

Sugboanong Taras: A Glimpse of Cebuano Personality

Philip Albert Y. Lagahid

Southwestern University, Cebu City, Philippines

Nera Mae A. Puyo

University of San Jose-Recoletos, Cebu, Philippines

Through the years, there have been many studies aiming to unfold Filipino personality. However, existing general concepts are limited as the Philippines is made up of different ethnic groups with differing cultures and traditions. To contribute to this endeavor, this study focuses on identifying the personality of one of the largest ethnic groups in the country, the Cebuano people. Using participant observation and pakikipagkuwentuhan as methods, the study explains how a Cebuano goes about his or her daily life. Theoretical sampling was used in sample selection—the Cebuanos' common behaviors, ways of thinking, and ways of feeling were considered as samples in the study. Thematic analysis was used in data interpretation. Results showed three concepts that describe Cebuano personality: "Espirituhanon"—belief in God, spiritual beings, and life after death; "Garbo"—the dignity and pride with which the Cebuano protects his or her sense of self-esteem; and, "Lumadnon"—the love for one's family, origin, and community. The interrelation of the three character traits describes the proposed theory on Cebuano personality, the "Sugboanong Taras". This, however, does not define the entirety of Cebuano personality but is rather offered as an aid in understanding Cebuano characteristics and personality.

Keywords: Sugboanong Taras, Cebuano personality, indigenous personality, social psychology

How are we to study the Filipino personality? Cuizon and Garcia (2013) believe that it is important to consider the environment and culture of study

be the first step in reconciling our differences, until eventually we would be able to help strengthen our country and culture (Poralan, Babiera, & Habla, 2012; Smith, Peterson, & Schwartz, 2002).

Defining the Cebuano Behavior, Culture, and Lifestyle

Lameli, Sudekum, Nitsch, and Wolf (2015) and Nivales (2009) observe language to play a huge role in understanding ethnicity as it can be used as the basis for identifying similarities and differences among certain groups of people. Cebuano refers to one of the major languages in the Philippines (Dumanig & David, 2011) used mostly by people in the southern islands of Cebu, Bohol, half of eastern Negros, half of western Leyte, and some northern parts of Mindanao (Wf, 1982). Considering the relatively wide geographical distribution of its speakers, Blowers, Cheung and Ru (2009) as well as Ji, Zhang, and Nisbett (2004) opine that the selfhood of the Cebuano people may also differ from other Filipino ethnic groups.

Two recent studies that have sought to unlock the Cebuano personality examine personality constructs in the context of resiliency to disaster experiences (Orio, 2016) and in terms of how the personality is expressed

“pagmalig-ori (strength). Lastly, Orio also finds that trying times serve to strengthen the Cebuanos’ faith, as manifested in their *ampoy*, *pagsalig*, *ug pagtuo sa Gindog* (worship, trust, and faith in God).

Rather than distinguishing the Cebuano personality, however, these findings echo the results of earlier studies that tried to capture the Filipino personality. For example, Ysseldyk, Matheson, and Anisman (2010) and Teng-Calleja and Menguito (2010) also discovered courage, optimism, and faith in the *‘bahala na’* attitude of Filipinos. In particular, the piety of the Cebuano is not an exclusive ethnic characteristic that sets them apart from other Filipino ethnic groups. Abanes, Scheepers, and de Vries (2014) observe that there are a lot of religious groups in the Philippines that shape both the religiousness and identity of its people.

Following Jaeger and Mykletun (2013) who consider festivals as a milieu to express individual and collective identities, Flores et al. (2016) explore the local behavior during the *La Santa Dance Festival* in south Cebu in an attempt to isolate some distinct Cebuano characteristics. They found that the following show up in the behavior of the locals at festival during

The limited literature on the Cebuano identity investigates their behavior

Taga Kalag-kalag kay mag ingon-ana man mi para inig bisita sa mga kalag sa amo ~~pante~~, kahibalo sila nga gi-ampo namo sila. Kung pila ka ~~pante~~ namatay mao pud ang gi-daghanon sa kandila, butangan man apil ang hagdanan. Mag butang pod mi og prutas ug uban pagkaon sa altar kay mo kaon man pud na sila. (It's our tradition every All Souls' Day. We do it to let our dead relatives know that we are praying for them. The number of candles symbolizes the number of our departed loved ones. Some candles are placed on the ~~stave~~ ~~We~~ also place food in the altar because when souls visit, they also eat.)

During a funeral service, someone said ~~Nag~~-una lang ka namo partner, pero mag-abot ra unya gihapon ~~ta~~. (You may have left ahead of us, but I know we will meet again some ~~day~~.)

In a similar vein, a daughter talks about her dead father:

I know wala na si papa namo, pero sigurado ko nga naa ra siya pirmi nag bantay namo. Pa, ayaw biya mi ug biyae (ha, know our father is gone, but I'm sure he still watches over us. Pa, please don't leave us.)

Another characteristic related to ~~Es~~pirituhanon is the Cebuanos' strong faith in God. This characteristic is evident in their daily activities. They believe that having good relationships with others is equivalent to having a good relationship with God. One must do good deeds if he or she hopes to receive blessings in return. A mechanic was overheard talking to his friends about earning money on the side:

Apil nako og collect mga plastic na botelya ~~na~~ Maayo nalang na pang additional ba, ginagmay ra gud. Naa pa gyud to ni agi tig-kolekta pud og plastic nga botelya, ako giingnan nga dili na ipa-kuha ang naa sa basurahan kay akoo na. Boanga pagka human, mura man ko na konsensya. Maayo na lang unta to sa iyaha ba. Mahatagan unta ta og grasya sa ~~Gin~~ (I collect empty plastic bottles now to have a little extra income. Earlier caught a garbage collector rummaging through our garbage bin and I told him the bottles were mine. Later felt guilty when I realized that he needed them more than I do. If I had given the bottles to him, God may bless me.)

Meanwhile, a man surrenders his decision in a manner that underlines his faith in divine providence: Ginoo ra bahala ani. Kung maayo ang resolta or dili, Ginoo na ang mag-igo nako. (I leave everything to God. No matter what the result may be, God will take care of me.)

Espirituhanon also manifests in the holding of feast days of saints in different villages, cities, or provinces; in the placement of the image of the Holy Child Jesus in homes and business establishments; and in the traditions of pagdagkot sa mahal nga S. Niño (lighting of candles for Senior S. Niño) and the dawn and block rosary for Mother Mary. Faith that is constant serves as a solemn vow that marks the milestones in one's relationship with God, as shown by this overseas worker who comes back to Cebu annually for the Sinulog festival in the belief that it sustains his relationship with the patron saint:

Mag-ulian man ko taga Sinulog (feast day of the Holy Child Jesus) bai, mao man ni panaad nako gud kartag S. Niño. (I go home every Sinulog festival. It's my promise to S. Niño.)

On any given day it is normal for Cebuanos to discuss their religious beliefs and rituals even in public places. The day commonly starts with a prayer, especially in classrooms among the young. The practice of faith is encouraged, with some universities allocating different prayer rooms for different religious groups.

Garbo

The second theme identified from the gathered data is Garbo, which shows Cebuanos' behavior in dignifying their social identity. Cebuanos strive for a higher social status commonly through education, alternatively through sheer hard work. Education for the professions for themselves and their children is still prized, however, and becomes a marker indicating when one

because they've achieved something. (Actually, I feel ashamed to meet my former classmates because unlike me, they are now professionals.)

This also shows up in the views Td)

It has been said that a Cebuano seldom backs down when it is a matter of pride, but too much

bisan dili Cebuano gali basta Pinoy magkaila ug magka amigo na. (Every Sunday many Filipinos gather here in the plaza, especially Cebuanos. Most of us have days-off during Sundays. When you meet a Cebuano or a Filipino, even if for the first time, you become friends immediately”

Lumadnon manifests in the importance one gives to family occasions for the chance of being with one's kin. For some Cebuano students, Friday is a “Fly day”, which means going home to respective provinces or just simply having gatherings with friends. Sunday is also considered a family day.

Mag leave ko kaong fiesta. Magkita-kita napud mi sa mga kapantihan nako ug mga kaila didto. (I'll file a leave of absence this coming town fiesta. I'd get to meet my relatives and friends in the province again.)

Uli jud ko taga Sinulog. Lahi ra jud kung kauban nimo celebrate Sinulog kay imo family ug mga barkada. Lahi ra ayo didto sa gawas, bisan gali Pasko. (I jud ko spend Sinulog para sa family reunion sa family (I go home every Sinulog festival. It feels really different to celebrate Sinulog among family and peers. It's not the same overseas, even at Christmas. So I go home for the family reunion)

DISCUSSION

Based on the data presented above, the researchers were able to come up with three concepts that would identify Cebuano personality. These three concepts are Espirituhanon, Garbo, and Lumadnon.

Researcher's name: mosawlatheimp@fms.tju.edu.cn; Chis27@algonuhs.org; 03932

Religiosity also forms Filipino people to be more conscious of their actions and show prosocial behavior, which defines the morality of an individual (Batara, 2015). This helps them to become more peaceful individuals and reminds them to treat others the way they want to be treated. This nature is called 'kapwa' as described by Enriquez (1977, 2002). In our study, we find that Cebuanos also extend this kapwa treatment to unseen spiritual beings in the environment. They believe that spiritual beings should be treated the same way they treat human beings — with courtesy for the inconvenience or injury one's presence and action may cause.

In Cebuano traditional healing practices, Berdon, Ragosta, Inocian, Manalag, and Lozano (2016) observed that Cebuanos perform *parasubay* (cause and cure determination). Before doing any activity in a particular place, some Cebuanos ask permission first. They believe that failing to do so would result in illness or bad luck. When one suddenly becomes ill, for example, he has to trace the places he visited before he acquired the illness to seek pardon from the spirits whom he may have unknowingly offended.

Espirituhanonans connected in the belief in the afterlife lends a sense of optimism (Flannelly, Ellison, Galek, & Silton, 2012). This belief is somehow a coping mechanism when one talks about death concerns (Heflick & Goldenberg, 2012). For Cebuanos, the souls of their dearly departed are believed to be keeping watch over them. The belief reassures them, while at the same time making it easier for them to let go.

Garbo reflects Cebuanos' dignity and pride, similar to the oft-quoted but least studied concept of *amor propio*. Dignity shapes personal honor or worth (Timbreza, 2003; Agich, 2007) and is an important factor for quality life (Hall, Dodd, & Higginson, 2014). Pride, on the other hand, has been linked by McFerran, Aquino, and Tracy (2012) to different behavioral outcomes. On the positive side, garbo makes Cebuano people strive hard to earn self-worth through education. Mapasigarbo or taking proper pride in one's achievement is about appropriating quite rightly the attainments of an educated person. Garbo misinterpreted can lead a Cebuano to become grandiose and annoyingly loud, perhaps as a defense mechanism in asserting his or her social position, such as described by Lobbestael, Baumsteter, Fiebig, and Eckel (2014) in their concept of *garbo*.

Lumadnonas a character trait of the Cebuano refers to strong attachment to their ethnic origin. Wherever they go, they identify themselves through their ethnic origin (Min & Park, 2014). Kaelin (2012) has seen

hand or the intercession of the dearly departed or benevolent spirits. Lumadnon also contributes to the formation of Garbo as it develops one's desire to achieve something in order to be accepted by the society &

Robins, 2008) — but more iy on

- Bulatao, J. (1977, 2002). Oh, that terrible task of teachers to teach psychology in the Philippines. *Philippine Journal of Psychology*, 95(1&2), 32–37.
- Catado, M.C.U. (2015, December). South Bus terminal prepares for influx of holiday travelers. *Cebu Daily News*. Retrieved from <http://cebudailynews.inquirer.net/78804/south-bus-terminal-prepares-for-influx-of-holiday-travelers>
- Cuizon, R. O. & Garcia, A. M. (2013). Influence of educational environment on learning engagement of indigenous students. *AIMSRE International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*, 7(1). Retrieved from <http://ezproxyusjr.edu.ph:2092/form/cite.php?id=2598>
- DeTorres, S. (2002). Understanding persons of Philippine origin for rehabilitation service providers. CIRRIE: Monograph Series. Retrieved from <http://cirrie.buffalo.edu/culture/monographs/>
- DeVera, M.G (1982). Pakikipagkuwentuhan: Paano kaya pag-aaralan ang pakikiapid? *Sikolohiyang Pilipino*, 7(1), 187–193.
- Dumanig, P. & David, M.K. (2011). The maintenance and preservation of the Surigaonon language in cyberspace. In Maher, Sethna, B., & Duval, C. (Ed.) *Literacy for dialogue in multilingual societies*, 19–30. Tokyo Japan: Linguapalasia.
- Enriquez, V. (1977, 2002). Filipino Psychology in the Third World. *Philippine Journal of Psychology*, 95(1&2), 7–24.
- Flannely K.J., Ellison, C.G, Galek, K., & Silton, N.R. (2012). Belief in life-after-death, beliefs about the world, and psychiatric symptoms. *Journal of Religion and Health*, 53(3), 651–662.
- Flick, U. (2009) *An introduction to qualitative research* (4th edition). London, UK: Sage.
- Flores, S.M.S., Mata, M.A.C., Parinasan, R.M.M., Inocian, R.B., & De la Torre, N.P (2016) Argao's LaTorta Dance Festival: A culture mix of colonial and indigenous elements. *Global Journal of Human-Social Science*, 16(1). 23–33.

- Funder, D. (2013). *The personality puzzle* (6th edition). New York: W.W. Norton.
- Gonzales, S.J.T., P., Greer, J., Scheers, N., Oakes, E. & Buckley (2004). Sources of resilience in the Filipino wife's responses to spousal infidelity. *Philippine Journal of Psychology*, 37(1).
- Groleau, D., Whitley, R., Lesperance, J., & Kirmayer, L. (2010). Spiritual reconfigurations of self after a myocardial infarction: Influence of culture and place. *Health and Place*, 16, 853–860.
- Hall, S., Dodd, R., & Higginson, I. (2014). Maintaining dignity for residents of care homes: A qualitative study of the views of care home staff, community nurses, residents and their families. *Geriatric Nursing*, 35, 55–60.
- Hanssen, M.M., Peters, M.L., Maeyen, J.W.S., Meevissen, Y.M.C., & Vancleef, L.M.G. (2013). Optimism lowers pain: Evidence of the causal status and underlying mechanisms. *Pain*, 154(1), 53–58.
- Heflick, N.A. & Goldenberg, J.L. (2012). No atheists in foxholes: Arguments for (but not against) the life belief buffers mortality salience effects for atheists. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 93, 385–392.
- Ibones, N.C., Oliverio, J.S., Ondo, H.J., Tagpuno, H.F.C. & Inocian, R.B. (2016). Señor Santo Niño devotees' lived experiences in a fluvial parade. *Asia Pacific Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*, 4(2), 180–187.
- Jaeger, K. & Mykletun, R.J. (2013). Festivals, identities, and belonging. *Event Management*, 17, 213–226.
- Ji, L.J., Zhang, Z., & Nisbett, R. (2004). Is it culture or is it language? Examination of language effects in cross-cultural research of categorization. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 87, (1), 57–65.
- Kaelin, L. (2012). Strong family weak state: Hegel's political philosophy and the Filipino family. *Quezon City, Philippines*.

- Killmister, S. (2010). Dignity: Not such a useless concept. *Journal of Medical Ethics, 36*(3), 160–164.
- Lameli, A., Sudekum, J., Nitsch, V., & Wolf, N. (2015). Same but different. *German Economic Review, 16*(3), 290–306.
- Lobbestael, J., Baumeister, R., Fiebig, T., & Eckel, L. (2014). The role of grandiose and narcissism in self-reported and laboratory aggression and testosterone reactivity. *Personality and Individual Differences, 69*, 22–27.
- Macapagal, M.E., Ofreneo, M.A., Montiel, C., & Nolasco, J. (2013). *Social psychology in the Philippine context*. Quezon City, Philippines: Ateneo De Manila University Press.
- Min, P.G., & Park, S. (2014). Twice-migrant Chinese and Indians in the United States: Their origins and attachment to their original homeland. *Development and Society, 40*(2), 381–401.
- McFerson, H.M. (2002). Filipino identity and self-image in historical perspective. In McFerson, H.M. (ed.) *Mixed blessing: The impact of the American colonial experience on politics and society in the Philippines* 13–41. USA: Greenwood.
- McFerran, B., Aquino, K., & Tracy, J., (2012). Evidence for two facets of pride in consumption: Findings from luxury brands. *Journal of Consumer Psychology, 24*(4), 455–471.
- Medina, B.T.G (2001). *The Filipino family* (2nd ed.) Quezon City Philippines: University of the Philippines Press.
- Myers, A. & Hansen, C. (2012). *Experimental psychology*. Singapore: Cengage Learning Asia.
- Nivales, M. M. (2009). Filipino socio-cultural traits as glimpsed in dissertation acknowledgments. *FEU English and Literature Journal, 3*(1). Retrieved from <http://ezproxyusjr.edu.ph:2092/form/cite.php?id=1249> O'Reilly, C.

Orig, P. (2002). Kayumanggi versus maputi 100 years of America's white aesthetics in Philippine literature. In H.M. McFerson (ed.), *Mixed blessing: The impact of the American colonial experience on politics and society in the Philippines* (pp. 99-131). USA: Greenwood.

Orio, T.P. (2016). Exploring the intrinsic indicators of individual resiliency. *International Journal of Research Studies in Psychology*, 5(2), 15-30.

Poralan, P.S.

- Teng-Calleja, M. & Menguito, M. (2010). Bahala na as an expression of the Filipino's courage, hope, optimism, self-efficacy and search for the sacred. *Philippine Journal of Psychology* 43(1). Retrieved from <http://ezproxyusjredu.ph:2092/form/cite.php?id=3962>
- Timbreza, F (2003). *Filipino values today* Navotas, Metro Manila, Philippines.
- Tracy, J. & Robins, R. (2008). The nonverbal expression of pride: Evidence for cross-cultural recognition. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 94(3). 516–530.
- Wolff, J.U. (1982) *A dictionary of Cebuano-Visayan*. Philippines: Linguistic Society of the Philippines.
- Yalung, O. (2011). Veneration of Saints in popular religions. *PAMISULU: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Theology and Philosophy* 1(1). Retrieved from <http://ezproxyusjredu.ph:2092/form/cite.php?id=901>
- Ysseldyk, R., Matheson, K., & Anisman, H. (2010). Religiosity as identity: Toward an understanding of religion from a social identity perspective. *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 14(1), 60–71.