

LESSON 19

Mga Talang Pangkultura Muling Pagsusuri sa mga Pinalalaganan ng mga Filipino Rethinking Filipino Values

It might be useful, therefore, to learn a little bit more about Filipino psychology. You may have heard about so-called Filipino “values” such as **utang na loob** (contractual reciprocal obligation), **hiya** (shame), and **pakikisama** (yielding to the will of the leader or the majority). However, according to scholar Epifanio San Juan, a problem faced by many, especially Filipino Americans, is that an emphasis on these “values” has contributed to the “essentialization” of the Filipino. What should we do then? Perhaps a wider understanding of Philippine interpersonal relations is needed to understand Filipino psychology. Thus, while it is important to look into early studies by Frank Lynch, Charles Kaut, and Mary Hollnsteiner, it is also valuable to study new directions in Indigenous Psychology, also known as **Sikolohiyang Pilipino** (Filipino Psychology) proposed by Virgilio Enriquez, Carmen Santiago, Zeus Salazar and others.

The emphasis on “Filipino values” comes from the widely popular book *Four Readings on Philippine Values* (1970 third ed.), edited by Frank Lynch and Alfonso de Guzman III and published by the Ateneo de Manila University Press as part of the IPC (Institute of Philippine Culture Papers). Among the essays in the book are: Frank Lynch’s “Social Acceptance Reconsidered” which discusses the concept of “smooth interpersonal relations,” or SIR; and Mary R. Hollnsteiner’s “Reciprocity in Lowland Philippines” which focuses on **utang na loob** (debt of gratitude reciprocity, as defined by Hollnsteiner; also defined as “contractual reciprocal obligation by Kaut, 1961).

These two essays were informed not only by surveys and interviews conducted in field researches but also from the writings of Spanish missionaries from the 16th–19th centuries on their observations of Filipinos.

In explaining **pakikisama**, Lynch notes that it is derived from the root **sama** which means “accompany,” or “go along with.” Lynch further defines **pakikisama** as “‘giving in,’ ‘following the lead or suggestion of another’; in a word, *concession*.” It refers especially to: “the lauded practice of yielding to the will of the leader or majority so as to make the group decision unanimous. No one likes a hold-out.” (Lynch 10-11).

In his article, Lynch further explains that the preference for social process (SIR) over social product is understandable in a system where the highest value is placed on the pleasant word except when the exchange is between good friends and good enemies.

Insights into this can be informed by the article “Reciprocity in Lowland Philippines” [1970]. Hollnsteiner’s research on reciprocity looks into the following: contractual reciprocity, where reciprocal acts are equivalent; quasi-contractual reciprocity, where terms of repayment are not explicitly stated; and **utang-na-loob** (debt of gratitude) reciprocity, which, “is most consciously generated when a transfer of goods or services takes place between individuals belonging to two different groups.”

Consider Hollnsteiner's explanation of **utang na loob** which, in turn, also draws from the work of Charles Kaut (Kaut 1961 in Hollnsteiner 70). She states:

Breaches or non-enactment of reciprocal obligations result in the emotional expression of **hiya** (Torres 497), a term that Bulatao describes in the following words: "a painful emotion expressed in interpersonal relations perceived as dangerous to one's ego." However, instead of alerting the individual to reprisal or aggression, **hiya** results in withdrawal behavior or the avoidance of conflict. (1964 in Torres 498) Further studies on **hiya** by Jocano outline the behaviors that typify this emotion: **pangingimi** or the inability to express feelings openly; **pag-aatubili**, or hesitation to proceed with an intended act even if the other is known to the actor; and **alapaap ng kalooban**, which means "inner uncertainty of feelings" resulting in a reluctance to interact more fully and to proceed with intended actions because the other is not yet fully known. (Jocano 1975 in Torres 498)

In addition, Lynch describes "pressure to agree" in his essay (12): "Except where the group is one whose members have learned to see the occasion (on academic conferences, or seminar, for instance, or a meeting of openly opposed factions), as one in which straightforwardness is acceptable and desirable, the participants may never appear to dispute the point at issue, or to find an issue to dispute. So it will appear to the average American, at least."

In recent years, scholars of Philippine psychology have revisited values such as **pakikisama** (concession) and **utang na loob** (contractual reciprocal obligation), resulting in a clearer understanding of social interaction among Filipinos. In his article "Kapwa: A Core Concept in Filipino Social Psychology," Virgilio Enriquez explains that "previous work on Philippine values have emphasized three evil characters in Philippine interpersonal relations: 1) the **walang pakisama** (one inept at the level of adjustment); 2) the **walang hiya** (one who lacks a sense of propriety); and 3) the **walang utang na loob** (one who lacks adeptness in reciprocating by way of gratitude). (Enriquez 265)

Enriquez interrogates these concepts, first, explaining the work done by Frank Lynch (1964), Charles Kaut (1961), Robert Fox (1956) and Jaime Bulatao (1964) and then putting forward the concept of **kapwa** and levels and modes of social interaction among Filipinos that he believes go beyond the conceptual and the theoretical. Enriquez writes (265):

Lynch (1964) proposed the construct of "smooth interpersonal relations" as acquired and perceived through **pakikisama**, euphemism, and the use of go-between. He was successful in penetrating and teaching the highest level of interpersonal relations in the **ibang-tao** category, thus making him believe

that **pakikisama** is a value. However, he did not take cognizance of the importance of the other levels of interpersonal relations beyond **pakikisama** thus making his observation valid to a point but definitely inadequate.

Kaut (1961) singled out **utang na loob** as a key concept for the analysis of Tagalog interpersonal relations while **hiya** has long been interpreted by Fox (1956) as “self-esteem” and by Bulatao (1964) as a “painful emotion” arising from a relationship with an authority figure which is perceived as dangerous to one’s ego. It’s a kind of anxiety, a fear of being left exposed.

Carmen Santiago and Virgilio Enriquez propose a more comprehensive analysis of Filipino social interaction by using the Filipino language in identifying eight levels and modes (Santiago and Enriquez 1976 in Enriquez 262):

1. **pakikitungo** (transaction/civility with)
2. **pakikisalamuha** (interaction with)
3. **pakikilahok** (joining/participating with)
4. **pakikibagay** (in-conformity with/in-accord with)
5. **pakikisama** (being [getting?] along with)
6. **pakikipagpalagayan/pakikipagpalagayang loob** (being in rapport/ understanding/acceptance with)
7. **pakikisangkot** (getting involved)
8. **pakikiisa** (being one with)

Enriquez further directs us to Santiago’s (1976) research which notes that the levels of interpersonal relations are both conceptually and behaviorally different. In her article “The Language of Food,” Santiago, according to Enriquez, discussed the language of interpersonal relationship in food sharing among the Filipino Bulacan middle class. Significant in this discussion are two general categories of the five levels she discussed (Enriquez 263).

Ibang tao or “outsider” category

Levels: **Pakikitungo** (level of amenities)
Pakikibagay (level of conforming)
Pakikisama (level of adjusting)

Hindi ibang tao or “one of us” category

Levels: **Pakikipagpalagayang-loob** (level of mutual trust)
Pakikiisa (level of fusion, oneness and full trust)

These categories are useful to us in analyzing the interactions between Filipinos as they navigate through **pakikitungo** (level of amenities), **pakikibagay** (level of conforming) and **pakikisama** (level of adjusting or concession) but also in terms of **pakikipagpalagayang-loob** (level of mutual trust) and **pakikiisa** (level of fusion, oneness and full trust).