FILIPINO CULTURAL IDENTITY
Felipe M. de Leon, Jr.
What is Culture?

- Culture is essentially the way we perceive the world, the values arising from this perception, and the way we express these values as well as the skills they necessitate.

- Perception > Values > Expressions/Skills

- Any activity, product or expression attained through the application of human skill is CULTURE, that which is not is NATURE, such as trees, rivers, mountains, birds.
UNESCO defines culture as:

“The whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or social group. It includes not only the arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs.”
Three main value-orientations engendered by core value of Kapwa

- Filipinos love to connect, especially to people
- Filipinos like to experience the multidimensional wholeness of life
- Filipinos are highly participatory
I. FILIPINOS LOVE TO CONNECT, ESPECIALLY TO PEOPLE

- Among the most highly relational in the world, Filipinos are hardly alone. They are happy being together - when they eat, sleep, work, travel, pray, create or celebrate. They like to feel connected to the world, God and nature, but most of all to people.
“Walang gustong maiwanan sa kodakan”
(Nobody likes to be left out of a photo op)
Togetherness is happiness

- Filipinos hardly eat alone
- Invite a person to your party, how many will come?
- Bantay (watcher) & extra bed
- Prizes for everybody
- “Do not praise small items” - Juan Flavier
- Pabalot, balato, bonus (forms of sharing)
- Pasalubong (quasi-sacred ritual: gift from a journey)
- Cannot keep secrets
- Relational terms for calling each other
- Texting and Facebook capital of the world
- No isolated notes (hagod, slides, “scooping”)
Notes are People
Pitch Relations Reflect People Relations

- In individualistic cultures where people preserve their private space and separateness from others, musical pitches also tend to be discrete or isolated from each other.

- In communal cultures where togetherness and connectedness with others is highly valued, musical pitches tend to be bridged by slides or a microtonal continuum.
FILIPINOS – AT THEIR BEST – ARE A HIGHLY NURTURING, CARING, SHARING PEOPLE, WITH A STRONG MATERNAL ORIENTATION, AND DEFINITELY NOT LONERS.

Filipinos, because of their genius in interpersonal communication and a nurturing, caring attitude, excel in the service professions or industry.
Loners More Prone to Heart Disease

- People with lots of friends are usually the healthiest in the world
- Lack of friends and close social ties are the hidden cause of heart disease
- As social ties increase, mortality rates decrease
- Married people, members of religious groups and the like often live longer
- Social isolation breeds depression, which may lead to lower immunity to disease and even suicide
Study after study has shown that feeling connected with people is extremely important for physical and mental health.

Suicide, alcoholism and mental illness rates are much higher among people living alone.

A massive study confirmed that those with the fewest close friends, relatives and social connections are 2 to 3 x more likely to die earlier than those with high levels of social connectedness (like Filipinos!)
Selfless love is absolutely necessary for the survival of newborn babies and for their healthy growth.

- **Human immune systems** function well only when basic emotional needs such as acceptance and love are met.
The urge to connect makes FILIPINO POPULAR CULTURE

A CELEBRATION OF SENTIMENTS
(OR FEELINGS THAT CONNECT)
Filipino popular culture is the culture of devotion to the family and sanctity of the home, which is its source of strength. Thus, ancestors are revered and the ancestral house has become a symbol of family continuity and stability.
KINESTHETIC INTERACTIVENESS: Connecting Through Touch

- Filipinos love to feel, literally touching their way through life. Rich textural qualities, biomorphic shapes, tasty foods, lush sounds and social clustering make life exceedingly warm and intimate.
A hundred words for touch

- DAMA
- HIPO, KAPA, SALAT
- SALAGOY (touch lightly)
- DAITI, DIIT, DIKIT, LAPAT
- HAWAK, KAPIT
- KAPKAP
- AKAP
- HIMAS, HAPLOS, LAMYOS, HAGOD
- LAMAS
- KAMOT, KALMOT
- KANTI, KALABIT, TAPIK, TIPA
- KISKIS, KUSKOS
- BUNGGO
- SAGI, SANGGI, ANTIG (gentle bump),
- SUNGGO (bump against lightly),
- SIKO, SIIL (violent pushing or shoving with the elbow)
- SUNGGAB, SAMBILAT (clutch, grab, snatch violently)
- SINTAK (sudden pull)
- LUKOT, LAMUKOS, KUYUMOS
- KIMIS, PIGA
- KUTOS, KADYOT, SUNTOK
- SABUNOT, SIPA
- PALO, SAMPAL, BATOK, BUNTAL
- SIKLOT, LAPIROT,
- DUTDOT, SUNDOT, KUTKOT, KUROT
- BUTINGTING, PINGGER
- BALUTBOT, BULATLAT, KALKAL
- KALIKOT, KALAWKAW, KALIKAW
- KILITI
- AKAY, AKBAY
WAYS OF CARRYING OR HOLDING

- **DALA**, BITBIT
- SALO, SAPO
- KIMKIM, KUYUMOS
- KIPKIP
- SAKBIBI, HALUKIPKIP
- SUKBIT
- BABA, PASAN, SUNONG
- PANGKO
- KANDONG, KALONG
Hug If You Want To Live

- Hugging is a key to happiness – Leo Buscaglia
- Hugs make you feel psychologically more secure and together
- Touching releases endorphins (the “happy hormones”), which kill pain and increase immunity to disease
- Positive feelings strengthen the blood’s immune system
KINESTHETIC INTERACTIVENESS: The Magical, Healing Touch

- Traditional rituals are a way of connecting to the divine. Through touch people get healed. A “magical” transference of vital energy occurs in many levels, physical and metaphysical.
A Way of Identifying What is Filipino

- If Filipinos love to connect to people, then they will enjoy and excel in activities that bring people together.
- The more an object, activity, event, ritual, tradition, institution, or idea connects us to one another, the more Filipino it is.
Ideas, Objects, Activities that Bring People Together

- Those with many functions or purposes – they attract different kinds of people and connect them to one another
- Friendship, Kinship, Family
- Shared Devotions, Celebrations, Festivities, Rituals
- Expressive activities especially artistic performance
- Games and sports
- Reunions, Wakes, Crises
- Fulfillment of Daily Needs like eating, shopping, leisure
MULTI-SIGNIFICANCE: Bringing People Together

- An effective Filipino tool for connecting people to each other is to endow an activity, presentation or creation with as many different meanings, functions and qualities as possible.
Arts of Asia
January-February 1991

Classic Furniture in the Paulino Que Collection

20 YEARS INDEX
1971-1990
The Filipino is a highly accessible and accommodating person, **basically trusting and open**, yet quite sensitive and **demanding of respect and recognition of one’s dignity.**
Bukas ang kalooban, not private

- Windows all around ancestral houses
- Aliwalas, airy spaciousness and openness of interiors
- “Space surrounds space”
- High value placed on being natural, informal, personal
OPEN HOUSE: In most Western cultures, guests are allowed to move around only within the confines of the living room.

In Filipino culture, guests may roam anywhere inside or outside the house, even in the bedrooms.
PAKIKIRAMDAM: Soft, Flowing Movements

- Pakikiramdam, knowing through feeling or participatory sensitivity makes the Filipino especially compassionate, affective, gentle, and kind.
EXPRESSIVENESS: Maximalism

- The common Filipino is a maximalist, filling up every available space with forms and things. It springs from an expressive exuberance deeply rooted in emotional sensitivity and the strong urge to connect.
Enhancing Filipino expressiveness is “uslawit”, ornaments that protrude (usli) and hang (lawit). When the body moves or the wind blows uslawit dances as well. Filipinos everywhere love uslawit.
Dancing Flight Attendants
The world’s most emotional countries

- **The Philippines is the world’s most emotional country.** It’s not even close; the heavily Catholic, Southeast Asian nation, a former colony of Spain and the U.S., scores well above second-ranked El Salvador.

- **Singapore is the least emotional country in the world.** ”Singaporeans recognize they have a problem,” Bloomberg Businessweek writes of the country’s “emotional deficit,” citing a culture in which schools “discourage students from thinking of themselves as individuals.”
The world’s most emotional countries
Most Romantic in Southeast Asia

- A Mobile Lifestyle Survey conducted by Asia Market Intelligence for Siemens in late 2002 among six SEA’n countries found that Filipinos send “I love you” messages the most often:

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<th>Country</th>
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<td>Filipinos</td>
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Countries where people feel the most and least loved

- The three countries with the very highest scores are, in this order, the Philippines (93 percent), Rwanda (92 percent) and Puerto Rico (90 percent). The region that appears to experience the most love is Latin America, followed by Southeast Asia and Western Europe.
Countries where people feel the most and least loved

- Interestingly, these findings seem generally consistent with a 2009 Gallup survey that attempted to determine the countries where people experience the most and least emotion on a daily basis.
What about the countries where fewer than half of respondents said they’d experience a lot of love the previous day?

- Most of them are former Soviet republics: Russia, Central Asia, Eastern Europe and the Caucasus region all consistently scored poorly. Interestingly, those countries also tend to have very high smoking rates.

- Other low-scoring countries included Burma/Myanmar, Yemen, and three African states: Ethiopia, Chad and Morocco.
II. FILIPINOS LIKE TO EXPERIENCE THE MULTIDIMENSIONAL WHOLENESS OF LIFE

- FILIPINOS DO NOT LIKE A PARTIAL, FRAGMENTED VIEW OF LIFE; THEY LIKE TO SEE LIFE AS A WHOLE.

- THE MORE WE KNOW ABOUT SOMEONE, THE GREATER OUR CHANCE OF FINDING SOMETHING IN COMMON WITH THIS PERSON AND ESTABLISH A CONNECTION, THUS, A FILIPINO IS NOT HAPPY JUST KNOWING ANOTHER PERSON’S NAME. HE WOULD ALSO INQUIRE ABOUT HIS WORK, HOMETOWN, RELATIVES, MARITAL STATUS, EVEN HIS SALARY.
An intuitive logic more profound than the either/or of mechanistic cultures is Filipino holistic *polar logic*.

In polaristic logic, it is axiomatic that *if a thing is true or valid, then its opposite must also be true or valid.*
WE DO NOT LIKE TO BELONG TO ONLY ONE SIDE OF A RELATIONSHIP. OUR KINSHIP SYSTEM IS BILATERAL. HAVING TWO KIDS IS ENOUGH AS LONG AS THEY ARE A BOY AND A GIRL.

In hosting shows, Filipinos traditionally pair a man and a woman rather than just have one or the other as in Western countries. The West is beginning to catch on but mixed gender hosting is still a novelty in the U.S.
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BRIDGING DIFFERENCES: Curves not Angles

- The Filipino prefers mediation to confrontation. *Pahiwatig, pakiusap, pakikibagay, biro* are only a few of the orchestral wealth of techniques for bridging differences.
FILIPINOS ARE HIGHLY PARTICIPATORY

- FILIPINOS DEMAND COLLECTIVE, EQUAL PARTICIPATION IN THE CREATIVE PROCESS, DECISION-MAKING AND SELF-DETERMINATION. No one must have a monopoly of the decision-making process

Everybody must have an active role, no matter how small (salimpusa)
Participation in the creative process is primary

In Filipino society, everybody is a participant/performer. Nobody is a mere spectator. There is no separation of **performer and audience**; or **creator and spectator**.

Thus, Filipinos prefer **consensus** as a mode of reaching decisions or settling conflicts.
The Participatory Filipino

Pantay-pantay, walang lamangan

Pagbibigayan, sharing, interdependence; equitable distribution of resources

- micro interweaving of colors, visual elements
- interlocking/interconnected wide spaces (non-compartmentalized)
- salitan, interlocking rhythms in music
Verbs expressing mutual, reciprocal action and equal possession of similar qualities

- **magsi-** magsilabas, magsigising, magsitayo
- **magsipag-** magsipagghanda, magsipagkalat
- **magka-** magkaisa, magkasundo
- **magka-** magkasama, magkapatid, magkatulad, magkakulay
- **magkasing-** magkasingganda, magkasimpangit
- **ka** - karamay, katuwang, katulong, katabi, kaklase, kalahi, kauri, kalaro, kasapi
- **kasing** - kasintigas, kasinlapit, kasintanda, kasindali, kasing-asim, kasinggaling
- **mag-an** - magsagutan, magsabunutan, magtakbuhan, magtawanan
- **magka-an** - magkalinawan, magkainisan, magkarinigan, magkasintahan
- **magsing** - magsing-irog
- **maki-** makisangkot, makialam, makiisa, makibahagi, makibaka, makisama, makigawa, makibili, makihalo, makitulog
- **makipag-** makipag-away, makipag-kamay, makipag-usap
- **makipag - an** makipag-agawan, makipagsagutan
- **makipagka - an** makipagkaibigan, makipagkasunduan
- **ka - an** kasunduan, kaibigan, kasintahan
- **pakiki-** pakikiramay, pakikiramdam, pakikiisa, pakikiapid
- **pakikipag-** pakikipaggtalol, pakikipag-sayaw, pakikipag-usap
- **pakikipag - an** pakikipaggtulungan, pakikipaggtawanan, pakikipag-ugnayan, pakikipag-unawaan, pakikipagsulatan, pakikipagsapalaran
- pakikipagka - an pakikipagkasunduan, pakikipagkaibigan
- paki- pakialam, pakisuyo, pakibasa
- paki – an pakibagayan, pakisamahan, pakilapitan, pakibihisan
- ta- kain ta
The deepest social aspirations of the Filipino are freedom, justice, and dignity. Monopoly, dictatorship and the curtailment of choices are anathema. Decision-making is participatory.
ARROGANCE IS A NO-NO

- The Filipino concept of kapwa (shared identity/goodness) and non-duality of life make people absolutely equal in principle and nobody has a right to regard himself as above or more important than others.

- Humility is highly-prized, at least outwardly.

- The privilege of one must be the privilege of all. Equal application of the law is a must.
Providing Choices:
Variability of Form, Medium and Technique

- A greater range of materials, forms, techniques, ideas and possibilities for engaging in productive or creative work allows for wider and democratic social participation
Westerners are time people

- The traditional concept of marking the beginning, middle and end of a finite segment of time is a much ingrained habit of thought that manifests itself even in the way food is served in the West.

- The structure is chronological: with a beginning (appetizer, soup), a crescendo towards a climax (salad, fish, chicken, and/or meat), and a steady progression towards an anticipated end. When the English serve tea, or American coffee, they know dinner is over.
Filipinos are space people

- The structure of Filipino meals is entirely different, for everything is served all at once, and we are free to choose the combination of foods that we would like to eat at any given moment. It is thus a sense of space rather than a sense of time that is created.

- the concept of time implied by the structure or layout of Filipino is open-ended and non-finite.
Filipino Healing Culture

- We are highly relational – **Social interconnectedness** leads to longevity
- **Expressiveness**, especially through music and dance, releases harmful emotions
- **Everyday creativity** promotes well-being
- **Touching as a way of life** increases immunity to disease
- **Deep belief in God** makes Filipinos optimistic and provides meaning to life
- **Strong sense of humor** enables us to rebound easily from any tragedy
WAKAS
The End
Fin

Salamat Po!
Thank You!
Merci