Chapter 5

From Decolonizing Psychology to the Development of a Cross-Indigenous Perspective in Methodology

The Philippine Experience

Rogelia Pe-Pua

It all began in 1975 when a postgraduate student at the University of the Philippines Psychology Department decided to take a different approach in her field research. Carmen Santiago (1975, 1977) was interested in studying the concept of *pagkalalaki*, a term that is difficult to translate to English but would roughly refer to maleness, manhood, manliness, machismo, or all of these. She started reviewing the literature and found that the available literature (mostly Western) was not relevant to this Filipino concept. So she ventured out into a Philippine village without a clear-cut research design or a literature review, and started interacting with the local residents. What was clear to her was a single question for the men whose views she was interested in obtaining: What is the meaning of *pagkalalaki*? In the course of her finding the best strategies for conducting this research, she discovered the *pakapa-kapa* approach, which was later defined by Torres (1982, p. 171) as “a suppositionless approach to social scientific investigations. As implied by the term itself, *pakapa-kapa* is an approach characterized by groping, searching and probing into an unsystematized mass of social data to obtain order, meaning and directions for research”. *Pakapa-kapa* provided the impetus for encouraging Filipino social scientists to discover methods of research that are indigenous to Filipino participants. *Pakapa-kapa* was a turning point in Philippine social science research.
This chapter will discuss the history of the development of indigenous methods in the Philippines, including the epistemological basis for these methods. Specifically, it will explain the basis of indigenization efforts in Philippine psychology, the debate within cross-cultural psychology on the nature and value of indigenization, the application of indigenous methods, and a critique of these methods.

DECOLONIZING PHILIPPINE PSYCHOLOGY

The seeds for developing indigenous research methods in the Philippines were planted during the early years of the 1970s when Virgilio Enriquez (Carmen Santiago’s professor) spearheaded a movement known as Sikolohiyang Pilipino (Filipino psychology) that calls for understanding Filipino thought and experience from a Filipino perspective or orientation (Enriquez, 1975). The idea of the “indigenous” then becomes relevant in relation to the Western psychology tradition (the exogenous, the colonial) that has dominated the teaching and practice of psychology in the Philippines and which has resulted in an understanding of the Filipino that has been deemed inappropriate and insignificant. For instance, Filipinos’ predisposition to be indirect when they communicate was regarded as being dishonest and socially ingratiating and as reflecting a deceptive verbal description of reality (Enriquez, 1992). In reality, i.e. using a Filipino perspective, this indirectness serves a number of purposes, for example, reflecting concern for the feelings of others to avoid the other person losing face or getting embarrassed if directly confronted with negativity, conforming with the norm of humility and modesty by not directly recognizing one’s own ability and achievements, and so on.

With the shift to an indigenous psychology, Enriquez and his colleagues and students were able to unravel relevant Filipino characteristics and explain them through the eyes of the native Filipino. This effort has resulted in a body of knowledge that includes indigenous concepts and methods. One such concept that unfolded was kapwa (shared identity), which is at the core of Filipino social psychology, and which is at the heart of the structure of Filipino values. Enriquez refuted the widely-acclaimed observation by an American researcher that the main Filipino value is pakikisama, or maintaining smooth interpersonal relations, which would explain why Filipinos try to go along with the group or majority decision (conformity) (Lynch, 1961, 1973). Instead, Enriquez clarified that pakikisama is simply a colonial/accommodative surface value, and that the core value is pakikipagkapwa, which means treating the other person as kapwa or fellow human being (Enriquez, 1978, 1994). The discovery of kapwa and the articulation of its structure have an implication for the way we conduct indigenous research which I will elaborate later.