance, to this date, the Philippines has yet to garner an Olympic gold medal since its participation in 1924. However, this finding is indicative of the fact that for a vast majority of Filipino citizens, a main source of esteem towards the nation is rooted in their country’s athletic achievements. Perhaps then, to answer Bourdieu’s question posed in the first paragraph, one essential social demand satisfied by sporting events is that of national pride.

National pride in sports, however, is hinged on the presumption that a country’s sporting heroes are skilled men and women who, more often than not, emerge triumphant. In the Philippine context, the spectator sport of boxing has grown to be a phenomenon in recent years, perhaps owing to the successive triumphs of current Filipino pugilists in the international boxing
scene. Of the professional Filipino boxers today, reigning world boxing lightweight champion Manny Pacquiao remains to be the most successful Filipino athlete and his popularity has risen to almost mythical levels. He is, as acknowledged by most of Filipino society, a hero.

Manny Pacquiao’s most recent victory has further cemented this heroic status. On December 7, 2008, hours after Pacquiao triumphed over American flyweight Oscar de la Hoya, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo joined the nation in rejoicing over the victory, pronouncing him not only the “world’s greatest boxer”, but “a true Filipino hero.” The nation’s newspaper headlines that followed echoed similar sentiments, all reiterating the theme of a unified nation jubilant over the success of an intrepid, if underestimated hero.

Pacquiao’s heroic stature is manifested through how his boxing matches unite the nation into what I characterize as a ringside community. The community represented by Pacquiao spectators has come to represent an idealized nation unified by a fighter bearing the name of the nation. For instance, a particularly incredible phenomenon is the reporting of zero crimes occurring in the nation’s capital, Metro Manila, on the day of Pacquiao’s most recent fight in the ring. According to Metro Manila police Chief Director Vidal Querol, “Our district commanders reported that not a single crime was reported.” (Evangelista, par. 2) Ceasefires between the military and rebel groups are also called on the days of his fights. Furthermore, the viewing of these fights is more often than not, a communal experience. While it was reported that a mere 48.5% of households tuned into Pacquiao’s latest fight, this cannot be taken as an accurate statistic of actual viewership; Households open their doors to neighbors without television sets. Cinemas open and broadcast the fight, and town halls hold special showings. Indeed, Manny Pacquiao’s fights are collectively experienced by Filipino communities all over the nation.
How does one begin to explain the extraordinary heights achieved by this boxer, and how has his popularity reached levels of near-idolatry? Why has the persona of Manny Pacquiao come to represent a bastion of hope and unification for 90 Million Filipinos who come together as a nation to collectively view his fights? While Manny Pacquiao is a contemporary example of a heroic figure, the narrative of heroism particular to the discourse of Philippine history has long been in existence. Building upon the concept of nations being sustained by historical narrative, this thesis asserts the use of symbols such as heroes — men and women that citizens regard as exemplars of “national” character -- play an essential role in the development of this narrative. It is this hope in a heroic (and most importantly, national) figure that contributes to the formation of community, which then necessitates for this heroic narrative to be reiterated time and again. Narrative texts contribute greatly to the diffusion of this narrative; With this in mind, this study focuses on the concepts of national heroism through an analysis of such texts, primarily news texts.

The literature review section of this thesis provides an assessment of the various theories on national identity, as well as studies dealing on the linkage between nation and its sports in the creation and maintenance of this narrative. These articles and theories will serve as a basis for my approach to various characterizations of heroism, as well as the present-day heroic construction of Philippine athlete Manny Pacquiao.

Sidney Hook (4) argues that “the history of every nation is represented to its youth in terms of the exploits of great individuals – mythical or real.” The Philippines is of no exception, as the symbol of the heroic has figured prominently in its history. Thus, the fourth chapter of this thesis focuses on the relevance of heroism as situated in a post-colonial country such as the Philippines. The first part of my analysis section provides a historical background of how the
The concept of heroism has taken root in the Philippines by providing a series of biographical sketches of notable heroic figures in the history of the Philippine nation. The underpinning theory of this analysis is Pierre Bourdieu’s notion of the habitus. Defined by Bourdieu as a set of dispositions which generate practices and perceptions, it is “a present past that tends to perpetuate itself into the future by reactivation in similarly structured practices” (“Structures, Habitus” 34). Using the concepts of habitus, I explore how this narrative of heroism is institutionalized and inculcated in the everyday lives of Filipinos. I analyze the symbol of the heroic figure in this country’s past, by enumerating key themes that figure in this narrative, and how this is intrinsically linked to the concept of a unified nation.

The second portion of my analysis section focuses on how the Filipino press continues this narrative, by constructing and framing Manny Pacquiao as a contemporary hero, one who is instrumental in the formation of a “Filipino ringside community”. Indeed, the media plays a large role in facilitating the relationship between sports, heroism and a shared sense of national identity. This is exemplified, for instance, in the promotion of nationalist sentiment through the extensive coverage of sports events, as well as the through the continual cultivation of the public personas of athletes who have become heroic figures for the nation. Similarly, other media texts employed in this analysis section include advertisements and songs that contribute to the construction of Pacquiao’s public persona outside the boxing ring.

In sum, the thesis’ analysis centers on the recurring themes and reiteration of myths regarding Pacquiao’s history and character – i.e. how he is explicitly named and framed as a heroic symbol for the nation. Concurrently, I provide a commentary on the nationalist discourse that stresses the centrality of Filipino unity and how heroes such as Manny play an important role in the mythology & identity of the Filipino nation.
CHAPTER II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Nationalism and National Identity

Sustained by stories of the past, national mythologies and the invention of traditions, a nation’s identity is deeply rooted in the *imagination* of its constituents. The notion of imagination is echoed by Ernest Renan, in his seminal piece on nationhood “What is a Nation?” (Renan, 19). Despite this seemingly intangible depiction of nationhood, however, it manifests itself in markedly visible, distinct, and oftentimes ordinary ways. It is particularly this tension between the ephemeral and the corporeal that is explored in two primary texts, Andrew Billig’s *Banal Nationalism* and Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Both discuss the notion of nationalism in detail, and certain key points in these works, particularly their conceptualizations of nationhood and community are essential to the investigation and analysis of data for this project.

The notion of nationalism has been reworked and contested by several theorists who have attempted to provide definitions, but as Anderson points out, this term has always proven to be difficult to pin down. In his analysis, he highlights its uniquely *constructed* nature; for him, nationhood is a conjured notion that is shared by members belonging to the same community. Thus, he describes a nation as:

> Imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion… the nation is imagined as limited because even the largest of them…have finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations (Anderson 6).
Granted, the idea of nationhood is *inclusive* and reliant on the key concepts of *unification* and *community*, as exemplified by Anderson’s conception of separate individuals united by an “image of communion”. On the other hand, however, a nation cannot be defined without acknowledging its *exclusive* nature: after all, it is defined by the borders that delineate itself from other territories. These territories, in turn, constitute and represent *other* imagined communities.

In addition to this, it should be noted that these imagined communities do not merely exist at the level of consciousness but have a definite foundation in reality. Anderson, despite his emphasis on the imaginary, also acknowledges the very tangible nature of nationalism. Bishop and Jaworski note in their summary of Anderson’s thesis that a nation is characterized as being continually imagined and reconstructed as a “coherent, unproblematic and homogenous community in terms of both time and space” (247) through an assortment of concrete practices, symbols, as well as social arenas. To illustrate this, a principal issue in Anderson’s analysis is that nations were originally formed by the advent of print-capitalism: the creation, publication and eventual dispersal of texts written in the vernacular. This sudden access to texts provided for the phenomenon of *shared* discourse and in the process, produced an imagined national community of readers. Anderson primarily envisions the imagined community as being hinged upon the idea of nationhood as a product of modernity. Viewed in this light, it is ideal to analyze media texts, with their tremendous potential in reaching mass audiences, in relation to their ability to form and reinforce collective identities. It is through the framing and language of the narrative of news which reflects a particular intentionality (whether overt or implied) to remind readers that they are part of a larger, and more significantly, *national* collective.
Michael Billig also concurs with this imagined conceptualization of the nation, although he chooses to focus on the mundane manifestations of nationhood that construct this imagined sense of community. His analysis contends that much of the development of nationalism has to do with the inculcation of habit—not unlike Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of the *habitus*, wherein communities are intentionally constructed as nations (and similarly, individuals are reproduced as national citizens) on a *daily basis*. He describes this process of construction and propagation as such:

For such daily reproduction to occur, one might hypothesize that a whole complex of beliefs, assumptions, habits, representations and practices must also be reproduced. Moreover, this complex must be reproduced in a banally mundane way, for the world of nations is the everyday world, the familiar terrain of contemporary times. (Billig 6)

For Billig, nationalism is an all-pervasive phenomenon that has so deeply engrained in communities that it often goes unnoticed. Thus, the construction of a nation occurs through a subtle process, not through the explicit or extreme nationalism that has been associated with radical fundamentalist groups. Billig asserts that nationalism is characterized by its banality and is consistently reproduced by ubiquitous and routine practices. An example of a routine practice, for instance, would be the use of language, particularly in media texts. Billig insists that nationalism is reproduced through the employment of what he terms as “routine deixis” and a rhetoric of us versus them in various cultural texts. In his text, he credits British newspapers as “nationalizing” news through the routine use of devices such as: deictic language, “flags” (explicit references to, and markers of, the nation) and assumptions about the spatial location of
the reader. Although these subtle markers may go unnoticed, Billig maintains that they play a potent role in the construction of national identity and community.

**National Symbols and Narrative in the Media**

At this point, it is important to point out the essential part that symbols play in the reinforcement of national identity. As the “strongest, clearest statements of national identity” (Cerulo 244) symbols, as recognizable and potent representations that can be shared by a collective, integrate and form a nation. Cerulo’s “Symbols and the World System: National Anthems and Flags” discusses the intricate relationship between what the world-position of a nation and the nature and structure of its symbols. As “modern totems…signs bear a special relationship to the nation they represent, distinguishing them from one another and reaffirming their identity boundaries” (Cerulo 244). In this quote, Cerulo also brings up an important point, which is that these symbols being co-constructed by the state as well as its constituents, do not merely play an integral role in the *formation* of community. Rather, they play a fundamental role in *distinguishing* nations from other territories as well.

Aside from mainstream symbols (flags and anthems, for instance) narratives and myths are examples of one of these symbols that Cerulo credits as one of the building blocks of a nation. A *national narrative* is often merely a reiteration of past narratives, repeated in the present in order to attain a certain immortality. Renan acknowledges the rather unorthodox chronological state that a nation is situated in and characterizes a particular duality that is present in the conceptualization of a nation: “One lies in the past, one in the present. One is the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories; the other is present-day consent, the desire to live together, the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage that one has received in an
undivided form” (19). It is this idea of legacy and heritage that grounds a nation to respect its past. Conversely, it serves to spur its citizenry to look forward to a future based on community, or what he characterizes as a desire to live together. Narratives, by their reliance on the past, sustain the present day nation and in turn, propel its citizenry to move forward together towards the future.

Indeed, the implications of these narratives and myths are unificatory, as Kluver in “Political Identity and the National Myth: Toward an Intercultural Understanding of Political Legitimacy” points out:

National myth articulates and reinforces a sense of collective identity, provides a meaningful framework for individual identity and reifies the values of the nation. These narratives shape and reinforce the national consciousness and…establish policies and agenda. (Kluver 58)

One such narrative or myth similar to what Kluver refers to is a particular narrative of heroism. Reliant upon the symbolic idea of the hero who is often paralleled to the people of the nation, this narrative serves to provide inspiration, and, as some may assert, to ensure a pacified and cooperative collective. Berman in “Positioning in the Formation of National Identity” elaborates:

Collective masses are positioned as heroes and praised for their dedication and sacrifices to the successful development of the state. Conversely, those that vocally object…can be branded as subversives, that is, an obstruction… (Berman 140)

In today’s modern society, this narrative is transported via many channels, most significantly, the media. Media systems, and their capability to disperse narrative and mythology
to mass citizenry on a repeated, daily basis, as Billig stresses-- figure crucially in the inculcation of key beliefs and ideologies that become shared by communities. Once again, Kluver sums up the power of the media and other institutions in perpetuating both narrative and myth: “Once a political mythology has been formulated, the educational and mass media systems… inculcat[e] that myth within the citizenry.” (Kluver 58)

The news media figure prominently in the dispersal of shared myths and narratives that maintain national communities. Karen S. Johnson-Cartee’s *News Narratives and News Framing* examines the ways in which the news operates on the ideas of narrative structure and framing. Regarding the news product as a social construction of reality; specifically, as a constructed reality that unfolds itself as a narrative, she regards these narratives in the media as “the means by which societies ultimately govern themselves, for these shared stories establish commonalities, promote goodness, and discourage wickedness. Narratives provide societies with their moral reasoning” (Johnson-Cartee 149). Implicitly, then, it may be said that media systems, through the continual process of creating and dispersing intentionally framed narratives, figure in the inculcation of particular societal values.

Similarly, Rod Brookes’ “Newspapers and National identity: the BSE/CJD crisis and the British Press” shows how newspapers are specifically framed with a particular agenda: “National newspapers by definition are nationally distributed, and although there may be differences of age, gender, region, social class and ethnicity even within the readership of individual titles, the limit is that of nation” (Brookes 256). As Brookes points out, media texts such as newspapers provide for fertile ground in the analysis of national identity as it brings together communities which are heterogenous and yet, bound by their sharing of nationality.
In addition to this, Mirca Madianou’s *Mediating the Nation* considers the media, and its impact on the ways that people experience the political entity of the nation, as well as their own national and transnational identities. In her exploration of the relationship between the identity of nations and national media, Madianou seeks to find replies to questions such as: “in what ways and contexts do the media influence identity discourses? … what role do the media play in relation to inclusion and exclusion from public life?” (Madianou 3)

Madianou’s approach to her research questions begins with the assertion that the relationship is not one that is causal or deterministic. Her analysis, which posits that the world we live in is a mediated one, argues that the main contribution of the media is the creation of what she terms as *symbolic communicative spaces*. She characterizes these spatial phenomena as “spaces [which] are experienced as exclusive by some informants, suggesting the power of the media to determine the boundaries that affect practices and discourses about ‘home’ and ‘belonging’.” (5) In this manner, Madianou’s approach to different media texts and their narratives falls directly in line with the concepts of Anderson and Billig’s conceptualization of cohesive communities which are formulated by day-to-today symbols and representations of the nation. The idea of a communicative space, however, assumes that society *itself* plays a role in the creation of nation. In this manner, the public is not characterized as a collective of passive subjects held captive by hegemonic control of larger powers (i.e. the media or the government) who dictate the definition of nationhood but rather, *active* agents who participate in a communal process of negotiated meaning-making.
**Heroism in the National Media**

Since this thesis focuses on heroism within the Philippine context, it is imperative to discuss the idea of the heroic as a key figure in the construction of a national narrative and in the projection of national unity. Billig acknowledges that “national histories will have their special moments, in which heroes and heroines seem to step out of the banal progress of calendrical time” (70). As time passes, however, modern-day heroes become immortalized and their tales become woven into the very narrative of a nation. While narratives of such nature are reconfigured to adjust to the shifting contexts of a nation, they always contain basic mythical elements in place. This concept of the heroic as an integral key narrative in the conceptualization of a nation is one that is universal. For instance, Anna Makolkin’s *Name, Hero, Icon: Semiotics of Nationalism through Heroic Biography* credits the power of the heroic symbol in nation construction. While she focuses on the case study of poet Taras Shevchenko as a symbol of heroism in the Ukraine nation, Makolkin maintains that indeed, this need for the heroic is one that is shared by all nations, with some putting more salience on this myth than others. As such, by regarding heroes as universal signs, Makolkin highlights the myth-making capabilities of iconic hero-figures and similarly, how this relates to national cohesion:

The history of various cultures in different periods has convincingly demonstrated that there is a persistent attempt to establish heroism. Numerous thinkers throughout history already acknowledged this persistent need of the heroic, and Freud summarized in this century what had already been known: “We know that in the mass of mankind there is a powerful need for an authority who can be admired (Makolkin, 13).

While indeed, this thirst for an ideal figure, an exemplar of character has been established,
what are the strategies employed by the media to elevate the stature of men and women to the
privilaged status of the heroic? A person’s rise from ordinariness to the heroic is greatly
dependent on several social actors that take part in a process of framing which is important in the
process of heroic construction. This may, for instance, even involve turning a person’s
deficiencies or inadequacies into virtues. For instance, Billig references Schwartz’s observation
that “if the national hero is obviously a dull character, like George Washington, his ordinariness
can always be transformed into a mythic ordinariness, in order to symbolize the national genius
for ordinary dealing” (qtd.in Bilig 71).

Aside from framing, the appearance (at times, the invention) of a heroic figure may stem
from a need for the State to exert control upon its populace. Pugsley’s article “Constructing the
Hero: Nationalistic News Narratives in Contemporary China explores how in times of crisis,
Chinese journalism is still heavily influenced by the Maoist era in which the news media served
as the mouthpiece for government propaganda. Pugsley proposes that the Chinese media relies
on the “telling of ‘hero narratives’ during times of calamities as an intentional strategy for the
maintenance of the Chinese mass audience” (1).

Indeed, heroes are created, exalted, and continually resurrected within the histories of
nations. As Bill Butler states in his treatise on heroism entitled The Myth of a Hero, “The Hero is
an archetype figure, a paradigm who bears the possibilities of life, courage, love—the
commonplaces, the indefinable, which themselves define our human lives.” (6) Often capable of
attaining feats which are deemed impossible, the symbol of the hero serves as a metaphor for
possibility. It goes without saying that an individual does not automatically become a hero by the
mere framing and naming by the media. To be accepted by nations, s/he must embody
characteristics that resonate within a particular national context. Serving as a symbol of the
nation, this figure must be accepted and admired by its populace. In this manner, the hero serves to go beyond representing a nation, but s/he provides that which is ineffable: hope. Viewed in this light, a nation’s dependence on a hero myth may then be viewed as a need on the part of nations (whether ancient or fledging) for hope and perhaps, rebirth.

**Sports Narratives in the Media**

There are many different ways in which these heroic narratives are perpetuated through the media. Sports narratives, in particular, provide an ideal framework for the connection between the heroic narratives and the construction of national identity. This is particularly true on the international stage, as athletes who represent their country are not merely displaying technical skill or athletic ability, but serve as *national* symbols of honor. Competitors are representatives of the nation, and as such, their successes and triumphs indirectly reflect upon to the prestige of the country which they represent. Smith and Porter in their introduction to *Sport and National Identity in the Post War-World* agree with the notion of the relevance of the tangible nature of sport and how this relates to national identity. According to them, the idea of sport being instrumental in the creation of a sense of nationhood is fundamental, particularly because the very idea of international competition is reliant upon the embodiment of a nation in “something manifestly real and visible” (2).

Hobsbawm in *Nations and Nationalism* uses Anderson’s notion of the imagined community to relate to the relationship between sporting events and the feeling of pride and belonging to a nation. In particular, he cites the idea of a country’s national team not only as a representation of the unrealized fantasies of sporting fans, but as fundamental to the spectator’s consciousness of the nation: “the imagined community of millions seems more real as a team of
eleven named people. The individual, even the one who only cheers, becomes a symbol for the nation himself” (143).

Recent studies examining the relationship between sporting events and national identity have been conducted. These studies show how the reportage of a single sports event, as well as the press’s choice to focus on a heroic sports figure reveals an implicit construction of a nation, as well as the explicit framing of this nation’s constituents. Oftentimes, the press more than serves as a mediating role between these two concepts. In “We Beat ’em: Nationalism and the hegemony of homogeneity in the British reportage of Germany versus England during Euro 2000”, Bishop and Jaworski focus on the themes of hegemony, nationalism, and how readers are positioned and constructed as a homogenized collective during the coverage of the Euro 200 game. By doing so, they provide an analysis of the distinct role of the press in the construction of the nation, specifically as a national collective much like the imagined community Benedict Anderson refers to in his work. They point out the need to identify: “how the press construct a sense of collective national engagement with the events being reported and in doing so construct the nation as a homogenous collective that the implied reader is positioned as being a member of. “(244) Their findings show that the British press does not merely call attention to readers’ identities as spectators, but their identities as nationals as well by depicting images of homogeneity and unity. Furthermore, the press taps on themes that resonate strongly within a nation’s history — in this case, a hostile history of war and conflict between Germany and England – and in turn, contribute to creating a more marked rift between the two opposing nations.

Gardiner’s “Running for Country: Australian Print Media Representation of Indigenous Athletes in the 27th Olympiad” focuses on the Australian media’s depiction of aborigine athletes
as unifying a diverse nation, as indigenous athletes were promoted by the press to capture the imagination of the the national, as well as international audience. The article shows how the press reportage of two indigenous athletes on the games were explicitly framed in such a way that “indigenous identity continued to be presented within, and confined by, the discourse of national unity” (233).

Most studies dealing with the analysis of sports narratives in the press employ the concepts of Billig’s notion of Us vs. Them rhetoric in the press, which is used in order to position the implied reader as a nationalist rooting for the triumph of an athlete and concurrently, the triumph of his nation. The pronoun “us” calls attention that this adulation for both athlete/sporting team is something that the reader shares with a collective, and thus, indirectly calls to attention that the nation is one in celebration. Similarly, he also focuses on the use of the language of warfare in the press coverage, as “sport does not merely echo the language of wafare but it can provide the symbolic models fro the understanding of war” (124). His commentary on the idea of personal sacrifice in the sports pages confirms the existence of the hero-myth in sporting narratives:

An athlete (described as a “reluctant hero, and male, of course) is reported as saying “when your country needs you…how can you say no” (Mail). The same paper reported the rugby hero, who, despite pain and injury, carried on to fight for the cause of national honour against New Zealand. The “Anglicized Welshman at the heart of the Wellington campaign… appeared afterwards with “one eye blackened, one knee strapped, hand and cheekbone swollen”. He declared: “This was a do-or-die-situation. The tour had to be saved.” (Billig 124)
Like war, sporting events are typically structured as a struggle between two nations. Those who fight this war and exhibit greatness — either by overcoming great odds or by simply triumphing in the arena -- are positioned and constructed as heroes.

To close this section, sports narratives in the media are situated and framed accordingly within a decidedly nationalist context. It is perhaps the idea of competition, particularly on an international scale that lends itself to the channeling of nationalist, and as Billig points out, often aggressive energies towards a nation that is pitted as the Other. In the metaphor of sport as war, the athlete naturally fulfills the role of noble war hero.

The Heroic Myth in the Philippines

As a nation which has endured years of colonial rule, it comes as no surprise that the Philippines’ most renowned heroic figures have been those who have gone against foreign oppressors. However, possibly the most crucial element that catapults the ordinary Filipino man or woman to the realm of the heroic is the idea of sacrifice or suffering (and most often, martyrdom) — for the good of the country. Indeed, most of the key heroic figures in Philippine history have been immortalized precisely for their abilities, or at least, their valiant efforts to defend a threatened nation.

Who, then, is this Filipino heroic figure and what ideals elevate an ordinary Filipino to the realm of the heroic? Most historians agree that the “heroic standard”, if there is one, has been set by the Philippines’ national hero, Jose P. Rizal. An intellectual and novelist who was a vehement critique of oppressive Spanish rule, Rizal led the Propoganda Movement which was considered to be one of the major catalysts of the Philippine revolution. What cemented Rizal’s
position as the bearer of the heroic ideal, however, was his martyrdom at the hands of the Spanish government.

The choice to revere Rizal as an important heroic figure reflects certain key points about Filipino society and its standards of heroism. According to historian Vicente Rafael, indeed, the discourse around the Filipino heroic myth is heavily dependent on the idea of Rizal’s suffering and martyrdom. Comparing Rizal’s legacy to that of Christ’s *Pasyon* (the Passion of Christ), Rafael notes that Rizal, as well as Jesus Christ are both “pathetic and prophetic…forced to undergo humiliation at the hands of alien forces” (Rafael 211). Indeed, while he is treasured for the literary value of his written works, a fundamental reason for the devotion to his heroism is that he risked his life by choosing to fight against the injustices inflicted upon his nation, His works were what led to his eventual martyrdom, and it can be said that this crucial sacrifice for his principles -- a sacrifice that one that can indeed be aligned to that of Christ’s – ultimately cemented his position in the nation’s pantheon of heroes.

How is a hero formalized and rendered official, however? The historical, political and educational relevance of the heroic myth is evident in the concrete ways in which the State authorizes and sanctions these individuals as heroic figures. Heroes such as Jose Rizal are institutionalized by the state, incorporated in educational curricula and immortalized in monuments. For instance, according to Maria Stella Sibal Valdez in *Dr. Jose Rizal and the Writing of his Story*, “Legislation has been enforced long enough to ensure that there is some sort of a Rizal icon in most places in the Philippines. The teaching of his life and works is mandatory, to be studied and read in schools.” (39)

And yet, as stated earlier, the need for the constant retelling of this heroic myth is inexhaustible. It is important, then – for a nation such as the Philippines which is framed within
the discourse of heroic myths — to find contemporary, modern day exemplars who embody heroic ideals. It begs to be pointed out, however, that as a European-educated ilustrado, Jose Rizal has never been considered to be truly representative of the Filipino masses, as he was considered to be one of the privelaged few who had access to education and training during this time of colonialism. Valdez points out, “The raising of Rizal upon a pedestal spawns for us a hero mold that is almost perfect, if not perfect…. Rizal is above us, beyond us, and unlike us” (39).

Who is the “us”, however, that is alluded to in this quote? Strictly speaking, Filipino society is largely composed by the lower to middle classes. In “Trends and Characteristics of the Middle-Income Class in the Philippines: Is it Expanding or Shrinking?” a study conducted by Virola et.al, they state that “[a]s of 2003, less than one in 100 families belongs to the high-income class; about 20 are middle-income and 80 are low-income” (Virola, par. 14). Taking in consideration the overwhelming majority of the populace that resides in the lower income bracket, one may ask if there a need for a “common” hero, one who is more representative of the spirit of the Filipino. More specifically, it can be posited that there exists a demand for a hero who is not “above us, beyond us, or unlike us” but can be said to embody the same experiences of the collective whilst retaining the characteristics necessary to attain heroic status. Furthermore, in order to sustain this narrative of heroism and render this heroic symbol more potent, there also exists a clamor for present-day heroes to carry this torch passed down to them by figures such as Rizal.

Several efforts have been made to address this problematic. In Filipino contemporary society, for instance, the idea of equating heroism with the Filipino masa (masses) has been frequently utilized. For instance, the campaign rhetoric of deposed Philippine Predisent Erap
Estrada capitalized on this idea of the “common man for the masses”, proclaiming him as “Erap para sa mahirap” (Erap for the poor). This campaign strategy was indeed successful, with Estrada emerging triumphant in a ten-candidate race, and garnering 40 percent of the votes cast mostly by the lower classes (Moreno 94). Much of Estrada’s popularity stemmed from his early years as a former actor whose onscreen personas frequently portrayed him as a middle class hero and champion for the poor. Although admired and lionized by a faithful faction of the citizenry, Estrada never quite reached heroic status, as his personality grew to be quite polarizing throughout his Presidency, and accusations of corruption as well as his eventual ousting from the seat of Presidency in 2003 marred this heroic image. Indeed, he did not serve as a figure who united the Filipino collective.

A recent trend that typifies the idea of the contemporary common hero is the archetype of the Filipino migrant worker. Mythified and encoded as “bagong bayani” – the new heroes – by both the state and the Philippine media, we are brought back to the idea of a societal and political culture that, again, is “predicated on the logics of suffering and sacrifice” (Rafael 212). McKay (72) states, by capitalizing on the idea of the heroic Filipino, “the state taps into particular cultural understandings of heroism steeped in the ability of an individual — male or female — to sacrifice and suffer for the nation.”

And yet, the idea of tangible symbol of the heroic figure remains, and Pacquiao has emerged as the successor to a legacy of heroism that has been laid in history. The myth of Manny Pacquiao invokes this history, and fulfils the need for a common, relatable, modern-day and yet, undoubtedly heroic champion for the Philippine nation. As a man of humble beginnings, he can authentically be framed as the “common man” and representative of the majority of Filipino society. Furthermore, nature of his profession, as well as his expertise in the ring conjure the
ideals of sacrifice, physical hardship, and a willingness to literally put one’s life on the line for the honor of nationhood: all ideals considered to be important to the notion of the heroic figure in the Philippines.

The next section describes the nature of my analysis on the existing heroic narrative, and Pacquiao’s role as he as situated within this discourse. I elaborate upon the concept of the heroic and how a narrative of heroism has been inculcated within Filipino society. Furthermore, I explain the process by which I analyze how the press frames, names and constructs the heroic figure of Manny Pacquiao. By doing so, I discuss the implications of his heroic construction on the Philippine national identity and community.
CHAPTER III: DATA AND METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of this study, I draw on a triangulation of methods approaching the phenomenon of the heroic myth of Manny Pacquiao from several angles. The first part of this analysis, Chapter IV, focuses on establishing an extant narrative of heroism, and analyzes the inculcation of this narrative from Bourdieu’s notion of habitus.

Chapter IV provides the context by which the elevation of Pacquiao as a contemporary heroic figure may be understood. The analysis asserts that national narratives, such as the Philippines’ myth of the heroic are grounded upon a particular national consciousness that has been institutionalized and inculcated in the lives of its citizenry. Bourdieu would call this a manifestation of habitus. Indeed, these myths have become so deeply ingrained in society that they are considered as “natural”. As Brown, in Fanatics!: Power, Identity, and Fandom in Football asserts:

Having a national identity involves being situated physically, legally, socially, as well as emotionally (Billig 1995: 7) by ideological narratives based on a selection of myths and traditions — roots — which are considered as essential, natural, to a country. (Brown 160)

Chapter V, on the other hand, focuses on the case study of Manny Pacquiao and how he is constructed as a heroic figure by the Philippine press. Guided by Bourdieu’s conceptualization of naming and symbolic power, as well as Wodak’s precepts of Critical Discourse analysis, this analysis explores the process by which Pacquiao is named as a hero through the press’ use of several symbolic themes.

Thus, Chapter V focuses on a particular representative event, the Manny Pacquiao-Oscar de La Hoya match that occurred on December 6, 2008. Focusing on a corpus of online
newspaper articles regarding Pacquiao’s match with Oscar de la Hoya, published within a one month period, and the heroic themes employed therewith, the first part of Chapter V summarizes what is involved in the heroic naming and framing of Pacquiao; precisely, how the press focuses on his characteristics that make him an exemplar of heroism and situates this within the contemporary Filipino experience. A large bulk of the analysis comes from online news sources, specifically the following three of the top-selling broadsheets of the country: *The Philippine Daily Inquirer, The Philippine Star*, and *The Manila Standard*. 220 articles were reviewed from the time period of November 27-December 17, 2008. While the sample number of articles is indeed significant, I assert that this study should be taken to be representative in character.

Building off on this reading of texts, I explore how Manny Pacquiao is *named* and *framed* as a heroic symbol. Following a cursory readings of all the articles involved, I extrapolate and identify recurring themes and patterns that emerge over the period deployed in framing and constructing Pacquaio as a heroic figure for the nation. Key features to be used in this analysis are *pronoun use* and the *employment of war metaphors* and symbolism to illustrate the discourse of *Us. vs. Them* in the reiteration of national identity. Concurrently, through the use of critical discourse analysis, this paper focuses on how a ringside community is imagined, constructed and continually reinforced by the use of symbols and rituals that surround the Filipino media’s reportage of Pacquiao’s matches.

A Note on the Data: News Texts

As Jaworski and Bishop note, it is through media discourse that ideologies are forged, reinforced and reproduced (246). Nationalism remains unquestioned and unchallenged, an ideology which has “come to be seen as inevitable and natural… a ‘common sense given with a
world without nations being an unimaginable impossibility” (Bishop and Jaworski 247). The ideology of nationalism seen here is strengthened through these texts that define and glorify the heroic figure of Manny Pacquiao. By framing him as the “people’s champion”, it is through his reflected glory that Filipinos are expected to gain a sense of national identity and pride.

Similarly, it is also through media texts that the inculcation of *habitus* is evident. For instance, Bourdieu highlights the ways by which *habitus* reveals itself through the content of newspapers:

> Newspapers call for a relation to the object implying the affirmation of a distance from an object which is the affirmation of a power over the object and also a dignity of the subject. They give the reader much more than the ‘personal opinions he needs; they acknowledge his dignity and a political subject capable of being, if not a subject of history, then at least the subject of a discourse of history.

(Bourdieu, “Distinction”, 446)

As stated earlier, the media performs an important role in disseminating and relating ideological and national narratives. As a parenthetical note, this is not to attribute direct causality between the media and other institutions in relation to the shaping of public or national identities. As Madianou points out, one cannot deny the role of the media in the creation of what she terms as “communicative spaces” with regard to the formation of community. This analysis intends to examine the nature of a particular kind of “communicative space” by examining the continual construction of Pacquiao’s heroic persona by various institutions, including the public who lionizes him, as well as Pacquiao himself.
Background on the Method: Naming, Framing and Critical Discourse Analysis

Building upon Bourdieu’s notion of symbolic power, particularly the unique role of language in the social construction of reality, Chapter V focuses on the ideological implications of the themes and metaphors regarding the discourse surrounding Manny Pacquiao as a modern day hero of the Philippine nation. Central to this close attention to language will be Billig’s methodology of “homeland deixis”, specifically the use of war metaphors and personal pronouns (the imagery of Us. vs. Them) in the interpretation of texts in determining the subtle references to the nation. Indeed, it is the aggressive nature of sports in general that lends itself well to drawing a parallel between war and sports:

The sports pages, in inviting us readers to wave flags, echo the language of warfare. Frequently, the metaphors of `weaponry (firing, shooting, attacking are employed (Sherrard, 1993). If sport is a sublimation, then the flag-waving is a safety valve, draining away masculine, aggressive energies and making the world a more peaceable place” (Billig 123)

Is this the case, however, in the construction of the heroic in Manny Pacquiao? As discussed later on in the analysis section of this thesis, however, what is emphasized is that this event is not particularly framed as a clash of two separate nations at war with each other. What occurs is rather, the media’s emphasis on the adversarial nature of the sport but rather, the positive implications of Pacquiao’s triumphs (specifically, his ability to spur a deep sense of national pride and the formation of community).

It is, then, primarily, Bourdieu’s assertion of the importance of the symbolism of language, (the process of “naming”) and its implications upon community formation and national identity construction that lends itself well to the method of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) in
the analysis of data. CDA regards ‘language as social practice’ (Fairclough and Wodak 6), and of the many tenets of this theory, this study focuses on the following precepts:

- The idea that language as a social phenomenon
- That various institutions and social groupings (in this case, the media) contain particular meanings, standards and valued that are conveyed in a particular manner, usually in concrete texts.
- That individuals (the readers/hearers of these texts) take part in the construction of meaning. (Wodak 6)

CDA is usually employed in an attempt to explain and shed light on the “opaque aspects of discourse” (Fairclough and Wodak 258). The explicit attention to language is specifically utilized to highlight the continual construction of this discourse. As reiterated by Fairclough and Wodak (278), language is not merely a social phenomenon but a *concrete* action. Social action manifests itself through tangible texts, such as news discourse, where communication is conveyed.

In this sense, the use of CDA for this study is meant to show that this narrative and myth of the heroic is continually being constructed by the press through the use of language and symbols, which are taken to be reflective of Filipino culture, as well as its beliefs and practices in contemporary society. It is imperative to analyze the language of these texts by relating them to the larger social context; a context which the text continually reflects and invokes.

McGregor in “Critical Discourse Analysis -- A Primer” references van Dijk and says, “CDA does not have a unitary theoretical framework or methodology because it is best viewed as a shared perspective encompassing a range of approaches instead of one school” (1). However, one of the main techniques employed by critical discourse analysts is the process of *framing*. In order to achieve an effective “name” (in this case, the naming of Manny Pacquiao as
“hero”) the news media specifically constructs him Pacquiao within a specific frame. The concept of a frame is “a central organizing idea for news content that supplies a context and suggests that the issue is through the use of selection, emphasis, exclusion and elaboration” (Tankard, et al. 11) As shown by these articles employed under analysis, certain aspects of Pacquiao’s personality are specifically selected, emphasized, elaborated upon and excluded (although the public may not be privy to this) in order to fulfill an established heroic standard that has been set by past heroes. Cartee’s News Narratives and News Framing: Constructing Political Reality examines the process by which this framing is achieved and in doing so, cites M.R. Just, Crigler, and Neuman in their investigation of how political meanings are constructed within public issues or events. According to them, this construction is achieved by the use of two dimensions—cognitive and affective:

- The first dimension, the frame, is primarily cognitive in nature and contains information about the structure and general parameters of the object under consideration. The second dimension, the tone, is primarily affective and represents the emotions associated with the object. (Just, et.al 133)

This concept of naming and framing is thus included in the methodology. Guided by the principles of Critical Discourse Analysis, and Billig’s concept of homeland deixis, I analyze the language of the press in order to explore how national readership of ringside community is framed and constructed. Secondly, I describe and delineate how Pacquiao satisfies certain ideals that constitute him as heroic. By focusing on the language employed in these articles, it is possible for me to sift through the data and identify key recurring tropes in the language used that are — to use Bourdieu’s notion of symbolic power essential in the naming of Pacquiao as a heroic symbol. Through the use of these methods, Chapter V focuses on how
language of news constructs the heroic Pacquiao figure by framing him within particular contemporary contexts, how this reflects a pre-existing habitus of heroism, and ultimately, how society is constructed as a ringside community through these discourses.
CHAPTER IV: The Habitus of Philippine Heroism

We know that in the mass of mankind there is a powerful need for an authority who can be admired (Freud 109)

Heroism, the manifestation of great courage in a nation consistently beset by adversity, poverty and a long history of captivity by foreign powers, has been a defining factor in the Philippine nation’s history. It is perhaps this tradition of suffering by the hands of colonizers that can be attributed to the nation’s persistent attempt to establish and inculcate the notion of the heroic to its citizenry. Whatever the reason, however, the symbol of the “bayani” (hero) has been ascribed to the nation’s national mythology as lives of honorable men and women have been posited as concrete challenges for the present and future generations of Filipinos to emulate. With their accomplishments written into history books, their lives commemorated on special days and their likenesses immortalized in monuments all over the nation, Filipino men and women considered to exemplify “heroic” virtues have been mythified, deliberately recalled and subsequently instilled into the consciousness of the nation’s constituents.

Who are these men and women considered to exemplify the notion of heroism? Considering the nation’s colonial and bloodstained past, it comes as no real surprise that these are individuals who risked their lives in order to fight for freedom and independence, who fought for freedom and independence, and nearly all of them have been martyred individuals. This idea of sacrifice and defending the country — whether through arms or through ideas is a unifying thread that unites the heroes of the Philippines.

Mokolkin writes in Name, Hero Icon: Semiotics of Nationalism through Heroic Biography that
at various stages of civilization and in various cultural traditions there were
different criteria for measuring the heroic: different standards of beauty, courage
and wisdom were applied to heroes in ancient and modern times….Time passes,
empires and emperors fall into decay, heroes are born and die, but the
indestructible panegyric rises again and again to fulfill the innate desire to praise
and admire the “Other”.(15)

This section of the thesis focuses on the idea of hero – Mokolkin’s conceptualization of
the honorific “Other”; an Other that has been revered in different incarnations in Philippine
history. Ultimately, this heroic “Other” is one who is measured primarily by a self-sacrificing
willingness to his/her struggle against a greater power: an “Other” who has risked his life for the
honor of nation, or at least, the honor of his tribe or community. In order to explicate this
conceptualization of the Heroic Other in the context of Philippine history, analysis presents two
main archetypes can be gleaned from this long line of heroic figures: a. *the revolutionary*, and b.
*the martyred intellectual*. Despite this categorization, I assert that all of these heroes discussed
exemplify the ideals of suffering and self-sacrifice for the purpose of his nation. What follows in
this section is a discussion of a few of the seminal figures who are essential in the Filipino heroic
narrative, as well as a description of their heroic traits.

**Two Revolutionaries: Lapu-Lapu and Andres Bonifacio**

**Lapu-lapu, the First Filipino Hero**

Considered as the nation’s first national hero (Zaide 83), the Muslim king Lapu-Lapu is
venerated for his role in thwarting a Spanish invasion of his island, as well as the catalyst for the
death of famous Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan in what historians refer to as the Battle
of Mactan. According to historian Jose Arcilla, this historic battle was initiated by the fact that the Lapu-Lapu outwardly refused Magellan’s attempts to Christianize the island; Spanish accounts directly quote Lapulapu as saying he refused “to obey the King of Spain” (Arcilla 3).

**Defiance towards Colonial Power**

Filipino children all over the country are taught the following tale, as the story of Lapulapu is written in most history textbooks. The native chieftain’s heroism is attributed primarily to his *refusal to submit* to Spanish powers. Despite the mostly successful attempts of Magellan and his crewmates to Christianize the island of Cebu, as well as to pledge fealty to the Spanish king, Lapu-Lapu, however, refused to comply with their efforts. In response to this, Magellan then sent a party of sailors to Mactan to burn villages on the island, but this only strengthened the resolve of Lapu-Lapu and his tribe. On the morning of April 27, 1521, Magellan and a larger force returned to Mactan to pacify what they thought, perhaps, was a minor insurgency. Then armed with spears and their native weapons, Lapu-Lapu and the men of Mactan, faced Spanish soldiers led by Magellan, who “wore armor from his head to his knees. Magellan and a number of his men were killed, and the Spanish ships promptly left” (Arcilla, 24).

A direct retelling of this incident by one of Magellan’s shipmates, Antonio Pigafetta, relates the following account of his death:

….they all hurled themselves upon him (Magellan). One of them wounded him on the left leg with a large cutlass, which resembles a scimitar, only being larger. That caused the captain to fall face downward, when immediately they rushed upon him with iron and bamboo spears and with their cutlasses, until they killed
our mirror, our light, our comfort, and our true guide. When they wounded him, he turned back many times to see whether we were all in the boats. Thereupon, beholding him dead, we, wounded, retreated, as best we could, to the boats, which were already pulling off. (Pigafetta, qtd. in Arcilla 24)

Based on this account, there is no proof that exists that Lapu-lapu killed Magellan himself; however, the heroic myth of Lapu-lapu is largely strengthened by attributing Magellan’s death to his valor. Because of this, as well as the fact that he was the first recorded inhabitant of the Philippine islands to have challenged and defied Spanish colonial powers, he has long since served as a symbol of resistance to subservience. The symbol of this chieftain has been incorporated into an existing discourse of heroism, and attempts have been made to formalize and even legislate his heroic status. For instance, he is alluded to in the Philippine Declaration of Independence of 1898 as "King Kalipulako de Maktan". (qtd. in Kalaw) He is also regarded as a regional hero for the island of Cebu, which has even renamed the town of Opon to Lapu-Lapu in order to commemorate his valor. In 2008, Senator Richard Gordon proposed a bill to formally rename April 27 as Adlaw ni Lapu Lapu (Day of Lapu-Lapu) and declare it as a non-working holiday in order to commemorate “the first Asian victory against colonial aggression” (Press release, Senate of the Philippines).

Despite this Lapu-Lapu’s instance of opposition (and many failed insurgencies afterwards) the Philippines was colonized by Spain for well over three hundred years. It was only around the tail end of the nineteenth century that a more consolidated effort against Spain was gradually formed. By this time, the atmosphere of repression had now reached boiling point; it was thus this milieu that ushered in the genesis of the Philippine revolution. One of the most important figures during this historic time is Andres Bonifacio.
Andres Bonifacio: the Father of the Revolution

Indeed, the birth of our nation saw the start by Andres Bonifacio of two struggles: one for freedom from foreign control and the other from freedom of poverty.

--Gloria Macapagal, in her speech during National Heroes Day, November 30, 2002

The leading catalyst for the Philippine revolution of 1896, Andres Bonifacio has been renamed as the "Father of the Philippine Revolution". Unlike the other heroic figures of this time who were mostly Filipino priests, writers and propagandists who spoke out against Spain’s injustices, Bonifacio’s rallying cries for a bloody revolution distinguishes him from their decidedly pacifist attempts.

Revolution, Unification, and Bonifacio’s sacrifice

A Freemason, Bonifacio was the leading founder of a secret organization, the Katipunan, which aimed to start an independence movement against Spain. Along with the members of the Katipunan, Andres Bonifacio drafted the following goals of the organization, all of which largely worked towards the goal of total independence from Spain, and to achieve this goal through armed revolt (Guerrero 4). Although the Katipunan’s cause asserted for the rights of what they term as Tagalogs (known in contemporary Filipino society as inhabitants of the Northernmost islands — or simply those who speak the Tagalog language), it is evident that this was written with the intention of unifying the entire archipelago composed of more than seven thousand islands. To illustrate, one may refer to the Katipunan’s cartilla, or manifesto of sorts. Written and published in 1896, the Katipunan’s Cartilla delineated its major objectives. A translation follows:
The objective pursued by this association is noble and worthy; to unite the inner being and thoughts of the Tagalogs through binding pledge, so that through this unity they may gain the strength to destroy the dense shroud that benights the mind and to discover the Path of the mind and to discover the Path of Reason and Enlightenment. The word Tagalog means all those born in this archipelago; therefore, though Visayan, Ilocano, Pamapango, etc. they are all Tagalogs.” (qtd in Guerrero, Encarnacion & Villegas, 10)

It must be noted, then, that while the revolution was definitely mounted in response to a perceived need to rebel against oppressive Spanish rule, one of the main objectives desired by the organization was that of unification. Bonifacio was not alone in rallying for this cause; by 1896, the members of the Katipunan were estimated to have ranged between 30,000 to 400,000 members (Guerrero 4).

Admired for his active participation in the Philippine revolution — literally going out on the streets to fight Spanish soldiers in contrast to merely writing about these injustices, the symbol of Bonifacio’s heroism becomes ultimately more salient and powerful as it involved what a physical offering of one’s self. This corporeal element to his sacrifice is not lost on Filipinos. Indeed, a great part of his heroism is attributed to his martyrdom for the cause of independence: on May 1897, Bonifacio, along with his brother Procopio, were executed in the mountains of Maragondon on grounds of sedition. To this day, his memory is commemorated annually on his birthday, November 30, which is now a public non-working holiday in the Philippines and known nationwide as *Araw ni Bonifacio* (Bonifacio Day). His presence is immortalized in monuments across the Philippines, the most famous being two sculptures, one
by Napoleon Abueva and the other by Guillermo Tolentino in the city of Caloocan. Furthermore, his countenance is emblazoned on Philippine currency, the 10-peso coin.

**Bonifacio, A Common Man**

A member of the lower class who had only attained the educational equivalent of a fourth grader, Bonifacio has been re-christened in history books as the Great Plebian. One may also attribute his ability to achieve greatness in spite of his humble beginnings as reason for his appeal amongst the Filipino nation, of which 40.2% remain to be classified as significantly poor (Asian Economic News, par 12).

Indeed, a significant part of his mythical personality has to do with his ascent to greatness despite facing a life of poverty; he stands apart in stark contrast to the national hero of the Philippines, Jose Rizal, who is widely acknowledged to have been a member of the privileged elite. In the final analysis, two aspects of Andres Bonifacio factor significantly in his heroic personality: his efforts of concrete resistance against Spanish colonialism, as well as a life marred by poverty have proved to resonate with Filipinos, past and present. As Guerrero notes, “Andres Bonifacio appealed to common people, used their own language, was poor enough to know that revolutions are fought by common people who have nothing to lose” (Guerrero, 401).

It is perhaps because of this echoing, embodiment, and fighting for the struggles of a largely poor nation that the figure of Andres Bonifacio has taken on a unique degree of salience throughout this chapter of Philippine history, and continues on today.
The Problematic of Lapu-Lapu and Bonifacio: Embellished/Invented Heroes?

While the heroic figures of Lapu-Lapu and Andres Bonifacio play an essential role in the national narrative and mythology of the Philippines, like most heroes, both personas are not without controversy. Interestingly enough, the statures of both Lapu-Lapu and Bonifacio as national heroes have been consistently contested by historians who point out the lack of verifiable sources that surround their mythology. Because of this, both face the problematic of being viewed as creations of fictionists or rather, folkloric protagonists — and not, in actuality, factual figures.

The Jesuit historian Jose S. Arcilla, for instance, questions the popularly-accepted myth of Lapu-Lapu, and even expresses doubt towards his so-called act of heroism for the Philippine nation. In his analysis, he insinuates that not only is the story of Lapu-Lapu has grounded on conjecture, but he also stresses that Lapu-Lapu’s actions were the motivations of a chieftain for the good of his tribe, and not the nationalist acts of bravery by a revolutionary for his country. Thus, he cannot be heroic figure motivated by “nationalistic” intentions:

One wonders why so much has been made of the “heroic valor” of Lapu-Lapu, for paradoxically, it was Magellan’s own courage and self-confidence which destroyed him. Several military blunders explain not the heroism of the Mactan fighters but Magellan’s defeat….Moreover, no document mentions that it was Lapu-Lapu who plunged the weapon that snuffed out Magellan’s life. And even if it had been he, by his leadership, who had killed the Portuguese navigator, Lapu-Lapu did not do so in defense of the Philippines, for that nation as yet did not exist. (Arcilla, 5)
Similarly doubts cloud the myth of Bonifacio. Glenn May, in his controversial critique of Bonifacio entitled *Inventing a Hero: A Posthumous Recreation of Andres Bonifacio*, cites historians for having “consciously dissembled” and “altered evidence” pertaining to the life and times of Andres Bonifacio and in the process fallaciously ascribed heroic virtues to his persona. According to his accounts, May intended to write a biography of Andres Bonifacio but instead, he ended up writing a "bizarre story about a famous man." (1) He characterizes this as bizarre because he believes the myth of Bonifacio as hero has been "posthumously recreated... given a new personality and a childhood that may bear little resemblance to his real one" (1). As he states:

> These sparse documentary records — something that appeared to have posed formidable obstacles to the recovery of the past — actually made it easier for nationalist historians to invent the man. Unhampered by existing documents, they were freer to attribute certain ideas and personal characteristics to Bonifacio, to explain away the apparent human flaws, and, in the process, to create a suitable national symbol. (May 17)

Arcilla echoes this criticism over “invented heroes” by stating:

> So far, Philippine revolutionary analysis has yet to admit that no revolution ever occurs overnight, or that people must first attain a certain level of political maturity before they could prefer death to an unacceptable social situation. Paradoxically, the Philippine revolution could not have happened had Spain not promoted this essential political maturity. But current writing has stressed the Spanish cruelty against Filipino bravery, forgetting that both Spaniards and Filipinos were both cruel and brave, for revolutions are times of instability,
revealing both the worst and the best among the people. The point is not to say whether there are Filipino heroes or not; rather, an attempt should be made to show what makes them heroic. (Arcilla “Who is” 572)

Fabulations or not, both of these figures play irreplaceable roles in the Philippine heroic narrative. Both embody the ideals of personal sacrifice of a larger whole whether it be a tribe or the entire nation. The next two Filipino heroes discussed in this analysis are also examples of how an individual can unite a collective — however instead of the use of force, they chose a decidedly more pacifist route: words and rhetoric.

Jose Rizal and Ninoy Aquino: the Martyred Intellectuals

Jose Rizal: The Great Malayan

Largely considered to be the definitive symbol of the Filipino nation, José Protasio Rizal Mercado y Alonso Realonda was a poet, writer, nationalist and the most prominent advocate for reforms in the Philippines during the Spanish colonial era. (Poblete, 1) Aside from this, he is known as a martyr of the Philippine revolution, being taken in to trial and executed by the Spanish government in 1896.

Words as Ammunition

Decidedly more intellectual and less radical than the revolutionary Andres Bonifacio in his ideas to defend the nation, Jose Rizal was educated at the best universities both locally and abroad, and distinguished himself as an intellectual upper-class Catholic. Two of his most famous pieces, the “Noli Me Tangere” and “El Filibusterismo“, are satirical novels which focused primarily on the injustices of Spanish colonialism, particularly the hierarchical Catholic
Church in the Philippines Indirectly, his works inflamed revolutionary sentiment among certain Filipino factions; Andres Bonificao for instance, claims to have been greatly inspired by the sentiments of Jose Rizal (Ocampo, 45).

While his writings focused primarily on Spain’s unjust rule, he did not advocate the formation of an entirely independent Philippines. In Guerrero’s *The First Filipino: A Biography of Jose Rizal*, he is quoted as saying “We do not desire a separation from Spain. All that we ask is more attention, better education, a higher quality of government officials, one or two representatives in parliament, more security for ourselves and fortunes” (Guerrero 28). In distinct contrast to the Katipunan of Bonifacio, Rizal founded the *La Liga Filipina*, which was composed of a group of reformists who agreed to fight for the following: institutional reforms, equal rights for Filipinos, the inclusion of the Philippines as a province of Spain, representation in the Cortes, as well as freedom of speech and assembly (Agoncillo 63).

Despite his rather moderate stance on the topic of Philippine independence, Rizal launched vehement attacks against the misdeeds committed under the Spanish rule. Court-martialed for rebellion, sedition, and conspiracy, Rizal was tried and eventually found guilty by the Spanish courts and subsequently sentenced to death. On the 30th of December, Jose Rizal was finally executed, with his last words being that of Jesus Christ’s: "consummatum est", -- it is finished” (Coates, 3), thus contributing to his status as near-unattainable, Christ-like figure.

One final legacy he left was his poem, *Mi Ultimo Adios*, found hidden in his prison cell. This final poetic work, an ode to the nation which he loved fervently, further immortalized his martyrdom and shows how — not surprisingly — the ideals of sacrifice and martyrdom were highlighted in these translated excerpts of this piece:
Farewell, beloved Country…To you eagerly I surrender this sad and gloomy life; And were it brighter, fresher, more florid, Even then I’d give it to you, for your sake alone. In fields of battle, deliriously fighting, Others give you their lives, without doubt, without regret; The place matters not… On a plank or open field, in combat or cruel martyrdom, It’s all the same if the home or country asks.

**Sacrifice, Martyrdom, and the Formalization of a Hero through Legislation**

Undeniably, Jose Rizal was a truly illustrious mind who contributed numerous literary and political works that sparked the advent of the revolution. However, a significant part of his heroism lies in the fact that he committed the ultimate sacrifice through his martyrdom. Indeed, Rizal’s symbolic act of risking his life through his literary works (which subsequently led to his execution) played a significant role in the elevation of his stature as the Philippine national hero. None other than Benedict Anderson considers him to be one of the best exemplars of nationalist thought (Anderson, “Under Three Flags”, 17, ) in Asia, and notes that his legacy contributes to the notion of national identity in the building of nationhood.

Indeed, the legacy of Rizal lives on in contemporary society. His contributions have even inspired the formation of a religious cult called the Rizalists, which worship him as a Christ-figure (Rajaretnam 44). A vast number of monuments, street names and cities are named after him. The most famous of these monuments is the Rizal Monument (guarded twenty four hours, seven times a day by appointed honor guards), was erected at the site of his execution bearing the inscription, a quote attributed to Rizal himself: "I want to show to those who deprive people the right to love of country, that when we know how to sacrifice ourselves for our duties and convictions, death does not matter if one dies for those one loves – for his country and for others dear to him."[(taken from http://www.publicartaroundtheworld.com/Rizal_Monument.html)]
Rizal’s stature can also be attributed to the consolidated efforts of the government to sanction him as the heroic exemplar: for instance, Republic Act signed and passed under the Presidency of Ramon Magsaysay in 1956, called the Rizal Law, indicates that the study of Rizal’s life, works and writings be incorporated into the curriculum of Filipino students at the grade school, high school and college level. (Republic Act No. 1425, House Bill No. 5561, Senate Bill No. 438). Although he has never been officially legislated as “the National Hero”, it may be observed that a process of naming is associated with Rizal: he is known by numerous titles, such as “the First Filipino” and, interestingly enough, his heroism is not acknowledged within the frame of the Philippine nation: he has been referred to as Pride of the Malay Race," and "Greatest Man of the Brown Race" as well.

A more contemporary example of the Philippine hero who channels many of the elements of Jose Rizal is Benigno “Ninoy” Aquino, the former husband of Corazon Aquino (11th President of the Republic of the Philippines).

**Benigno “Ninoy” Aquino**

Ninoy Aquino was a former Philippine senator, governor, vice governor and mayor and a known for his staunch opposition to the rule of the Philippine dictator, Ferdinand Marcos. Assassinated at the Manila International Airport, upon returning home from exile in the United States, his death propelled his widow, Corazon Aquino, to the limelight. Corazon Aquino, along with several leaders of the military, religious organizations, and even members of the administration launched the People Power revolution of 1986. Aquino went on to depose Marcos and became the president of the Philippines, thus officially ending the 20-year-old Marcos regime.
Ninoy’s heroism is linked, primarily, to his tragic execution, but he was always known as an unwavering detractor of what he deemed as the corruption of the Marcos government and the injustices of Martial Law. With the government’s stronghold over its citizenry (by the seventies, the Writ of Habeas Corpus had been suspended and many critics of the government had been arrested), Aquino’s vocal criticism of the formidable Marcos regime was considered as a noble act of patriotism in a nation living in repression and fear.

**Bodily Sacrifice**

Arrested on charges of arrested and imprisoned on trumped-up charges of murder, illegal possession of firearms and subversion, Aquino’s heroic stature was first brought into the limelight by his demonstration of *bodily sacrifice*: a hunger strike. On April 4, 1975, Aquino announced that he was going on a fast to the death to protest the injustices of his military trial (Soliven 7). Many occurrences transpired — his hunger strike: an election which he had lost (unjustly, as the majority claimed), a heart attack in his prison cell, a three year exile in the United States, his arrival in the Manila and his subsequent assassination minutes after. This death eventually catapulted the People Power Revolution of 1986 which was led by his wife, Corazon Aquino, members of the Opposition and the military, and the Roman Catholic Church in the Philippines. This event was historic in the fact that it was a peaceful, bloodless revolution that succeeded in overthrowing the Marcos dictatorship. Even though he was not present during this exhibition of a unified collective, the legacy of the life he had lived, and the symbols associated with him – the “L” hand symbol, standing for Aquino’s former political party entitled *Laban* (meaning fight) and the color yellow (taken from Aquino’s favorite song, “Tie a Yellow Ribbon Round the Old Oak Tree”) to name a few – were employed by Corazon Aquino in all the protests
and rallies associated with the People Power revolution. Although he had died, his image served as the most potent symbol for this Revolution.

Rizal and Aquino: Elite Heroes in a Developing Nation?

As pointed out earlier, Rizal, while indeed has been revered for well-founded reasons (his intellectual ability, the political and historical significance of his writings, as well as his martyrdom in the name of the country), does not fit the archetype of the “common Filipino man”. Although he spoke out and wrote vehemently against the injustices committed by Spanish colonizers, it is debatable whether he truly experienced these manifestations of cruelty and oppression. While this should not tarnish his heroic prestige, this fact simply highlights what Vicente Rafael pointed out, which is that Rizal, while undoubtedly a great man, was not truly “one of us”.

Like Jose Rizal, however, Benigno Aquino was a well-educated member of the elite. One of the main reasons why his heroic persona cannot entirely be taken as a representative of the Filipino experience is that he was a child of eminent politicians and hacienderos (landlords). This is not to trivialize Aquino’s heroic status, or to belittle what he accomplished. Certain elements of his personality and background — particularly his wealthy upbringing do not lend themselves well to having Filipino society identifying completely with him. A question is raised by this fact, though: is it necessary for heroes to be exalted on a pedestal or should they be rendered accessible? Or can they be both?

The Habitus of Filipino Heroism

This section focuses primarily on the concept of heroism which has been woven into the Filipino historical narrative and how this has been inculcated into the consciousness of the
Philippine citizenry. Why is there a need for this heroic trope and how has this such as this become an integral part of the Philippine national narrative? To begin to explain this phenomenon, it is essential describe the process of inculcation that Bourdieu concerns himself with in his conceptualization of *habitus*.

I employ Pierre Bourdieu’s notion of the *habitus* to explain this integration of the heroic narrative within the fabric of Filipino experience and identity. For Bourdieu, habitus refers to dispositions that have been socially acquired and embodied; they may be patterns of thought, taste, and behavior that result from existing social structures. He explains that habitus is not a static notion, since it refers to a set of dispositions that is acquired as well as continually constituted:

I wanted to insist on the *generative capacities* of dispositions, it being understood that these are acquired, socially constituted dispositions…. I wanted to emphasize that this “creative,” active, inventive capacity was not that of a transcendental subject in the idealist tradition, but that of an active agent (Bourdieu, “Fieldwork” 13)

It should be noted that Bourdieu maintains that the social construction of reality is not carried out in a vacuum; cognitive structures are themselves structured because they have social origins. Habitus entails these social origins. From his standpoint, each agent is equipped with a habitus (one that is shaped in formative years by home culture) that bears affinity to a larger group of reference. With this in mind, I assert that there exists a kind of habitus of heroism in the Philippines: *a predisposition to rely upon the idea of the heroic as bastions of hope and harbingers of unification*. Filipino citizens are situated within this existing habitus—a habitus inculcated by institutions such as the government, the education sector and the media-- and are
called to continually reconstruct a narrative of heroism which sustains it.

In what ways, then, are these dispositions toward a discourse of Filipino heroism cultivated and maintained within Philippine society? This occurs over time, and through a subtle process of inculcation. Bourdieu says that “Agents to some extent fall into the practice that is theirs rather than freely choosing it or being impelled into it by mechanical constraints” (Bourdieu, The Interest of the Sociologist” 90). To recall Billig, the process by which one “falls” into this habitus may be even banal.

The process of inculcation, as this study argues, begins by the dispersal of information of these heroes through various institutions, most notably the government and the educational system. This is then strengthened by various practices such as the integration of the study of the lives of heroes in the history lessons as part of the national curriculum, such as Republic Act 1425. Furthermore, it is fortified by these heroes’ posthumous visibility through the physical manifestations of their likenesses in Philippine currency and in monuments and statues. This myth is built up through the celebration and commemoration of their lives by granting special holidays attached to their names. Although all of the heroes discussed in this section have their own days of commemoration in the national calendar, a special day that honors all of the country’s heroes is celebrated on the 4th Monday of August, which is known as Araw ng Mga Bayani (National Heroes Day).

Another important consideration is that this is reinforced by government efforts to formally proclaim the heroic statures of these men and women, such as the formation of the Philippine National Heroes Committee formed in 1993 during the administration of the 12th President of the Philippine Republic, Fidel Ramos. This Committee was formed in order “study, evaluate and recommend Filipino national heroes to recognize their heroic character and
remarkable achievements for the country” (Reference and Research Bureau Legislative Research Service, House of Congress). Not only does this show an effort to officially name heroes, but it shows a consolidated push to enumerate what are considered to be virtues worthy of a Filipino hero and to provide some semblance of a national “heroic standard”. Here are some choice examples drafted by the Committee in 1993:

a. Heroes are those who have a concept of nation and thereafter aspire and struggle for the nation’s freedom.

b. Heroes are those who define and contribute to a system or life of freedom and order for a nation.

c. Heroes are those who contribute to the quality of life and destiny of a nation.

In 1995, however, the following criteria were added to the define the characteristics of the heroic Filipino:

1. A hero is part of the people’s expression. But the process of a people’s internalization of a hero’s life and works takes time, with the youth forming a part of the internalization.

2. A hero thinks of the future, especially the future generations.

3. The choice of a hero involves not only the recounting of an episode or events in history, but of the entire process that made this particular person a hero.


Although this was never ratified, it brings to light that the State has made several formalized efforts to define the notion of the hero in their quest to find those who sure deemed
worthy to bear this honor. What Makolkin refers to as the heroic biography (and what I identify as the nation’s narrative of heroism) “not only worships heroes, but popularizes dominant beliefs generated in society. Heroes are praised in the light of prevalent societal views, or heroic discourse passes through the mass censorship of the community and produces popular beliefs and popular myths….it establishes some emotional stability within the hero-worshipping community and offers support to the group” (Makolkin 17). As shown from these standards of the National Heroes Committee, it may be gleaned that these ideals include the concepts of struggle for the good of the nation and for the succeeding generations to come. This is further indicative that one of the “dominant beliefs generated in society”, as Makolkin states, are themes of selflessness and self-sacrifice for the greater collective.

Furthermore, with the myth of the hero comes a construction of national identity and selfhood as well. The notion of the hero is also presented as a hopeful challenge to Filipinos to become future heroes are deeply entrenched in present Philippine society. As Carlos Romulo says in one of the most famous Filipino speeches to date, to be Filipino is to be a hero:

I am a Filipino – inheritor of a glorious past, hostage to the uncertain future. I am a Filipino. In my blood runs the immortal seed of heroes – seed that flowered down the centuries in deeds of courage and defiance. That seed is immortal. It is the self-same seed that flowered in the heart of Jose Rizal that morning in Bagumbayan when a volley of shots put an end to all that was mortal of him and made his spirit deathless forever… The seed I bear within me is an immortal seed. It is the mark of my manhood, the symbol of my dignity as a human being. It is the insigne of my race. (Romulo 14)
The quoted lines of this famous literary piece articulate a challenge that is posed to the common, ordinary Filipino to be heroic as well. In equating heroism with Filipino heritage, Romulo brings to light the idea that heroism is not merely something to be aspired for but rather, is a birthright to be fulfilled. Past heroes – Lapu-Lapu, Bonifacio, Rizal and Aquino to name the figures discussed in this analysis – serve as exemplars of this “inheritance”, and as models of character for which modern day heroes such as Manny Pacquiao are expected to emulate.

While Makolkin presents the heroic discourse as passing through “mass censorship” in order to produce dominant heroic myths, perhaps this is not so much the case in the Philippines. I assert that rather, this discourse is constructed by highlighting the aspects of a present day hero such as Pacquiao that conforms to a pre-established standard set by past heroes. As a fighter, one who goes in the ring to fight for the nation, Pacquiao exhibits the ideals of suffering and self-sacrifice exemplified by past heroes in Filipino history. Thus, these ideals are highlighted by those institutions that continue this narrative --- the government, in their attempts to name him as hero, and the media, in their continual construction of Pacquiao’s heroic persona, discussed in Chapter V.

What distinguishes the modern day phenomenon of Pacquiao from these past heroes, however? The potency of Pacquiao’s symbol may be attributed to the fact that he addresses the some of the deficiencies attributed to past heroes. Unlike the doubts clouding the authenticity of the two revolutionary heroes discussed (Lapu-Lapu and Bonifacio), Pacquiao as a modern day hero — one who Filipino viewers tune into during his boxing matches – serves as a tangible and incontestably genuine example of self-sacrifice for the public. His heroism as a fighter, thus, is a phenomenon that is immediately perceived and experienced by the public and thus cannot be doubted. Similarly, unlike the elite figures of Rizal and Aquino, Pacquiao’s past, being rooted in
poverty and hardship, is a trope that resonates with the citizenry of a developing nation such as the Philippines. Pacquiao then, is all the more “authentic” as a hero and thus, is undeniably powerful as a symbol for the nation.

Chapter V of this thesis focuses on the case study of the press coverage of Manny Pacquiao’s December 2008 bout. In presenting how the media constructs and depicts a public personality such as Manny Pacquiao by elevating him to heroic status, I explore contemporary Filipino media as it not only demonstrates a habitus of heroism, but it plays an integral role in the construction of this heroic discourse that is fundamental to the building of nationhood. The media plays an integral role in the manifestation, as well as the continued inculcation of this habitus of heroism in the present-day Philippines.
CHAPTER V: REALMS OF REPRESENTATION: SYMBOLS & MANNY PACQUIAO

"There are two things this country is hungry for: a fighter and a hero. In Manny we have both, in a time when we have been down."

—Filipino journalist Ronnie Nathanielsz

Symbols, because of their indirect but potent way of calling individuals into national citizens, are employed in the inculcation of nationalist dispositions. This analysis explores how the various use of symbols function in perpetuating the heroic narrative, the construction of the heroic figure of Manny Pacquiao and ultimately, in the formation of an imagined ringside community.

Bourdieu and Symbolic Power

One of the great powers of the symbolic is in its capability to stimulate sentiments of — to recall Benedict Anderson – belonging to a larger and yet imperceptible entity. Indeed, the concept of the symbol is one that plays an important role in Bourdieu’s characterization of the habitus. In his analysis of social space and symbolic power, Bourdieu states that: “symbolic power, in this sense, is a power of "world-making."” (Bourdieu, “Language and Symbolic”, 22).

By regarding symbolic power as constitutive in its faculty to “make worlds”, Bourdieu contends that its distinctive faculty is its ability to produce and maintain the formation of groups and communities. Bourdieu considers the prerequisite for symbolic power to exist is the existence of symbolic capital, which is the “power to impose upon other minds a vision, old or new of social authority acquired in previous struggles” (Bourdieu, “Language and Symbolic” 23).
These symbols employed in constructing the heroic persona of Manny Pacquiao (while they may not necessarily “impose” a vision upon the Filipino collective), call attention and simultaneously fortify the heroic myth extant in past Philippine historical narrative, as discussed in the previous chapter. Furthermore, since Bourdieu points out that “symbolic efficacy depends on the degree to which the vision proposed is founded in reality. (23)”, the construction of unified collective, then, is dependent on the extent to which Pacquiao’s heroic attributes are indeed grounded in reality. One may say that the continued reportage of his exploits in the boxing ring and the reiteration of his triumphs, serves as a tangible reminder of the reality that he represents the nation with the use of his fists, and more often than not, emerges triumphant.

Before I go on to the actual textual analysis, I further illustrate the role of the symbolic in the construction of Pacquiao’s personality by citing two important symbols that are used to create and foster national identity as well as a ringside community during the actual boxing matches of Pacquiao: the use of flags and anthems.

**Symbols: Flags and Anthems within the Ring**

“The symbols involved in sport — national flags, ethnic and regional emblems, songs and anthems chanted...are all evidence of the concretization of identity within the sporting arena.” (Maguire, 144)

One of the main parallels between sport and national identity is that they are both maintained by ritual and symbolism. Sport has grown to be so much more than physical activity; sustained by an intersection of different institutions, a huge part of sport is its spectacular nature. In his work *On Television and Journalism*, Pierre Bourdieu asserts that all sporting events are produced two separate times; the first occasion in the stadium and the second time, on the television screen (although one may argue that this spectacle can be reproduced both in print and
online, in many different incarnations). He goes on to say that “sport is a product — a spectacle, produced by professionals for consumption by the masses” (456).

While sport indeed may be characterized as a “product for the masses”, what is undeniable is that it serves a national purpose, one that Bourdieu acknowledges as well, as he considers sports competitions to be a “measure of national strength, and hence a political objective” (433). The rituals involved within the boxing arena almost always involve what Michael Billig refers to as flagging, or the reminding of nationhood (8) — which are also symbols. By the use of these rituals and symbols, Filipinos are indirectly reminded not only of their national identity but also of their collective identity as Filipino people. This flagging of Filipino national identity is sustained through the use of various symbols that are consistently employed before, during, and after Manny Pacquiao’s matches, for both the stadium audience and the national audience experiencing it. Spectators then are positioned as both witnesses and participants in a national phenomenon.

The Flag as a Symbol

The symbol of the flag provides a resounding statement of national identity. As modern totems, Cerulo considers flags as “signs that bear a special relationship to the nations they represent, distinguishing them from one another and reaffirming their identity boundaries”(Cerulo, 244). To view a boxing match is to witness a ubiquity of flags, both waved and unwaved — employed to prompt the spectators of their own individual national identities, thus fostering bonds among co-citizens and stirring feelings of solidarity with each other, as well as identification with the boxer.
The Philippine flag figures quite prominently during every Manny Pacquiao match, and is displayed in several ways. Pacquiao employs this flag as a signification of his allegiance. He usually drapes it over his body during the official fight announcements or weigh-ins. During the national anthem that is sung before the match, the flag is waved continuously by designated flag bearers, and Pacquiao himself has been known to carry the flag after a victorious fight. Manny’s identity as “bearer of the flag” is not restricted to within the boxing ring, however: during the Beijing Olympics, he was chosen to lead the Filipino athletes during the opening ceremony, regardless of the fact that he did not even compete in the games.

The Philippine flag is a pervasive sight from the side of the actual audience during the boxing match as well, and contributes to what Billig terms as a “world of waved flags” (124). As is usually the case with all fans, Filipino fans carry individual flags or paint them on their faces as a sign of homage to the nation as well as an expression of support towards Manny Pacquiao.

Perhaps what is most important is the shared waving of a multitude of flags during the homecoming that occurs after each match Pacquiao comes from. This communal waving serves as a form of welcoming and solidarity, which is a reminder of a common identity as much as it is a sign of tribute.

The Symbol of Song and Anthem

“National anthems…flag the nation as a nation among nations, as flags themselves do.” (Billig 86)

The playing and singing of a national anthem before sporting events has been a standard practice all over the world and serves as an implicit prompt of nationhood. In the boxing context,
the fight between two boxers is preceded by both fighters’ national anthems, as a reminder of the two nations that come into contact in the ring.

The importance of the national anthem has extended outside the boxing ring and has been utilized in direct conjunction with the public persona of Manny Pacquiao. One of Manny Pacquiao’s most famous commercials for the brand Nike is composed of snippets of him fighting various boxers and is set to the somber tone of a child humming the Philippine national anthem. It ends simply, with only the last words of the anthem being sung: ang mamatay ng dahl sa yo (which is roughly translated as “To die for you.”)

The choice to give salience to these words alone echoes Anderson’s sentiment when he states: “Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings” (Anderson 6). This shows not only an acknowledgment of Manny Pacquiao’s Filipino nationality or a depiction of his sense of martyrdom and sacrifice, since death in the boxing ring is actually a real possibility. Indeed, while this commercial serves the capitalist interest of selling Nike products, the national anthem sung in the background serves as a call to Filipinos to emulate his example, since like Manny, they share the allegiance to the Philippine flag, anthem and nation.

Pacquiao has gone beyond the boxing ring to explore a singing career in the Philippines. His hit song, “Para sa ‘Yo ang Laban na To” (This fight is for You), is indicative of many of the themes that are associated with the Filipino hero, primarily that of dying or suffering for the nation. This verse taken from the song exemplifies this essential theme:

Kahit buhay ko’y itataya sa ‘yo/
ipagtatanggol kita gamit ay aking kamao
ito ang tanging paraan na naisip ko
upang magkaisa kapwa ko... Pilipino

(translation:
I will offer even my life/
I will defend you through the use of my fists
This is the only way I can think of
to unite my brothers and sisters, my fellow Filipinos.)

Clearly, the main sentiment that pervades this piece is a genuine willingness to suffer and face the possibility of death for the good of the nation. This theme of self-sacrifice and martyrdom taps into the established standard of the Filipino heroic narrative, as exemplified by past heroes discussed in Chapter IV. Simultaneously, however, his suffering is framed as a noble act because it is considered to be a catalyst for bringing together a nation of dispersed identities.

Furthermore, to employ Billig’s notion of deixis, one may see that use of pronouns throughout the song is not incidental. Two constructions of identities are at work here: While this song presents the ideal of a unified collective — a harmonious Filipino nation where all are brothers and sisters, it also simultaneously constructs Pacquiao as a heroic figure: the Ultimate “I” that will unify a divided nation. This use of homeland deixis is particularly apparent in the media’s construction of Pacquiao and the Filipino collective, as shown by the next portion of this analysis.

Texts: The Symbol of Manny in the Press

Bourdieu regards sport as being conceived as a training of courage and manliness, ‘forming the character’ and inculcating the ‘will to win’ which is the mark of a true leader, but a will to win within the rules.” (430) As an example of sheer mastery within the realm of sport,
Pacquiao has been seen to embody these characteristics Bourdieu delineates—courage, manliness, and an exemplar of a well-formed character. Manny Pacquiao is, indeed, regarded as a modern-day Filipino hero, both by Philippine society and the Philippine media. There is truly no ambiguity as to how Pacquiao is constructed through the press. During the coverage of the de la Hoya Pacquiao match, certain articles explicitly bestowed upon him the title of “hero” and several incarnations of the word, as exemplified by these excerpts from *The Philippine Star*:

A truly *exemplary sportsman and a genuine sports hero,*” (“Chiz: Manny Win”)

“A *sports hero, the best fighter in the world today.*”

(Beltran, par. 2)

“…all set for a *hero’s welcome* for People’s champ” (Santos, par. 1)

“No doubt, Pacquiao is a *modern-day national hero*, an inspiration and a symbol of unity for all Filipinos. “(Henson, par. 22)

Manny Pacquiao is in the threshold of transcending borders to become a global *icon* (Henson, par. 1)

However, this analysis asserts that the press operates on this process of hero construction in varied (i.e. less explicit) ways, as well. These themes contributing to the all-around heroic persona of Pacquiao are as follows: Manny the Great Unifier, Manny the Fighter, Manny the Religious Figure and lastly, Manny the Government-Sponsored Hero. These heroic tropes, as well as the frames from which they are situated in, are discussed below.

**THEME I: Naming Pacquiao as The Great Unifier**

As explained earlier, Billig maintains that the reproduction of community is systematically—and incrementally—built through mundane activities (hence his term “banal
nationalism). One of the main examples that he highlights is the power of pronoun usage in political discourse (specifically the use of Us. and Them):

It embraces a complex set of themes about ‘us’, our homeland’, nations’ (‘ours’ and ‘theirs’), ‘the world’, as well as the morality of national duty and honor. Moreover, these themes are widely diffused as common sense. It is not the common sense of a particular nation, but this common sense is international, to be found in the nations of the so-called world order (Billig 4).

These embodied social habits—of language and flag-waving, for instance—are not given enough attention to precisely because of their seemingly innocuous banality. In Bourdeuian terms, they have become a force of habit; manifestations of the nationalist habitus. Brown (160) points out that media texts play an essential role in the reproduction of these nationalist ideas, and operate on this banality. This reminder of an inclusive national identity through the simple use of pronouns is employed.

Similarly, in this analysis, special attention is given to deictic markers—pronouns such as ours against theirs or us versus them, which are instances of Billig’s “waved flags” in the midst of sport news discourse, as they subtly remind the reader of his identity not merely as a boxing spectator but as a citizen of the Philippine nation. In the articles published directly after Pacquiao-de la Hoya boxing match, these pronouns were utilized not necessarily with the intention of contrasting the Philippines with the United States (the two nations involved in the match) but rather, to construct a vision of a unified Philippines. As The Manila Standard recalls the event a day after the bout, it depicts an almost utopian vision of unity: “For a few hours yesterday, we were one nation, united in mind, in spirit and in pride.” (Vida, par 51)
This quote performs a twofold objective: first, it serves as a reminder of the implied reader’s nationality—a nationality which s/he shares with similar readers, and secondly, it evokes the immediate effect Pacquiao’s match had on bringing together a nation of loyal viewers.

In this depiction of ringside community, The Manila Standard not only refers to the implied reader/Filipino national, but it directly addresses Manny himself through direct address. Indeed, what is interesting in this context is that the pronouns “them” and “they” do not seem to refer to the opponent nor of his nation, but rather to those who do not have faith in his boxing heroism:

Keep surprising **them**, Manny. Goliath isn’t just the boxers **they** throw against you—it’s everyone who doesn’t believe that a Filipino can be a world-beater and an all-time great. (Robles, par 6)

A distinct process of othering is employed by the use of “they” in this example. By delineating the “they” in this text, there is an implication that the unmentioned “we” refers to the members of a nation who believe in his capabilities and will be behind their hero. The “they” here is framed not only as being deviant doubters, or even unpatriotic citizens who do not believe that a Filipino may achieve heroic status. It is precisely the absence of the explicit reference to a unified “we” that this symbol of an integrated community becomes more potent.

Other articles explicitly affirm this notion of a unified “we” in faithful support of Pacquiao, however. Oftentimes, direct comparisons towards the Philippine nation are employed. The Star, in its post-fight analysis, states that: “as the pattern continued, magnificently woven by the smaller fighter, **our** fighter, fighting his best fight ever, just right and in time for his greatest
challenge, the jubilation rose to a crescendo well before the white flag was offered.” (Yuson, par. 4)

It is interesting to note that these articles similarly show that Pacquiao himself plays an important role in elevating himself to the heroic. Much like the rhetoric of news and the techniques in which journalists frame his triumph as the triumph of the Ordinary Filipino, he employs this same concept of homeland deixis. This is exemplified by the following quote from the *Philippine Daily Inquirer*:

> Let’s think about how we can unite first, how we can progress and move the nation forward… Like what I always say, this victory is not mine alone, it is for *every Filipino*. (Guinto, par. 5)

So does the President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, who presents a parallel between the boxer and the Filipino nation, and uses his triumph as a call to citizens towards agency:

> “His boxing feat is testament to the spirit of the Filipino, (which is) our resiliency and strength to face the challenges that come our way… We must as a nation work together as Team Philippines to face the challenges of the world economic downturn.” (Romero, par 7)

As seen by most of these articles, a bulk of the examples contain references to the collective (an “us” or “we”) instead of the presence of an opponent or adversary (a “them” or “they”). What could this signify? This study asserts that the media does not focus on the naturally warlike nature of the sport (or boxing, in particular) but rather chooses to give prominence to the symbol of unification, a unification that is resultant of the Pacquiao. What Bourdieu stresses in his conceptualization of habitus — a *socialized subjectivity* — is apparent in this example. The phenomenon of the ringside community which is formed during Pacquiao’s
matches exemplifies the tension between subjectivity and agency that Bourdieu explicates. In calling attention to the “we”—the collective identity formed by Manny Pacquiao’s matches, as well as Filipino society’s devotion to his personality is precisely emblematic of this dialectic of structure/agency that Bourdieu wishes to present in his discussion of *habitus*.

**The Frame: a Nation in need for Unification**

Effort is also made to demonstrate how Pacquiao brings together a nation such as the Philippines, which is divided in more ways than one. Geographically, it is composed of more than 7,000 separate islands. Linguistically, it has more than 80 languages, clashes have been reported in the Southern Philippines, and political rifts are intensifying due to a steady opposition to the present administration. In the reportage of his match against De la Hoya, Pacquiao was indeed framed as a Great Unifier to a divided people looking for a source of hope.

Newspapers directly frame his heroism within the context of a divided and suffering collective, in order to make the idea of a ringside community more salient. *The Manila Standard* reported that “(Pacquiao’s)... achievements in the ring through the years are a beacon of hope for millions of Filipinos mired in a sense of hopelessness. Pacquiao helped *us* all forget our individual and collective pain and helped *us* rejoice like never before. (Nathanielsz, par. 3)

Aside from this, other newspapers make it a point to directly remind their readers of the uniquely integrative effect Manny Pacquiao has in creating a sense of peace and community—or, at least, a marked lack of conflict—during his fights. This reminding is something that occurs even days before the match itself, as exemplified by *The Philippine Star*, which stresses that “the entire nation pauses to watch his fights” (AP, par. 5). This sentiment is also echoed by the *Manila Standard*, which asserts that “Everything grinds to a halt during live broadcasts of his fights” (AFP, par 2).
Thus, by positing him as an established unifier of a nation in need of integration, a preemption of events is involved in anticipation of his fight, as well. This is shown in the following excerpts of *The Manila Standard* as well, which contain an assertion that the idea of a united collective is not only an expectation, but perhaps, the *responsibility* of every Filipino as well:

“The entire nation will come to a stop tomorrow morning when our very own Manny Pacquiao faces the golden boy Oscar de la Hoya.” (Suntay, par. 1)

After the bout, his triumph was still framed within the context of a nation in need of peace. The *Philippine Daily Inquirer* calls attention to his unique ability to pacify –albeit temporarily--a nation that beset by crime and internal conflict as seen by these choice excerpts;

“The Armed Forces of the Philippines, fighting 2 local insurgencies and sporadic threats from terror attacks in Mindanao, experienced jubilant peace….the crime rate in the metropolis was zero during the fight. According to Bartolome, “crime incidents dipped significantly during previous fights of Manny Pacquiao, and some areas including Metro Manila have even recorded zero crime. He attributed this to everyone being glued to their TV sets to watch the fight.” (Carvajal, par.5)

There may appear to be a certain irony at present here, for how can a fighter bring about peace? The next section will attempt to explain how news articles deal with this by acknowledging Pacquiao’s ferocity, and at the same time, framing him as a particular type of fighter: an underdog/David versus Goliath.

**THEME II: Naming Manny the Fighter**

Indeed, Manny Pacquiao cannot get past the nature of his profession. As stated earlier, it is perhaps the metaphor of war, or of soldiers going to battle that is one of the most common
figurative devices employed in sports narratives.

Beard notes that (34) these war metaphors in sports news reportage have been so embedded in news discourse that one fails to be cognizant of this direct comparison to warfare. In the description of the fighting in the ring in full detail, however—calling attention to the violence inflicted upon each other’s bodies by both boxers—sports narratives do not merely provide readers with a vicarious experience of aggressive energies. Similarly, in his brief analysis of the language of war in the sports pages of contemporary British papers, Billig points out,

“personal sacrifice in the cause of the nation was applauded on the sports pages. An athlete (described as a reluctant hero’ and male, of course) is reported as saying “when your country needs you…how can you say No” (Mail). Indeed, one may say that an indirect flagging comes into play in this process: fighting in the ring becomes equivalent to fighting for one’s nation. (Billig, 124)

True, the undoubtedly violent nature of the sport of boxing must be acknowledged; and this lends itself to the metaphor of two nations in combat. This violence is not one of brute force, however. Bourdieu points out that to understand the symbolic power of sport to the nation, one must look at the philosophy that it represents:

Sport is conceived as a training of courage and manliness, ‘forming the character’ and inculcating the ‘will to win’ which is the mark of a true leader, but a will to win within the rules.” (360)

As the press call attention to the bodily toll it can take upon each boxer, combat-like sports such as boxing can also be reported in order to highlight the notion of sacrifice, which as discussed earlier, is a trope commonly found in the past heroes of Philippine history. This notion
of offering one’s life is not only expected of Filipino heroes but of ordinary citizens as well: for instance, this very notion is explicitly stated in the concluding of the Philippine national anthem highlight the importance of sacrifice for the nation: ang mamatay ng dahil sa yo (roughly translated as, “to die for your will”). Thus, to answer Bourdieu, sports (and its reportage and framing) does not merely inculcate the “will to win” but it also stresses the “will to be heroic”.

In light of this, a second thematic grouping that may be attributed to the construction of the heroic Pacquiao, which is the considerable attention to his physical strength and capacity to fight ferociously in the ring for the sake of a title (and by association, for the sake of his nation). In the texts used for this analysis, most of the aggressive language –particularly verbs pertaining to combat, and adjectives describing the damage inflicted in the boxing ring were used only directly after the match, however.

Examples of the use of such language, framing Pacquiao as the relentless aggressor—someone who hammers, pounds and punches, for instance—are as follows:

“Pacquiao hammers De la Hoya” (Morella, par 4)

“Flaunting tremendous punching power and blinding hand speed, Pacquiao pummeled Oscar De La Hoya to submission” (Ochoa, par 6)

“Pacquiao landing punch after punch while De La Hoya chased after him, trying to catch him with a big punch. Pacquiao was winning big even before the seventh round, when he was pounding De La Hoya against the ropes in his corner and catching him with huge shots that knocked him across the ring. “ (Tupas par. 10)

“…The devastating mauling he administered on Oscar…all over the ring for eight wickedly lopsided rounds. Pacquiao had de la hoya all softened up for the kill.” (Ochoa par. 3)
Other articles described in full detail the damage he inflicted upon co-fighter Oscar de La Hoya:

(De la Hoya)… **took a beating** from a unrelenting pound-for-pound champion who seemed intent at squeezing every drop of greatness out of the 35-year-old legend’s body. Pacquiao started and ended the eighth round with a barrage of power punches that has made him **one of the most feared predators** in the sport and all it took was a look at the puffed-up face of boxing’s long-time poster boy to know that it was time to wave the white flag. (Ochoa par. 4)

In the end, it was **the shell of De La Hoya, with his left eye swollen**, who retired on his stool at the end of the eighth round… (Manila Standard, par. 9)

A question may be asked at this point: with such descriptive accounts of the battering Pacquiao delivered to his opponent, doesn’t he come off as a paragon of brutality, a violent force attacking the helpless Mexican-American fighter? How does a “most-feared predator” who administers “maulings” be viewed as a hero? Indeed, initially it seems as if de la Hoya—in his “waving the white flag”, as one journalist put, comes off as a sympathetic survivor of a bloody battle. However, despite these hyperbolic and rather savage metaphors, much is also done by the press to establish and justify that the “right side” had triumphed. Therefore, if the match between Pacquiao and De la Hoya were indeed a war what kind of soldier is Manny? And what kind of war is being fought?

**Naming Manny as the Fighting David**

It should be established that the pre-match speculations of most journalists in the press had already framed de la Hoya as a sure victor, directly contrasting de La Hoya’s advantages with Pacquiao’s weaknesses. From early on, the battle was framed as a fight between
an underdog (in terms of weight, height, and reach) and a seasoned—not to mention a physically larger--champion:

The disparity of the guaranteed purses of Manny Pacquiao and Oscar de la Hoya is even wider than the discrepancy in the height and reach of the 2 fighters.

(Nathanielsz, par 10)

De La Hoya still towered over Pacquiao when the two met in the final pre-fight press (Ochoa, par. 12)

As soon as Pacquiao emerged the victor, his triumph was, as reported by the press, indeed of Biblical proportions. A bulk of the articles specifically utilized this discrepancy in size between the two fighters as a source of inspiration, and in the process, made the symbol of Pacquiao even more potent. Naming him as the unlikely, diminutive boxer fighting against an established (not to mention first-world) fighter, simply fortified the metaphor of Pacquiao as the nation—or rather, the Filipino people. As shown by these excerpts, the comparison to David, the lowly shepherd who defeated the mighty giant Goliath was employed time and again:

Manny Pacquiao dominated his bigger and more famous opponent from the opening bell Saturday night (Sunday morning in Manila), giving Oscar De La Hoya such a beating he declined to come out of his corner after the eighth round (AP, par 1).

Pacquiao bucked the odds and pundits, who were almost one in saying that De la Hoya was too big and too strong for Pacquiao because conventional wisdom held that a good big man will always beat a good small man. (Vidal, par 8)

The Philippine Daily Inquirer describes him as “An underdog to bookies and matchmakers abroad, he was already a winner to all Filipinos. (Guinto). They also report the
anxieties of Pacquiao’s mother, Dionisia Pacquiao, who “admitted that she was nervous because
she said she saw how big De la Hoya was. “ (‘Pacquiao Mom continues’) — but in the end, what
remained to be a “miraculous” feat was the fact that he had “he bucked the odds and defeated de
la Hoya’s edge in height, heft, and experience. (Sarmienta, par 5)

In relating his experience to President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, Manny Pacquiao
himself makes the parallel between David and himself, as reported in an article by The
Philippine Star:

“Nine weeks, for nine weeks I studied what I should do for my training and I
made a lot of sacrifices and prayers,” Pacquiao told Mrs. Arroyo. “It was like
David and Goliath.”(Beltran, par 26)

The Frame: An Underdog Nation/ A Nation of Davids

How come the metaphor of David and Goliath—or similarly, the theme of the underdog
was one that was exploited by the print and online media, and why did it particularly resonate
among the Filipino public? One may further take the metaphor of David and Goliath to be
meaningful to the Philippines, as it is a developing nation trying to establish itself among a
nation of more dominant powers. As pointed out earlier, with an overwhelming majority of its
citizenry lower middle class, the symbol of Pacquiao shows that through hard work and
determination, the Filipino may achieve victory, no matter how great the odds are against him or
her. For contributing to this underdog/David persona is the narrative of Pacquiao’s humble
beginnings—and The Manila Standard utilizes this in their depiction of the boxer in a succession
of articles:
Pacquiao, who broke away from the bondage of his childhood to carve a name for himself and to redeem a country’s reputation internationally. (Nathanielsz, par. I)

Manny, who broke away from the shackles of his childhood poverty, sent a message to all his countrymen that with grim determination, sacrifice and hard work there is nothing the Filipino cannot achieve (Nathanielsz)

By utilizing this narrative of Pacquiao’s destitute past and juxtaposing it with his present successes, he serves as a symbol of hope for the average Filipino who has been a victim of poverty:

People… will never accept that a hardly literate Third World boxer rose from poverty and obscurity to become the best in the world at what he does, bar none. (Robles, par. 8)

The Philippine Star hails Manny’s excellence in the ring and frames his success as the Filipino’s ability to overcoming a life rife with poverty. This is then paralleled this to the economy of the Philippine nation. In doing so, this idea of the “common man”, one who has tasted poverty and hardship is added on to the Pacquiao persona not only makes him a more relatable hero, but it inspires those can relate to his experience:

Pacquiao’s fighting spirit, his disciplined training, his bold dreams, his overcoming of incredible odds throughout his poverty-stricken youth up to his latest match — all these reflect the resilience and boundless positive growth potential of our Philippine economy. (Flores, par. 6)

Thus, it may be said that while the Philippine press did not shy away from descriptions of the physical battery Pacquiao inflicted upon his opponent, his heroic stature was still maintained
because of themes employed in the construction of his persona, namely the symbol of the underdog/ David. This symbol was reinforced by the constant reiteration of his small stature in contrast to De la Hoya’s imposing build, as well as his humble beginnings. And while Pacquiao was indeed a relentless, aggressive fighter who was a force to be reckoned with in the boxing ring, news reports also framed his triumph as a tangible manifestation of a underestimated hero who defied the odds that were against him. This metaphor of a downtrodden figure reaching a hard-earned victory was, and continues to be, utilized by Filipino journalists in their efforts to create parallelisms between Pacquiao the fighter and the Philippine nation. Indeed, in establishing that Pacquiao was an unlikely but well-deserved hero, these reports indirectly flag the Filipino nation as a David amidst a nation of Goliaths.

It is also perhaps, of no coincidence to attribute some amount of the cogency of the Biblical metaphor of David versus Goliath to the fact that the Philippine nation is also devoutly Christian. Thus, in spite of the fact that a battle of sorts took place on December 7, 2008, this was a battle that had religious overtones, as well. Filipino journalist Krip Yuson describes the juxtaposition of war and the religious of the occasion by calling attention to the fact that the match occurred within the time frame of two historical events:

“One might say in the sheer wildness of the moment that its unexpected quality was Pearl Harbor and the Immaculate Conception rolled into one.” (Yuson. par. 15)

This religious aspect to the reportage of these fights is one of the themes that will be explored in the next portion of this analysis. For aside from the image of Manny Pacquiao as a fighter, is the symbol of himself as the embodiment of religious devotion and benevolent heroism.
THEME III: Manny the Religious Figure

It may be argued that perhaps the most salient image of Manny Pacquiao during the December 7 bout was not of him persistently battering de la Hoya but rather, as the Philippine Daily Inquirer put it, the sight of “an elated Pacquiao (who) dropped to his knees in a neutral corner in a celebratory prayer.”

The following articles from *The Philippine Daily Inquirer* establish the importance of prayer and religion in the Philippines, and the role it played during the match. These anecdotes relating Pacquiao’s demonstrative faith in God before the match frames the battle — and it’s eventual outcome -- between de La Hoya and Pacquiao as “God’s doing”:

“Manny P. Saturday *said he was leaving his fate to God*…“Diyos ang bahala, kakampi ako ng Diyos, (God will take care of it, God is with me) “It would indeed be a world wonder if Manny wins. It would be triumph of honesty and faith in God, Pinol said. “ (Trinidad. par 4)

Pacquiao’s mother *continues to pray* that he will prevail (no author cited,

“Pacquiao Mom” par 2)

These scenes of devotion and prayer, once viewed in retrospect after the match, seem to convey the message that the triumph of the Filipino is a triumph bestowed upon by God, thus elevating Pacquiao’s symbolic status to move far and beyond the confines of sports or even on the national level, but rather, on the religious plane as well. Another article from the same paper employs a different tactic in depicting the unique role of religion in the Pacquiao bout, as recalls the notion of homeland deixis as discussed earlier:
Let us all whisper a prayer that he will remain the same decent, humble young man who has been embraced by a nation and people desperately searching for a hero and an icon in a sport we all love with a passion. (Nathanielsz, par. 12)

The Philippine Star also contained similar assertions regarding Pacquiao as a religious exemplar for the churchgoing Filipino citizenry to look up to and emulate. One article contains a quote from Deogracias Iniguez, the public affairs chairman of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines: “We rejoice with the rest of Filipinos. We hope this will inspire us to fight the present evils we face as a nation”. (Romero, par 6) This quote is emblematic of the different thematic elements that can be extrapolated from the religious slant of the press reportage after the Pacquiao-De la Hoya bout. The first of these is, as mentioned earlier, the assertion that the “good” side had won, since Pacquiao’s triumph is used as a parallel to Filipino nation’s struggle against evil. Pacquiao himself contributes to this idea of the sanctified nature of his feat against the Mexican- American De la Hoya, as illustrated by another quote from a different article in the same paper: “…he knew that “God’s with me when I entered the ring.”(Beltran, par 6)

The Frame: a Religious Country

Indeed, articles regarding this fight were also structured around the theme of religion. For one to understand this thematic element in the press’ construction of Manny’s heroism, it is essential to provide a brief background of the unique role Christianity (particularly Roman Catholicism) has played in Philippine history, as well as in the lives of present day Filipinos. Christianity, a seed that was planted by Spanish colonizers since the sixteenth century, has taken root and flourished prosperously throughout the Philippines. To date, more than 90 percent of the country identify themselves as Christians, with 85 percent of this statistic associated with the Roman Catholic Church. (Jenkins 91).
As Jarvie explains in *Sport and Leisure in Social thought*, “Habitus is a concept that allows the researcher to outflank the conceptual knots of individual and society, agency and structure, and nature versus nurture. For Bourdieu, habitus refers to a set of dispositions that are created and reformulated in the unification of objective structures and personal history. (Jarvie, 190) One may relate this to the fact that for the Philippine nation, religion plays a significant part in this shared and personal history—and thus, an integral part of its habitus. It is not only a characteristic of Filipinos to be religious, but with this religiosity comes an implied *responsibility* as well, that is, a responsibility to maintain this tradition of religious devotion. This fidelity to the Roman Catholic Church has shown no signs of ebbing, as Jenkins notes,

> “the Philippines reports 1.7 million Catholic baptisms each year a number larger than the *combined* totals for the four leading Catholic nations of Europe, namely France, Spain, Italy and Poland. By 2005, the number of Filipino Catholics could grow to 90 million, and to 130 million by 2050.” (Jenkins 92)

With these deeply inculcated religious dispositions, it therefore comes as no surprise that the idea of the heroic figure in the Philippines is also centered on notions of morality, altruism and more often than not, religiosity. Thus, construction of the image of Pacquiao as a religious man further contributes to this notion of the heroic.

In the framing of these articles, Pacquiao’s accomplishments are not only as symbolized as giving glory to the nation, but they also are seen as giving *glory to God* as well. Thus, what occurs through the religious framing of these texts is the re-imagining of the Filipino community not merely as a national collective united by Pacquiao’s victory in the ring, but the envisioning of an ideal, *Christian* national collective brought together by this *religious* fighter. Various examples, particularly in the *Manila Standard* show this simultaneous religious construction of
Pacquiao and the Philippine collective. For instance, one article bearing the title “90 M Filipinos saw their prayers answered” automatically contains an implication that the country behind Pacquiao during his match was one that was united in prayer—and similarly, that prayer was one of the factors that led to his victory. Other excerpts portray Manny Pacquiao himself as crediting his success to the Filipinos prayerful devotion, as well:

Pacquiao, as always, thanked God as well as the Filipino people, who had supported and prayed for him in every fight. (Nathanielsz, par 26)

In a rather dramatic reconstruction of events directly following the announcement of Pacquiao’s win, one article (also from The Manila Standard) shows how the use of inclusive homeland deixis is employed to further illustrate the salience of the religious element in portraying Pacquiao as a hero:

The sight of Manny praying in his locker room, going down on his knees in his corner in the ring before the fight and rather than celebrate his victory by beating his chest and prancing around the ring like a conquering hero, walked slowly to his corner, went down on his knees and whispered a fervent prayer to the Almighty to whom he turned to for protection, guidance and if it was His will, victory, filled our hearts. (Nathanielsz, par. 25)

Employing a reflexive strategy of acknowledging the very presence of the reader, texts such contain a tacit assumption that the reader is one who is inspired by this display of religious heroism. Similarly, the use of inclusive, pronouns such as “our” calls attention to other readers as well, and in doing so, these texts address readers as common citizens of the same nation, with the same religion, and most significantly, a shared veneration to the same hero.
THEME IV: Naming Pacquiao the Government-Sponsored Hero

As discussed earlier, Pierre Bourdieu considers the act of language — specifically the process of naming as an active, performative and constructive act. Thus, the symbolic act of naming someone as “hero”, or other titles befitting of that status is not only a validation of one’s greatness or his/her capability to inspire but it is serves a challenge of sorts for the subject to conform to this honor bestowed upon him/her.

It is this confirmation of support from the government gives the title of “hero” a “stamp of approval” of sorts, an official degree of formality. In an article entitled “Pacquiao gets Hero’s Welcome”, The Philippine Star delineates the following formalized titles bestowed to him by the government:

President Arroyo conferred on Pacquiao the title “Ambassador of Peace” when he made a courtesy call at Malacañang. Pacquiao had been given the Order of Sikatuna after a previous victory….At the House of Representatives, lawmakers unanimously commended Pacquiao for winning the fight.

…Aside from “confidential agent” of the Department of Justice, Pacquiao is also an Army Reserve officer. He has been several times promoted at the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) in the past victories he scored as a professional boxing champion. He is now Army Master Sergeant, the highest rank in the military that could be given to enlisted personnel in the military. (Villanueva, par. 11)

These roles granted unto him—Ambassador of Peace, confidential agent of the department of Justice, Army Master sergeant--all contribute to this larger than life persona and fortify the assertion that he is much more than a mere sports hero. The Philippine Daily Inquirer
states that there has been an actual effort to formalize Pacquiao’s heroic persona in terms of legislation. For instance, Resolution 792 drafted by Senator Miguel Zubiri which declares Pacquiao as the “greatest Filipino boxer of our time and the best pound for pound boxer in the world today”. (Ager par. 3) Thus, in doing so, the government does not merely assert his heroic status, but it plays an active and ongoing role in the further creation of Pacquiao’s almost god-like status.

In all newspapers, the pre-match reportage of Pacquiao did not contain any quotes from Malacanang Palace (the residence of the President). It should be noted, however, that all messages of advocacy from the President directed towards Manny Pacquiao began directly following the victory and continued steadily after. The Philippine Star quotes Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, Philippine president, who, not surprisingly employs the device of deictic language (once more, with an emphasis on us and we, not necessarily a them):

“We must as a nation work together as Team Philippines to face the challenges of the world economic downturn…We are all truly proud of him. His triumph is again a great unifier of Filipinos here and all over the world. Manny indeed is making boxing history. This is a shining moment for all Filipinos.” (Romero, par 3)

The Frame: A Government in Need of a Heroic Figure

The “We” employed in the quote above, as uttered by the head of state, does serve to construct spectators into citizens. However, it also signifies an effort to align the government with Pacquiao’s triumphs in order to seem favorable by association. According to the Political and Economic Risk Consultancy (PERC) survey on corruption, the Philippines is considered to be the “most corrupt economy among 13 countries and
territories across Asia.” (Bonabente par. 1) Plagued by charges of corruption and electoral fraud charges, as well as various rallies and demonstrations against recent efforts to change the nation’s constitution, the public did not look upon favorably to the Philippine government at the time of the Pacquiao match.

*The Philippine Daily Inquirer* specifically calls attention to the problems of the government during this period in an editorial “Why Arroyo is not Pacquiao” wherein a direct contrast is made between the government—as personified by Philippine President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, and the boxer:

Pacquiao has brought honor to his country. Ms Arroyo has brought shame to her country. Pacquiao is adored by his countrymen, even when he sings karaoke. Ms Arroyo is reviled by her countrymen, even when she tries to sing a different tune. Each time Pacquiao comes home, he is treated like a conquering hero. Each time Ms Arroyo comes home, she is treated like an uncontrollable plague. Wherever Pacquiao goes, he is mobbed by adoring fans, eager to touch him. Wherever Ms Arroyo goes, she is met by an angry mob, eager to lynch her. Pacquiao has united his countrymen by giving them to see the best that they can be. Ms Arroyo has divided her countrymen by giving them to see the worst that they can be. (de Quiros, par. 13)

*The Philippine Star* shows that Manny Pacquiao himself contrasts his persona with the government, as he is quoted as announcing his future intentions to run for congress:

“The Filipino people) idolize me in boxing. I want them to idolize me in terms of public service. (I believe in) social accountability. I can change the system. I’m not like some politicians who can be corrupt” (Villanueva, par. 2).
It is precisely within this frame of a citizenry disillusioned by a government marred by allegations of corruption wherein active efforts are made to formalize Pacquiao’s heroic status. “Formalization” is taken to mean explicitly bestowing different heroic roles upon Pacquiao’s persona. By officially being named as such, he transcends his role as a People’s champ and becomes a state-endorsed hero as well. As the Arroyo and the government show efforts to associate itself with his heroism, it invites the citizenry to look favorably upon the administration as well.

As Mokolkin states in *Name, Hero and Icon*, it is the symbol of the hero, that has the capability to “subvert the systems of social hierarchy, uniting peasants and aristocrats into one Whole-Nation” (Mokolkin, 20)—thus, paving way for an integrated, cooperative and (ideally) passive state. Similarly, by juxtaposing his triumphs with the tangible present day economic downturn, Macapagal Arroyo gives testament to the what Mokolkov terms as the interdependency of national pride and hero-worshipping. As she explains, “the achievements of other members of the group compensate for the individual failures of the rest of the national group, which is comforted by the sense of belonging to the “Other” who is simultaneously part of the collective I.” It is thus, as Mokolkin states, —“national heroes…simultaneously symbolize “the Victorious Other and the Victorious I, the desired but frequently impossible success. It is within the Other—the heroic, victorious other represented by Pacquiao that certain goals (that which ordinarily would not be attainable by the majority of the populace) are realized.

**Discussion: Pacquiao and the Journalistic Field**

Integral to ‘power to make things with words…a power of consecration of revelation’ (Bourdieu, 23), symbols play an integral role in the construction of construction of narrative and myth. Utilizing Bourdieu’s concepts of habitus and symbolic power, this study springboards
upon the notion of symbolic power as the capacity of institutions to construct symbols of reality through labeling and naming. Bourdieu stresses the unique role of language and words in constructing social reality, as he states: “by structuring the perception which social agents have of the social world, the act of naming helps to establish the structure of the world”. (“Language and Symbolic” 105).

With this in mind, a discussion of the media is essential to evaluating the heroic ‘naming’ of Manny Pacquiao. In this analysis, I show how the journalistic field, the government, the arts and entertainment industries, the public who look up to him, and most definitely Manny Pacquiao himself are all complicit in what Bourdieu calls the “alchemy of representation…through which the representative creates the group which creates him (Bourdieu, 106).

One can see how Just’s concept of cognitive and affective framing, as mentioned earlier, is achieved by analyzing how the journalistic field frames Manny as a hero. While the media, indeed presents the facts—e.g. the date of the fight, what transpired during the bout, etc—and thus, achieves the cognitive dimension, some facts are given more salience than others and are tailored into a specific narrative. The affective dimension is realized by framing these facts about Manny Pacquiao within the discourse of heroism, as well as the context of a nation who demands a specific type of hero. In order to depict Manny Pacquiao as a heroic figure, the media targets particular values and themes that resonate within the contemporary Filipino experience. Thus, Pacquiao is situated within themes of unification, poverty, and religion, all of which achieve in evoking the affective dimension that Just et. al cite as integral to the concept of framing.

In the discourses surrounding the construction of Manny Pacquiao’s persona, the precise name attributed to him is one that is familiar to Philippine society: that of a hero. This may
involve the explicit use of the word “hero”, or simply calling attention to the characteristics of Pacquiao that are in line with his being a hero. By naming Pacquiao as a hero, there also occurs a simultaneous construction of citizens’ identities as well. As Kertzer’s “Politics and Symbols” insists, “the naming at stake here is of a crucial kind, for it involves the ability to provide people with a name for themselves, which is a symbolic identity…” (Kertzer 67). By defining Pacquiao as a hero, a presentation of a ringside community and ultimately, a re-imagining of a united nation transpires as well.
CHAPTER VI: CONCLUSION

Maintained by ritual and symbolism, sports and its cultivation of community both contribute to the formation of national identity. Sports foster a sense of community by allowing its spectators to take part in the vicarious pleasure of victory or the shared experience of defeat. Audience members, in turn, continuously reaffirm their membership into this collective by actively participating in the process of spectatorship. Once situated on international scale, an athlete then becomes a representative of the nation. Consequently, spectators are united by their allegiance to the same nation that this athlete (or team of athletes) represents, and become a plebiscite.

As a direct manifestation of this unique phenomenon, I characterize the Filipino ringside community, a collective united by the figure of modern-day hero, the boxer Manny Pacquiao. I argue that this faithful viewing of Pacquiao’s matches cannot be merely characterized as fulfilling the need for spectacle but rather functions as a reassertion of national identity. Billig reaffirms this idea of national integration through sports events such as Pacquiao’s matches as he says, “the plebiscite, whether through habitual deixis or sporting cheers, reproduces the nation state.” This reproduction of nationhood is found in the symbols employed at ringside as well, where spectators are called not merely to cheer for their athletes but to pledge allegiance to their flag and anthem.

Outside the ring, and after the matches, however, this reproduction of nationhood continues through the construction of the heroic myth of Manny Pacquiao. Indeed, essential to the formation of this ringside community is the existence of heroic narrative, with Manny Pacquiao as its contemporary protagonist. Narratives, such as the narrative of heroism, are instrumental to the maintenance of a nation: being negotiated upon and shared by a constituency,
they serve as important symbols of nationhood. In this characterization, then, narrative not only brings people together, but it is also “the means by which societies ultimately govern themselves” (Johnson-Cartee, 129). To situate this within Bourdieu’s habitus, this heroic narrative helps maintain nationalist dispositions and practices by serving as a tangible object that can be shared by a collective.

This thesis argues that Pacquiao’s ascent from skilled fighter to contemporary national hero is indicative of the historical tradition of a nation such as the Philippines, which places great importance on its heroes. The most relevant Filipino heroes in this narrative are characterized by their ability to defend and fight for a country that has had to confront a long oppressive history of colonialism and dictatorship. These heroes exemplify the ideals of sacrifice and martyrdom; to sum, they represent a giving of one’s self to one’s nation. In turn, these heroes are institutionalized by the State so as to represent glorious beacons despite a painful past, and to serve as reminders of the exemplary capacity of the Filipino to be self-sacrificing and heroic, against all odds. Manny Pacquiao, as a contemporary hero, recalls this tradition as he represents an embodiment of the heroic standards set forth by an existing narrative of heroism which has been *culcated* in Philippine society.

In the modern age of today, it is through the media that narratives can be told, symbols can be established and both can be used with the intention of bringing a nation together. This is precisely where the phenomenon of Manny Pacquiao passes through mediated discourse, where the construction of his personality is framed within a particular context, and heroic elements are symbolically presented within him.

Institutions that deal with the reconstruction of Pacquiao’s heroic persona operate primarily *naming* him a hero. Bourdieu proposes that a process of naming takes place in order to
make national symbols more potent. Indeed, an explicit process of *naming* is shown in the coverage of Pacquiao’s bout with de la Hoya, as several interlocking institutions (journalistic field, the government and the arena of show business, and to some extent, even Pacquiao himself) do not merely christen him as hero but bestow upon him other names as well: that of unifier, martyr, a David fighting Goliath, a man of religion, and a Government-Sponsored hero. Similarly, this construction of Pacquiao as hero is specifically situated within the *frame* of nationhood and nationality. The intentional use of homeland deixis in the language of news discourse, for instance, frames him not only as a hero, but also as a hero that the Filipino collective can call *their very own*.

In conclusion, the case of the Philippines’ unflagging devotion to their unofficial national hero, Manny Pacquiao, can be explained by the fact that it ultimately serves a reparative function. At its very core, the symbol of Pacquiao and his ability to create this ringside community is indicative of an essential sense of hope. In the end, this phenomenon reflects the struggles, both won and lost, of a developing nation in need of unification.


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------. Republic Act No. 1425, House Bill No. 5561, Senate Bill No. 438.
