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A FEMINIST CRITIQUE OF SOCIAL WORK IN THE PHILIPPINES

A Research Paper presented by

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(Philippines)

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter One: INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Research Problem

Social work is an applied social science which trains change agents in working with poverty groups. Social workers are supposed to be trained professionals who work with Filipino families, especially through women, in facilitating the solution of a myriad of issues ranging from those affecting individuals, groups and communities. Social work in the Philippines uses the integrated method of working with either the individual, group or community as point of entry and on the basis of the presented problem, facilitate the problem-solving process in a holistic way employing eclectically and appropriately the casework, groupwork and community organizing strategies.

I have an academic training in social work, have practised social work with grassroots Filipino communities and as a social work educator in recent years, I have trained social workers . All these years, I feel a growing dissatisfaction that social work has not had a significant impact on the lives of the poorest of the poor that we are supposed to work with. As a social science, social work seems to have used limited development frameworks and strategies in dealing with poverty issues so that most efforts seem to be short term palliatives to overwhelming forces that keep people impoverished.

Could it be because social work is a product and a tool of dominant interests which operates on false assumptions of social problems. Social work is a western import to the Philippines. It evolved from charity and humanitarian work during the Spanish era and was gradually systematized and professionalized through the years. Social welfare services and institutions were introduced by foreign groups, mostly Christian missionaries. The first professionally trained social workers were schooled in the U.S. in the 20s and 30s who brought with them western social science concepts prevalent at that time. These social science

1

perspectives and approaches carry class and gender biases and blindness which perpetuate capitalist and patriarchal interests.

Poverty has been the major problem afflicting majority of the Filipino population since the colonial times. The Spanish colonization started the systematic dispossession of production resources, especially land, from the indigenous people by the foreign colonizers and the collaborating local elite. The Filipino women, who occupied a high status in pre- colonial society, were subordinated and marginalized economically, socio-culturally and politically. Today, the poorest sectors are comprised of mostly women, hence the feminization of poverty.

Majority of Filipino social workers are women and are themselves a product of feudal and patriarchal upbringing. Social work is among the stereotyped professions for women who are overworked, underpaid and undervalued. Given our personal socialization as Filipino women and our gender- biased professional training, social workers have served more as agents for the domestication of women and of Filipino communities. We have reinforced a patriarchal and capitalist system of mobilizing women for community and national interests but not for women's interests.

What is the general situation of women in the Philippines today - their needs , problems and aspirations ? How does social work view the problems of poor women ? To what extent has social work addressed the issues of poverty and other related issues in Philippine society especially as they affect women? Given the fact that most social workers are women themselves, how equipped are social workers in their education and training such that their development perspective, strategies and skills adequately respond to women's issues? What current efforts are undertaken and what recommendations can be made such that social work can be enhanced in responding to emerging needs of Filipino women in particular and of the Filipino society in general?

2

1.2 Research Objectives

This study will attempt to examine how social work as a professional social science, as applied and implemented by women in a Third World setting like the Philippines, perpetuate patriarchal and capitalist interests. The general objective of this paper is to critically review social work in the Philippines especially focusing on its perspectives and strategies in dealing with women's problems and issues.

The specific objectives of this study are:
1. to describe the general situation of Filipino women - their needs, problems and aspirations;
2. to analyze the assumptions of social work and critique its perspectives and strategies in responding to women's issues as reflected in the social work educational curriculum and in social welfare programs and services for women;
3. to describe how female social workers as products of middle class socialization have internalized and perpetuated women's subordination in their role as 'change agents' and identify possible scope for change through feminist consciousness raising among their ranks; and
4. to identify gaps in terms of the needs of grassroots women and social work interventions and discuss their implications in terms of educational needs of social workers in making effective responses and in terms of more relevant social welfare programs, services and processes; and to make the appropriate recommendations in this regard.

1.3 Research Methodology

This research will be an exploratory study relying mainly on the review of literature and secondary data. Case illustrations from the social work curriculum of the University

of the Philippines and the social welfare programs and services of the Department of Social Welfare and Development's Bureau of Women will be drawn to clarify some arguments.

The data sources will come mainly from published and unpublished documents, existing organizational records, training and discussion proceedings , program evaluation reports , course syllabi and other relevant materials.

I should also draw from my experiences as a Filipino woman, as a social worker and as a budding feminist. Having undergone the social work curriculum as a student, I have imbibed the so-called professional values, attitudes and skills . As a field practitioner , I have come to see how helpful yet also inadequate the perspectives of my training is and how I have been enriched with my relationship with grassroot communities and colleagues who are non-social worker activists. I have tried to bring in insights of my community organizing experience as a field instruction supervisor to fieldwork students of social work and to the classroom. I have argued that social workers should root their analysis in the systemic and structural nature of social problems, basically as that of class and national oppression, and interventions should accordingly be multi-pronged, primarily focusing on consciousness-raising and empowerment strategies built from the community-based level up to national and international levels. I thought this was progressive enough as I draw support from friends and colleagues in the non-governmental organizations who come from different disciplines, including some former social work schoolmates in the university. But the gender question was not tackled in our community organizing and advocacy work until friends in the women's movement reached out to work with me on some urban poor women's training project. Only then did I start to realize the gap in my development perspectives. I hope to make more systematic my reflections and hindsight of my pre-feminist years as a Filipino woman and as a social worker.

1.3   Significance of the Study

This research is most timely and relevant given the growing recognition by government of the need to address women's issues and to effectively mobilize change agents and helping professionals like social workers in doing so.

The 1989 Philippine Development Plan for Women states as a policy that "The respective curriculum of the courses in social work and community development shall be reviewed periodically to upgrade its relevance to the present needs /demands from SW/CD workers.   A gender and culture conscious orientation in the curriculum development of both courses shall be formulated and adopted" (p. 109).

The findings and recommendations of this study will hopefully initiate discussions among social work educators and practitioners regarding how best the challenge of a gender and culture conscious social work can be responded to.

1.5   Structure of the Paper

<u>Chapter One - Introduction</u>: This section gives an overview of the research problem, the objectives of the study, the methodology, significance and limitations.

<u>Chapter Two - Conceptual Framework</u>: This portion discusses the theoretical perspectives which will guide the data analysis. It will discuss the socialist feminists' dual system view of patriarchy of capitalism, of subsistence production, of Gramsci's theory of hegemony of dominant knowledge in the sciences and feminism.

<u>Chapter Three - Women's Situation in the Philippines </u>: T h i s section describes the manifestations and analyzes the roots of women's oppression in the Philippines as a product of patriarchal

5

and capitalist hegemony. It traces the development of patriarchy in the country's colonial history, of how the conflation of patriarchal and capitalist interests perpetuate the condition of Filipino women as subsistence workers at the 'domestic sphere' and as exploited members of the labour force in the 'public sphere', and as commodities in mass media, in the factory and in the international employment market.

Chapter Four - Social Work's Response to Women's Issues : Social work in the Philippines, its assumptions and practice, will be deconstructed at this point using as case illustrations the social work curriculum of the University of the Philippines and the government program of the Bureau of Women of the Department of Social Welfare and Development.

The situation of social workers who are mostly women will be analyzed. They are themselves a product of patriarchal socialization and are at the same time officially tasked with 'targeting women for development'.

This will also broadly describe some experiences of social workers who have veered away from traditional social work practice and have gone into community-based organizing and social advocacy strategies on issues of class and national oppression. While they have started on a gender-blind perspective, they are eventually sensitized and gradually reoriented their practice to become gender-conscious.

Chapter Five - Conclusion: Gaps in social work response to women's needs will be summarized here. Implications and recommendations will be drawn in terms of possibilities for a feminist social work practice and its implications for social work education.

6

Chapter Two: PATRIARCHY, WOMEN'S SUBORDINATION,
                 HEGEMONY AND THE FEMINIST CHALLENGE

For this study, several related concepts will be helpful in
analyzing the situation of the Filipino women and the social work
response. The concept of patriarchy is useful in tracing how
Filipino women were subjugated by the colonial experience from
their honorable place in indigenous pre-colonial society. The
concept of subsistence production is a relevant framework in
describing the present situation and role of women in a semi-
feudal, semi-capitalist Philippine society. The household as the
site of women's subsistence work is also the site of perpetuation
of patriarchal and capitalist interests as well as of social work
interventions. The theory of hegemony helps us analyze how the
dominant patriarchal and capitalist interests is perpetuated in
the social sciences such as social work. Feminism as a world view
and call for liberative transformation of gender and other
societal issues will offer insights and challenges as to how
social work can best respond to the problems of women and
Philippine society.

2.1 Patriarchy and Women's Subordination

There are many ways by which various groups define
patriarchy but a common denominator is the focus on men's power,
authority and dominance over women. Patriarchy is therefore
loosely defined as male culture or ideology, male choice, male
bonding and male political interests in dominating women as
producers and reproducers (Truong, p.100).

Patriarchy is historically developed. It started with the
appropriation by men of women's sexual and reproductive capacity
even prior to the formation of private property and class society
but its commodification evolved with private property (Lerner,
p. 6).

7

Ann Ferguson (1989: 101-102) elaborates that the origins, the persistence and historical reproduction of male dominance remain as feminist theoretical questions. She illustrates the historical evolution of the concept of patriarchy in the United States in these phases:

1. Father patriarchy - during the colonial period, was reproduced by the fathers' legal and economic control of children's marriages and inheritance through family property which rested in sons, not daughters.

2. Husband patriarchy - during the Victorian period, was reproduced by the institution of 'family wage' which was rested in husbands who were the family breadwinners.

3. Public patriarchy - was reproduced by modes of sex/affective production characteristic of modern industrial states, whether capitalist or state socialist states: through an unequal division of family waged and unwaged labour, through the relative power in family decision making that their higher paid wage labour brings, through domestic violence, and through public mechanisms of the patriarchal welfare state: gender segregation of wage labour, state controls over women's physical and mental health and biological reproduction, and the exploitation of all mothers' unpaid child rearing labour, mass media's stereotyping and sexual objectification of women in the context of sexual consumerism .

In contemporary society, patriarchy is a deeply entrenched and integrated system of male dominance. It has built itself into the structures of society and the consciousness of men and women. Chhachhi identifies three areas where patriarchal control over women is manifested: in women's biological reproduction or sexuality, in women's labour and in the consciousness or patriarchy as ideology (Chhachi, 1986:8).

Lacanian feminists identify two semi-autonomous domination systems in advanced industrial societies which perpetuate male dominance: 1) capitalism as the mode of economic production , and 2) patriarchy as the mode of ideological production (Ferguson, p. 36). Third World countries like the Philippines which are satellites of industrial economies like the U.S. share this same pattern of conflating patriarchal and capitalist systems. These

systems have relative autonomy from each other and are dialectically related and mutually supportive. Woman is the site of contradictions in capitalism because it requires the married woman to enter the labour force against the interests of patriarchy. The wage earning wife's double burden is the result of this contradiction (Eisenstein as cited in Humm, 1989: 23-24).

Capitalism perpetuates the ideology of the natural biological, patriarchal nuclear family as the superior form of family and household organization. In this arrangement, women's second shift and unpaid domestic labour provides the most reliable and the cheapest way to reproduce the labour force it needs to reproduce itself. Patriarchy, on the otherhand, is perpetuated primarily through ideological beliefs about the natural role of women in the family and through the structure of unconscious desires that are tied to gender identity through early childhood experiences.

Socialist feminists call this the dual system theory where the partnership of patriarchy and capital which set up social relations between men, which have a material base, and which, though hierarchical, establish or create interdependence and solidarity among men that enable them to dominate women (Ferguson, p.26).

The household is identified to be the primary site for the reproduction or perpetuation of patriarchy. The concept of household is interchangeably used with the concepts of 'the family' or 'domestic unit' as constituting one of the basic institutions of the capitalist world economy. Martin and Beittel (p. 218) expounds that the concept of 'household' as the unit that ensures the continued reproduction of labour through organizing the consumption of a collective fund of material goods – a unit therefore different from the family, co-resident dwelling groups and kinship structures. The household may encompass these units, or be structured along their lines but it may also not and so is not identifiable with them.

In contemporary patriarchal societies, the household has evolved into the 'primary domain' of women but where they remain powerless and marginalized especially with regards to decision-making and the access to and control of resources. It is also the area where they are most effectively exploited and subordinated in their unpaid domestic labour and undervalued production (e.g. subcontracting and homeworking) for the capitalist market. It is also the site of social work interventions which offer palliatives to cushion the effects of marginalization.

Patriarchy therefore is an all pervasive system of male domination entrenched in the social structures and institutions and perpetuating itself in the consciousness of people, men and women alike. It manifests in the daily interpersonal relations of men and women as well as in the institutionalized practices of society such as in state policies and laws , mass media and other cultural forms. Patriarchal control is mainly expressed in the areas of women's sexuality, women's labour and consciousness or as an ideology.

As an ideology, it permeates in dominant knowledge such as in the social sciences and translated into practices like social work and social welfare. Patriarchal socialization mobilizes women to do social work and reproduce the same process of socialization among other women. This time, women not only reinforce the classic patriarchal paradigm of father and husband patriarchy but also become agents of the state in effecting public patriarchy through social welfare programs.

While patriarchal influence is pervasive and strong, there has always been persistent and increasingly creative forms of resistance from women all over the world to at least minimize the control if not breakaway from patriarchy. Kandiyoti call these efforts to resist as patriarchal bargains which are a broad range of tactics by women to manage and use to their best advantage patriarchal measures given their limitations in full resistance in the meantime (Kandiyoti, 1988).

2.2 Women and Subsistence Production

Maria Mies noted that all economic systems are concerned with two types of economic activities: production of the means of subsistence and the production of new life or procreation. She preferred to use the term subsistence production to denote the continuum between the two processes which would now involve a variety of human activities ranging from pregnancy, childbirth, production, processing and preparation of food, clothing, making of a home, cleaning, the satisfaction of emotional and sexual needs (Mies, 1988:27).

Mies further elaborated that in the course of societal development, capitalism brought about the fundamental separation and redefinition from the unity of the production process in subsistence work into that of dichotomizing production and reproduction. The term production is now used for the production of exchange values only, which becomes the dominant type of production. The concept of reproduction is now broken down to: a) biological reproduction, b) the reproduction of labour force whose energies are replenished when they rest in the comfort of their homes; and c) system reproduction or the reproduction of capitalist production cycle over time or extended reproduction or accumulation (p.28).

Subsistence production is also variably called subsistence work, housework or domestic labour. Domestic labour is work done in the household for purposes of subsistence production. Historically, most of production were done in the household until the advent of capitalism when the major portion of all the work were brought out of the household. But much of domestic work is still left in the household so that is also called housework. In the process of capitalist development, its importance has been diminished and devalued and has been relegated as women's/ housewives' work. Domestic work, especially in capitalist societies is now characterized by isolation and alienation, lack of separation between work and leisure, emotional manipulation,

11

service and self-denial, drudgery and monotony of repetitious and unending nature of tasks.

Beneria argues against this concept of the unproductiveness of women's domestic labour asserting that women's role in household production, i.e., the reproduction and maintenance of the labour force, cheapens the cost of maintenance and reproduction which should have been shouldered by capitalist employers. She postulates that:

1) the use value production does embody a social relation and should therefore not be excluded from the field of political economy;

2) exclusion of use value production renders the analysis of economic activity incomplete, leads to distortions in the measurement of the labor force, and can reinforce ideological biases related to the undervaluation of women's work (Beneria, 1981: 17).

Indeed, the undervaluation of subsistence production or domestic labour has led to the exploitation of women and also their children whose work subsidizes capitalist production (Molyneux, 1979). Women's ' voluntary contribution' or 'secondary support' to male waged work is deemed 'natural'. These pervasive myths led to the 'feminization of poverty' or the state of women occupying the bottom rungs of the socio-economic ladder because of their dependence on men and the low value accorded their work.

Subsistence production is the product of the conflation of patriarchy and capitalism. The patriarchal control over women's sexuality and labour relegated women to their homes with low regard and value for their labour. Capitalist interests reinforce these control and valuation so that they can derive most profits from workers' labour as the women greatly subsidize the reproduction of labour power . Even as capitalism mobilizes women's labour for employment outside the home, it undervalues women's labour power and recomposes patriarchal control in the public sphere. It is therefore significant to deconstruct women's role as subsistence producers and accord it its real value and possibly locate it as a starting point for organizing women.

12

2.3 Patriarchal and Capitalist Hegemony in the Social Sciences

Every theory is a self-fulfilling prophecy that orders experience into the framework it provides. Science is made by people who live at a specific time in a specific place and whose thought patterns reflect the truths that are accepted by the wider society. Social biases are difficult to see. There is no objective value-free social science (Ruth Hubbart, 1983: 51).

Patriarchy as a world view and capitalism as an economic order seek to perpetuate themselves in the consciousness of people , especially in the dominant knowledge and theories of the sciences. Human behavior and the relations among humans have so far been explained by 'Grand' / 'Big Man" Theories, such as Social Darwinism, Functionalism, Structuralism, Marxism, to mention the major ones. Most of them have justified the 'natural order and hierarchy of things, especially about the women's place in society, preferably in the home and for the family.

Kuitenbrouwer noted that dominant views and interests have in a variety of ways shaped the theoretical interpretations of social reality as well as the ways of dealing with problems of reality by social practitioners. Given the dominance of first world economic interests, it is also observed that the study of the social sciences as well as ways of dealing with social problems such as in psychology, psychiatry and social work, are patterned on that of the industrialized countries (Kuitenbrouwer, 1979: 19 -20).

Gramsci introduced the concept of hegemony to explain the various ways in which the dominant classes and interests in society impose their own conception of reality on all subordinate classes, and the possible ways in which the oppressed can create alternative cultural and political institutions to establish their own understanding of oppression in order to oppose and change it (cited in Weiller, 1988:14). Gramsci analyzes the interface of social control with various institutional structures and with a wider sense of cultural values and attitudes that go beyond the conscious control of ideas (Weiller, 1988).

13

The concept of hegemony is relevant in understanding how women's subordination is perpetuated in capitalist societies through the reproduction of social science knowledge which guide institutionalized practices such as social work. This points at the need to look at the assumptions and biases in social work practice, as these are based on social science theories developed in the West, transplanted and assimilated in the Philippines.

2.4 Feminism and the Women's Movement

Wieringa stated that feminism is not a one-dimensional social theory and practice but has arisen out of the varied responses of women to their specific form of subordination, which in turn is determined by the interaction of gender and production relations (Wieringa, 1988:1) .

There are different tendencies among feminists hence the different labels (liberal , socialist, marxist, black, third world 'types of feminism). Regardless of tendencies, feminists should be united on the following basic assumptions: 1) that women suffer discrimination because of their sex, 2) that women have specific needs which remain negated and unsatisfied, and 3) that the satisfaction of these needs require radical change in the social, economic and political order. Feminism as a concept refers to consciousness, the result of reflection and conscious choice; an active desire to change women's position in society; as a social and political movement concerned with self-organization of a women's politics, (Delmar, 1986: 12).

Feminism should work not only for women's emancipation but for liberation as well. Emancipation means the realization of equal rights for men and women in society and the entry of women into social production. Liberation involves the destruction of the patriarchal nature of society at all levels including the family and household and realising one's sexuality (Lycklama, 1987 : 33). The bottomline which should characterize feminism is

14

its radical attack on patriarchy or patriarchal civilization as a system, of which capitalism constitutes the most recent and most universal manifestation (Mies, 1986: 28).

Kate Young advanced that structural issues in society are the central concern on women's position. Particular to third world countries, the social position of women has worsened as result of the integration of developing countries into the global market. Their colonial experience destroyed their indigenous political organizations,including those of women, and were replaced with more pliable forms which excluded women. This also resulted in the restructuring of the economy which was male centered and based on the nuclear family as is found in the West and which is deemed an essential social and economic component of the market system. The economic and other necessary inputs were targetted largely to men in conformity with western stereotypes. Women's needs as producers were ignored, exacerbating their dependency on men (Young, 1988).

Women's critical view of their situation ideally should translate into a social movement. Movements may be defined by two important features: their ability for continued action and their aims. A movement is the collective mobilization to bring about change based on a predetermined or emerging ideology.

> Social movements emerge and develop from complex, fluid relationships between the state and society, the character of the dominant political institutions and ideology, the form of capitalist economy and generation of new subordinations and the 'culture' of political participation of social forces.

> A movement not only specifically takes up women's issues but links them with other issues and systematically questions basic premises and assumptions regarding women's lives and work in developing an understanding of women's oppression and building strategies for the transformation of unequal relations between men and women in society. It develops a vision of change which takes in the present and moves into the future" (Gandhi, p. 25).

Maquire (1984 : 57) suggested that women need to go where power and resources are and must go powerful and resourceful

themselves. Women should get organized because organization is power itself. There is a need for women's independent organizations but also building alliances across class and racial lines .

Women's organizations can work for "revolutionary reform" or a kind of reform which advances toward a radical transformation of society. It results in a shift in power, i.e., the extension of people's control; its objectives are consistent with the long term goals for a new society and based on a critical analysis of the present system; and the reform raises people's consciousness about the need for a new society (Maquire, pp. 58--59).

In the process of organizing women, Wieringa (1988: 9) underscored the need for feminist autonomy at three levels: personal, theoretical and organizational. Personal autonomy involves not having to bow to male pressure to conform to male standards, sexually, emotionally and intellectually. Theoretical autonomy refers to preserving the right to define what one wants to discuss. Women themselves must know their own problems, and the priorities in their struggles. Organizational autonomy means that women's organizations, as autonomous groups, do not succumb to male pressure to fight only for the 'general', male-defined causes .

Feminism is a world view borne out of a collective reflection of women's experiences in a male-dominated world order. It challenges the basic assumptions and imposed knowledge of human nature and society which is characterized as male-centered and advances alternative theoretical formulations which should radically alter gender, race/caste and class relations and the social, economic and political structures in society. Feminism necessitates the praxis of theory and action , of the personal and public , in the area of sexuality as well as work. It should work for liberative transformation through consciousness raising and collective action such as a movement

16

by women in communities and in solidarity with other women at several levels and in alliance with other sectors based on defined principles and areas of unity. Organizationally, a women's movement is strategically autonomous to allow the full and free development of women's articulation of their needs and vision, and having gained strength, it can relate in partnership with other organized sectors in asserting their agenda in the broader social struggle.

Chapter Three: WOMEN'S SITUATION IN THE PHILIPPINES

"The oppression of women in Philippine society cannot be isolated from the oppressive character of society as a whole. Since Filipino women are fundamental to the Filipino condition, their oppression reflects a fundamentally oppressive system of social relations".

Lorena Barros
Founding Chairperson
Free Movement of New Women
(MAKIBAKA)

The above statement was like a voice in the wilderness when it was articulated in the 70s. When Filipino activists were waging a fierce battle against unjust social structures and the 'isms',i.e., feudalism, imperialism, and bureaucrat capitalism, young women activists like Lorena Barros began to see beyond this usual framework of rooting out people's oppression. They realized that women, as a major sector of the oppressed population, suffer more on the basis of their gender, because of the dominant patriarchal values in society.

This level of consciousness of women's issues was held by very few women then. They are now a growing voice as their influence is felt as a national women's movement in the country but more work needs to be done . The majority of Filipino women would still live under the myth that their current place and role as women in Philippine society is predetermined, a destiny and part of the natural order of things. Socialized in these myths and having internalized their oppression, they accept and somehow enjoy the sacrificial roles of wife to their husband, mother to their children, daughter to their father, and other caregiving roles even outside the home - as teachers, nurses and social workers.

Middle class women professionals in the Philippines would even perceive themselves to enjoy equal, if not favoured, status with male colleagues provided they demonstrate as much talent, industry and perseverance in their respective field. They see themselves as much better off than their women counterparts in

other parts of Asia where gender discrimination is more obvious in their cultural practices such as the "purdah" (wearing a veil and totally covering the woman's body practised in some Middle East Muslim countries), "suttee" (widow burning in India), or female circumcision in Sudan and some areas in Africa. A typical view of middle class women would be... " We cannot get excited by all these talks of women's liberation in the Philippines when I feel that women already play a significant role in the development process. I agree with some male foreigner friends who say that Filipinas are capable and strong yet still remain feminine, no wonder they prefer marrying Filipinas. Perhaps, it is the men who need liberation in this country . We should be cautious in using western feminist framework in analyzing the situation of Filipino women ".

How do we unravel the situation of Filipino women? Are they liberated or are they oppressed? Is patriarchy a relevant framework in analyzing their situation? Is not the "oppression of Filipino women" a Western feminist's biased judgment?

3.1. Colonialism and the Development of Patriarchy in the Philippines

Research on the status of indigenous Filipino women before Spanish colonization revealed that they enjoyed a high status in society equal to men. There was equal value given to male and female offsprings. Women participated in the decision-making processes not only in the home but in the important social processes of the bigger community. They had equal access to production resources and had equal 'inheritance rights' to usufruct rights over communal property. They received an equal opportunity for education; they enjoyed the same liberty of movement as men. They had equal rights with regards to divorce before the law. They occupied leadership roles as the men in the political and religious fields (Mananzan, 1989: 7 - 36).

19

Maranan (1989: 38 -39) expounds that local pre-Hispanic economies were geared for social use and to fulfil certain kinship obligations. There was no centralized system of the means of production and the family as a self sufficient, subsistence unit of production and consumption. Thus there was no need to create relations of dependence nor of exploitation. Since the concept of private property still has to come with Spanish conquest, the concept of woman as property of a man had no social basis for existing. However, the early forms of feudalism had started to take roots in some communities, and class structures had germinated and were well on their way to full development . This was happening in some economically progressive and more politically consolidated riverine and coastal kingdoms who had more production surplus, had more barter trade contacts with foreign traders, and in some areas, had become Muslim sultanates. In these communities, the women had become part of social and productive relations which had need for dependence and exploitation.

The Spanish conquest facilitated the transition from pre-feudal to feudal relations. Communal lands became private reserves. While debt peonage and sharecropping had their origins in pre- conquest period, it was the colonization process that institutionalized these socio-economic phenomena.

Within the context of these developments, the transformation of women from highly respected equals of men to objects of subjugation began. When the Spaniards brought in their institutions and transplanted them on native soil, the social being of women was invested with new meanings, new dimensions.

> The "new" Filipina (or female Indio) was now her father's meek daughter, her husband's faithful subject, the Church's obedient servant, and before her marriage, a chaste virgin who would yield only to her husband (and occasionally to the friar). But of course, like her peasant husband, she was also a slavelike toiler who worked the rich man's and his descendants' land for pittance... (Maranan, p.39).

20

This colonial legacy was more effectively systematized even later as the next colonizers, the Americans , increasingly linked and made the local economy dependent on the world capitalist market. A significant portion of agricultural production was allocated to export crops such as coconut, sugar, tobacco, abaca and later fruits grown in multinational farms (pineapple, banana) or in contracted farms (mango). Many more Filipino peasants and their families were dispossessed their lands through various means— from outright landgrabbing, to usury and new legalities of land ownership of which the peasants were unaware of. The traditional self-sufficiency of the Filipino rural households (usually an extended kinship system) gave way to nuclear families dependent on male wage earners who work mostly as landless peasants, as factory and office workers, or other low-paying jobs. Many families migrated from the farms to urban centers and constituted the urban poor population congesting the slum communities.

The historical process of colonialism, feudalism and capitalism led to the class division of Filipino society and to the sexual division of labour and the gender subordination of women in the home and public work places. It also gave rise to the dual economy of stagnating countrysides and glittery cities where factories and facilities are concentrated. It also left well-entrenched socio-political structures which perpetuate colonial values , elitist rule and inequities in power and wealth distribution.

The Philippines remains a neo-colony of western economic powers, primarily of the USA and recently of Japan. US economic and political hegemony in the country persists even after the granting of political 'independence' in 1946. They prepared well for their exit by grooming proteges from among the local elite aspiring to take over the leadership of the country. Upon the US dictate, the blueprint for modernization and development of the country tried to ape the western models but without dismantling the feudal structures. The local elite, who were installed by the

colonial regime and are now in partnership with former colonial powers, even built on feudal values and relationships to maintain a dominant-dependence arrangement which suits their own interests. The western partners fully supported corrupt leaders, even a dictator whose economic exploitation left a plunder of the country's natural resources and a heavily indebted economy , with an estimated U$ 30 billion foreign debt this year. The economic dependence on the West led to the commodification of its people, especially women who are exchanged for foreign currencies either as global factory workers, as overseas contract workers.

3.2 Women as Subsistence Workers

The subordinate position of Filipino women is the result of the merging of patriarchal and capitalist interests which were entrenched by the colonial experience described earlier. Women comprise 50 % of the almost 60 million Filipino population (1990 estimates). However, women comprise a low 36 % of all employed persons and 41 % of all unemployed. This means that some 9.3 million women are left outside the labour force among the unemployed and "economically non-productive". Latest estimates show that 74 % of the 'unemployed women' are housekeepers or those who enable other members of the family to engage in productive work outside the home but whose contributions remain unrecognized (Philippine Development Plan for Women, 1989, p. 6).

Housework or domestic labour is the major responsibility of women both for fulltime housewives and those working outside the home. This involves childbearing and childrearing, housekeeping, and emotional support. The specific household activities the wife engages include washing and ironing, cooking, housecleaning, bathing and feeding the children, sewing, to mention a few. Women hold the pursestrings and determine the daily expenditures, do the marketing and try to make both ends meet. Some authors consider this exercise of responsibilities to mean that women in the Philippines wield power in the family (Sevilla, p. 3;

Rutten, 1982). Other Filipino feminists challenge this view arguing that in the context of the Philippine economic crisis, household budgetting is an extra burden when housewives try to make both ends meet with their husbands meager salaries and are expected to fill up the rest such as pleading with creditors for urgent cash .

Women do housework more than eight hours a day, for more than 29 days a month and work for the rest of their life as housekeepers, but they are not considered as 'workers' in terms of official government statistics . They are the reliable source of unpaid labour. While the role of motherhood continues to be glorified, there are no adequate support systems to help women undergo the physical and psychological stresses they bear as reproducers of human resources. The lack of recognition and lack of support for women's domestic work take a heavy toll on women's health as the following statistics bear out:

* the maternal death rate in 1985 was 80 out of 1,000 live births. The main causes are hemorrhage, infection and hypertension, all reflections of inadequate pre-natal care and unattended deliveries.

* 50 % of pregnant and lactating mothers are malnourished with a protein-energy deficiency and iron deficiency.

* 30,000 out of 500,000 teachers are sick with tuberculosis.

* there is still a widespread lack of safe and effective family planning programs, resulting in unwanted pregnancies, usually terminated through dangerous abortion methods (Corpuz, 1987: 10).

Given the economic difficulties of most Filipino families, women do not only do chores for the family but are engaged in subsistence production work such as planting subsistence crops, livestock raising, fishing, gathering/hunting food, weaving, commissioned outwork for cottage industries, vending, washing clothes, hiring themselves out as domestic help, scavenging in garbage and even begging in the streets. Women devise strategies or mechanisms so that their families can survive. Housewives

23

comprise a significant portion of the informal sector or the underground economy.

Child labour has also increased because women need additional hands for their multiple income generating activities, so children of school age will be stopped from schooling to help out or take out the younger ones while the mother is away. The tragic thing is that inspite of these income generating activities, they never get to earn enough to feed the family.

The Filipino women's marginalized status in the home is justified and reinforced by the pervasive perspective of biological determinism. It upholds the belief that because the reproductive function is by nature a characteristic of the female sex, women's physical make-up is consequently more delicate. Women are therefore viewed as being too weak to take on strenous activities unlike men who have sturdier physiques and are thus able to take on heavier tasks.

Because women possess the sole capacity to bear children, they are considered as the persons "naturally" predetermined to take on child care and child-rearing functions. This makes them the 'logical' caretakers of the home, producing the 'woman's place in the home' syndrome which defines yet another dichotomy, that of public / domestic. The nurturant role of the women justifies the position that women remain in the domestic sphere while men dominate the public arena, a distinction that has immense impact on the overall development of women and men.

For women who work outside the home, household chores are still their responsibility even if these are at times passed on to other women, like housemaids, who take on surrogate housewife roles. This brings out the issue of class stratification among relatively privileged women who can afford to hire househelp and poor women who have no option but to sell their labour as domestic helpers for measly wages.

The public / domestic dichotomy serves to maintain the division of production and reproduction functions in the economy. It is the public sphere where productive value functions is acknowledged. Goods and services in this sector are fully recognized, remunerated and reflected in official statistics. However, outputs in the domestic arena are classified as purely of reproductive value, merely sustaining the requirements and reproducing the productive sector.

Given the perceived dichotomy between the productive and reproductive spheres, the men who dominate the productive area are perceived to have primacy in society because they perform what are accepted as major functions. On the otherhand, women are relegated to the reproductive spheres and its extensions , thereby confining them to what are considered secondary pursuits.

3.3. Women As Exploited Members of the Labour Force

There has been increasing unemployment and underemployment of Filipino women. There has been a drop in the number of women workers from 8 million out of the total 20.0 million members of the labour force in 1985 to 6.5 million women of the total 19.8 million in 1987. A profile of Filipino women in the labor force shows: (Corpuz, 1987)

agricultural sector	–	32.5 %
sales sector	–	24.87 %
services sector	–	13.5 %
industrial sector	–	11.75 %
professionals	–	10.21 %
clerks	–	6.4 %
managerial	–	0.66 %

The majority of women in the agricultural sector are found in agricultural plantations producing agricultural export products such as pineapple, bananas, sugar, coconut, etc. These products are geared for the world market so whenever slumps on the demand and prices of these occur, massive retrenchments happen.

In the industrial sector, the majority of women workers are found in the garments, electronics and textile industries. There has also been an increasing retrenchment in the garments industry for example - from a total of 1 million workers in 1980, to 500,000 in 1986, to 200,000 in 1988. Worldwide recession and increasing protectionism among the northern countries has led to the closure of many small garment firms. On February 23, 1988, President Aquino announced that her veto against a bill increasing tariff on imported garments and of the government's plan to import garments. As a response, the Domestic Garments Industry decried that this will result in unfair competition and will force the dismissal of 200,000 workers (Corpuz,1987: 6).

Women in factories, especially in the country's four export processing zones work under regimented and hazardous conditions. The following problems are common among them: substandard wages, strict and ever-rising production quotas, monotonous and repetitive work, exposure to extreme temperatures and harmful chemicals, cramped and inadequate housing, sexual harassment, management cheating and abuse, union-busting and strike-breaking. For married women workers, the daily routine is inevitably a backbreaking burden , given the customary lack of male participation in housework and child care, and the virtual absence of institutional support systems like creches (Ofreneo, 1987: 65).

The workers in the global assembly line are most visible in the export processing zones and the factories of Metro Manila. But the line extends all the way to the villages, as metropolitan exporters subcontract jobs to provincial manufacturers or agents, who further farm out the jobs all the way to rural households. This pattern is clearest in the garments industry, harnessing the cheap labour of women workers at the bottom of the subcontracting ladder (Ofreneo, 1987: 67).

In the public sector, the government which is the biggest employer of women has retrenched almost 1 million employees since

the start of 1987 in compliance with the IMF-World Bank
conditions that privatization and streamlining of the government
bureaucracy be done. The majority of those dismissed are women.

3.4 Women as Commodities

The heavy dependency of the Philippine economy to the global
capitalist market has spawned a crisis that severely affects
women whether in their homes or in their jobs. The overwhelming
and still growing foreign debt of almost U$ 30 billion drains the
meager resources that should have otherwise been spent on social
services for women and families. As of 1988, debt servicing alone
will eat up the following: (NEDA)

> 60 % of the Philippine export earnings
> 10 % of Philippine output (GNP)
> 40.8 % of the national budget

Aside from the conditions described earlier of women's
marginalization as subsistence producers in the home and women's
exploitation in the labour force, Filipino women have been
increasingly regarded as commodities for sale, preferably in
foreign currency. As a feminist researcher succintly puts it:

> Her value lies in her being a source of dirt-cheap,
> uncomplaining womanpower, in the factory or cottage, in or
> out of bed. As a money earner, she is often drawn into the
> following options: taking a job in foreign -dominated
> export-oriented industries, becoming a prostitute catering
> to tourists and US servicemen, working as a migrant menial,
> or offering herself as a mail-order bride in search or
> crumbs from more affluent societies (Ofreneo, 1987: 65)

Women account for majority of permanent migrants while there
is an increasing trend in the deployment of women for overseas
work or as temporary migrants. The composition of female
emigration includes women overseas workers and those intending
to marry or are spouses of foreign nationals. They leave with
the hope of breaking away from the vicious cycle of prevailing
poverty and unemployment besetting the country.

As of 1987, the Philippine Overseas Employment
Administration reports that of the total 382,229 land-based
contract workers deployed, 47.2 % are women. Female contract
workers were predominantly engaged in service (59.2 %), and
professional, technical and related work (34.8 %). Of all female
service workers in 1987, 75.9 % were domestic helpers; on the
other hand, 50. 3 % of female workers engaged in professional,
technical and related work were entertainers (Philippine
Development Plan for Women, p. 119).

Foreign exchange remittances generated by overseas contract
workers are conservatively estimated at around U$ 463 million a
year (PDPW, p. 121). It is apparent that the export of Filipino
women workers is a boon to a beleaguered economy in that it
brings in much needed foreign exchange and serves as a relief
from the pressures of widespread unemployment. The phenomenon of
contract labor migration may be viewed within the context of
the international division of labor where the developing
countries supply the developed countries not only with cheap raw
materials but also with cheap low-skilled labor. A sexual
division of labor is also in operation, whereby women are
recruited for low-skilled, low-paying jobs- e.g., as domestic
helpers and entertainers - traditionally performed by them.

In sum, the woman question in Philippine society can be
viewed in terms of class, national, and sex or gender oppression.
Filipino women are thus oppressed by virtue of their class
position, race or nationality and membership in the subordinate
female sex.

There are class-based problems of poor women in the basic
sectors - the workers, peasants, urban poor, ethnic minorities,
as well as cross-class women's problem and issues such as double
burden, reproductive freedom, health and domestic violence. These
issues were bred by the colonial experience and still perpetuated
by the country's neo-colonial status.

Chapter Four: **SOCIAL WORK IN THE PHILIPPINES: DOMESTICATING OR LIBERATING OF WOMEN ?**

A Philippine textbook defines social work as...

" the profession which is concerned with man's adjustment in his environment; man (or groups) in relation to his (or their) social situation. This is referred to as man's 'social functioning', which results from the performance of his various social roles in society, e.g., son, father, husband, employee, employer, patient, committee chairman, citizen... In general, social functioning problems are caused by any of the following:
a.   personal inadequacies or sometimes pathologies which may make it difficult for man to cope with the demands of 'his environment;
b.   situational inadequacies and other conditions which are beyond man's coping capacities; and
c.   both personal and situational inadequacies.

Personal inadequacies may be due to physiological factors like poor physical constitution, wrong attitudes and values, poor or unrealistic perception of reality, ignorance, and lack of skills. Situational inadequacies, on the otherhand, refer to the lack of resources and opportunities in society, or the existence of resources or opportunities, which however, are beyond the reach or coping capacities of people" (Mendoza, 1981: 5).

This definition shows how social work views society from a psychoanalytic view of individual dysfunction and a strongly Parsonian functionalist framework of making the system work. Social functioning and adequacy of role performance in the context of society's givens are emphasized. It implies that social work facilitates the adjustment of individuals to society without much analysis of who defines the givens and the expectations of the members of that society. It also ignores the question of how such givens and expectations evolved, the dynamics of forces behind it. The ahistorical view of contemporary reality should be critically assessed in terms of the time and space under which the Parsonian school emerged. This kind of functionalism was a reaction to the spread of Marxist influence in the social sciences. This likewise sought to promote the preservation of the status quo, the American capitalist economy and liberal democratic thinking hence the thrust of adequacy of role performance and social functioning instead of

29

challenging the basic premises of society and radically altering social structures. Social work interventions are mostly done with individuals, especially using the psychoanalytic approach of delving into the intrapersonal dynamics of dysfunction.

This state of social work is a result of western influences on Philippine society, both in mode of production and in the socio-cultural reproduction of values and practices to maintain the dominant mode of production. Social work practice in the Philippines evolved from the charitable and humanitarian acts since the Spanish colonial period. Prior to this, pre-colonial Filipino communities did not have social work as a specialized activity because mutual aid and support was inherent in their relatively homogeneous, communal and egalitarian society.

In his review of social welfare in the Philippines, Kuitenbrouwer (1979, p. 12) observed that social work and social welfare emerged with the rise of poverty in the country during the Spanish and American colonial periods. It was therefore necessary to propagate beliefs and value systems that would legitimize the inequities of the status quo. For example, during the Spanish colonial period, the Filipino people were socialized into believing that poverty was an act of God and had therefore to be accepted without protest. During the American colonial period, the dominant view, strongly infused through values propagated in the educational system which promoted individual opportunity and mobility, was that all people have equal opportunities.

Social work was introduced as a systematic method of helping people in the 1930s when a coordinative body for public welfare was set up. This was facilitated a Filipino social worker, Josefa Jara Martinez, who trained in the U.S. The first schools of social work sprang up in the 50s. In 1965, social work became officially recognized as a profession with the passage of a law in Congress. This means regulating the practice of social work requiring practitioners to have formal training and to pass a

30

licensure examinations (Mendoza, 1981: 5).

Of contemporary Philippine social work, Kuitenbrouwer's analysis remains relevant even today...

The social science premises on which the hitherto dominant forms of social work have been based have been ideological projections of values which emerged at a specific historical juncture, in response to the dominant interests at the time. Social science, social work theory and practice and research methodology are not neutral, but that they are always rooted in philosophical premises, a world view, and a valuation of society and human relation... that have corresponded to the needs of the powerful and wealthy. Science is never neutral and always implies commitment and choice.

The theory, practice and profession of social work, as these have developed over the years and were transferred from industrialized countries to the Third World, are in profound crisis. The crisis in the Philippines is part of a world-wide crisis in societies where concentrated wealth, privilege and power go hand-in-hand with poverty, impoverishment and human degradation. Foreign approaches to social welfare and to social work prove irrelevant and do not effectively answer the problems of mass poverty which characterize most Third World countries (Kuitenbrouwer, 1979:37-38).

The application of the 'principles and methods' of social work in the Philippines, assumed to be of universal validity, illustrates how ideological premises and values which are dominant in the industrial countries have been transferred to Third World countries in their dependency situation within the world's productive structure. Economic dependency tends to generate dependency in consciousness and intellectual activity (p. 43).

I shared this criticism along with other Filipino social work graduates of the University of the Philippines who considered social work as an "American pie" and who wrote in an 'Eight-Point Manifesto on Social Work in the Philippines' (Ambahan, 1981: 14) the following:

I.   Social work has been an imperialist or world capitalist tool for promoting and maintaining the neocolonial status in the Philippines.

II.   Social work has been directed not for genuine social change but for the maintenance of dependency.

31

III. Beyond being indigenous, social work should aspire to be nationalist.

IV. Social work in pursuing human rights should dare address itself to foreign domination, the prime transgressor of individual and national rights.

V. Social work should work for national self-reliance beyond working for individual self-reliance.

VI. Social work should not be palliative but make an honest attempt to recognize and eradicate structures and institutions that make our country subject to foreign domination and a poor neo-colonial nation dependent on rich industrialized "benefactors".

VII. Social work should be organizational rather than mainly individual; organizing people on the basis of their oppressed and exploited conditions.

VIII. Social work should desist from treating, or vainly attempting to treat, human and social problems in isolation but endeavor to approach these problems holistically, with a social, developmental and national perspective.

These sentiments were expressed in the context of a strong nationalist , anti-imperialist,and anti-dictatorship climate fermenting in the 70s and 80s. Although such voices were a minority, they were significant in terms of breaking away from the traditional social work perspective and practice. They advocated for a community organizing strategy which links individual and community issues to macro structural issues. They sought to confront not only the symptoms but the structural roots of social problems, focusing on consciousness-raising or conscientization which should lead to organized grassroots sectors emerging as a broad social movement able to confront power structures and assert their own development agenda.

Some of us social work graduates organized ourselves and founded alternative groups of non-governmental development organizations such as the Agency for Community Education Services (ACES) and Organization for Training, Research and Development (OTRADEV). These are interdiciplinary groups of young professionals who sought to practice and develop alternative models of development work other than what the established

governmental and non-governmental organizations could offer us as jobs and careers. We sought as our vision "a nationalist, democratic, just and humane Filipino society through democratic, liberating and holistic processes and approaches" while are mission are as follows (OTRADEV Brochure):

1.   To empower the rural masses through conscientization, community organizing and solidarity with the poor.

2.   To promote alternative career paths among students and professionals toward direct service to the rural poor and in the process build a socially conscious interdisciplinary association.

4.1   Social Work and Women

From a Marxist view, social work fails to address the structural roots of poverty in the Philippines. But even the so - called progressive and structural approach to social work also fails to fully address societal problems particularly women's issues because it has remained gender blind.

All these years, social work has mainly viewed women as targets of social services, as reinforcers of traditional man-woman relations and roles, and as instrumental to the delivery of social welfare service. Even as the Philippine government tried to apply the resolutions of the International Decade on Women, the thrust has mainly been along the line of "integrating women" in the mainstream development model without challenging the basic assumptions of such model as inimical to the basic interests of women. During the Marcos regime, the government set up the National Commission for the Role of Filipino Women which organized a 'women's movement' called "Balikatan sa kaunlaran" (Women as Partners in Development). Initiated from the top and led by the wives of local government officials and politicians, this movement mostly served as socio-civic clubs which tinkered with some income generating projects for women. This movement , being identified with the ousted regime, fizzled out with the takeover of power by the Aquino government. The National

33

Commission on Women remained but mainly as a coordinative body especially in policy formulation. The new government created a Bureau of Women's Welfare whose mandate is "the promotion of women's welfare, prevention, eradication of exploitation of women in any form including prostitution, illegal recruitment, as well as the promotion of skills for employment and self-actualization". This seems a positive development except that in practice, there has been no qualitative difference in perspective.

As targets of change, social workers usually work with poor families through women, particularly mothers. Poor women are 'clients' or consumers of social welfare services in terms of being acceptors of contraceptives , recipients of income-generating projects, or co-implementors of child-care/feeding programs, etc. There is an implicit assumption that women clients have to some extent been inadequate in their role as mothers to malnourished children or delinquent youths, as wives to philandering or depressed husbands, or as prolific breeders to an already overpopulated community. Outreach is measured in terms of number of women accessed or served , usually not qualifying the process and the quality of the service. Hence, there is a vague context behind the percentage of accomplishments rendered, and at the outset, the assumptions on why certain targets were made by whom, and so what kind of transformation, if any, took place in the lives of women served.

In its 1988 year-end evaluation conference of the Bureau of Women's Welfare, a regional report would read as follows:

*   With six (6) women welfare workers, a total accomplishment of 3,997 which is 90.84 % was reached. Each of the women welfare worker had a total target caseload of 1,000 each.

*   The five (5) trained supervising social workers carried a caseload of 200 each, of which an accomplishment of 56.4 % was reached.

*   The average number of women in every organized group is between 20-25. From the experience of the women welfare workers, it usually starts with a bigger number like 35 - 40 but the attendance of women is observed to fluctuate due to reasons like economic, illness, etc.

34

*   The ultimate goal of each group of women is to put up a women's center. This women's center is similar to that of a clubhouse, a structure which could accommodate a number of women at one time. It is usually made of indigenous light materials and put up through the efforts of women thereby giving them a sense of identity.

*   The ultimate aim of the program is the self-enhancement of women. Thus, it is in seeing them relate and express through social communication skills development that really the women are moving towards this aim.

*   SEA[1] for women is meant to augment the income of the family and not to take over or compete with the husband's role. Thus to insure success, an indicator in terms of the women's skills, attitudes, and potential for self-enhancement be looked into before a capital grant is given... Project types are more of the traditional ranging from selling, animal raising and farm production. However there are also more technical/creative projects like cottage industry and handicraft such as stuffed toys making, mat weaving, basketry, broom making, pottery and garments making.

This report is very revealing in terms of the implied assumptions of women's needs hence the kind of social work interventions made. While the goals of women's self-enhancement and self-actualization seem laudable, their concept of these processes seem limited to social communication skills and employment. The DSWD Modular Packages on Self-Enhancement of Socially Disadvantaged Women promotes it in terms of clarifying and enhancing the women's roles of "wife, mother (child rearing practices), daughter, daughter-in-law, sister/sister-in-law, breadwinner/provider, community leader/member and others". Hence, a woman who has undergone the DSWD seminar comes out with a 'self-enhancement plan' which reads: "As a mother , I will spare time with my children by playing with them and helping in their school assignment, read storytelling books and introduce new or join them in their games". Women are further bombarded with family welfare services geared for the maintenance and development of the family. This includes parent effectiveness and

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[1]Self-Employment Assistance (SEA) is a livelihood service which provides capital assistance for income-producing projects.

family life education services which aims to provide parents the opportunities to improve their parenting skills and therefore enrich their lives as parents. A total family approach is supposed to be promoted, which means that parents shall be informed on all aspects of family life enrichment which includes responsible parenthood, specifically family planning, home management, child nurturing and care, health and nutrition, etc., in practice women end up doing most or all of these responsibilities given the unchallenged patriarchal context of man-woman relations.

It becomes more absurd when poor women are organized to have as their 'ultimate goal' the setting up of infrastructures like women's centers! This illustrates how energies can be misdirected with a superficial perspective of women's situation. Another example is the Self-Employment Assistance (SEA) , a major thrust in the DSWD's poverty redressal program. SEA is premised on the analysis that ...

> Inadequate income, brought about by chronic unemployment and underemployment and large family size are the over-riding problems of the poor. Other manifestations of their poverty are poor housing conditions, malnourished children and insufficient food/clothing and other resources. As an economic intervention, SEA hopes to uplift the conditions of the disadvantaged into the mainstream of community life and towards self-sufficiency (Fondevilla, 1983:41)

Income-generating projects become economic palliatives which utilizes women's labour without questioning the structural roots of their poverty. It saddles women with more expectations and responsibilities than they are able to handle hence they are usually bound to fail as shown by low payback rate of SEA loans and the dwindling attendance and participation of women in many of the activities initiated mainly by the social workers. The nature of the SEA projects reinforces women's traditional roles like sewing and craft making . These projects, while augmenting a little the family income, do not effectively lead to the empowerment of the women and of the community given their lack of control of the market mechanisms which dictate a marginal value to their produce (Razon, 1989).

Social work has intervened in women's lives mainly in their role as subsistence producers in the household, attempting to cushion the impact of their marginalized status, but never really questioning why women are in such situation. Hence , responses are palliatives in terms of insufficient services , quantity and quality wise, such as day care facilities to ease the double burden. Social work is noticeably absent in the public areas of women's involvement such as in work places to do the likes of trade union organizing, peasant organizing, etc.

4.2 Social Workers as Women

Majority (80 %) of social workers in the Philippines are women. Social work is among the gender-stereotyped professions for women because of the pervasive belief that social work as humanitarian and charity work requires a 'big, gentle heart' which would be most appropriate for women. Along with teaching and nursing, it is generally perceived as a noble profession because of its service to humankind but it is only medium-ranked in terms of professional status, authority , power and compensation (compared to medicine, law , engineering and economics). Social workers are generally consoled that even if they are remunerated low, they have an abundance of the 'psychic income' or the feeling of satisfaction at having helped others and being appreciated for having done so.

But long gone were the days when rich dames did charity work in their leisure time and get prestige from such involvement. Nowadays, Filipino social workers come from lower and middle classes who are still fired by their commitment to serve the poor but also need just incomes to keep themselves and their families above the poverty threshold. Given, the low salaries of social workers, the few males who take social work eventually move on to other fields of work which will earn them enough as breadwinners. Those who remain are either single women who may come from well-off families and on whom they can lean on for some

support or married women whose incomes are considered supplementary to their husband's. Usually, social workers are not much higher in socio-economic status than the poor they work with.

Aside from being underpaid, women social workers are often overworked and face work hazards and risk. For the married women social workers with children, they face the dilemma of balancing career demands and their families' needs. This is especially true when the job requires out-of-town trips for prolonged periods, late-evening or overnight and week-end community meetings and workshops. At the same time, their work setting does not provide a support system which will make them effective given their needs as women such as creches in their work place , flexible work time, or transport facilities. They are usually uncomplaining about these in the name of 'professional commitment'. Mendoza cites a study which revealed that social workers are "willing to make personal sacrifices for their job" (64 % of 245 respondents), are willing to take personal risks" (of 296 respondents 49 % agree, 25 % neutral, 26 % disagree) and are "willing to work despite poor work incentives" (of 295 respondents, 46 % agree, 24 % neutral, and 29 % disagree). These findings show that social workers love and enjoy their work in spite of the meager renumeration but some have begun to question if they can live by commitment alone because they have to contend with the rising costs of living (Mendoza, p. 82).

The management style is usually hierarchical, if not authoritarian , stressing competitiveness instead of support and collaboration. This is illustrated in the Women's Bureau Report where the direct workers and their supervisors are pitted against each other in terms of who delivered more of their caseload target! Women social work supervisors tend to reproduce the patriarchal relationship of superior-subordinate hierarchy and consequently, social workers replicate this relationship with their 'clients'.

Most governments would use social welfare services, delivered by social workers, as political tools for social control such as in counter-insurgency action or simply to win votes among the population. Social workers are often caught in a bind, but have not come forward with organized protest and action to their predicament. Social workers, despite their mandate for social advocacy, have not come forward with a clear,strong and organized position against social injustices. Their effective internalization of their oppression as women and as Filipinos have incapacitated them from doing so.

4.3 Social Work Education

Formal social work education started with the need to systematize and professionalize social services during the post war rehabilitation period in the late 40s. In June 1950, a one-year degree program called master of arts in social administration was offered. The first graduates were mostly executives and supervisors of social welfare agencies in the country. The following year, it was expanded to two years and the degree changed to Master of Social Work. While there were some enrollees, there was little appreciation of the need for formal education for social work practice. There were not many jobs for social work graduates who would usually end up as hospital social workers doing eligibility screening for patients seeking free hospital treatment and other forms of assistance (Mendoza, 1981: 46).

A big boost to the professional development of social work was the UNICEF-assisted Social Services Project in 1961 which sought to improve child welfare services by upgrading the competence of family and child welfare workers. An interest in professional social work education was aroused among welfare agencies.

The institutionalization of social work as a distinct profession came in 1965 when Republic Act 4373 was passed. Specifically, it encouraged: a) the pursuit of formal education in social work, b) the improvement of practice standards because of the consciousness as a profession, and c) the development of more relevant educational curricula.

Social work literature distinguishes a profession from other occupations by the following attributes (Greenwood cited in Mendoza, 1981: 66 - 70).

1. Systematic Body of Theory - the application of scientific knowledge to solving human problems.

2. Professional Authority - the authority ascribed to the professional by reason of his educational background gives the client a sense of security that the professional has the capacity to help him with his problem.

3. Community Sanction - the community sanctions a profession's authority by way of giving it certain powers and privileges. Among these powers and privileges are the profession's control over its a) training centers, b) admission to the professions, and c) standards for professional performance.

4. Regulative Code of Ethics - a built-in regulative code, partly formal and partly informal, which compels ethical behavior on the part of its members, and achieved informally through self-discipline.

5. Professional Culture - values, norms and symbols that bind members and distinctly identify them as a group.

These attributes of professionalization is double-edged. While it is supposed to uphold competence and accountability in serving people, it likewise strengthens power, authority and elitism for those formally educated in social work vis-a-vis the poor 'clients' or the beneficiaries of their services and the other professionals who work with them in this field. This can be seen in the hierarchy of terms/labels or social welfare personnel. The 'social workers' are those who formally trained in social work, i.e. with at least a bachelors' degree; other college/university graduated professionals who engage in social welfare work are called 'paraprofessionals' ; while those who

do welfare work but do not have college degrees are called 'welfare aides' or community leaders.

As students of social work, teachers and supervisors would always query us about what is distinctly social work in a given process or experience in terms of theory, intervention and skill. We were so conscious about being properly recognized as social workers that we got irritated by media calling some red cross organizers or some civic workers as social workers when they surely did not have a social work degree and they were only doing fund-raising or doling out relief goods and did not seem to be doing things 'professionally'.

Graduating with a social work degree and passing the social work board examination does not directly translate to effective field practice. Some social workers who get cooped up in their comfortable offices from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. may tend to settle in routine work and risk less in strategies which make them less comfortable. In other situations, the administrative constraints and heavy workload limit the creativity and flexibility to make relevant responses to people's needs. The community leaders and volunteers who work more closely and intensively with the people would be more effective, given some training. The area of community organizing , one of the social work methodologies, is an eclectic field where many other people disciplines and community leaders may perform very well more than many social workers.

The Schools of Social Work Association has adopted as a policy that social work curriculum for all schools of social work should contain the following three major areas of knowledge:

1) Human Behavior and Social Environment (HBSE) is concerned with the material necessary for understanding the client in his problem situation, and the dynamics of individual and group behavior, and of group and community processes which affect or influence the individual, the group and the community. It is also concerned with content about normal and deviant behavior.

41

2) Social Work Methods/Practice is concerned with the actual process by which the social worker helps his client - an individual, group, or community, the methods and techniques of helping, the resources necessary for helping, as well as the appropriate attitudes that facilitate the helping process.

3) Social Welfare Policies and Programs (SWPP) or Social Services is concerned with the organization, administration and operation of social welfare programs which are established in society in order to meet human needs and problems, the development of these policies and programs, the interrelationship of the agencies which undertake them, and the nature of needs being served by these programs.

4) Field Instruction - aimed at providing the student with opportunities for integration of learning in the three areas by way of supervised social work practice in selected settings (Mendoza, 1981).

As of academic year 1985-86, the SSWAP lists 47 schools of social work throughout the country . Majority of the schools (25 out of 35 which responded to a survey) are under private auspices, both sectarian (i.e.,22 schools are either Catholic or Protestant) as well as non-sectarian groups (Mendoza, 1986: 11).

It is significant to note the prevalence of sectarian schools of social work in terms of the influence and interests they bring to social work training. Most of these schools carry the patriarchal ideology of women's 'Christian' subservience and 'service-for-all' attitude. The schools are likewise capitalist enterprises which have to be economically viable to fully support their operation and hence have to charge exorbitant fees, attract as much enrolment, scrimp on faculty wages, facilities, etc. and in the end, end up as diploma mills. Majority (60 %) of the faculty teach on a part-time basis (equivalent to half day's work or some similar arrangement) which means that they barely have time for curriculum development and student advising and supervision. This consequently takes a toll on the quality of student learning especially in field instruction so that the preparedness of many social work graduates in terms of relevance and appropriateness of perspectives as well as skill competency in the methodology may leave much to be desired.

One school which has the relative luxury of resources, faculty and facilities-wise as well as the academic freedom to pursue innovations in its social work curriculum is the College of Social Work and Community Development of the University of the Philippines, the premier state university. The college has evolved and existed in the context of a secular academic environment which encourages debate and constant scrutiny of curricular relevance to changes in Philippine society. Its social work curriculum was not spared from the Marxist and nationalist surge of campus activism which peaked in the 70s. It had to reckon with the analysis that social work has mostly done palliative measures to the problem of poverty in the urban areas but has not addressed the structural roots of urban/rural poverty. A positive outcome of this is the reorientation of its social work curriculum from the training of urban/city-based professionals working in institutional settings to the training of social workers for rural development work using the integrated method[2] but with a community organizing thrust.

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[2]The integrated method of social work practice, also called the 'generalist approach', developed in the U.S. in the 1960s as an effect of the systems theories which seeks a more holistic understanding of the relationships between man and his environment. It is a correction to what is perceived to be a 'faulty conceptualization ' of the standard approach to service delivery by way of casework, group work and community organization.

In the Philippines, the integrated method is advocated to be more appropriate to the poverty situation given the following related concepts:

1. The concept of one (any) client system as point of entry for working with other client systems. For example, a helping relationship can start on a one-to-one basis, and at an appropriate time in the judgment of the worker, he moves on to a helping relationship with a group or an entire community, with the individual client as point of entry.

2. The concept of total problem-solving. A total problem-solving framework allows the worker to help the client as a system, and to deal with the other systems of which the client is a part, and which are affecting him.

43

4.4   A Challenge for Alternative Social Work Practice

In 1978, I was among the first batch of social work students of the University who underwent the revised social work curriculum with a rural development and community organizing thrust. We were a group of 15 young women who were assigned to three rural villages and lived with peasant families for at least four months . It was a profound experience which transformed the lives of most of us, confronting our bourgeois lifestyle with the issues of poverty and survival - hungry and sick children , landless peasants being ejected from the lands they till, the stench of air and water pollution from nearby distillery firms, to cite the major ones. We soon realized that community organizing is not a fairy tale of people living happily-ever-after by bringing needs and resources together and providing some training seminars on leadership and community problem-solving.

Social work in poor rural communities should involve empowering the people so that they in turn could confront oppressive power structures, both at the micro and macro levels. Thus, social work practice dealing with issues of class and national oppression was emphasized in this experience. We organized peasants, fisherfolks, men, women, youth and children so that they are conscientized, organized and mobilized collectively on community issues. We had no gender perspective so that while most groups would generally be open to men and women , men would dominate most groups, especially those dealing with production issues, except for the health and childcare committees where mostly women are involved given their role as caregivers of the family. Local women's ingenuity and talent in community organizing shine despite the constraints of household and family responsibilities. We were insensitive to women's issues hence we just ignored the fact that women's participation slackened and/or are hampered by the double burden of farm work

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3.   The concept of the client's problem or situation as the basis for the choice of the worker's helping approach or intervention.

44

and housekeeping. We had a general vision of organizational self-reliance for the communities in continuing their struggle but there was no clear vision of women's role in it. Being gender-blind, we falsely assumed that women would naturally become actively part of it. We viewed things from our position as middle class women who have the luxury of opting for higher education and careers.

The poor women in the community who are still saddled with their double burden would lag behind in their participation and settle back in their domestic work. Organized groups would still be dominated by the men with some women as supporting cast. Community issues of class and national oppression would still be waged at the expense of women running the homes and finding ways to feed the family while the men go organizing and waging advocacy campaigns.

This is the trend of work of some social workers who in their personal convictions, rather than as a thrust of the social work collective bodies, chose to go into less tread paths of empowering the oppressed especially the industrial workers, the peasants, the urban poor, the tribal communities , the political detainees.

This framework was influenced by the national democratic stream of the activist movements in the country who see the emancipation of women as being tied to the larger goals of social emancipation. They assume that women will be the automatic beneficiaries of a liberated society. The limitations of this framework, especially as applied to women's issues, can be corrected with the perspectives of the women's movement who see the need for an autonomous women's movement 'integral to but distinct' from the nationalist movement. It is integral to the nationalist movement because its main objective of liberating women would not be achieved unless class divisions and national oppression are eliminated. It is distinct because it is composed of all women fighting their own oppression and developing their

own vision of liberation (Angeles, 1989: 261-262).

The women's movement has drawn some social workers into their fold in varying degrees of feminist involvement. Some social workers who became young mothers like me went into natural childbirth / Lamaze sessions which instilled the principle of recovering the woman's control of her body especially in the event of childbirth. We also practised breastfeeding and saw the importance of waging a campaign to promote breastfeeding and to protest the violation of the Milk Code by transnational milk companies. These initial involvements did not have a clear feminist focus initially . Some of these were linked to broader issues like women and foreign domination, women and foreign debt, women and agrarian reform. Sometimes, women's issues were treated as 'secondary contradictions' to 'primary contradictions'/issues like such as foreign debt, agrarian reform, human rights violations.

The shift of the women's movement to a more feminist orientation has been gradual and uneven. The unevenness of this process of development is due to a host of factors internal and external to the women's movement. The internal factors are 1) the varying degrees of political and feminist consciousness among the women active in the movement; 2) the differing ideological tendencies that tend to subsume organized women into various political formations. The external factors are 1) the differences in ideological orientation and political tradition within the Philippine left movement itself, and 2) the specific political conjuncture sharing the directions of the nationalist movement and the women's movement (Angeles, 1989: 262).

Chapter Five: **Towards a Feminist Social Work Practice in the Philippines (Conclusions)**

Women comprise an important sector of the Filipino population not only in number but also in terms of their role and contribution to the fruition of Philippine society in all its aspects. Filipino women strategically participate in the 'domestic' and 'public' spheres of production but have been marginalized in their value. The patriarchal and capitalist ideologies that permeate the economic, political and socio-cultural fabric of society perpetuate the continuing subordination of women.

Social work as a social science has reflected the capitalist and patriarchal hegemony in Philippine society. Social work evolved from the colonial experience of having to provide palliative and ameliorative measures to the damage done by an imposed socio-economic system. Even today, social work continues to assist the poor , more in terms of adjusting needs and resources than confronting the root cause of maldistribution of power and resources. It has facilitated the domestication of women in their subsistence production roles both within and outside the household. It has allowed some participation of women in the community but only to the extent that this is efficiently managed so as not to conflict with their responsibilities in the household. Social work interventions have been directed more in women's activities in the household or in the community that would complement their housewife roles (e.g. community day care and health services) than in their workplaces outside the home (e.g. trade union organizing).

Social work can learn a lot from the feminist movement in reevaluating its gender-biased and gender blind perspectives. Female social workers have to go through the process of reflecting on their personal and professional selves to mirror and check on their partriarchal socialization and see how they have been instrumental to the dominant capitalist and patriarchal

47

ideologies especially in their roles as change agents. This would hopefully instigate a process of change in orientation and practices such that they become gender conscious and more relevant to women's issues in their persons as well as in their work.

Feminism offers a lot of challenge to working with social workers as they both work for societal transformation. Empowerment of women so that they can assert their participation and agenda in the development debate should be a common goal for working together. Women's role as marginalized subsistence producers has to be challenged and can be a starting point for organizing women.

The hegemony of patriarchal and capitalist interests in social work knowledge has to be unmasked by feminist social workers. A reevaluation and reformulation of the social work curriculum and social work programs and services have to be undertaken.

Feminist social work practice should weave into the feminist movement in a dialogue for a clearer analysis of societal and gender issues and in the search for more responsive interventions to address the roots of these issues at the personal, community and societal levels. Social workers, especially that most of them are women having to confront their own as well as other women's situation, should be fully conscientized on gender issues . This gender consciousness will liberate social workers as well as liberate other women and other sectors towards their effective collaboration for genuine social transformation.

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