

Deconstructing the Pilipino Values

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ABSTRACT

The prevailing narratives of the essence of the Pilipino values is very much leaning in the discourse of the Tagalog speakers. Hence, the Tagalog-termed concepts related to the values figure prominently in the literatures and textbooks that attempt to explain and impart the very core and ideals of being Pilipino. These are blindsided-linguistic perspectives anchored in the dominant Tagalog-based Filipino language, one among over-a-hundred languages spoken in the archipelago. A closer scrutiny into another dominant language, the *Binisaya*, reveals that there is a discrepancy in the reckoning of the values when analyzed and deconstructed linguistically. A discourse analysis shows similarities and differences of the usage of terminologies of the Pilipino values in spoken conversation. Similarities were taken as points of intersection of value practices showing coherence. Differences or the lack of counterpart terminologies will show divergence of values as practiced or analyzed in various literatures. This study argues that the Pilipino values, as gleaned from the discourse, reveals a superior-subordinate nexus that defines these values in the context of one's power, position and status in the Philippine society. Further, this asserts that in order to imagine the Pilipino values in an inclusive context, the other languages must be included in the analysis, otherwise, the single-language lens becomes hegemonic, if not ethnocentric.

Keywords: Pilipino values, linguistic analysis, deconstruction, discourse analysis

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Introduction

The premise of the study began with the study of the *duyan* (a hammock; Alovera 2005, 2006). In my master's thesis in Anthropology on the *duyan* and perceived Pilipino dependence, I drove the point that the Pilipino values are manifestations of that dependency. I have long abandoned this linear explanation of the *duyan* as causing the dependency as behaviors are dynamic and cannot be reduced to a single cause. It may be a contributory factor but not the one explanation for the development of the perceived behavior/characteristic. In the same study, I looked into the Pilipino values as a developed cultural strategy. Let us take the study in context.

The *duyan* (and other practices like leaving the child on the crib, cot or bed) is a deliberate isolation of the child from the mother. The study showed that most of the reasons provided for putting the child away is for the infant to sleep (whichever is most preferred and convenient) giving the mother more time for her chores (Alovera 2005). The contention of the study was that the child, particularly of lowlanders, is physically separated from the mother from the instance of birth denying the child of the in-arms care which affords direct skin contact with the mother or the caregiver. This is different from the practice of baby wearing by the indigenous peoples where the child is kept close to the caregiver/parent all the time. Both the lowlanders and indigenous communities have the concept of the *duyan* (other terms: *uwaan*, *b'waan*) but the idea of keeping the child physically close to the caregiver is diverse.

The search for possible answers lead to the several studies on the neurological, anthropological and medical/health benefits of touch – the physical contact between child and the mother/caregiver as the primary source of 'basic trust' (Prescott 1975 cited in Leo retrieved 2003) and security of the child. Touch in this study is defined as 'any form of direct skin-to-skin contact like carrying, kissing, cuddling, caressing, bathing, nursing and the like' (Alovera 2006). The idea was simple: touch is the only form of communication that an infant understands (Montagu 1971, 1978, 1986), hence, the more a caregiver provides direct contact with the child, the more the sense of security develops. The use of the *duyan* does the opposite.

It is argued in the study that when the child is separated from the caregiver, the sense of security is lost leading to dependency manifested with the creation of values as strategy to protect the observed low self-esteem as adults (Arcilla 1998; Cullen 1997; Andres 1981; Guthrie and Jacobs 1966). The study used discourse

analysis to deconstruct the prevailing narrative of the explanation of the formation of the Pilipino values especially when reckoned from the purview of a hegemonic language without regard for the existence of the other languages in the country.

This article is not intended to negate previous narratives of the Pilipino values but merely contributes a different viewpoint as may be affected by the hypothesized cultural practice of isolation of the child through the use of the *duyan* or any related device. This is also limited to those values and practices that can be linguistically deconstructed or associated with the value per se. Moreover, this will not cover all the values purported to be the core of the Pilipino personality. There is no claim that the values discussed here are uniquely Pilipino. Values are universally shared and differ only in the manner these elements are 'ranked, combined and emphasized' giving it a Pilipino incline (Gorrospe 1994).

Discourse Analysis

Discourse, from a sociological standpoint is any practice such as the spoken and written word to artworks, rituals, traditions and customs that produces meaning. The most preferred form in the analysis is the verbal manifestation of discourse as all these practices are eventually translated and communicated in words, the simplest manner in transmitting meaning (Ruiz 2009). This analysis takes into consideration the context and content of conversations in the social and cultural context (Nordquist 2020) and "understand how language is used in real life situations" (Luo 2020).

This study analyses the Pilipino values as practiced and as perpetuated through generations through the use of language. There are multiples of Pilipino languages that separated, chronologically and geographically, from its Austronesian root. This article specifically analyses the two largest stocks: *Tagalog* and *Binisaya*. These two languages are virtually similar in structure but differ in specific terminologies. In this analysis, the similarities and differences in the terms and utility of the languages are compared. The convergence and divergence of terminologies is the basis of this discourse analysis. When terms converge and agree on a point, then the analysis centers on the similarities; likewise, when terms diversify and disagree, the analysis deconstructs the differences.

The prevailing literature on the Pilipino values is largely based on the Tagalog language, thus, the analyses are tinged with ethnocentric generalizations as the terms used do not necessarily include and coincide with the other languages in the Philippines. Hence, the generalizations may not be reflective of the Pilipino (as claimed) as a people sharing a set of values. When the linguistic analysis of values

is based on one of more than a hundred languages, it becomes an academic hegemony which further divides an already divergent society.

Methodology

This article is an analysis based on a previous study/article written by the author (Alovera 2006). This is an analysis of the value system alluded to in the previous analysis of the use of the *duyan* in child rearing practice among the lowland Pilipinos. The analysis here is more a cerebral exercise based purely on the discourse and conventional use of the values as observed by the author as well as the analysis of other authors.

The Pilipino Values: A deconstruction

This article does not deal with all the values that are practiced by the Pilipinos in general. This will particularly focus on the ones frequently written about and are subject to lectures, textbooks and the emphasis given them in the discourse. In this analysis, the Tagalog and *Binisaya* reckoning of the Pilipino values shall be the core of attention as these are the biggest linguistic groups in the country. The two are examined and analyzed for similarities (convergence) and differences (divergence) of the discourse with regard to the practice of the values. Similarities will be pursued as commonalities in the practice while the differences will be deconstructed as divergence which implies that the practice (or the others' analyses of it) cannot be claimed as generally Pilipino. To put emphasis, the analysis of the values, through the discourse, is rooted on the cultural practice of isolating the child from the mother-caregiver which leads to low self-esteem. There shall be heavy reference on the perceived low-self-esteem as a Pilipino character in this analysis.

Before delving into the analysis, it is essential to note here that the Pilipino languages come from the Austronesian linguistic family that comprise the languages of the Pacific islands extending as far as Madagascar (Blust 2018). Most of the languages used in the archipelago are variants of the mother language introduced around 5,000 years ago when our Austronesian ancestors arrived from mainland Asia, particularly taking the south China route (Graillard and Mallari n.d.). The Pilipino languages therefore contain direct similarities in terminologies as well as cognates (derivatives of words that may have shifted in sound and syntax due to long periods of separation; we note that the Austronesian ancestors did not come as one group but in trickles in several moments of history).

Kaulaw or Hiya. It is my contention that *kaulaw/hiya* is the core of the Pilipino values. Most of the other values revolve around the protection of the self from *kaulaw* or *hiya* (sense of shame or embarrassment). This value appears to be treaded with utmost attention. At the outset, I will deviate from many authors' definition of *hiya* as a 'sense of propriety' (IES 2021; Fernandez 2015; Hollnsteiner 1961) in the sense that it is too general and virtually applies to all values. In this analysis, *kaulaw* and *hiya* will be defined in their raw meaning.

But why is there much emphasis on the concept of shame rather than honor? Why is the sense of honor leans much on the absence of shame? This value of *kaulaw* or *hiya* is manifested by the common phrase often uttered by many, '*unsa nalang ikasulti sa uban*' ('*ano nalang sasabihin ng iba*' -- what will others say of us). This may be explained by our own concept of honor.

Let us take a linguistic exploration into the Pilipino concept of honor. The Binisaya term for honor is *dungog* or *kadungganan*. The latter term is derived from the root '*dunggan* or *dalunggan*' which refers to the ears. *Dungog* on the other hand means 'to hear'. The allusion to the ear or hearing implies that the concept of honor rests on what others say about someone. It is therefore imperative that one guards against how others will see one's actions. The Tagalog word for honor is *dangal* or *karangalan*. Let us dissect the term *dangal* (root derivation of *karangalan*). The nearest Tagalog term for ear is *tenga/tainga* (similar to the Bahasa -- our Austronesian neighbor -- word *talinga* or *telinga*; this is also the term used by indigenous groups). Therefore, the terms, *dangal* and *talinga/tainga*, appear to be cognates. The closest Bahasa (maybe Austronesian) term to *dangal* is *dengar* which means hear or listen (n.b. Bahasa is one of the languages spoken in Indonesia, Malaysia and the nearby islands of Sulu and Tawi-tawi). Taken from this perspective, *dengar* and *dangal* are related terms. Both terms, as related to *talinga/tainga*, explains the oft-repeated phrase, '*ano nalang sasabihin ng iba*' (what will others say) as the guiding principle in the determination of honor or dignity. Honor, in this sense, is what others say about you (and perhaps your family as well).

It is for this reason that *tsismis/libak* (gossiping) becomes social control, the means by which a society regulates the behavior of its members (Macionis 2014). Much of the actions of many Pilipinos are dictated by what others say or how others perceive such actions. Nobody wants to be talked about negatively, which is often the case in *tsismis*. In the Philippines, when someone says, '*wala koy ikasulti*' or '*wala akong masabi*' ('I have nothing to say'), it literally means 'I have nothing negative or offensive to say' about a particular person or group.

As a means of behavior control, *kaulaw* or *hiya* takes the form of power. In this context, the value takes the Foucauldian context of governmentality where one conducts self-discipline or governance (Huff 2020) given the prying eyes of the society and the sanctions of ostracism one gets when behavior deviates from the expected course. In the same breadth, the value, which is strictly observed, can also be usurped by individuals as power to control others, thus creating a superior-subordinate relationship. The discussion of the values that follow have much to do with the protection of the sense of *kaulaw/hiya* and the perceived low self-esteem. The analysis deals also with the concept of power as related to the practice or the imposition of the Pilipino values. The values that are externally imposed as opposed to internally practiced are manifested in the superior-subordinate nexus where the powerful dominates and controls the powerless which implies that societal status or position are vital elements in value regulation.

There are many common practices (and values) among Pilipinos that are related to *kaulaw/hiya*. For instance, the Pilipinos are known to practice **hospitality to a fault** (Agoncillo 1960; book cover leaf). It is a common practice that many Pilipinos go through all the hassle to entertain a visitor, even a stranger, i.e., bringing out fresh linens, serving expensive food, vacating the master's bedroom etc..., just so to please the guest. This may be an authentic Pilipino brand of hospitality but it may also be possible that it is a strategy to keep the guest from speaking ill of how one estimates a visitor. It may be truthful behavior but it can also be a way to keep the others from talking (*tsismis: walang masabi* or *walay ikasulti*). The same is true with being careful in our dealings with other people, the so-called SIR -- **smooth interpersonal relationships**. It is imperative that one does not offend, in any way such as words or actions, the other person, especially one's neighbors. In order to belong to a community, one must necessarily be polite otherwise the order will be disrupted and *tsismis* operates. Being frank in the Philippines is viewed as vulgar. Appropriate words, in dealing with others must at all times be observed otherwise scuffle will ensue. For instance, when a neighbor borrows an object from a particular household, it is essential that one does not 'get it back' (*kuhaon* or *kukunin*). One must 'borrow it back' (*hulaman* or *hiramin*). Doing the former is considered rude. (There appears to be a communal ownership of things or properties but this is a matter worthy of a separate forum.) Offending the folkways make people talk and nobody wants that. *Kaulaw* or *hiya* operates here.

Utang Kabubut-on or Utang na loob. If there is a value that nobody wants to possess is this, literally, a debt of gratitude (Kaut 1961 in Pe-Pua & Protacio-Marcelino 2000) or debt of good will (de Castro 1998). This form of indebtedness is seemingly unpayable whose value is determined only by one's gratefulness to somebody else. Thus, no valuation can measure this debt.

One wonders if this is indeed a value. Among the values said to be characteristically Pilipino is *utang kabubut-on/loob*. But contrary to the perceived notion that it is a practice, this value (or disvalue) is something nobody seems to want or at the very least, run away from. Admittedly, nobody wants to have *utang kabubut-on*. The reason most likely why no one wants to have *utang kabubut-on* is due to its nature of a never ending payment and indebtedness. In the discourse, it is noticeable that the usage of the phrase *utang kabubut-on* or *utang na loob* in an active sense, i.e., the phrase being used in a sentence preceding the intention of the speaker, is absent in casual conversations, in fact, even in serious ones. It is usual to hear the phrase, in an active sense, in radio dramas or films, or read such in literary pieces but seldom in real life conversations. Analyzing the phrase then in its cinematic, literary or theatrical appeal is dangerous as some authors do, giving the value a sugar-coating charm.

The concept of *utang kabubut-on* or *utang na loob* must be understood and analyzed in the context of how it is being used by the different societies. Enriquez (1990) as other well as other authors (Cleofas 2019/20; de Castro 1998; Enriquez 1990; Gorrospe 1994; Andres 1981) argued on the concept of '*loob*' and its variations, *sama ng loob*, *lakas ng loob*, *tibay ng loob* etc... to be included in the analysis. I diverge politely. The weakness in this analysis lies in the erroneous assumption that all Pilipinos are Tagalog speakers. The concept of *loob* as used by the Tagalog, is not consistent with the Binisaya language. The closest *Bisaya* concept to *loob* is *buot* but the meaning of the word varies in the usage compared to the relatively consistent utility of the word in the Tagalog language. In the instance of the usage of the roots '*buot*' and '*loob*' in *utang na loob* and *utang kabubut-on*, both mean the same. The convergence of meanings of the roots in the two phrases can only be interpreted as they are. To extend the meaning of *loob* and impose it in the other Philippine groups with different languages where the concept is absent, is to undermine the uniqueness of the latter. Enriquez's argument on *utang na loob* as debt of gratitude is based on the other concepts of *loob*. He claims that the richness of *loob* is "*summarily ignored because of the minimal appreciation given to the Filipino language and the lack of appreciation of the meaning and significance of the theoretically fertile concept of loob*"

(Enriquez 1990). Take notice of the sweeping use of ‘Filipino language’ when the assertion is only based in the Tagalog language. Unfortunately, and as previously argued, this contention omits the existence of non-*Tagalog* speakers. As asserted in this analysis, similarities of concepts in the discourse imply convergence of meanings while differences connote divergence and must be reckoned as separate ideas.

Hollnsteiner’s (1961) reckoning of *utang na loob* as contractual reciprocation finds validation in the Binisaya concept of *utang kabubut-on*. *Utang na loob* and *utang kabubut-on* mean the same in the Tagalog and Binisaya languages, debt of gratitude. In the Binisaya discourse, when a person offends another and the former utters the phrase “*wala kay utang kabubut-on*” (“you don’t have a sense of gratitude”), it is usually followed by the phrase, “*wala kay igabalos!*” (roughly translated, “you don’t know how to reciprocate”). Thus, the phrase *utang kabubut-on* is given a mercantilist impression. It is not given for free even if one does not have a choice. Exchange or reciprocation or payback is implied and expected. When one is offered a favor or a gift, the usual response is not to accept it immediately or if it is accepted, it is usually with the phrase, “*nakakahiya naman*” or “*maulaw or maikog man sad ta*” (I am embarrassed by your kindness”). Again *hiya* and *kaulaw* figure prominently in the discourse. Let me take the concept of *maikog* (to be abashed by one’s generosity) further. The prefixes *ma* (or in other instances, *ka*), if taken out leaves the root, *ikog* which in Binisaya translates as tail. Thus, *ma-ikog* then literally means ‘to become one’s tail’ -- an implication of a superior-subordinate relationship. Being subordinate, for a person with a culturally induced low self-esteem as premised, is unacceptable. No wonder no one wants to acquire *utang na loob/kabubut-on*. It puts the person in an awkward position as subordinate when escaping from it is still an option. Several studies point to the relationship between subordination, low self-esteem, depression and anxiety (e.g. Shen et al 2019; Price 2000).

Most of the analyses on the concept of *loob* disregards the concept of *utang*. An examination of how *utang* is reckoned in Pilipino societies reveals that people evade it whenever possible, more so in the discourse. The word *utang* (to acquire debt) is seldom used in the act. Both Tagalog and Bisaya societies use other terms seemingly euphemistic in the hearing. *Kuha* (to get) or *hulam* (to borrow) or *baylo* (to trade/exchange) are the words used among the Bisaya when one wants to obtain something on credit. Similarly, *hiram* (to borrow) is used among the Tagalog. *Utang* seems to be a burdensome term. Acquiring goods on credit from a store one says, “*magkuha*” (literally, “to get....”) or “*magbaylo*” (literally, “to

trade/exchange”). When borrowing money the creditor says, “*maghulam* or *magbaylo-a ug kwarta*” (literally, “I will borrow/exchange money”), instead of using the appropriate term, *utang* which in both languages translates as credit or debt. *Bale* (an “IOU” or promissory note) is the same among both societies. This is used in borrowing goods from retail stores.

Utang implies ownership which implies payback in monetary terms or reciprocation in whatever way feasible. This relationship indicates one’s power over the other, thus naturally or necessarily avoided. The worst of all *utang kabubut-on* is when the favor given is borne out of the helplessness of a situation which necessitates asking for a favor. Worse, if it is unsolicited. This makes the person obliged to reciprocate or repay something that cannot be repaid. Even if the person giving the favor is not demanding repayment, society requires it as it is not only a value, it is also a norm.

Pakikisama (Camaraderie). There is no exact translation of *pakikisama* in *Binisaya*. In fact, among the Bisaya, the word *pakisama* (with one *ki*) used to be a casual mention in conversations although its frequency has reduced and superseded with the more current Tagalog term, *sabay* (to be with, to accompany, easy to be with). There is a difference however in the usage. Among the Tagalog, *sabay* (to go together/with) is a verb but in the *Binisaya*, it is an adjective which means one is somebody you can identify with. The same is true with *pakisama*. In *Binisaya*, *pakisama* is a characteristic of a person while in Tagalog, *pakikisama* is an overarching value, i.e. it is a noun that requires a modifier to refer to a person, e.g. a person can be *marunong makisama*, or *may pakikisama*. For simplicity of the discussion, both terms shall be alternatively used here as the meaning for both societies is the same. While not a part of this analysis, it may also be vital to dissect the other terms related to *pakikisama* here as levels of interaction (see Enriquez 1990, Indigenous Psychology). *Pakikitutungo* (civility with or transactions with), *pakikilahok* (interaction with), *pakikibagay* (in consonance with). These terms find rough translations in *Binisaya* as *pakiglambigit* (to be involved) or *pakigsalmot* (to join, be with). All these terms do not require hierarchy or status in their reckoning in the discourse of *pakikisama* as discussed fully here. The levels of interaction in these concepts differ from *pakikisama* where putting one in the ‘right place’ or ‘proper position’ with allusion to one’s status is given emphasis than the other terms which presuppose the interaction between equals.

It seems that the use of the term, *pakisama*, has something to with the place or situation where a person is, as well as the position one is in. In a family for

instance, *pakikisama* is not required. For non-immediate members of the family, especially those who live with them, *pakikisama* is imperative (implicitly by the host family and explicitly by the family of origin). A family member, who lives with a relative, for instance, is always reminded that, “*wala ka sa bahay mo, matuto kang makisama.*” (“you are not in your home, learn to cooperate.”). Similarly, it is a constant reminder to do household chores (in Binisaya, *maglihok-lihok*) when in a relative’s house so that they have nothing ill to say (recall: *walang masabi, walay ikasulti* and *kaulaw/hiya* as social controls). *Pakikisama* connotes a territorial frontier in this case. Not being in your right place requires *pakikisama*. This appears to be also true in a neighborhood setting particularly if someone is a new resident.

There also appears to be a gradation of status before *pakikisama* can be imposed. Not being in the higher position or status is a requirement for *pakikisama*. In a social setting, the rich, the powerful or the influential are not expected to be *pakikisama*. The one in the lower position/status is required it in order to belong. Attaining membership and acceptance into a group releases one from the dictates of *pakikisama*, although one’s membership status may still require so. While it appears that a degree of familiarity (or belongingness) is a factor, being powerless, i.e., having no means or being in no position will require one to be *pakikisama*.

The interplay of power and status is crucial in the analysis of *pakikisama* between equals, *pakikisama* does not take effect. There has to be the ingredient of the powerful and the subdued, the accepted and the disowned. The boss (higher status) is not expected to be *pakikisama* with the workers. In fact, being a *pakikisama* boss is hailed as a virtue. In Bisaya society, the *pakikisama* boss is called *sabay* (one who mingles; cool). A lowly member of an organization or group is required to be *pakikisama*, otherwise, find another one.

A related concept here is *bayanihan* (a sense of cooperation). This value is often depicted as a group of people carrying a house to move it in another location. The practice is slowly fading as spaces are now less public. This concept of cooperation, mostly among among rural folks in the past (as also transmitted in the present) is evident in the practice of *hunglos* (a *Binukid* term) where farmers/cultivators collectively participate in opening farms and harvesting in exchange for the same favor when the need arises. This frees one farmer from hiring farm hands and will only require the same services when the time comes. The same is true with the concept of *dayong*, a *Binisaya* term where a neighborhood contributes money, goods or services when someone dies. But what happens if one refuses to participate?

What happens when one stands on the road watching while the rest of the neighborhood carries a house on their shoulders? What happens to the farmer who does not join the others in clearing and harvesting or that neighbor who refuses to contribute? Naturally, the rest will talk ill about someone's uncooperative, if not selfish tendencies. Again, nobody wants to be talked about (recall: the *tsismis* culture). It is imperative that the neighborhood has nothing to say (*walay ikasulti, walang masabi*) about you. In this case, *tsismis* as social control becomes the power to dominate. When everyone does the same thing, the one who deviates becomes powerless. While the freedom to refuse is not curtailed, who wants to bear the burden of being the 'talk of the town.'

In a peer group setting the power of number is a prerequisite to oblige one to do what the group wants. When the group decides on something and one is subdued, the number becomes the power. Group loyalty has nothing to do with *pakikisama*. Loyalty in a *barkadahan*, unless the necessity of making a member choose arises, is not a requirement or a need. It is observed that membership in a *barkada* is not exclusive and solid as is usually perceived. Members of the core *barkada* are also members of other groups. As such, the system is loose and members jump from one group to another, whichever is preferred with special predilection to where the adventure or fun is. The fear of being ostracized by the group (the power of number) is the factor behind *pakikisama*. When a group member does not conform with what the majority wants, he or she is called, "*dili sabay*" (in Tagalog, "*walang pakisama*" -- one who does not conform or join). Someone who happens to be of higher status than the rest will at first be eluded, but upon the assurance of another member that the person is *sabay* (one who blends well) or "*way kura*" (one who does not care about your status), will be welcomed. Interestingly, the word *pakisama* is not used to describe the one with the higher status. *Pakikisama* is therefore is a "privilege of the powerful and an obligation of the powerless" (Alovera 2006). *Pakikisama* becomes a security blanket in this case. A person who is considered *walang pakikisama* is loathed by the group as well as the network of friends connected to other groups individuals belong to. *Tsismis* travels through this network and before one knows it, it becomes a brand. Interestingly, a corollary term used in *Binisaya* is the corrupted term, '*aders*' (others). A person who is considered *aders* loses the image and the peers. The brand sticks and others will try to shy away from the person. *Kaulaw/hiya* operates when one is *walay pakisama* or *aders*. This makes one powerless.

One brand that individuals fear so much is to be marked as *dawlimps*, a conjugation of the phrase, *dawat limpyo*, roughly, one who receives favors without

working for them. Digging into the phrase, *dawat limpyo* technically means, net income, i.e., one invests capital and receives only income while others, who do not have capital, do the dirty work. When someone is branded *dawlimps*, the person is considered shameless, uncooperative and does not reciprocate. Hence, being *dawlimps* means one is *walang hiya*, *walang pakisama* and *walang utang na loob*. *Dawlimps* is a stigma.

Bahala Na! The exclamation point is intended. ‘*Bahala Na!*’ is a complete sentence and must be reckoned as such. It is definitive and with finality. This value (or disvalue) must be analyzed on the context of its usage. *Bahala na!* is often used not in the beginning of something but in the end when choice is at odds or when the uncertain is perceived to be forthcoming. Generally, it is translated as ‘come what may’. Some authors claim that the sentence connotes determination. Lagmay’s finding in 1976 cited in Enriquez (1990) places *Bahala na!* as operational in a situation “*full of uncertainty and lacking in information*” and despite of that “*very few avoid or run away from the predicament*” thus giving the value “*a confrontative attitude*” (Enriquez 1990). While it is true that *Bahala na!* is confrontative in the face of uncertainty, it is not lacking in information. In fact, *Bahala na!* is uttered when information says the odds are against the concerned. Nobody says *Bahala na!* without an idea of what lies ahead – the probability of failure. *Bahala na!* is a decision minus the responsibility. In fact, the sentence is often uttered for everyone to hear which implies that one does something and is not responsible for the outcome. The utterance of *Bahala na!* washes one of any guilt for the act which may turn detrimental to others and the self. It is an excuse to a negative outcome. *Bahala Na!* is in fact a win-win situation. When one fails, he or she is absolved of the fault as the people know from the very beginning that the act is determined by chance. On the other hand, if the person succeeds, he or she is seen as valiant and bold for braving the odds. Enriquez (1990) argued that *Bahala na!* connotes “*an acceptance of the nature of things including the inherent limitations of oneself...as if one is being forced by the situation to act in his own capacity*” making him “*resourceful and creative to make his situation better*”. This statement connotes an inherent helplessness and incapacity of a person. More so, being forced to act in a situation presupposes the absence of choice.

Gorrospe (1994) accounts for the negative aspect of *Bahala na!* which, he equates with escapism from decision making and social responsibility and the prevalence national apathy, thus,

“... in the past the negative aspect of *bahala na* which dominated Filipino life meant a false sense of resignation (*ganyan lang ang buhay*), a superstitious belief or blind faith (*malas/suwerte, tadhana, kapalaran*), or escape from decision-making and social responsibility.... it may be the root cause of national apathy (*walang pakialam*) and collective paralysis of action (*bakit pa kikilos*).....Nothing is going to happen--*Bahala na*, come what may. (Gorrospe 1994, 63-70)

I would like to take cognizance of the phrase “escape from decision making and social responsibility”. As argued earlier *Bahala na!* is an escapist attitude owing to the fact that responsibility of the act is taken off the burden of the concerned. The decision to do something is out of chance and the responsibility for the act is absolved. *Bahala na!* is operative as an excuse to failure and a booster to courage and heroism. Success is cheered upon and graciously accepted while failure has a conveniently built-in excuse. It is an easy way out.

Bahala na! is another mechanism to protect the image. The concept of non-responsibility for one’s actions as it is relegated to chance and the built-in excuse for failure proves it so. Failure in this case may be seen as *malas* (misfortune) or in the case where prayers are not answered, ‘*kulang sa pagtoo*’ (lacking in faith). Notice that both connote something beyond one’s capacity to control. One is not responsible for his or her failure thus the image is protected. Similarly, success from a *Bahala na!* venture is good for the image. It makes one valiant and heroic. Surely, there is no ruling out the probability of being ostracized for failure but that an excuse is readily available could wash it off. The most important thing is to absolve oneself of the guilt of failure. Self-worth is protected in the guise of taking chance. *Bahala na!* is a mechanism to veer away from responsibility. Thus, by being not responsible, the image is protected from *kaulaw/hiya*.

CONCLUSION

It is the contention of this article that the Pilipino values were developed as a response to a low self-esteem developed due to the child rearing practice of separating the child from the mother or caregiver. Due to this low self-esteem developed from infancy, the Pilipino values take on *kaulawhiya* as overarching guideline in conducting oneself social interactions. It is evident that the value of the protection of the image from ‘what others say’ (recall *tsismis* culture) figures prominently in the discourse (i.e. casual conversation) like in the protective shield of *Bahala na!* where the probability of failure is cloaked with the ambiguity of the decision to act. *Kaulaw* is also reflected in the other values as response to powerlessness in the context of the superior-subservient relationship manifested in the practice of *pakikisama* and *utang kabubut-on*.

This analysis does not intend put the Pilipino in a bad light. It merely contributes to the narrative of the values dominated by the Tagalog-speaking scholars. It simply presents that the Tagalog-based interpretation of the values may or may not find counterpart in the other languages (in this case, the Binisaya) and therefore cannot be claimed in general as Pilipino. As earlier expressed, the analysis of the Pilipino values taken from the context of one language among more than a hundred languages is hegemonic, if not ethnocentric.

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