

A REFLECTION ON PINOY YOUTH & GLOBALIZATION¹

BY

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INTRODUCTION

WHY ARE WE HERE IN BORACAY? When I received the invite from the PACSA officials that the mid-year convention will be held in this island, I cannot help but wonder: Why Boracay? As I read through the theme of the convention, *Strengthening Campus Advising and Student Leadership Amidst Global Challenges*, I immediately rephrased my question and asked: Why not Boracay?

I find it meaningful that PACSA chose this enchanting island as venue to think about one of the most fascinating concepts that have defined our world as we know it today – “globalization”. I remembered in 2005, my first time in Boracay; then, I did not only see the beauty of “nature” but also witnessed how this island has “nurtured” the diversity of peoples and cultures around the world. Indeed, Boracay has placed the Philippines in the global map as one of the most popular international tourist destinations in the world. Thus, it could be construed that being here in Boracay is witnessing and living what the process of globalization may be all about.

TWO SOCIOLOGICAL QUESTIONS

In the field of social sciences, “globalization” is both a problematic and a controversial concept, specifically when it is perceived using the lens of economics as a tool to structure one hegemonic world order (see for example: Bello, 2001; Edelman, 1999; Fritzgerald; Harvey, 2000; Tomlinson, 1999) that is, a process marked by “increasing integration of the world economy” (Nolan & Lenski, 2009). What made this world process possible is shaped and blamed to the developments in information and

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communication technologies (Castells, 1996, 1997, 1998). However, the indicators of globalization come in varied forms.

In the Philippines, one just needs to reach out into their respective pockets to see how globalization works. For example, most of us here I bet, own cellular phones and credit cards. When it comes to taste buds, most Pinoy children are socialized into the sweetness of *Coca-cola* and *Pepsi Cola*, and the hamburgers of *McDonalds* as well as the “finger-licking-good *Kentucky Fried Chicken*. Even when it comes to the various products for our bodies are produced by multinational corporations from soap, toothpaste and lotion to our medicines. Or, we could just ask the question – Who amongst us whose lives have not been touched in one way or another, by the pain, sacrifices and economic victories of the *Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs)*. These are some indicators of “globalization” impacting our contemporary lives. But how many of us have fully engaged our minds into understanding this concept?

The topic assigned to me was, *Empowerment of Global Leaders in the Institution*. In my mind, there are many ways to explore this topic. But for this presentation, please allow me to take a more practical route in sharing my views about empowering global leaders by articulating two interrelated sociological questions reflecting my academic interests: sociology of youth and sociology of Filipinos. These are:

1. How is it to grow-up in times of globalization?
2. How is it to remain a Filipino in times of globalization?

In trying to respond to these questions, my aim is two-fold. First is to explore the significance of globalization in the growing-up processes of young people, particularly of Filipinos compared to their counterparts worldwide. And second, to think about the problem that globalization put forward to our national identity. I argue that, only when we are able to explore the responses to these questions that we could fully understand what it takes to be empowered global leaders in our respective institutions.

GROWING-UP & GLOBALIZATION

One of the questions that youth sociologists ask when it comes to globalization is that: Do we have evidences to prove that youth around the world are becoming more and more similar in terms of their worldviews, needs and values? There is no straight answer to this question. Although there has been a claim that the global structuring of institutions such as media and labour market produce a ‘homogenized global youth culture’ (Brown, Larson, & Saraswathi, 2002). While we may see in various media representations such as in television and cable news how youth around the world share their fascination for pop music, fashion and social networking, all these are differentiated by another, and probably more forceful, global phenomenon, which is poverty and social inequality (UNESCO, 2010). This means that while in some ways, there seems to be a general narrative of ‘growing-up’ across cultures that is taking place (i.e., homogenization of youth culture), in developing world, like in our country, what appears to be evident in the

midst of globalization is the persistence of local structural social divisions (social class, gender, ethnicity) in the lives of young people.

Take for example, the state of Philippine education as reported by UNESCO (2010), *Reaching the Marginalized: Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2010*, which suggests that “there is a real danger that the country (the Philippines) will fail to achieve universal primary education by 2015” because “extreme economic inequalities (in the country) fuel education inequalities, notably pushing many children out of school and into employment”. This report brings insight that our country in this age of universal education appears to endanger the future of Filipino children.

I find that the descriptive poem, *The Paradox of Our Age* by Dr. Robert Moorehead (Online: nd), a former pastor of Seattle's Overlake Christian Church, gives us a lens to reflect on what constitute our contemporary world, where globalization is at its core. It narrates:

The paradox of our time in history is that we have taller buildings, but shorter tempers; wider freeways, but narrower viewpoints. We spend more, but have less; we buy more but enjoy it less. We have bigger houses and smaller families; more conveniences, but less time; we have more degrees, but less sense; more knowledge, but less judgment; more experts, but more problems; more medicine, but less wellness.

We drink too much, smoke too much, spend too recklessly, laugh too little, drive too fast, get too angry too quickly, stay up too late, get up too tired, read too seldom, watch TV too much, and pray too seldom.

We have multiplied our possessions, but reduced our values. We talk too much, love too seldom, and hate too often. We've learned how to make a living, but not a life; we've added years to life, not life to years.

We've been all the way to the moon and back, but have trouble crossing the street to meet the new neighbour. We've conquered outer space, but not inner space. We've done larger things, but not better things. We've cleaned up the air, but polluted the soul.

We've split the atom, but not our prejudice. We write more, but learn less. We plan more, but accomplish less. We've learned to rush, but not to wait. We build more computers to hold more information to produce more copies than ever, but have less real communication. These are the times of fast foods and slow digestion; tall men, and short character; steep profits, and shallow relationships.

These are the times of world peace, but domestic warfare; more leisure, but less fun; more kinds of food, but less nutrition.

These are days of two incomes, but more divorce; of fancier houses, but broken homes. These are days of quick trips, disposable diapers, throwaway morality, one-night stands, overweight bodies, and pills that do everything from cheer, to quiet, to kill.

It is a time when there is much in the show window and nothing in the stockroom; a time when technology can bring this letter to you, and a time when you can choose either to share this insight....or to just hit delete.

If this is the era that young people are growing-up into, how do we expect them to be “responsible adults” or as “future leaders”? It seems that educators of this age, especially in the Philippines, have more tasks to do in terms of clarifying the worldviews and values of Pinoy youth relative to constructing a community of Filipinos negotiating with the consequences of globalization.

GROWING-UP PINOY IN A GLOBAL WORLD

Another issue that I find salient among the Filipino youth respondents in my studies (i.e., Batan, 2010b) when it comes to globalization is the paradox between their “disconnection” with the Philippine government and their “connection” with the demands of globalization, aptly captured by the phrase, “going abroad” – a sentiment of hope and future desired by the alarming younger Filipinos (Miranda, September 16, 2003). The saddest thing about this observation is that these young Filipinos imagine “leaving the country for good”, which is a different from the narrative of migrant workers in the 1970s and 1980s who imagined returning to the country. Thus, it appears that, for some Filipino youth, the world is not just the Philippines because probably for some of them, the world is the entire globe. This may be the reason why in all my travels around the world, I always bumped into a *kababayan*. Truly, this makes us, Filipinos, not just citizens of the Philippines but citizens of the world.

TOWARDS CULTURAL COMPETENCE

So what does it take to be global citizens?

I came to fully realize the concept, value and power of global citizenship when in 2008; I was given recognition by the Office of International Student and Exchange Services at Dalhousie University for promoting international understanding of cultures. Key to this recognition was my discovery and use of the concept “cultural competence”, which impacted my worldview and the way I see and treat persons I intersected with over these past few years.

“Cultural competence” is a disposition to fully understand and act on the complexities and meaningfulness of cultures. As Hanley (Online: nd) explains:

To work toward cultural competence, we must look within and without for a deeper understanding of ourselves and the cultures of the people we serve. We must also act on the knowledge, turning our understanding into more effective programs and services.

“Cultural competence” may not yet be a buzzword in the Philippines but in a world that is becoming more and more culturally-diverse as a by-product of globalization, this term will soon be reaching institutions such as schools, non-profit organizations and the government. In North America for example, one of the job requirements is to pass a

“cultural competence” exam. Specifically in Canada, I observed that a requirement for job acceptance is to show how one has volunteered to organizations promoting multiculturalism, diversity and equality among cultures.

I predict that in the next few years, if Philippine institutions are open to fully grasping the demands and consequences of globalization, conducting “cultural competence” training should be given ample attention, especially for Filipino youth, as they negotiate with the contemporary world, and with the older generation. In so doing, we may be able to rewrite some parts of Dr. Robert Moorehead’s (Online: nd) *Paradox of Our Age* with a pen that describes a global society that pronounces a kaleidoscope of perspectives with a deep sense of community, solidarity and humanity.

As meaningfully woven in the lyrics of Francis Magalona’s *Kaleidoscope World* song:

Every color and every hue
Is represented by me and you
Take a slide in the slope
Take a look in the kaleidoscope
Spinnin' round, make it twirl
In this kaleidoscope world.

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