Critical Research in Philippine Community Psychology

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Abstract

This paper examines the elements of community psychology as reflected in critical psychology in researches   published in the Philippine Journal of Psychology, during the past 40 years. As Filipino psychologists have continually asked the question about what they want to do as a discipline, the studies were examined historically, tracing the development of the themes of psychological studies. Research outputs reflected vigorous efforts to build theory, methods and analytical tools in the different areas specifically in Social Psychology and Personality, Developmental Psychology, Clinical Psychology, Organizational/Industrial Psychology and Political Psychology. Their postural practice has allowed an outward look at making a conscious effort of accommodating the social context of individual situations and locations. The practice of critical contemporary psychology in the Philippines can be considered as still limited, but growing and continues to face the challenge of praxis. In the early years of their practice, the approach to which the psychologists are partial to limited the potential of making their researches action-oriented. Through time, the way Filipino psychologists go out of their institutions and engaged in researches spawned by socio, political and ecological disruptions do now tell us that they have picked up the call for action to bring about change in the everyday lives of people, in their own communities.

One big gap identified is the way a social problem is tackled, as these were partial to urban experiences, resulting to the disenfranchisement of the practitioners from the geographical and social margins. Hence, the everyday lives of those from the margins which could have been examined by the practitioners from the same milieu might have been overlooked. However, Filipino psychologists have, as reflected in the breadth of studies covered in this review, begun an introspective incursion into the ontological, epistemological and methodological shortcomings of the early years. The future holds a lot of promise for Filipino psychologists in sharpening their disciplinal lenses via an adoption of a critical stance in making the personal embossed with the social.

Keywords: Philippine psychology, community psychology, action research, critical psychology

Introduction

The perspective of critical contemporary psychology to use research to solve social problems and promote quality of life presents a relevant yardstick for the evaluation of one aspect of

the growth of Philippine psychology today. Although the discipline is relatively young in the Philippines, its history reveals the conscious effort of not a few local psychologists to respond to the goals of the critical tradition.

This paper examines the elements of community psychology as critical psychology in published psychology researches of Filipino psychologists during the past 40 years. It primarily examines the *Philippine Journal of Psychology*, since this journal has served as the major avenue for research dissemination nationwide. The studies were reviewed along the dimensions of the aspects of social problems addressed, types of communities studied, research methods used, forms of intervention programs conceptualized and/or implemented and their impact on the affected communities. The studies were also looked at historically to be able to trace the development of the themes they addressed across time.

The paper is a collaborative effort of researchers from three social science disciplines, namely, Psychology, Anthropology and Sociology. This was done deliberately in order to emphasize the interdisciplinary approach of community psychology. In Tan's history of Philippine Psychology (1999), he suggested that 'inputs from our fellow social scientist from other disciplines' will be important in the 'growth of the discipline'.

Community Psychology as Critical Psychology

Critical psychology is a movement that challenges psychology to work towards emancipation and social justice (Austin & Prilleltensky, 2001). In addition, it opposes the uses of Psychology to perpetuate oppression and injustice (Parker, 1999). Coming from the tradition that gives primacy to consciousness-raising, the critical slant in doing psychology renders the discipline to be more attuned to what is happening on the ground with the people who are its object of inquiry. Being so, Critical Psychology goes beyond being a heuristic tool in studying people in community, and becomes more of a mechanism that could bring about change in people's lives.

Since Critical Psychology is a strategy that aims to politicize all subdisciplines in Psychology, it enables the discipline to critically evaluate its moral and political implications (Prilleltensky, 1994, 1999; Walkerdine, 2001). It focuses on reshaping the discipline of Psychology to promote emancipation in society (Prilleltensky, 2001). This critical psychology is based on a commitment to the values of caring and compassion, collaboration and democratic participation, self-determination, human diversity, and social justice (Prilleltensky & Fox, 1997). Such commitment runs parallel to how Lincoln and Guba (2000, p. 174) see the advocacy among critical theorists for 'social action, from overturning of specific unjust practices to radical transformation of entire societies'. Social action really is an integral part of being critical. The penultimate goal of being critical is to transform those oppressive and oppressing structures after unraveling them. This critical element in psychology springs from its capacity to provide the lens with which to see how present conditions came about from a historical past and thereby enhancing the social context of the personal.

Psychology has traditionally defined itself as the study of the individual organism. Psychodynamic, humanistic, and cognitive perspectives have focused on individuals rather than on their environments. Social psychologists, likewise, have studied primarily the cognitions and attitudes of individuals, and even the tradition of behaviorism has seldom studied cultural-social variables, despite emphasizing on the importance of environments.

However, defining Psychology as the study of how individuals are related to their sociocultural environment is already implicit in the works of John Dewey and Kurt Lewin (Sarason, 1974, 2003). Although the stance of focusing on individuals had its benefits, its limitations also led to the emergence of alternative viewpoints which includes those of community psychology.

In North America, the emergence of community psychology contributed to setting the stage for contemporary critical psychology. It has attempted to move beyond the ahistorical, asocial, and value neutral assumptions of mainstream psychology (Sarason, 1981). Community psychology developed in response to the notion of community as forgotten; brought about by extreme individualism, especially in a Western cultural context. Community psychology represents a reaction to the limitations of mainstream psychology and an extension of it.

Although at first the ideas of community and psychology seem to be contradictory, where community suggests the notion of people coming together in a shared endeavor or geographical proximity, and psychology traditionally concerned with individuals, community psychologists see quality of life for individuals, for communities and for societies as inextricable (Dalton et al., 2007; Elias & Wandersman, 2007). The community psychology perspective can be explored by looking at the shifts it has undertaken. First, from focusing only on individuals to considering how individuals, communities and societies are intertwined; and second, a more detailed analysis of how individual and social problems are intertwined (Elias & Wandersman, 2007, p. 15). Based on these shifts in perspectives, community psychology concerns itself with individuals, but keeping in mind their relationship with communities and societies. Community psychology integrates research and action with the goal of seeking to understand and enhancing the quality of life, not just for individuals, but for communities and societies as well. What is crucial about community psychology is that it is aware of values, since these help clarify choices for research and action and they also help identify when actions and espoused values do not match. In addition, for one to be able to understand a community or a culture involves understanding its distinctive values. Community psychology in itself has a distinctive spirit (Kelly, in Dalton et al., 2007) having a shared sense of purpose and meaning which becomes the basis of commitment. This spirit is based on seven core values which are central to the work of community psychologists and the issues that they raise for community life. The core values identified are individual and family wellness, sense of community, respect for human diversity, social justice, citizenship participation, collaboration and community strengths, and empirical grounding (Dalton et al., 2007).

Action Research

The basic tenet of community psychology, "(i)ndividual lives and community life are intertwined" (Dalton et al., 2007, p. 3) succinctly summarizes the significance of the people, events and social structures that definitely have an effect on what makes our lives stress-free or stress-full. Community psychology is clearly biased towards putting the traditional object of the disciplinal analysis, the individual, *in the company of others*. What an individual experiences is not an isolated incidence; to better understand the individual and to better help him/her find answers to problems, the social location of the individual has to be recognized. As Dalton et al. (p. 6) maintain, 'there are no truly individual problems or interventions. Everything that humans do takes place in social contexts: in a culture, a locality, a setting (such as a workplace, school, playground, or home) and a set of personal relationships.'

Cognizant of the 'social locatedness and embeddedness' of an individual, the practice of community psychology takes into consideration the levels of conceptual position of an individual outside his/her own person: the microsystems, organizations, localities up to the level of the macrosystems. Socially contextualizing the individual presupposes privileging certain principles in the form of core values that shape the approach of community psychology. Dalton et al. (p. 23) present these values as: individual and family wellness, sense of community, respect for human diversity, social justice, citizen participation, collaboration and community strengths and empirical grounding. These sub-disciplinal values show the heightened consideration for how an individual can affect and be affected by the community.

The link between the individual and the collectivities s/he is a part of presents a locus of research that potentially addresses issues of concern such as those that threaten physical, emotional or mental well-being. An ideal type of research that could suitably produce the essential information for practical action in a community setting is the action research.

Reason and Bradbury (2001), in the introduction of their edited book, maintain that action research is rather difficult to define given the multidimensionality of its components, the processes it entails and the goals aimed for. It is seen as 'a participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, grounded in a participatory worldview' which is perfectly suited to the ideals of community psychology. There is a noticeable ontological bias towards the human beings as individuals who can know the social structures that make their lives meaningful, and who possess the faculty to change those same structures if they become a source of any form of stress for them. An epistemological presupposition therefore follows from this: that knowledge generated by the individuals under distress with other people in the persons for instance of psychologists and professional researchers therefore is *acceptable* knowledge. Reason and Bradbury (2001, p. 1) further find the purpose of action research as one that 'seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities.' Clearly, action research is an inquiry about everyday lives and issues of ordinary, common people and how they can act upon their own problems.

It is therefore understandable how the characteristics of action research enumerated by Reason and Bradbury (2001, p. 2) encompass the ontological and epistemological elements mentioned earlier. For one, action research must be able to generate 'practical knowledge that is useful to people in the everyday conduct of their lives.' Effecting change on the social location of individuals therefore is a key objective of action research. A consequential characteristic of this type of research that bridges the academic and practical is the production of 'new forms of understanding' that factor in reflective application of theories for human emancipation and for strengthening their communities. The essential feature of action research, anchored in its practical dimension, is seen by Reason and Bradbury (2001, p. 2) in its being participative: 'action research is participative research, and all participative research must be action research.' In their own words, Reason and Bradbury (2001) show what people have and what they can do for their own lives.

> Human persons are agents who act in the world on the basis of their own sensemaking; human community involves mutual sensemaking and collective action.

> Action research is only possible *with, for* and *by* persons and communities, ideally involving all stakeholders both in the questioning and sensemaking that informs the research, *and* in the action which is its focus. (p. 2)

The qualities of action research, namely participative, emancipatory and involving engaged people, may not sit well with some quarters due to its radical approach. Stringer (1996, p. 9), for instance, mentions that action research suffered a weakening due to its association with political activism in the 1960s. Given the trend now for involving people in research, action research has come to be known as a "disciplined inquiry (research) which seeks focused efforts to improve the quality of people's organizational, community and family lives" (Calhoun, as quoted in Stringer, 1996).

Action research is hence, in spirit and form, community-based action research. Stringer (1996, p. 10) sees community-based action research as democratic, equitable, liberating and life enhancing. The point that this type of research is the ideal approach to and mode of conducting a study about people, about individuals cannot be stressed enough. The bottom line about action research that is community-based is that people living in a community have the capacity to know and understand their own situation and in effect have the potential to transform their own lives.

The Goals of Filipino Psychologists

The commitment of Filipino psychologists to their social responsibility to promote quality of life has been in place from the very start. When the forerunners of Philippine Psychology gathered as a professional organization in 1962, the promotion of human welfare was immediately laid down as one of the goals in their constitution (Tan, 1999). Almost fifty years hence, they continue to "provide scientific analysis" of current events as researchers and they have taken "positions and actions on important social issues" and "supported the psychological needs" of individuals and organizations" as practitioners (PAP, n.d.).

Reflecting on the role of psychologists in national and social policy-making, Tan (1990) believes that there is still a need to do good and relevant research that can inform policies. Licuanan (2000) echoes the same call for more involvement in national issues in areas like human costs of development and people's participation in development. She agrees with Tan that psychologists here do not yet have a definite professional identity. There is an apparent realization that opens up an avenue for reflexivity among Filipino psychologists at this point. The intent of informing policies impresses the potential of going beyond the limits set by the traditional way of doing psychology. At the same time, this shows the capacity of the discipline of overcoming its ontological, epistemological and methodological limitations.

Critical Community Research in Philippine Psychology: A Review of the *Philippine Journal of Psychology* (PJP), 1968-2010

Research activities in Philippine Psychology took off during the 1960s. Tan (1999) attributed this to the annual PAP conventions and the publication of the *Philippine Journal of Psychology* which provided a channel for research dissemination. The researches in this journal for the first two decades, the 1960s and 1970s, were experimental and heavy on statistical analyses. They were studies to test out theories and also relied on previous works of their colleagues where they validated some items or applied them in different situations. Researches, likewise, have not centered on social problems and hence there was no need yet

for introducing intervention programs. The areas chosen for studies were Educational Psychology, Cognitive Psychology, Child Psychology, and in a few cases Family Psychology and Health Psychology. It was only in 1977 that a shift occurred in the type of research published, with different foci and methodologies being introduced. The staple method used in many of the studies up until that time was the experiment. Since these research findings leaned more in the direction of the generation of knowledge, rather than being intended for direct community interventions, they can be classified as basic or pure research. This is understandable, as the researches were not generated by a concern about social problems. However, the year 1977 marks an important change, inaugurating the emergence of different perspectives of Filipino Psychology. The issue of January-June 1977, for example, contains researches considered as milestones in Philippine Psychology; e.g., Virgilio G. Enriquez's "Filipino Psychology in the Third World". He criticized the token use of Filipino concepts in local Psychology, while maintaining foreign categories of analysis, because it leads to the distortion of Philippine realities and the miseducation of Filipinos. Instead he called for indigenous research using concepts and methods that are relevant to the local culture (Enriquez, 1977). Other significant studies of this decade were one by Bonifacio's (1977) in which he used a Social Interactionist approach to make sense of Filipino subjectivity in relation to other aspects of social behavior; and one by Mataragnon's (1977), which employed a culturally adapted non-reactive research method, the *pagtatanung-tanong.* Also, Domingo's (1977) study on Philippine child rearing was the only to depart from the dominant methodological reliance on experimental design or the use of psychological measurements. It utilized participant observation, key informant techniques, the systematic interview of children and mothers, and the child verbal Thematic Apperception Test, particularly the doll play.

By 1979 the focus of published research had shifted to subjects promoted by Filipino psychologists: that of looking into our own psychological structures using methodologies that are apt to our own socio-cultural setting. This is indicative of a disciplinal reflection on the practice of psychology in the Philippines vis-à-vis its Western roots. However, it was noted that the second issue of the same volume seemed not to carry this consciousness. Our brief journey through the remaining years of the decade has revealed that the practice of psychology during that period had been very academe-oriented. Being so, the researches done still bear a positivistic orientation as seen in the predilection for experimental and theory-driven studies.

The decade of the 1980s witnessed the development of a strong Asian flavor in psychology, with several researches that probed the potential of cross-cultural psychological research in the Philippines. There was an active exchange of views among Asian psychologists. With regards to researches done in the Philippines specifically, there was a clear partiality to urban communities as geographical location for the studies that were published. In line with this the Western imprint on psychology was tempered by calls for conscious reflection on the way psychology was to be practiced in the local setting. Attention was paid to the utilization of indigenous methods to promote the adaptation of the discipline to the local situation, indigenous psyche and distinct local characteristics of the Filipino lifeway. Contributions centered on urban communities tell us that the practitioners heard (published) at that time still mainly came from the major universities. Also, the local practice of psychology was still extractive, doing research for knowledge generation and for consumption by practitioners. The conscious effort to bring about change in the community, i.e. intervention on behalf of the category of individuals studied, was still absent. The researches done were not social-problem oriented and still carried the traditional disciplinal focus on the individual. There

was, however, evidence of active interaction between psychology and other disciplines like sociology and anthropology, as seen in contributions by practitioners in the said fields.

During the 1990s, most psychologists were still inclined to use Introductory Psychology students as subjects for their researches. Toward the later part of the decade, however, a broader and more diverse group of research participants in different settings became evident. A shift in the focus allowed the study of people from different developmental age groups and different settings, as well as the investigation of more diverse research topics, largely in the fields of Social Psychology and Cognitive Psychology. There was also a growing interest in field studies and other innovative methods (Carandang, 2000), even though experimental, correlational and statistical designs, following the empirical and positivist traditions, continued as important modes for generating psychological knowledge during this decade.

In addition to shifts in research participants and settings, several psychologists during the 1990s started engaging in the development of concepts and theories that drew from the Filipino experience. Torres (1997), a noted social psychologist, explained that the more vigorous work in *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* was an effort to develop theories and methods that situate Filipino behavior in its social, cultural and historical context, and is necessary not only to establish culturally appropriate explanations of Filipino behavior, but to address various social problems.

The growing efforts among psychologists to address real-life problems during the 1990s are clear in works on health promotion and intervention. Clinical-phenomenological studies and researches on coping with different life circumstances and developmental stages, on the other hand, provided inputs for more sensitive and competent clinical and counseling practice. These works further informed social policy makers about necessary child and adolescent protection and other institutional supports for different sectors of society. The research inputs in the field of education had important policy implications, informing education authorities about language and language policies. Bernardo's call for psychologists to play a more active role in the academic functions of schools (1996) pointed to the need for more intensive training in psychological theory in the school setting. In the organization and industrial areas, research on the stressors and strains in combining work and family among working parents (Hechanova-Alampay, 1997) supported reducing work-related stress through work policies and benefits. In addition, Clamor's (1997) study on conflict management practices in semi-conductor companies offered alternatives to more formal mechanisms in companies. Samonte's (1992, 1994) studies on Filipino women in foreign countries, on the other hand, sought to inform overseas employment authorities about a more effective cross-cultural and adaptive skills program for Filipinas seeking employment or marriages abroad. Furthermore, the peace efforts became more efficient when researches started addressing cognition, practice and peace education (Sta. Maria, 2000; Salazar-Clemena, 1995; Montiel, 1996).

The research outputs in the PJP during the decade 2001-2010 reveal a continuing and more conscious effort by Filipino psychologists to develop psychological knowledge in the different fields and in various settings and to define relevant concerns that they thought the discipline could possibly address. For instance, while many of the studies in Developmental Psychology still focused on understanding how children think and reason, a more comprehensive body of studies investigated the various concerns and resources of adolescents from different school environments, using focus group discussions. The recognition of Filipino adolescents as a developmental group during this decade marked the development of Adolescent Psychology in the local setting, which apparently provided the

opportunity to inform possible programs for them. Studies on adults likewise took a developmental perspective by focusing on developmental and social issues like sexuality and cognitions of women. Efforts to understand cognitions and behaviors of different age groups in their social contexts became the preferred goals of researches in the field.

The diverse works in Social Psychology covered relevant social issues like kidnapping, the reproductive bill and sexual health behavior. The number of research outputs in the area of Political Psychology reflects a growth that already began in earlier in the decade. The elections of 2004, the EDSA 2 event and the development of various processes of political participation were a focus of several studies. A new interest in environmental concerns was evident in works about volunteer helping behavior, community resilience during disasters and the cognitions of biodiversity conservation in a community. Research works in the field of Organizational/Industrial Psychology further took off during this decade with an entire PJP issue devoted to I-O researches.

The body of works in Clinical Psychology largely focused on very specific concerns like abuse in the Filipino family, the role of the family in personality development, coping behaviors and symptoms of disorders. The use of clinical approaches was also evident in the works, which underscores the marked increase in the number of clinical psychologists during this period and the need for research as an input in clinical practice. Contributions in Educational Psychology were also the goals of a diverse body of researches.

One of the first papers published in this decade explained the need to deconstruct metanarratives in order to respond to postmodern conditions and diversity and differences (Tiangco & Tiangco, 2001). This paper set the direction for many works, including those that discussed theoretical frameworks. The Filipino personality was the focus of a few major works. Carandang's concept of the *tagasalo* personality was examined and the *kapwa* theory and *bahala na* concept were revisited. There were validations of factors of the revisions or translations of tests. The interest in cross-cultural researches which began in the earlier decades continued during this period.

Other Efforts in Philippine Psychology

Although this paper only focuses on the researches published in the *Philippine Journal of Psychology*, it is significant to look also at other works that psychologists have completed, since it is through these that one can see the direction of the goals of the discipline, particularly in community psychology and action research.

One outstanding study that used community psychology was the research by Arellano-Carandang, Sison and Carandang (2007) entitled "*Nawala ang Ilaw ngTahanan*". The focus of the research was the impact on family members left behind by OFW mothers and its main goal was to formulate research-based programs and activities for these families to be empowered and their communities to be strengthened. The participants of the study were families in poor urban communities. These families had mothers as migrant workers and fathers as caregivers of the children. The study sampled populations often underrepresented, since there is a "silent agreement" (Arellano-Carandang et al., 2007) to gloss over the real predicament of the families of female migrant workers thus preventing the assistance they need. The study used the family-systems approach and made use of a clinical-phenomenological method (Arellano-Carandang et al., 2007).

The same author, Carandang together with Queena N. Lee-Chua, complete another study entitled "The Filipino family surviving the world: The psychology of *Pinoy* families" (Carandang & Lee-Chau, 2008). The authors discussed various societal changes and their impact on the family and tried to situate the Filipino family in context. It focused on family dynamics and the various interactions within, which was shown to be different from the West. Moral regeneration in the society, which starts from the family, is the emphasis of the research. As part of the research, other challenges faced by Filipino families were looked at, including traumatized children of the poor, autism, sexual abuse and the OFW phenomenon, with emphasis on the spouse and the children left behind.

A study entitled "Children of global migration: Transnational families and gendered woes", by Rhacel Salazar Parreñas (2006), was another significant effort that contributed to critical psychology. The research site was a city in Central Philippines chosen because of a high concentration of colleges and schools, working on the assumption that many children left behind in transnational families would be represented in the institutions of higher learning, where attainment of education for one's children is the motivating factor for labor migration. Transnational families pose challenges to the development of close family relations which include the risk of emotional distance between the children and their migrant parents, the overburdening of extended kin with care responsibilities, the threat of strains in marriages as well as the danger of inadequate parental guidance of children.

Aside from community psychology researches, there have been various efforts to help OFWs and their families over the last decade. One of these was to provide free online counseling and psychological support. Ateneo CORD, in partnership with the Psychology Department, Department of Information and Computer Science, and UGAT Foundation, launched the OFW Online in July 2009. It continues today to service OFWs and their families and tries to expand its services by extending their call to individuals who are willing to be part of their pool of counselors. As incentive, the counselors receives training, attend case meetings supervised by the faculty of the university engaged in Clinical Psychology, and can credit their involvement as part of their practicum or internship. Graduate students who wish to do their MA thesis related to the project are also welcome since the experience in itself can generate a number of researches (Ateneo Center for Organization Research and Development, 2011).

In addition to online counseling, stress management and counseling has been done for OFWs. A forum was organized in Milan of October 2010 to address the social cost of migration as well as to strengthen the community-based support groups for families of OFWs in the Philippines. It was a collaborative effort of the *Ugnayan at Tulong Para sa Maralitang Pilipino* (UGAT), the Philippine Consulate General (PCG), the POLO and the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA). The forum aimed to prepare for skills needed in providing assistance to victims of abuse and to other vulnerable individuals or groups stressing the importance of the role of community leaders as care providers. (PIA-MMIO)

A great deal of research has focused on OFWs and the use of New Media. Agila (2009) presented case studies involving computer-mediated communication among OFWs. The research's findings indicate that the most significant contribution of CMC to the relationships of the key informants was their greater acceptance of migration. The CMC is credited for the respondents' more optimistic view of overseas employment. It made them feel as if sacrifices

made in the name of financial security were no longer as overwhelming as they were before the existence of the Internet and cellular phone.

Researches have also been done on the psychology of remittances, as OFWs remit billions of dollars to the Philippines, making it afloat in its economy. It becomes a means of empowerment and upliftment, which if used properly functions as a path out of their poverty, according to Dr. Elena Samonte-Hinckley, who has done extensive work with Filipino communities abroad (Rosete & Torres, 2006).

Health-related studies demonstrate the community activities that some Filipino psychologists have done together with researchers from other disciplines. In such a multidisciplinary study, Paz, Medina and Ventura (1997) investigated stigma among the Tausugs of Mindanao. Lack of knowledge was theorized as influencing stigmatization, which in turn affected health control programs against Hansen's disease or leprosy. The goal was to examine the manifestations of stigma, its effects on the sick and the community and the coping mechanisms of the sick and their relatives. Using multidisciplinary approaches that included historical investigation, psycholinguistic analysis of taped oral data and psychological testing the study was able to develop more culturally sensitive and appropriate education materials for an HD control program. Ventura's other health-related community work, which was published in the PJP (1993), involved the study of blood examination as a crucial part of a prevention campaign against filariasis.

The Aytas, an indigenous community in Floridablanca, Pampanga, was the focus of a collaborative study involving health psychologists, the local government, a non-government organization involved with popular education and an organization of local leaders (2007). Adapting a participatory action research approach, the study included workshops, dialogues and consultations with stakeholders in order to develop an educational system that will sustain the components of preserving the Ayta culture and way of life, livelihood and health promotion. Drawing from the knowledge of the Aytas' holistic concept of health and their perceived social, political and economic barriers towards achieving health, the action research which focused on literacy-livelihood, allowed for the building of a literacy center, an organized Ayta community with a community of leaders and seedlings for livelihood. Land dispute, however, continues to be the obstacle to the Ayta community's problem on land ownership.

Political psychology is one area where psychologists are able to do both research and action. In a study on children used for combat by the NPA and the MILF, Protacio-De Castro (2001) compiled from interviews and anecdotal reports the different factors that pushed child soldiers to participate in armed conflict situations. The accounts further revealed that, apart from being exposed to physical injuries and illness, the children experienced human rights violations like summary executions, arbitrary detention and torture when they are arrested and detained by the Armed Forces of the Philippines. All these caused psychological effects that impaired the children's over-all development. Protacio-De Castro's research called for the strict enforcement of laws and regulations on the management of child soldiers by the AFP and for DSWD and non-government organizations to work together to provide the children with a safe environment and a comprehensive recovery and reintegration program which should include a livelihood and skill-building components. Protacio-De Castro likewise proposed that a ban on the use of children as soldiers should be part of advocacy, educational and mobilizing activities of government and non-government agencies.

Another example of social action research on behalf of the promotion of human rights is a study on the rehabilitation of the large number of survivors of torture and political violence during the Marcos regime and post-Marcos period (Parong et al., 1992). Conducted by medical professionals together with Filipino psychologists and in coordination with local and international agencies, the rehabilitation work involved out-patient services in a clinic, detention center visits and educational activities. The research component involved data gathering and diagnosis of both political detainees in military camps and ex-detainees and the action component included treatment, monitoring and evaluation accompanied by individual and group therapy work with the children of political detainees. The treatment entailed individual and group therapy, stress tension reduction therapy, medical and health services, occupational therapy, home visits and community outreach and discussions on torture and how to cope with torture for high-risk groups. This social action research continues until today because political repression and violence persist. Socio-cultural and economic factors likewise pose problems in many survivors' successful rehabilitation.

Critical Psychology in the Philippines

Critical psychology, as a field of study, is defined in various ways, but most writers agree that it is a movement that challenges psychology to work towards emancipation and social justice, and that opposes the uses of psychology to perpetuate oppression and injustice (Parker, 1999). The core of critical psychology focuses on the concepts of oppression and emancipation. Oppression is both a state of subjugation and a process of exclusion and exploitation, and involves psychological as well as political dimensions. It involves structural inequality that is reproduced by the everyday practices (Prilleltensky & Gonick, 1996). When emancipation is invoked, we refer to the person's life opportunities as they relate to power (Teo, 1998).The focus of psychologists is on human problems, hence, there is a need to pay attention to social problems. The challenge for critical psychologists is to integrate the most promising features of each tradition with the common aim of eliminating oppressive practices in both psychology and in society at large. The promotion of emancipation and the resistance of oppression as objectives of critical psychology can be achieved by facing the challenge of praxis, which is the integration of, and constant engagement with, reflection, research, and action. It is predicated on attaining a balance between (a) academic and grounded input, (b) understanding and action, (c) processes and outcomes, and (d) differing and unequal voices (Austin & Prilleltensky, 2001).

For Kane (1998), grounded knowledge is not enough. There should be a healthy tension between grounded input and academic discourse. Although academic discourse is useful, one still has to acknowledge the fact that academics occupy a particular location in society, typically one of privilege. Most critical psychologists are in the academe. They are concerned with the welfare of oppressed populations, but may risk prescribing what disadvantaged people need in the absence of consultation with the people themselves. People's voices need to be scrutinized for their ethical and political meaning. Further, to have an internally consistent framework of values but does not reflect the lived realities of most people nor knowing people's needs and aspirations without processing into principles and guidelines will be worthless. The techniques of participatory action research in community psychology can complement deconstructive analyses to determine which social policies are progressive and which ones maintain the status quo. At the same time, discursive methodologies can dissect the voice in which people are speaking (Austin & Prilleltensky, 2001).

To ensure that knowledge does not remain the sole object of intellectual interest, there should be a balance between understanding and action. For one to achieve the common aims of critical psychology, theory has to be followed by social action. Writing and theoretical work are forms of academic action, but this work needs to be translated into social actions that have a direct impact on the life circumstances of people who suffer. "Powerful ideas need to be matched by powerful actions" (Austin & Prilleltensky, 2001, p. 10).

Recognizing the importance of entering into a dialogue with research participants and community members is essential (Crossley, 2000; Holzman & Morss, 2000). Postmodernism and empowering approaches in psychology, including qualitative methodologies and collaborative interventions with communities recognize this. However, the need to balance good processes with effective outcomes is required, to ensure that dialogue is not an end in itself (Austin & Prilleltensky, 2001).

The fourth criterion for pursuing praxis in critical psychology is balancing differing and unequal voices. This responds

> …to the challenge of critical psychology by calling upon diverse voices (academics and community members), employing diverse methodologies (discursive analysis, qualitative investigations, participatory action research), and relying on diverse traditions (liberation psychology, postmodernism, community psychology, etc.). The challenge of critical psychology is to integrate these various perspectives into the common aim of human liberation. (Austin & Prilleltensky, 2001, p. 12)

Both in theory and practice, Psychology in the Philippines has changed through the years. Beginning as an academic discipline in the 1920s with the establishment of distinct Psychology departments in the different universities and colleges in Manila, the field grew when other institutions around the country followed suit and graduate programs flourished. Psychologists likewise began their practice in the schools. Research became a major activity with the annual PAP convention and the bi-annual Philippine Journal of Psychology. The research outputs through the years reflect vigorous efforts to build theory, methods and analytical tools in the different areas specifically in Social Psychology and Personality, Developmental Psychology, Clinical Psychology, Organizational/Industrial Psychology and Political Psychology. In the 1970s, a group of Filipino psychologists began the movement pushing for the development of theories and methodologies based on the Filipino experience. Practice, on the other hand, has expanded from individual work in the Psychology departments to testing of overseas contract workers in the 70s, therapy and organizational/industrial work. Psychological services were provided in diverse settings which required the expertise of psychologists like in health promotion, disaster intervention, effective coping and learning.

Filipino psychologists have continually been asking the question about what they want to do as a discipline. As a professional organization, they have reflected about the directions of their psychological activities in the past and in the present. Foremost are the goals of developing global competitiveness in psychological teaching, research and practice, the professionalization of Psychology by way of legislation and the establishment of a code of ethical standards for psychologists. As a body, they have agreed to support efforts at social transformation by providing the necessary scientific analysis of events and by taking positions and actions on important social issues. This stance represents a growing commitment to the value of social responsibility to promote human welfare in society.

Reflexivity is also much implied in this disciplinal stance. Looking inwardly, Filipino psychologists questioned the discipline itself, its methodologies and concepts. Such postural practice has allowed an outward look at making a conscious effort of accommodating the social context of individual situations and locations.

Translating these values require moving away from a value neutral orientation that marks mainstream psychology. For a number of Filipino psychologists, this meant embracing the challenges posed by the political and social environment. Hence, in the 1970s, psychologists applied their psychological skills in recruitment agencies at the time when thousands of Filipinos were seeking employment in foreign lands. Martial law and the post-Marcos era have advanced both research and interventions in order to analyze and address the consequences of a dictatorship. Education, research and practice in organizations and industries have drawn programs and social policies that sought to improve production and worker well-being in these settings. Health promotion, environmental conservations, effective learning environments, behaviors during the presidential elections, family abuse, bureaucracy and human development, elderly, personality disorder – these are a few of the other challenges that have led psychologists "to step down from their pedestals", so to speak, and render service.

Critical psychology as manifested in such forms as community psychology and feminism was observed in some of the researches done in the *Philippine Journal of Psychology*. These forms emerged as a response to both human problems and societal needs such as health, disempowerment as a result of wars, disasters and gender, violence against women and children and work-related problems. The pressures from martial law, the continuing problem of human rights violations and the failure of the peace process were likewise the important impetus for the significant rise in works in the area of Political Psychology. Among these Filipino psychologists, there were a few who did not only seek to understand these human problems. They pushed their work further and committed themselves to eliminate or address the needs through social action such as programs for families and for organizations, trainings for a more sensitive and competent therapy work, social policies for child and human rights protection, peace education and reassessment of language policies.

In addition to the shift to discourses about practical concerns in real life, an increasing preference for more qualitative methods and triangulation in data-gathering, seems to point to a growing recognition of the limitations of the experimental and statistical designs in Western Psychology. The study of behaviors and mental processes in their social and cultural contexts as espoused by *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* represents an important change in paradigm. These directions and the focus on practical concerns have, in effect, broadened the clients/research participants to include marginalized groups. It also allowed Filipino psychologists to veer from Psychology classrooms and psychological clinics and work in more diverse natural settings. These developments in Philippine Psychology today reflect the position of many regions in the world that have, in their history, embraced a colonial experience. They also represent the changing moral and social values that are slowly shaping the directions of teaching, research and practice of Psychology in the Philippine setting.

The practice of critical contemporary psychology is still limited, but growing. It continues to face the challenge of praxis, which is the integration of, and constant engagement with, reflection, research, and action. We can say that the struggle for facing this challenge is still in the incipient stage. This is apparent in the way social problems are treated as a context of individual difficulties. There is a pronounced oversight in how the social is infused in the

personal. Retracing the principles of action research cited several pages back, its being participative and enabling to effect change in everyday lives, the implied call for psychologists to bolster the sociality of individual problems that they study becomes imperative. To effect the change in everyday lives of people that are studied, the channel for their participation in the research per se should have been put in place. However, the approach to which the psychologists are partial to in the early years of practice impaired the potential of making their researches action-oriented. The positivistic, deductive approach of the methodologies and theories utilized in the earlier years gave no room for putting up an action program hinged on participation. As has been pointed out earlier, this is and has been addressed by Filipino psychologists as seen in their research outputs, both in the PJP and other channels. The way Filipino psychologists go out of their institutions and engaged in researches spawned by socio, political and ecological disruptions do now tell us that they have picked up the call for action to bring about change in the everyday lives of people, in their own communities, i.e., in the localities.

One big gap that has to be consciously filled up by Filipino psychologists in their efforts to enact the tenets of critical psychology is the way a social problem is conceptualized. The source of a social problem and how it permeates a person's private life can be presented as a basis for this argument. As C.W. Mills (1959) pointed out in his classic sociological imagination, one's biography is connected to the world history. A person's trouble in his private milieu can be explained by what is happening in the public sphere of the world history. The intersection between the self and the world happens in the setting we call society. The virtue of connecting the different ecological levels (as promoted in Dalton's community psychology) where the individual exists and his problems are located enables the articulation of ways to sensitize and make the individual aware of the sources of his problems. The published psychologists seem to be lacking in this department, the conscious articulation of the nexus among the different levels and therefore makes their researches more on the extractive side only. In effect, the ideal of action research to effect change in everyday lives of individuals has not been attained. The everyday lives conceptually speaking is a very essential aspect of critical psychology as this is the location of the intertwined structural (for instance, institutional) forces that impinge upon the personal of the individuals.

The structural dimension of social life as an important point of looking at the practice of psychology is not exclusive to the subjects of researches. If the institutional (academic) affiliation of the published psychologists were a barometer of participation in the field, an observed marginalization of some practitioners can be forwarded. Most of the publications are outputs of psychologists from the top three universities in the country: University of the Philippines (particularly from its Diliman, Quezon City campus), Ateneo de Manila University and De La Salle University. These three are all located in the capital and therefore are at the center of information, resources and networks. Such privileged position occupied by the practitioners affiliated with any of the three gives them the leverage over those from the provinces and regions. It is therefore no wonder that the social problems attempted at being addressed were very biased towards urban experiences. Such resulted to the disenfranchisement of the practitioners from the geographical and social margins. Hence, the everyday lives of those from the margins which could have been examined by the practitioners from the same milieu might have been overlooked.

The lenses used by the urban-based practitioners thus could have seen a different social dimension and thus understanding a very distinct personal aspect too of a psychological problem that is Filipino. Critical psychology in the Philippines thus has a lot to do still from

where and how it has gained a momentum. Taking advantage of the momentum gained, Filipino psychologists have, as reflected in the breadth of studies covered in this review, begun an introspective incursion into the ontological, epistemological and methodological shortcomings of the early years. The future holds a lot of promise for Filipino psychologists in sharpening their disciplinal lenses via an adoption of a critical stance in making the personal embossed with the social.

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