

The Development of a Filipino Indigenous Psychology

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This paper is a review of Filipino indigenous psychology (often referred to as Sikolohiyang Pilipino), tracing its inception, growth and development within the socio-historical situation of the country and the socio-political consciousness of its primary movers. Three stages in Philippine psychology are identified: a) pre-Sikolohiyang Pilipino, b) the early days of Sikolohiyang Pilipino, and c) Sikolohiyang Pilipino after Dr. Virgilio Enriquez. Theoretical and methodological shifts are noted across the three stages and are linked with changes in the socio-historical-political realities of the Philippines. This paper also attempts to gain an insight into future prospects of Sikolohiyang Pilipino, considering current trends in its progression and situating those within the context of globalization and the changing world political order.

Sinha and Kao (1997) correctly noted that although modern psychology is a recent phenomenon in Asia, many Asian countries actually have a rich heritage of psychological knowledge in their ancient traditions, philosophy, religion, cultures and folk practices. This knowledge base, however, is not what is often considered as falling within the mainstream of scientific psychology as defined by the West.

Scientific psychology of this order imposes very strict disciplinary limits and involves only those efforts based on the empirico-positivist traditions as marked by the following key features:

1. Generates its knowledge base via the experimental and objective modes of theory testing;
2. expresses logical relationships among categories presumed to be naturally occurring in terms of a mathematical language;
3. depends on procedural integrity and public scrutiny for establishing scientific validity (Hoshmand & Polkinghorne, 1992 as cited in Torres, 1997).

In this arena of theorizing, the hegemony of the West has been very clear. They define the relevant concepts; impose the methodology borne out of their own experience and control theoretical production through what the Filipino sociologist, Raul Pertierra, termed the "western monologic discourse (1989)."

Given the economic-political-academic dominance of the West, it was no surprise that psychologists from Asia and other Third World countries went to study modern psychology in the West and transplanted that body of knowledge to their home countries.

Thus spread the gospel of "universal" psychology and the dominance of western psychology.

What tended to be overlooked in the beginning was that much of what was passed around as universal psychology was, in fact, western in conception and emphasis and, therefore, often irrelevant or inapplicable. The research findings published in top-level western journals and publications which were must-reads for all who wished to keep abreast of the latest developments in their area of expertise were viewed as "statements of fact, pure descriptions of the nature of things as such, regardless of the viewer and without taking into consideration the background set of constitutive conditions and practices which is what lends the social its natural appearance in the first place (Mendoza, 1998)." This automatic ascription of the same meanings to the same label, concept or terminology has been criticized for rendering static theoretic formulations and turning them into essentialized universal propositions. This model of science adhered to ignore the fact that psychology and the phenomena it studies are rooted

in culture and local traditions. To fit all data into generalized concepts derived from a western and alien experience is to render the knowledge meaningless. To pass off psychology derived from a western ethos and culture as universal may not be a valid perspective.

Nevertheless, for a long time, western psychological principles were accepted as universals and it was only recently that Asian and Third World psychologists raised their issues and made themselves heard in the snowballing movement in indigenous psychology.

It is the thesis of this paper that these developments were all products of the socio-historical-political events transpiring in the world and the changing perspectives that various people held about themselves vis-à-vis dominant and non-dominant countries. After all, the dynamics of power in the world are often reflected in the dynamics of power in knowledge production and exchange. The Philippine case will be used to illustrate this.

Philippine Psychology

In discussing the development of a Filipino indigenous psychology (or what I shall refer to here as *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* or SP), one would be better able to understand the process if we placed it within the broader context of the growth and development of Philippine psychology or psychology in the Philippines. For simplification purposes, three periods in this progression are marked off: pre- *Sikolohiyang Pilipino*, the rise of *Sikolohiyang Pilipino*, and *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* after Enriquez.

Pre-Sikolohiyang Pilipino

Going beyond tracing the history of Philippine disciplinary psychology, Zeus Salazar (1985) traced the history of Philippine psychological thought and identified four separate historical threads or "filiations" across Philippine historical time. What Salazar's historical analysis sought to point out was the deep-rootedness of psychological thought in the country's rich heritage

of knowledge in its cultures, traditions and folk practices. It is true that western colonial influence came in and led to a changed perspective of what are considered appropriate psychological domains, leading to the diminution in value and emphasis of these indigenous psychological thought. Nevertheless, the rich cultural traditions remain underneath it all and only need to be recognized as Salazar did in his article. Salazar challenged the monopolistic dominance of the western tradition of academic-scientific psychology while hailing the rich potentials of ethnic psychology rooted in our own cultural traditions.

The first filiation identified by Salazar is academic-scientific psychology which entered the country in 1925 when Dr. Agustin Alonzo came back to the University of the Philippines. Alonzo obtained his doctorate in experimental psychology from the University of Chicago and became chair of the U.P. Department of Psychology which was then under the College of Education. Alonzo brought back American-oriented educational psychology and was mentor to a number of known Filipino psychologists, including Alfredo Lagmay, Estafania Aldaba and Sinforoso Padilla (Enriquez, 1994). Lagmay (1984) commented about this history of psychological science in the Philippines as a "case of cultural diffusion which started about the turn of the century, when the United States, as colonizer, came to this country and established an educational system based on the English language as the primary medium of instruction." Enriquez (1994) had this to say about the impact of the use of the English language on psychology in the Philippines:

The use of English as the medium of instruction in psychology made possible the speedy introduction of American-oriented psychology and values. With American textbooks in psychology from Thorndike, Hall and Lindzey to Hilgard and McConnell, Filipinos began learning not only a new psychology but also a new culture. Education became miseducation because it began to de-Filipinize the Filipino psychologists, taught them to look up to American departments of psychology as always years ahead of Philippine counterparts, to regard American psychology as always superior to theirs and American society as the model par excellence for Philippine society.

Academic-scientific psychology, in this context, may then be viewed as a tool of colonization. Psychological knowledge in education was particularly of great utility to the colonizers who were using education as the main means to subjugate the natives. The entry of academic-scientific psychology "into Filipino consciousness and academic preoccupations was a clear case of technology transfer cum foreign ideology and world view (Salazar, 1985)."

The second filiation in Salazar's treatise is academic-philosophical psychology, which he identified as starting with the establishment of a system of higher education in the University of Santo Tomas during the Spanish times. This is older than the academic-scientific, dating back to the Spanish colonial era. In the institutions of higher learning run by the Spanish clerics, psychological material was introduced via courses in philosophy and medicine.

The third filiation, ethnic psychology, dates even farther than the second filiation and supposedly began with the coming into contact of Filipinos and the foreign colonizers. Salazar differentiated three levels of ethnic psychology: *katutubong sikolohiya* (the truly indigenous knowledge base), the psychology of Filipinos (a more sophisticated psycho-social approach to understanding the traits of the Filipino), and the practice of psychology of Filipinos from ancient to modern times (including the "normal techniques of enculturation or socialization and the proto-clinical approaches to problems, tensions and conflicts").

The last filiation involved the traditional psycho-medical system which had religion as its basis and explanation. Today, there still exist many examples of practitioners and experts in this traditional knowledge base although they and their conceptual framework are marginalized, if not totally excluded, from the mainstream of academic-scientific psychological discourse.

In summary, the pre-Sikolohiyang Pilipino period, coinciding with the colonial era, was also a period of dominance by western knowledge structures in psychology. In the decades of the fifties and sixties, the Philippines, though independent, found itself still

looking to the former colonizers for the country's agenda and development. In the educational field, the former colony was faced with the task of training its many academics who would eventually run the degree programs in the universities and colleges. Academics who eventually made an impact in the field of psychology in the Philippines went to the United States to train in "rigorous" and "scientific" psychology. This era of Philippine psychology was heavily influenced by psychological science in the North American tradition, following the two traditions of experimentation and correlation (Torres, 1997). The brand of psychology was both empirical and positivistic. This is heavily evident in the nature of research and publication at that time. Papers accepted for publication in the Philippine Journal of Psychology had to meet the criteria of empiricism and scientific rigor maintained by the editorial board. "Legitimate psychology was (and is) stereotyped to be that which proceeds from experimentation, rigid statistical procedures, and from observable data (Torres, 1997)." Most, if not all, published papers then were in English. Textbooks and other course materials were all western and usually in English, too. Whatever local textbooks were written were patterned after western texts and heavily cited western theories and research data. Even the local psychological association (founded in 1962) still looked west, affiliating with the American Psychological Association and the International Union of Psychological Science and vowed to uphold scientific traditions, ethicality and the welfare of man.

The Rise of Sikolohiyang Pilipino

In 1971, Virgilio G. Enriquez came back to the University of the Philippines with his Ph.D. in psychology from Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. His training was in the finest western tradition and his dissertation was a behaviorist treatise on bilingualism supervised by the experimenter, Donald Campbell. On a biographical note, Enriquez, prior to his exposure to western academia was a product of a background steeped in the rich

cultural traditions, nationalistic fervor, and language of the Bulacan Filipino. (Many illustrious Filipino revolutionaries and nationalist writers had their origins in Bulacan province.)

And he was coming home to a society in ferment against the repressive Marcos regime with the University of the Philippines at the forefront of this activism. The late 1960s and the early 1970s is often referred to in the historical accounts as the First Quarter Storm and is marked by the brief existence of the Diliman commune, students and the university community barricading themselves from the onslaught of military repression and violence unleashed to disperse the demonstrators against the oppressive regime and its perceived patron, the American imperialists. Nationalism was intense and all things foreign were in question. Discussion groups and teach-ins were the order of the day. It was this atmosphere of critical questioning and heightened nationalism that led to the germination and subsequent flowering of *Sikolohiyang Pilipino*. This, plus the conditions existent at the UP Department of Psychology at that time—a supportive chair in the person of Dr. Alfredo Lagmay and faculty who, in their writings, were starting to question the applicability of western theories and tools in the Philippine setting and doubted the replicability of research results obtained from the west. Had Enriquez stayed with his training and spread the gospel of behaviorist bilingualism instead in the acquired language of the colonizers, he would have lost all the critical and inquiring minds looking for relevance in their studies and just been another forgettable American colonial instrument.

Instead, Enriquez raised questions about the validity of western psychological concepts and their methodologies. He advocated for a *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* that would be “based on the experience, ideas and orientation of the Pilipino (Enriquez, 1976)” and people took note, resonating to the issues raised. He himself identified the “neo-colonial status of Philippine psychology, the Great Cultural Divide which separates the Anglicized elite from the Filipino masses, and the meeting of the East and the West” as the backdrop to this new indigenous psychology (Enriquez, 1997).

Torres (1997) identified Sikolohiyang Pilipino not only as an attempt to arrive at culturally-appropriate explanations of Filipino behavior but also as a "form of resistance to the hegemony of psychological literature from the West...part of the social activists' efforts in the '70s for national liberation with emphasis on establishing a body of literature that would give meaning to Filipino psychology within the terms of our experiences as a culture, rather than on the basis of pseudo-universals." She went on further to note that "Sikolohiyang Pilipino spawned (and continues to fertilize) the development of a tremendous volume of literature in Philippine psychology different from traditional academic research."

Enriquez (1994) identified the major characteristics of Sikolohiyang Pilipino in terms of its philosophical antecedents, principal emphasis in psychology, principal methods of investigation, primary areas of protest, position on psychological practice, position on science-humanism issue, position on the mentalism-behaviorism issue, and position on the analysis-wholeness issue. Examining these features, one realizes that Enriquez was not totally abolitionist in his perspective with regards to western psychology since he does not wholly reject science nor its methods of investigation. Rather he advocates for the addition of certain features (particularly the emphasis and areas of protest) that would make the discipline more faithful to Filipino reality and not just another alienating instrument of western oppression.

Several developments in the field mark this period. First, after single-handedly pursuing his cause among his many students at the university's department of psychology and gaining adherents among the already politicized studentry, Enriquez founded the Pambansang Samahan sa Sikolohiyang Pilipino (National Association for Philippine Psychology) in January 1976 with the "objectives of inquiry and clarification of the value and nature of Filipino personality and consciousness and the development of studies towards a more scientific universal psychology (Lagmay, 1984)." The association was inclusive and open, seeking a much wider base for its membership of academics and professionals

beyond psychology such as anthropologists, historians, philosophers, educators, sociologists, writers and artists and all intellectuals with interest in Filipino psychology and national character. This is unlike the Psychological Association of the Philippines which accepts only psychologists and professionals in psychological practice.

The PSSP attracted a wide membership from outside psychology and from institutions outside the University of the Philippines. It held annual conferences, with papers and discussions done mainly in the national language and was instrumental in disseminating information and initiating discussion on the many aspects of Sikolohiyang Pilipino. The first conference ever on Filipino Psychology was held in 1975 and at this meeting; the initial formulations of Sikolohiyang Pilipino were spelled out and presented.

In addition to the PSSP, other associations furthering the interests of Sikolohiyang Pilipino were founded: the Samahang Pilipino sa Sikolohiya ng Wika (Philippine Association for the Psychology of Language) and the Samahang Pilipino sa Sikolohiya ng Bata (Philippine Association for Child Psychology). In addition, Enriquez established his Philippine Psychology Research and Training House (PPRTH) initially mainly for research but subsequently also engaged in other activities like publications and the maintenance of a small research library for Sikolohiyang Pilipino researchers.

Other developments included the development of an indigenous measure of personality (Panukat ng Ugali at Pagkatao), the development of indigenous research methods considering and emphasizing the relational distance between researcher and research participants, the development of an undergraduate course in Sikolohiyang Pilipino, the publication of several books of readings on Sikolohiyang Pilipino which greatly facilitated the teaching of the course (Aganon & David, 1985; Enriquez, 1990; Pe-Pua, 1982) and, ultimately, the establishment of a graduate program specializing in Sikolohiyang Pilipino as an area of study.

At the core of all these developments was the indefatigable Enriquez whose creative energies provided the fuel to the Sikolohiyang Pilipino movement. His single-minded devotion to his cause was admirable. He generously poured his energies and material resources into his research house and the activities of Sikolohiyang Pilipino. Such devotion is hard to replicate.

In 1986, the dictator Marcos was finally driven out and the country was proud of its bloodless revolution which became a model worldwide worthy of replication. It was Enriquez's concept of "*kapwa*" at its finest. And after the initial period of instability, the organizations and institutions of a democratic system were once again fully functioning and a modicum of peace and prosperity returned.

It should be noted that around this period, Enriquez was spending more of his time in foreign lands and thus the salience of the problem of Filipino communities abroad struggling to keep their cultural traditions despite the immersion in a totally foreign way of life. Thus the establishment of the Pandaigdigang Katipunan sa Sikolohiyang Pilipino (International Association for Filipino Psychology) in 1990 which attempted to link and network with Filipino communities all over the world where Filipinos may go, but mainly in Japan and the United States of America.

Meanwhile, in the home front, SP adherents kept the fervor of the movement alive through the annual conferences but it was basically the maintenance of an ideological status quo. There were no fiery debates and the few critical questions, particularly about the finer details of the concepts and methodologies which would facilitate further research and development of the constructs, were acknowledged but not addressed in any systematic manner (Margallo, 1990; Sevilla, 1990).

Sikolohiyang Pilipino after Enriquez

Enriquez premature death in 1994, however, was a shock to his many followers and left much work still to be done in the Sikolohiyang Pilipino he initiated. He had done much to craft Sikolohiyang Pilipino and shape its directions. When he died,

Sikolohiyang Pilipino was orphaned and none of his followers appeared ready to step into his extremely large shoes.

This has always been the problem with the great leader and father figure who suddenly dies or leaves the organization. Their organizational skills and creative energies are hard to match and can be intimidating to prospective successors. While still on the job, they foster a kind of deferential dependency and complacency among followers who are lulled into thinking that they will be there forever. And furthermore, although all good leaders should perhaps think prospectively and train possible successors, there are often more pressing work demands and entertaining the idea of one day leaving one's baby on whom one has lavished all one's efforts and attention can be unpalatable.

Thus in Sikolohiyang Pilipino, the issues of succession, the need for reorganization, the need to finally confront basic issues like resources to stay afloat and other organizational issues had to be resolved first. The heir-apparent was Rogelia Pe-Pua who had ably assisted Enriquez since her student days and the inception of Sikolohiyang Pilipino and was by then an assistant professor at the University of the Philippines Department of Psychology. She had also written extensively on the area and, from the intellectual-heir perspective, would have been the most sensible choice. Unfortunately, she migrated to Australia with her family and although she still does some work in the field and visits the Philippines periodically, the organization at home could not be managed from a distance. That task fell on the shoulders of Grace Dalisay and subsequently Elizabeth Marcelino (now de Castro), both former students and later colleagues of Enriquez at the university.

The annual conferences continue and there is still some research activity going on—Orteza's work on *pakikipagkuwentuhan* (story-telling) as methodology, Guanzon-Lapena's research into the concept of leadership among the grassroots Filipinos, Dalisay's studies on male and female sexuality, to name a few. However, publications seem to have slowed down and visibility of the field has also diminished somewhat.

There are still many concepts Enriquez raised in his lifetime and questions he posed which need empirical research support and validation. One of the interesting prospects after his death was waiting to see the directions the field would take. While Enriquez was alive, his ideas (ex., the core concept of *kapwa*) were almost dogma and were transmitted with hardly any modifications and few empirical supports. Challenging his views or taking a devil's advocate position were hardly dared by followers standing in the shadow of the great thinker. Mendoza (1989) argued for the value of opposition in any transformative endeavor. From Ellul (1981), she quoted:

...if the positive remains alone, it remains unchanged...an unchallenged teacher...will be shut up in the indefinite repetition of its own image. It will live in satisfaction at what was produced once, and will see no reason to change...We thus have sclerosis, paralysis, a redundant monologue of self-satisfaction and self-reproduction...

Sikolohiyang Pilipino adherents need to take stock of the current literature, challenge the teachings, and prune/integrate/synthesize the knowledge accumulated thus far. The theoretical formulations need to be refined and tested further. Perhaps, it is also time to constructively deal with its issues and the criticisms leveled against it — the lack of representation of other indigenous and ethnolinguistic groups in its research literature which is mainly Tagalog and the need to differentiate and interpret cultural values and behavior according to gender (Torres, 1997), the methodology issue, and the language issue (Pe-Pua and Marcelino, 1998). With regard to the language issue, we might do well to heed Pertierra's (1989) suggestion:

...the adoption of Filipino as a national language will at least make it more difficult for foreigners to take part and perhaps hijack this imaginative process. It will at least require them to first invest considerable time in learning the language before becoming experts. In the meantime this humbling experience may leave them with a higher regard for the native. As it is, the Philippines is perhaps too accessible to the untutored Westerner and may explain why it attracts, on the whole, less competent

scholars than say Japanese, Thai or even Balinese studies. The problem, however, is to have a national language but to prevent it from hegemonizing national life.

It might be added, too, that usage of the national language may make our knowledge base more accessible to our own people unlike an alien language like English.

Finally, the question of Sikolohiyang Pilipino as a psychological science needs to be addressed. What is distinctively psychological (science) about it that would set it apart from anthropology, history, sociology, politics of the Filipino? In the openness of Sikolohiyang Pilipino, disciplinal demarcations have been blurry. An additional point to ponder in the science question is the model of science espoused: a positivist framework seeking to establish ahistoric universals, albeit within a more complex social context, or a proactive postmodern position with emphasis on its ability to guide human action to attain goals (Torres, 1997).

The socio-historical period post Enriquez's death is very different from the times when Sikolohiyang Pilipino was started and allowed to flourish. In the mid-90s, the economy appeared to be in fairly good shape, the government was doing its job, peace and reconciliation was the new order with various peace talks initiated with the left, the right and the Muslim separatists. The studentry was not as restive nor as critical and questioning as the students of the 70s. Career advancement and material attainments were the big motives. Globalization was slowly taking place and people were generally outward-looking. These days, the Philippines are, once again, in the middle of another political storm and questions on our national character are salient once more. What is the place of a Filipino indigenous psychology in this setting?

Sikolohiyang Pilipino and Globalization

The last few years of the second millennium has been marked by major changes in the world order, signaling what has been referred to as globalization. Among these changes are the rapid

developments in information media and technology and their influence on individuals. Where before news took a long and circuitous route to arrive and societies could stay isolated and unknowing of events in each other's society, today, the computer has really pushed the speed button and, within seconds, we are informed of what transpires in the opposite end of the globe. The phenomenal and immediate worldwide response, for example, to the death of a world figure like Pope John Paul II or a natural disaster like the December 2004 tsunami in this side of the world, would be unthinkable in earlier times.

Another change indicating the shrinking of the world and the erosion of national barriers is the greatly increased human interchanges leading to increases in personal interaction with members of another country or culture. Opportunities for travel to other lands have greatly increased for ordinary citizens interested in tourism, education or work purposes. For the Philippines, some of these opportunities for travel are also opportunities for a better life. The number of Filipino overseas contract worker has greatly increased over the years.

The enhanced levels of communication and the higher levels of information and personal encounters have led to the diminution of distance between nations and the enhancement of mutual influence on a day-to-day basis. However, because of this drawing nearer and increased chances of changing each other, "the globalization process poses a challenge as well to the ethnic culture contained within each nation. It frequently invades and transforms the forms of indigenous culture which were established by ethnic groups and nations. The process of globalization, however, tends to be incompatible with the maintenance of indigenous cultures" (Nobutaka, 1996).

In this context, where does Sikolohiyang Pilipino fit in? What is the relevance of developing an indigenous psychology in a tangled, interactive and highly overlapping world where cultural boundaries appear blurred and eroded? Perhaps now is the time to seriously take up the futuristic projection of a universal

psychology derived from and enlightened by the indigenous psychologies. Ho (1998) suggested a metatheory of psychological theories as a means of clarifying convergences and consistencies across theories of cultures by insider and outsider theorists. His metatheory approach

treats each culture not only as a target of investigation but also as a source of intellectual nourishment. The resources from each culture are regarded as potentially useful for interpreting behavior native to the culture as well as behavior in exotic cultures. ...the theoretical significance of the metatheory is...based on a new intellectual approach to psychological knowledge, one that is no longer anchored in a single culture, be it native or alien. Psychological decentering is demanded.

He goes on to suggest that we go beyond indigenization if a universal psychology is to be realized. In a globalizing world, perhaps this is one way. However, we should also be wary that the new globalizing order is not a new form of colonialism and imperialism where the less powerful and economically dependent states are at the mercy of the same old dominant states and where the knowledge base could be used against our advantage.

NOTE

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