Values Research in the Philippines

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Values research first flourished in the Philippines in the 1960s. The center from whence many of these researches originated was the Institute of Philippine Culture (IPC) of the Ateneo de Manila University. The two main volumes that were produced in the era were *Four Readings on Philippine Values* (Lynch 1964) and the *Symposium of Filipino Personality* (Psychological Association of the Philippines 1965). They were collections of research papers and were widely read by the educated public. Aside from these two, the IPC published a series of monographs on *Modernization in the Philippines,* including George Guthrie's (1970) monograph *The Psychology of Modernization in Rural Philippines.* Most of the researchers were either psychologists (e.g. Jaime Bulatao and George Guthrie) or social anthropologists (e.g., Frank Lynch and Mary Hollnsteiner).

In the 1960s "modernization theory" was popular in the social sciences and in the socio-cultural and intellectual atmosphere of the time. Most people then presumed that the modern industrialized societies (especially the United States and Great Britain) presented the "face of the future" and served as a model for the less developed countries to emulate.

Reading between the lines of the IPC research publications, one could discern an underlying theme to much of their writing, and that underlying theme is modernization and economic development. In those days, political and economic analysts found it convenient to divide the world into First, Second, and Third World countries. The Philippines was—and still is—considered a Third World country or an "underdeveloped" country. Later, a euphemistic term was introduced: "newly developing" nation. Many books that focused on the pattern of development were published in the 1960s and many social scientists each had their own pet idea as to what were the most crucial social and psychological factors that promote development.

An examination of some of the more popular books then will show how they probably influenced local research on Philippine values. An economist, W. W. Rostow (1965) wrote a very popular book which he entitled *The Stages of Economic Growth: A non-Communist Manifesto*. His main idea was that nations went through four stages in order to attain economic maturity. These stages are the traditional economy, the pre-conditions to take off, the take off stage wherein the economy accomplishes double digit growth over a number of years (this is what the tiger economies do), and the high mass consumption society which is the stage that most poor countries are ultimately aiming for. In his book, Rostow focused on the economic factors that enabled a nation to move from one stage to the next higher stage. Other behavioral scientists, however, thought that there were more important socio-psychological factors that allowed a nation to achieve a sustained economic take-off, and by implication, modernization.

Background Works of the Sixties

Perhaps the most popular psychological work along this line at that time was David McClelland's (1961) *The Achieving Society*. In that book McClelland proposed a very interesting hypothesis: that economic development comes about when children are brought up to be independent and self-reliant. Children who grow up with these two traits develop a high need to achieve, and high achievers are partial to activities where they are in control of things and involve a moderate amount of risk or challenge. They are also better able to delay gratification. Because of these factors they are prone to become entrepreneurs, thus providing an impetus for the development of their society. The suggestion is that the Filipino social scientists of the 1960s were probably familiar with McClelland's work, took a good look at the Philippine situation, and figured that the Philippines was not a developed nation because, instead of promoting the values of independence and self-reliance among our children, we were emphasizing *pakikisama* and smooth interpersonal relations. Instead of being attracted to activities under his control and manifesting his sense of self-efficacy, the typical Filipino found it easy to live with "Bahala na!" situations. So what the social scientist ended up doing then was to look inwards and look for shortcomings—shortcomings that had to be overcome if we were to become a developed nation.

Another book popular at that time, with a rather intriguing title, was Edward Banfield's (1958) *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society*. Banfield was an anthropologist who did field work in Sicily in the 1950s. In those days Italy was considered backward among the European countries, and Sicily was one of the most backward regions in Italy. Banfield tried to find out why. He believed that he found the key to their underdevelopment. It was because Sicilians suffer from something he called "amoral familism." Of course "suffer" is not a good word to use, and he did not use it, but in many ways, it best conveys the tone of the book. Amoral familism means that people put the interests of their family above anything else; whether their family is right or wrong, hence the word "amoral." So Filipino social scientists, having read Banfield's book, reflected on the Filipino family and noticed that the family tends to be very close knit. Parents have a strong hold on their children, and sibs are often willing to sacrifice for each other. Political clans do seem to be more concerned with their family's interest than with the nation's good. From that, it was easy to conclude that the strong family orientation that Filipinos have is another obstacle to national development.

Another popular anthropological idea in those days was George Foster's "image of limited good." Foster observed that in traditional societies, people believe that all good is limited. This applies to material things such as money as well as non-material things such as mother's love. The main consequence of this is that people end up believing that if a member of their community starts to get more of something; e.g. wealth, it would result in everybody else getting less of that thing. Hence, they resort to "levelling"; i.e., they attempt to bring down those who have gone ahead. In the 1960s, Mary Hollnsteiner (1965) saw mechanisms like these operating in our society as a means of establishing social control. She cites the example of a graduate of agricultural school who returns home tries to introduce new technology to their farm practices. Instead of being receptive to such new ideas, his family and neighbors proceed to belittle his newly acquired knowledge. Filipinos have often been characterized as having "crab mentality" wherein those who try to get ahead are pulled back by the others.

Turning to the sociologists, Talcott Parsons (1964) at that time wrote about five patterned variables which were five bipolar dimensions along which all cultures could be placed. These were:

Affectivity vs. affective neutrality. In some societies people tend

to be emotional about many things while in others they are able to look at things more objectively.

Diffuseness vs. specificity. In societies that are diffused, relationships are intertwined. You don't relate to one person on one specific ground. You relate to him in several different ways. For example, your cousin might also be your *kumpadre* as well as your supervisor at work.

Particularism vs. universalism. A universalistic society applies rules or laws in a universal, impersonal way, while a particularistic society has different rules for different people; e.g., if a thief happens to be my friend, I will not arrest him.

Quality vs. performance. Do you reward people on the basis of certain qualities that they possess, such as having a certain surname, or having a certain complexion; or do you reward them on the basis of their merits and performance? In other words, is it based on ascribed status or achieved status?

Collective vs. self-orientation. Do other people have an important influence on the way you make decisions? Or do you make your own decisions and decide things for yourself?

In Parsons' theory, each of the first mentioned poles among the five bipolar pattern variables are more characteristic of underdeveloped societies while the latter pole in each case would be more likely found among developed societies. Predictably, social scientists saw Filipinos as emotional, diffuse in their relationships, personalistic, status oriented, and collective in their orientation.

Inkeles and Smith (1974) combined these ideas and added some while constructing a model of individual modernity. They saw modernity as not just a quality of societies; but also a quality that was present in varying degrees among individuals. The modern individual could be characterized by a readiness for new experiences and an openness to innovation and change, a disposition to form or hold opinions over a wide range of issues, an orientation towards the present and future rather than the past, a sense of efficacy over physical and social environment, an ability to plan and organize, a belief that the world around him is calculable and reliable, a sense of justice that stipulates a person's rewards to be proportional to his skill and contribution towards certain outcomes, a value on formal education and learning new skills, and an awareness and respect for the dignity of others. They proceeded to develop an Overall Modernity scale and found that individuals in more modernized societies did score higher on their scale.

1960s Philippine Values Research

The conclusion from the above discussion is that there were two implicit questions underlying much of the 1960s Philippine values research and those were: "Why are we an underdeveloped country?," and "What is wrong with us?" In those days many visiting researchers came, and immersed in the popular theories of the day, it seemed natural for them to look for Filipino traits that could be the cause of our lagging development. Likewise, many Filipino social scientists who were trained abroad (mainly in the United States) ended up with the same mind-set when they did their research.

Mentioned earlier was that one of the widely read volumes in the 1960s was the *Symposium on the Filipino Personality* (1965) which consisted of five papers that were presented in the very first convention of the newly formed Psychological Association of the Philippines. In 1988, twenty-five years later, Fr. Jaime Bulatao (1988), who was the only one of the original participants in that symposium who was still in the country, was asked to reminisce about the historical symposium. The main point of his reminiscing was that the papers in that symposium were mainly the works of Filipino social scientists who had just returned from their studies abroad and were all eager to apply the new theories and methodologies that they had just learned to the problems in their home country.

Soon after many of the IPC studies were published, they were the subject of intense criticisms from various corners. F. Landa Jocano (1966) wrote an article entitled "Re-thinking Smooth Interpersonal Relations." He did field work in Panay, stayed with a family, and observed continuous fighting, often at the slightest provocation. He also alluded to the American literature on other-directedness and conformity and suggested that it could very well be that Americans, more so than Filipinos, were the ones concerned about Smooth Interpersonal Relations.

Another anthropologist, Robert Lawless (1967; also Lawless and Tan 1968), did an evaluation of Philippine values research. He charged that the methodological procedures in many of these studies were often vaguely described, and that the conclusions drawn in much of the research was probably based on the researchers' stereotypes regarding the personality and behavioral differences between Eastern societies and Western societies.

The Reaction of Sikolohiyang Pilipino

The stage was now set for the introduction of Sikolohiyang Pilipino which began in the early 1970s. Virgilio Enriquez is generally accepted as the founder of Sikolohiyang Pilipino and his book *From Colonial to Liberation Psychology* (Enriquez 1992) can be read as the manifesto of the movement. In many ways, Sikolohiyang Pilipino appears to be a reaction or anti-thesis to the 1960s Ateneo-IPC values research. Sikolohiyang Pilipino has its intellectual roots in the ideology of nationalism, and its basic implicit assumptions are derived from the ideas of Renato Constantino (1978). In several books, Constantino traces the causes of our present problems to our past colonial experiences. The Americans have left, and the Spaniards are long gone, but they left such an overpowering cognitive schema which still determines our ideas of what is good and what is desirable. We have been brainwashed, left with a colonial mentality, such that many of the things we value are really not appropriate or practical for us. Hence we crave for Oreos and apples which we cannot afford; our national sport is basketball wherein our physical size dooms us to continuing failure and frustration in international competitions; and we all want to be white skinned which we cannot be. The result of all this is an incessant sense of inferiority that handicaps us in life.

Perhaps it is the goal of Sikolohiyang Pilipino (SP) to counteract this pervasive feeling of inferiority by continuously belaboring the point that we are fine just the way we are. Thus, instead of addressing the implicit question "what is wrong with us?," Sikolohiyang Pilipino seems to take as a starting point, the stance that "Nothing can be wrong with us." Filipino values and traits that were previously viewed as obstacles to development were now upheld as qualities to be proud of. While *pakikisama* was previously seen as a hindrance to individual initiative, the SP tenet was that it should be viewed within the larger context of *pagkikipagkapwa-tao* which represents a strong conviction that emphasizes compassion for our fellow human beings. *Bahala na!* was equated to a fatalistic attitude that got in the way of individual achievement, but in the revisionist Sikolohiyang Pilipino view (Lagmay 1993), it was now an attitude that gave people added courage and enabled them to embark on ventures that entailed an element of risk-taking.

Whereas the IPC researchers thought in terms of traits needed for economic development, Constantino, and Sikolohiyang Pilipino as well, question the very idea of economic development as a desirable goal. Is this something we really want? Is there not also a lot of unhappiness in mature Western economies? In underdeveloped countries many suffer from hunger but in developed countries, people are prone to suffer from existential angst. Who is to say that hunger is a worse problem than existential angst?

In their methodology, the SP researchers always took pains to position themselves in opposition to the IPC group. The IPC researchers were usually etic in their approach, with cross-cultural comparisons often the basis of their conclusions. The SP researchers, on the other hand, insisted on an emic approach and championed the cause of an indigenous psychology. The indigenous psychology which they sought to develop also involved a wholesale rejection of Western research methods. To them, these methods were inadequate if not invalid in obtaining accurate data regarding Filipino behavior and values. Hence they embarked on a quest to develop indigenous methods of data gathering and interpretation that rely heavily on participant observations and phenomenological principles.

Unfortunately, however, much of the SP research is just as vulnerable to the criticisms that they themselves leveled at IPC research. Just as the IPC conclusions were often predictable in the direction of a collectivist orientation among the Filipino vis-a-vis the individualism of the American; so too the conclusions of the SP researches were often equally predictable along the lines of the richness, complexity, and innate goodness of the Filipino vis-a-vis the malicious intents of our former colonial masters. In both cases, the validity of their conclusions vis-a-vis their data base is equally tenuous. In the final analysis, the SP researchers relied on their ideologically guided impressions and intuitions just as much as their IPC predecessors did.

All of this lends validity to the social constructionist view of social science theory. According to the social constructionists, facts are interpreted on the basis of the social atmosphere, context and biases of the time. If modernization is the overriding concern, then interpersonal traits are negatively viewed. If social relations are the big concern, then these traits are positively valued. It has been observed (Whiting 1966) that in Western societies families tend to be nuclear and there is much pressure on the children to become independent so as to free their parents from tedious child rearing chores. In less developed societies, the task or child rearing can often be shared

among extended family members, older children, and even neighbors. There is less pressure on the child to be self-reliant. Instead, the emphasis is on interpersonal harmony and "smooth interpersonal relations" to prevent disruptive fights within the social network.

Stages in the Evolution of Theory

The IPC and the Sikolohiyang Pilipino approach to values are stages in the evolution of a theory of Philippine values. Harvey, Hunt, and Schroeder (1961) once proposed a theory of developmental stages that they claimed to be applicable to many domains: human development, organizations, nations, ideas, and theories. In their theory the maturation process involves four distinct stages of development. In human development for example, the first stage is unilateral dependence, as in a baby's unilateral dependence on his mother for survival. Stage two is negative independence. Here the child starts to assert himself, as in the "terrible twos," but in a negativistic way. The independence that he is trying to establish is not a genuine one because, in a way, his behavior is still determined by external forces although in a negative way. True independence comes later when he really knows what he wants and he knows how to seek it. In this third stage, he is not asserting himself just to be contrary or to be rebellious against his parents. The fourth stage of interdependence comes when he achieves even greater maturity and is able to relate to his parents on equal terms, when there is equal give and take as between two mature persons.

If one were to apply this developmental model to the evolution of a theory of Philippine values, one might view the 1960s IPC research as reflecting a state of unilateral dependence. Filipino social scientists adopted Western ideas, theories, and methods and applied them to their researches here, honestly believing that these were the best tools that they could use. The Sikolohiyang Pilipino movement could be seen as representing a stage of negative independence in the unfolding development of Philippine social scientific research on values. This involves a wholesale rejection of Western theories and methods but it is not yet a true independence because their actions are still determined by traditional authorities, albeit in a negativistic way.

Perhaps the time has now come to go on to the third stage of social scientific development, wherein we can act in an independent way; not just copy others which is stage one, or just do the opposite

567

of stage one, which is stage two. Rather, we should figure out what we want to accomplish in psychology, and use the best methods and develop the best theories, whether these be home grown, or adapted from, or directly imported from the work of foreign psychologists. We should use whatever tools will help us most effectively in answering the questions that we want to answer.

An example of this approach might be found in the therapeutic strategies that Fr. Jaime Bulatao (1992) has been using recently. He is often called upon to help people who believe that they have been possessed, or who claim to be receiving orders from poltergeists and other spirits. With cases like this he has been forced to innovate, and in fact often uses exorcism rites to disposses his patients. These methods work amazingly well probably because they work within the parameters of the patient's belief system. This is just one example of a practical, independent approach to psychological problems. With the renowned innovativeness of the Filipino, I am sure that the Filipino psychologist is capable of developing theories and methods that will both improve our understanding of our people and the practice of our profession.

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