Social Psychological Issues of Peace Education in a New Democracy: The Philippines

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This paper attempts to present various aspects of peace education in the Philippines. Specifically, it (1) it gives a brief account of the history of social conflict in the Philippines; (2) shows the nature of peace education; and (3) it discusses the nature of social conflict in the context of Kurt Lewin's theories.

Philippine mass-based freedom movements began 100 years ago aginst what were perceived as abusive colonial rulers and greedy landlords (Kerkvliet, 1977). In the late 1960s, there was a radical organizational shift influenced by the growing hegemony of China in Asia. In 1969, a Moaist-oriented protracted war against the government was declared by the Communist Party of the Philippines (Rocamora, 1994). Its military arm was the New People's Army.

In 1977, President Marcos declared Martial Law and imposed a ruthless dictatorial regime that lasted until 1986. During the 14 years of President Marcos' Martial Rule, the New People's Army fed successfully on social discontent and a notion among its recruits that the United States was propping up the ruthless Marcos dictatorship. Guerillas also drew psychological inspiration from the perceived victories of other protracted struggles in

Vietnam and Nicaragua. The underground forces swelled in membership and extent of territorial control.

During the decade of the 80s, the Philippines and other Third World countries, as well, underwent transitions of dictatorships into new democracries (Haggard and Kaufman, 1992; Huntington, 1993). In 1986, the nonviolent People's Power Revolution dislodged President Marcos from office and replaced him with President Corazon Aquino. Since then, the Philippines has been in a precarious state of transition-to-democracy, dodging seven coup attempts and engaging in four electoral exercises. It is against this historical backdrop that the Philippine military continues to wage armed encounters with the New People's Army. It is within this politico-military military context that the military continues to wage armed encounters with the New People's Army. It is within this politico-army context that peace education in the Philippines evolved.

Themes. With this as a background and context, this paper attempts to present the various aspects of peace education in the Philippines. I will develop the theme of this paper along the following statements:

1. In Philippine peace education, the unit of analysis is intrasociety forces.

2. In the Philippines, peace education is more an effect rather than a cause of contextual changes.

Data sources. Data for this paper came from three sources. The first was a set of in-depth interviews of staff members from 13 Philippine organizations running peace education and/or human rights programs. As far as I know, this list covers all existing peace education programs in the Philippine today. There are, however, other nongovernment organizations (NGOs) involved solely in human rights education that are excluded from this list. The second reference is a comprehensive article entitled, "A Philippine Peace Compendium." This is a socio-politico-historical description of activities of Philippine peace organizations by political scientist Miriam Ferrer (1996). The third information source is my own set of experiences

both as a political educator in antidictatorship movements and as a social psychology teacher. During the Marcos regime, I conducted various seminars on active nonviolence among the antidictatorship forces. In Ateneo University's Psychology Department, I continue to teach graduate courses such as Conflict Resolution, Psychology of Violence and Peace, and Political Psychology.

Sample. Table 1 presents a profile of the 13 organizations surveyed in this paper. Some are church-owned, others are academic institutions, some are NGOs, and the rest are government organizations (GOs).

Table 1. Thirteen Organizations with Peace and Education Programs

	Organization	Church-owned	Acad-emic	NGO	GO
1.	National Secretariat for Social Action	x		x	
2.	Pax Christi	x		x	
3.	Ecumerical Movement for Justice and Peace	x		x	
4.	Ateneo Graduate School	x	x		
5.	Notre Dame University Center for Peace Education	x	x		
6.	Miriam College		x		
7.	JAS Memorial College		x		
8.	Coalition for Peace			x	
9.	Peace Center			x	
10.	Department of Education Culture & Sports				x
11.	Office of the Presidential Adviser for the Peace Process				x
12.	Commission of Human Rights				x
13.	Armed Forces of the Philippines				x

Unit of analysis in Philippine peace education: Intrasociety forces

I will now proceed to discuss the meaning of 'peace' in 'peace education'. In the Philippines, 'peace' takes on characteristics which may be quite

different from the West. The unit of analysis is intrasociety forces (e.g., state vs. antistate, have vs. have nots) and is relatively low on the personal or interpersonal level of conflict.

I caution against labeling this dissimilarity as simply an East-West or a collectivist-individuals cultural gap (Berry et al., 1992, Han & Park, 1995, Leung et al., 1992, Ohbuchi & Takahashi, 1994, Triandis, 1994, Triandis et al., 1988, Trubisky, Ting-Toomey & Lin, S., 1991). Identifying 'cultural differences' is helpful in confirming significant variation. But culture does not explain the determinant sources of such variation. Cultural explanations also implicitly assume some kind of egalitarian relationship between and within the parties involved in social conflic, which is not true in many societies. Examining past and present systems of perceived power inequity among and within societies may yield some causal explanations to what, at first glance, may be labeled as 'cultural differences'. The role of power distribution in conflict and peace is discussed more extensively by Blalock (1989) in his book, *Power and Conflict*, and by other authors as well (Apfelbaum, 1979, Donnelon & Kolh, 1994, Raven, 1993).

Data from the Philippines show that the meaning of 'peace' takes on a strong politico-economic dimension. First, peace organizations describe themselves as being primarily state-related in nature (Ferrer, 1996).

Second, the content of peace education programs tends to take on societal perspective. I will now present the findings in more detail.

Peace organizations are political

In a survey of 100 Philippine peace groups, Ferrer (1996) asked her respondents to list their organizational activities. Each group dealt with an average of five concerns. Table 2 shows that the attention of peace organizations is focused on state-related political issues.

In addition to highlighting the importance peace organizations ascribe to political engagement, Ferrer's (1996) findings also point out another interesting fact. Issues that fuel progressive movements in the West find lighter weight in the subjective understandings of peace groups in the

Table 2. Concerns of 100 Philippine Peace Organizations*

	Concerns	Percent of Organizations
		(N = 100)
1.	Comprehensible Peace Agenda	56%
2.	Politics	
	2.1 Political Negotiations	55%
	2.2 Human Rights/Militarization/Political Repression	48%
	2.3 Dispute/Conflict Resolution	30%
	2.4 Empowerment/Governance Issues	28%
	2.5 Peace Zone Building/Peace Pact	18%
	2.6 Electoral Reforms	14%
	2.7 Regional Autonomy	5%
	2.8 Disarmament/Anti-Nuclear Arms	4%
	2.9 International Humanitarian Law	4%
3.	Social Development	
	3.1 Socio-economic Issue	45%
	3.2 Environmental Issues	27%
	3.3 Agrarian Reform/Rural Development	18%
	3.4 Ancestral Domain	14%
	3.5 Health	12%
	3.6 Literacy	2%
4.	Sectoral or Group Rights and Welfare	
	4.1 Gender	20%
	4.2 Christian-Muslim/Christian-Muslim-Others Relations	19%
	4.3 Children	10%
	4.4 Urban Poor	9%
	4.5 Labor	9%
	4.6 Students	6%
	4.7 Media	4%
5.	Cultural Transformation	
	5.1 Values Education	30%
	5.2 Ecumenism	8%
	5.3 Internationalsm	2%
	5.4 Spiritual Healing	1%

*Each group listed an average of five concerns.
 Source: Ferrer, 1996

Philippines. Only 4 of the 100 organizations listed disarmament and anti-nuclear issues as an interest. The women's and environmental concerns fared better, but still paled in comparison to intra-state political matters. Twenty percent of all groups included gender and 27 percent had environment in their list of concerns. The disparity in subjective interests may partly explain the weak psychopolitical links between contemporary global (Western) social movements and the passionately political national movements in the so-called Third World.

Societal perspective of peace education content

Of the 13 organizations doing peace education, 9 listed social conflict as their primary concern. Three others listed social issues as secondary concern to interpersonal peace, while one institution remained completely at the personal peace level.

Examples of societal topics discussed in peace education program are militarization, human rights, debt crisis, poverty, abusive political elite, unjust labor practices, and uneven land distribution. Identified as 'roots or cooperation' or what psychologist would probably call conflict resolution strategies are respect for human rights, building a sustainable natural-resource base, redistribution of wealth, just governance, international solidarity building, and engagement in the ongoing political peace process.

In an influential book written for Filipino peace educators entitled, *Peace Education: A Framework for the Philippines,* Swee-Hin and Floresca-Cawgass (1987) list their chapters as follows:

> The first issue: Militarization
> The second issue: Structural Violence
> The third issue: Human rights
> The fourth issue: Cultural Solidarity
> The fifth issue: Environmental Care
> The sixth issue: Personal Peace

Furthermore, the role-playing exercises annexed at the back of their book deal with economic and political conflicts in Philippine society. These

suggested classroom activities are about child laborers, squatters in a land of plenty, US military bases, land reform, and ethnic conflict. (Note: The US military bases were closed in 1991, after the book's publication date).

Political context affects peace education

I will now proceed to discuss the second theme of this paper: that peace education is more an effect rather than a cause of contectual changes. The Philippine experience during the Marcos dictatorship and in the turbulent transition period to democracy shows that political context affects peace education. Figure 1 shows the basic causal direction.

**Figure 1.** Causal Relations Among Context, Behavior, and Education
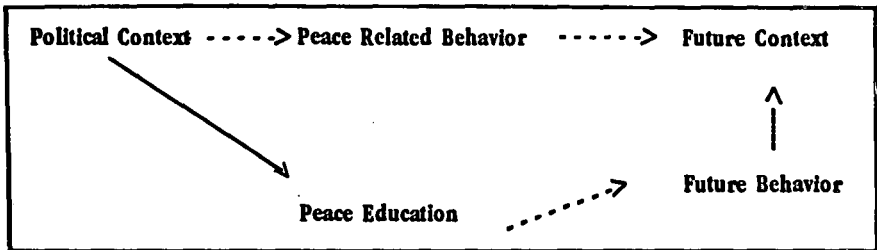
The contention here is that political circumstances influence peace-related behaviors which later on lead to peace education activities (broken line). Furthermore, changes in political conditions directly affect peace education (solid line). It remains to be seen whether peace education will lead to future changes in behavior and/or political circumstances (dotted lines).

A look at the number of peace organizations established in the past two decades suggests that a change in political context influenced peace-related behaviors, and not vice-versa. Figure 2 illustrates the surge of peace activities after, not before, the 1986 People's Power Revolution. The chronological arrangement of political change coming ahead of a rise of peace activities shows that the causal direction starts with context change.

Our survey of peace educators showed that for 6 of the 13 respondents, political conditions caused the establishment of their peace organizations.

Figure 2. Number of Philippine Peace organizations established before and after the People's Power Revolution
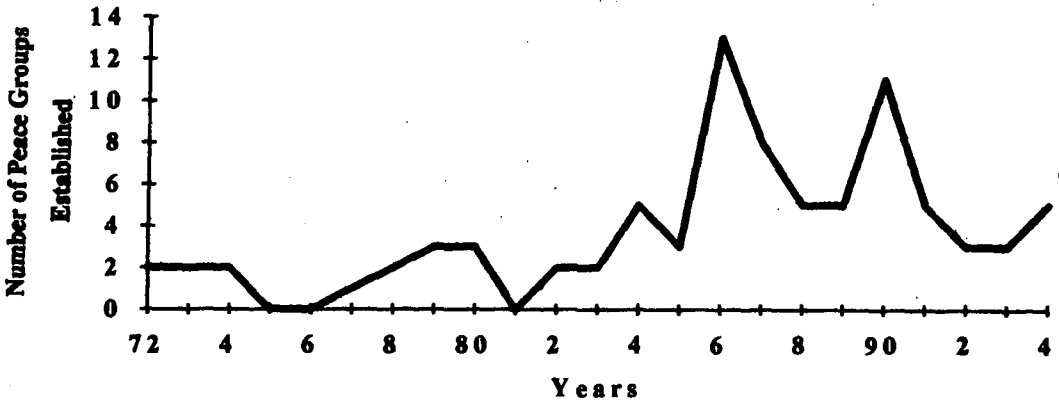
Note: 1972 - Declaration of Martial Law by President Marcos
      1986 - People's Power Revolution

At a later stage, these peace groups set up peace education programs. More specifically:

1. Three church groups were set up during Martial Law to pursue justice and liberation from all structures of oppression and in response to intensive military operations in the rural areas.

2. Two government offices were set up by President Corazon Aquino after 1986. These were the Office of the Peace Commissioner (currently the Office Presidential Adviser for the Peace Process) and the Commission on Human Rights.

3. One group was established after 1986 by a core of citizens to monitor the ongoing peace talks and ceasefire agreement between the Philippine Government and the New People's Army.

Direct effects: From political context to peace education

Five of the 13 peace education programs were directly caused by the political environment. For example, one elementary school

set up its program at the height of the series of coup attempts during the democratic transition phase from 1987 to 1990. Its school principal described the conditions that led to the setting up of their peace education program (Josefina Luciano, personal interview, January 24, 1996). On the other side of the conflict, one finds the Armed Forces of the Philippines setting up human rights education programs for soldiers because they were pressured by sociopolitical conditions in the new democracy (Personal interview, Captain Thomas Dumpit, January 25, 1996).

Teaching a context-sensitive psychology of peace: Some anecdotal accounts

My experiences as a social psychology teacher also show that political context affects peace education. Conditions in the changing political environment continuously permeate my classes on Peace and Violence, Conflict Resolution, and Political Psychology.

Students' direct experience with violence are brought into the classroom. One of our discussions on military atrocities triggered off traumatic memories in one student of how she saw a fellow student shot and killed by a military man. In another session a graduate student talked of her long-drawn involvement in the political underground.

Students' research papers take on a methodological flavor idiosyncratic to societies-at-war. Some key respondents require that they first screen the students' report before it is submitted as semestral work. This was the case when a group studied *The Social Psychology of Government Negotiations With Coup Leaders*, and interviewed one of the generals accused of organizing the coup attempts. Other students have close friends on both sides of the protracted war and manage to gather information ordinary researchers cannot obtain. Two students worked on a survey on *Preferred Personality Traits of a Filipino Conflict Resolver: Government-Military and New-People's Army Perspectives*. One of them had friends among the military, the other had access to the underground, so both managed to enrich the research due to their personal contacts. Not all research experiences are pleasant. A group of students did a study on *Peacemaking Efforts of the*

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Armed Forces of the Philippines. Since one of them was a civilian employee in a military camp, they assumed they would have no problems getting data. However, at the research facilities of the Intelligence Services of the Armed Forces, they had to fill out 10-page forms about their personal lives. Furthermore, two intelligence agents went to my university and did a background check on me. And this happened last year, almost a decade into our so-called new democracy.

The context-education relation is also evident in the syllabus changes of my Political Psychology courses after the downfall of the Marcos Dictatorship. During Martial Law, course topics had to do with political struggle. We discussed the following: (1) brainwashing and conditioning, (2) political education at the grassroots level, (3) propaganda, (4) political street plays, and (5) active nonviolence, such as through fasting and boycotts. Into our new democracy, we talked about public opinion surveys; trauma recovery from political ordeals; political peacemaking, and other broader topics such as applications of personality theories to political behavior and political psychology worldwide.

Conclusion

In their book, *The Person and the Situation*, Ross and Nisbett (1991) claim that social psychology rests on three principles borrowed from Kurt Lewin. First, the principle of situationism which posits that social context creates forces that affect behavior. Second, the principle of construal which considers subjective variations in individual understandings of a single stimulus. And third, the concept of field systems that recognizes that behavior is both a cause and an effect of a variety of simultaneously existing conditions that push and pull on each other in a dynamic and interdependent fashion.

Understanding peace education in the Philippines and other Third World societies, as well, can be aided by these powerful insights in Lewin. Peace education is situationist and is sensistive to political context. It is subjective, with peace taking on varying meaings across nations and across different stages of democratic transisitons. It does not exist in a vacuum but thrives in a field system of rapidly changing historical events.

I end this paper with the hope that the good work of peace educators in the Philippines, Asia, and other parts of the world will continue to march on, to the beat of their different drummers.

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