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Those Who Were Born Poor: A Qualitative Study of Philippine Poverty

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This qualitative study investigated the psychological experience of poverty among 2 groups of Filipinos who were interviewed about the effects of being raised poor, 12 who became rich, and 13 who remained poor. Using constructivist and critical theories as research paradigms and grounded theory as methodology, the results of the study illustrated perceived causes, coping mechanisms, and cultural factors. Surprisingly, both groups were very similar in their experiences of not having basic needs met, of negative emotions, and of generally attributing their poverty to familial circumstances. The ways of coping with poverty, such as receiving and giving assistance and imploring God for help, and the cultural features of perseverance (*pagpupunyagi*) and reliance on others (*pakikipagkapwa*) were similarly influential in both groups. Because the main difference between both groups is the occurrence of chance events that provided access to education and opportunities to emigrate for those who have become rich, the oppressive structures of a society that perpetuate poverty are discussed. In developing countries such as the Philippines, the psychological experience of poverty is characterized by the impossibility of upward mobility.

Keywords: poverty, Philippines, qualitative, culture, social justice

Counseling people who are poor is a necessary element to the social justice agenda. However, in psychological literature, and in counseling psychology research in particular, there is a prominent neglect and noticeable absence of discourse on social class or poverty (e.g., Lott, 2002; Smith, 2005). Counseling psychologists (Fouad & Brown, 2000; Liu et al., 2004) have reiterated the importance of attending to social class, economic inequalities, and poverty not only in teaching and research endeavors but also in preventive and outreach advocacies (Vera & Speight, 2003). Why should counseling psychologists care? According to the American Psychological Association (APA, 2000), poverty, a problem concerning 28% of the world population (World Bank, 2000), affects

people's lives in an all-encompassing way, with serious consequences for physical and psychological well-being. The World Bank defined poverty as people living on less than U.S. \$1 a day. Should those living on less than U.S. \$2 a day be considered poor, the number of poverty-stricken people would rise to 2.8 billion—46% of the world population (World Bank, 2000). For the present study, the terms *poor*, *impoverished*, *destitute*, and *undernourished* are used interchangeably to represent the World Bank definition.

There has been substantial research on the experience of poverty, for example, on attributions of poverty (e.g., Furnham, 1982; Furnham & Gunter, 1984), sociopsychological traits and characteristics that contribute to risk and resilience (e.g., Garnezy, 1991, 1993; Myers & Taylor, 1998; Rak & Patterson, 1996), consequences of poverty (Li-Grining, 2007; Porterfield & McBride, 2007; Underlid, 2007), and culture of poverty (Jarrett, 1994; Joassart-Marcelli, 2004; Seipel, 2003), but surprisingly little research investigating poverty in developing countries. In fields other than psychology, such as economics, public health, public administration, and political science, there are also many studies on poverty specifically investigating the dynamics of poverty in households (Finnie & Sweetman, 2003); self-efficacy and geographic opportunity in low-income individuals (Rosenbaum, Reynolds, & Deluca, 2002); getting off of welfare and homelessness (Friedman, Meschede, & Hayes, 2003; Litt, Gaddis, Fletcher, & Winter, 2000); and poverty reduction (Mitlin, 2001). Some of these studies have focused on developing countries, but, considering the number of individuals affected by poverty worldwide, there have not been nearly enough.

For counseling psychologists in the industrialized West, poverty in developing countries is of importance. Of the six billion people inhabiting the world, more than four billion live in countries classified by the World Bank as low or lower-middle income (Harrison, 2000). In order for counseling psychology to advance, truly championing internationalization (Leong & Leach, 2007;

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Leung, 2003; Savickas, 2007), psychologists must recognize the issues of those whose lives are intensely affected by the actions of developed countries. Studying and serving the needs of those who are poor is critical given the increased social stratification that is occurring in the United States and all over the world. And, as our field continues to neglect research aimed at increasing understanding of the needs of those who are poor, we perpetuate our social distancing from the poor and fail to illuminate and counter structures of oppression that perpetuate this widening gap between social classes.

This study focused on poverty in a developing country, the Philippines, in South East Asia. Asia and the Pacific are the home of almost two thirds of the world's chronically undernourished and hungry people, approximately 515 million Asians (United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 2002). According to the National Statistics Office (2000), 40% of the Philippine population, about 32 million people, were poor in 2000. A survey taken by Social Weather Stations, Inc., showed poverty incidence in the Philippines increased to 59% the first quarter of 2001 from 56% the last quarter of 2000 ("Hunger," 2001). Compared with industrialized countries, the prevalence of poverty in developing countries, like the Philippines, is powerful and intense because the hunger rate, the household incidence of food insecurity, is high, too. Consequently, counseling psychology in the Philippines must address the substantial influence of poverty: increased population, insufficient healthcare, mental health concerns due to socioeconomic deprivation, illiteracy, corruption, and social injustice.

Because this study was guided by the existing literature on resilience and the consequences of poverty, particularly in developing the interview questions and facilitating the focus group discussions, the psychological experience of poverty is investigated from a more global context. This study investigates the psychological experiences of poverty: the perceived causes, coping mechanisms, and cultural characteristics of poverty—the experience of deprivation—among two groups of Filipinos who were raised poor: those who stayed poor and those who became materially successful.

Psychological Research on Poverty

In 2000, the APA adopted the Resolution on Poverty and Socioeconomic Status, a product of concerned psychologists defining advocacies in research, practice, training, and public policy to serve the people who are poor, encouraging psychologists to examine their responsibility for the social issues of economic disparity, power inequality, and poverty. Even before adoption of the resolution, considerable research on poverty had been conducted in the United States and other developed countries specifically focusing on poverty in minority populations, such as the Latino population (De La Rosa, 2000; Joassart-Marcelli, 2004), single-parent African American women (Jarrett, 1994; Scott, 2004), minority children (Li-Grining, 2007; Rodenborg, 2004), and women receiving welfare (Scarborough, 1997; Seccombe, James, & Walters, 1998). There is also substantial literature on counseling people with low incomes included in the research on minorities (e.g., Chang & Banks, 2007; Miville & Constantine, 2006; Rak & Patterson, 1996; Sue, Fujino, Hu, Takeuchi, & Zane, 1991). And there are studies analyzing causal attributions of pov-

erty across cultures (e.g., Hine, Montiel, Cooksey, & Lewko, 2005; Shirazi & Biel, 2005).

However, there is a dearth of research focusing specifically on the influence of poverty in developing countries. Some studies investigated circumstances of particular groups in developing countries, such as malnutrition among children who live in conflict zones in Mexico (Sanchez-Perez et al., 2007); issues of adolescents with thalassemia in India (Roy & Chatterjee, 2007); stress, coping, and mental health of women in Tunisia (Hays & Zouari, 1995); the plight of street children in Lusaka, Zambia (Sampa, 1997) and Brazil (Monteiro & Dollinger, 1998), reiterating that the face of poverty differs according to each society's vulnerable individuals. Though these studies acknowledged poverty as a cultural context, they did not directly investigate poverty as a psychological experience. In a meaningful way, this study is a response to the APA's Resolution on Poverty, filling the gap in the extant literature by conducting an inquiry into the psychological experience of poverty in a developing country: the Philippines—uncommon ground for a study on poverty, but poverty is certainly not an uncommon experience there.

Consequences of Growing Up in Poverty

Poverty is often identified as a situational condition contributing to the possibility of negative outcomes for at-risk populations. For instance, in the Kauai (Hawaii) longitudinal study, in which subjects were followed from the prenatal period to ages 1, 2, 10, 18, and 32, chronic poverty was an identified adversity, along with prenatal stress, chronic discord, and parental psychopathology (Werner, 1993). In another study, children who had been exposed to poverty, neighborhood violence, and family illness were at high risk for negative outcomes (Gribble, 1991). Rak and Patterson (1996), discussing protective factors buffering negative consequences and promoting resiliency (e.g., Garmezy, 1991; Richardson, Neiger, Jensen, & Kumpfer, 1990), stated that youth are at risk of failing due to adversities such as poverty, family dysfunction, early deprivations, and abuse. In another longitudinal study of 267 high-risk children and families, high risk was defined by the experience of poverty, family stress, and maltreatment (Egeland, Carlson, & Stroufe, 1993). In essence, poverty is a severe situational condition to be born into and a key factor causing mental health problems in later life.

In one of the few studies on poverty in the Philippines, 200 low-income Filipinos expressed feelings of hopelessness or despair; disillusionment with the economic, social, and political conditions in the country; but little sense of resignation or apathy (Guerrero, 1973). This lack of resignation was due to a belief in their power to change conditions in the country using peaceful means (Guerrero, 1973). Findings showed that people who are poor have few aspirations for themselves but hold high hopes for their children's futures and educational attainment. According to Guerrero, their sociopsychological traits and attitudes are a sense of life being unfavorable; dissatisfaction due to the discrepancy between expectation and attainment; high work orientation; reliance on chance or luck; the magical role of education; being half-optimistic and half-hopeless; and disillusionment with social, economic, and political conditions in the Philippines. However, Guerrero's study was conducted more than 30 years ago, and although a low-income sample population was investigated, noth-

ing is known about the origins of the participants' poverty, including whether the participants had always been poor.

Knowledge of its origins is part of understanding poverty: This study investigates Filipinos who were born poor. In this study, the differences in terms of perceived causes of poverty, experiences of poverty, coping, and cultural characteristics of coping become relevant to understanding how people raised in poverty have evolved to lead different lives. According to Harrison (2000), the crucial elements in explaining poverty's persistence are the culture, values, and attitudes in society that obstruct progress. Those who stay indigent may have different experiences of struggle; prejudice, power, and privilege in their society may work to keep them impoverished. Filipinos who move out of poverty may be creating a different culture—a new paradigm of human progress (Harrison). It is with this perspective that the present study seeks to understand the psychology of poverty—by contrasting people of comparably impoverished origins who had opposite outcomes in financial circumstances.

Research Paradigms

The paradigms guiding this qualitative research are constructivist (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and critical (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994) theories, and they are the context within which grounded theory (Charmaz, 2000; Corbin & Strauss, 1990) is used as a methodology. In capturing the experiences of poverty, the qualitative researcher as "*bricoleur*" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 5) uses the methodology of grounded theory to be congruent with the paradigms of inquiry. Constructivism recognizes the existence of many possible realities and explores their meanings (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). It includes personal and social meaning constructions of the participant's experience of poverty and the researcher's involvement and interpretation of the research experience. Constructivist theory also asserts that the researcher's values and experiences cannot be eliminated from the research process—thus, the resulting rhetorical structure is personalized, as the methodology of constructivist research necessarily includes immersion in the participant's world (Ponterotto, 2005).

Critical theorists construe reality within a social-historical context and are vigilant about existing power relations (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994). A goal of critical research is to empower people (Kincheloe & McLaren) and engage those who are oppressed in discussion about their experiences and perspectives of privilege and oppression (Denzin, 2003). Critical theory asserts that reality is shaped by social, political, ethnic, gender, and cultural values and recognizes that this reality includes the subjective and dialectical nature of the relationship between the researcher and the participant (Ponterotto, 2005). The rhetorical structure is necessarily first person, and the methodology includes naturalistic and hermeneutic approaches (Ponterotto, 2005).

Ponterotto (2005) described both constructivist and critical theories as primarily idiographic and emic. The present study includes the cultural and historical context of the Philippines, grounded in Filipinos' experiences (Enriquez, 1977). The Philippines has traditions based on oral communication. The informal interactive, *pagtatanong-tanong*, is a form of questioning that assumes a level of trust (*pakikitungo*) and deep respect (*pakikiisa*) in the relationship between researcher and participant (Marcelino, 1990).

Method

Participants

A sample of Filipinos ($N = 25$, 12 who became rich, 13 who stayed poor) voluntarily participated in "exploring the processes of people who define themselves as having been born to a poor family." The sample was purposive, and participants were selected through the snowball technique, in which participants are asked to identify another who self-identified as poor or rich. This subjective indicator of social class (personal perception of resources and opportunities) was found to have better predictive power than objective social class indices such as income and education (Adler, Epel, Castellazzo, & Ickovics, 2000). Moreover, this subjective indicator was potentially important with participants whose culture is salient in the perceptions of class and status. Research participants were 11 women and 14 men, age 25–73 ($M = 44.92$, $SD = 13.01$), who described themselves as "growing up poor." Of those individuals, the subgroup who became rich consisted of 4 women and 8 men, with a mean age of 47 ($SD = 14.08$). Two members of that group were single and 10 were married. These participants were born to families with a mean of 6.08 children ($SD = 3.08$), were usually 3rd in birth order ($M = 2.83$, $SD = 2.79$, and generally had two children of their own ($M = 2.25$, $SD = 2.18$). The group of people who stayed poor included 7 women and 6 men, with a mean age of 43 ($SD = 12.20$). Of these participants, 3 were single and 10 were married. Members of this group had been born into families with a mean of 7 children ($SD = 1.87$), were usually 4th in birth order ($M = 4.15$, $SD = 2.27$), and had 4–5 children of their own ($M = 4.54$, $SD = 3.82$). All 25 participants identified as Filipino and Roman Catholic.

In terms of educational attainment, the group of individuals who became rich had 7 participants who did graduate work, 4 finished college, and 1 had some high school. In the group of people who remained poor, 1 finished college, 1 had a few college courses, 3 finished high school, 5 had some high school, and 3 had some elementary education. For current monthly income, the group of people who considered themselves rich included 9 with incomes of P100,000 Philippine pesos or more (U.S. \$2,000 +) and 3 with incomes of P50,000 (U.S. \$1000). The group of people who had remained poor had 4 with monthly incomes of P6,250 (U.S. \$125), 3 with incomes of P3,125 (U.S. \$62.50), 3 with P1,000 (U.S. \$20), and 3 with P100 (U.S. \$2). These objective indices of social class substantiated the differences between the two groups; that is, the ones who were materially successful had more education and income.

Purposive Sampling

The first group of participants was recruited in the Philippines and in the United States through word-of-mouth, when they identified as having been raised in a family that was poor and that they had become materially successful. Of 14 who self-reported growing up poor and becoming materially successful, 2 refused to participate, leaving 12 participants for Group 1. Ten of the 12 people were living in the United States when the interviews were conducted. The remaining 2 were interviewed in the Philippines. It was difficult to recruit participants in the Philippines who self-identified as having become materially successful. For instance, 5 potential participants living in the Philippines refused to partici-

pate in the study. It may be that Filipinos still living in the Philippines are not comfortable with identifying as rich, perhaps because the standard of living remains very low and they may not believe they have yet been spared the constant worry and struggle of poverty. It is also possible that not many Filipinos truly become materially successful without migrating out of the Philippines. From the responses of Filipinos living in the United States who identified as being materially successful, it could be concluded that they would not have been rich if it were not for the opportunities afforded to them in the United States.

The second group of participants identified as having been raised in a family that was poor and as still living in paucity into adulthood. Participants for Group 2 were approached in the field, for example, in tricycle stations, jeepney stations, at their homes in shanties and squatter areas, in prison, and at their stands in the streets where they were peddling. Tricycles and jeepneys are public transportation vehicles. The jeepney is equivalent to the public bus or train system in other countries and offers seating for about 16 passengers. The tricycles carry only three passengers at a time, offering access to destinations inaccessible to jeepneys, usually on narrower streets. Of 16 people approached, 2 refused to participate from the outset, and 1 refused to continue midway through the interview.

Procedure

All interviews of participants were one on one, lasting between 90 and 120 min each, and were conducted in places convenient to the participants that were relatively quiet and private. All interviews were audiotaped and then transcribed. For Group 1, 30-min follow-up interviews were conducted several weeks later to verify the transcripts and initial core categories analyzed. As part of data triangulation, Ma. Teresa G. Tuason led three focus group discussions on Group 1. Two of these groups were small, each consisting of 3 of the interview participants, and the third group was composed of 20 people other than interview participants who identified as having been raised poor but who later became materially successful. In this third focus group, the 20 people elaborated on their experiences, shared stories, and validated each other's experiences. Primarily, these discussions were used to verify the initial categories: (a) processes and emotional states when dealing with poverty, (b) common characteristics or similarities, and (c) vivid recall of deprivation while growing up. The interviews of Group 1 participants, the follow-up interviews, and the three focus groups were all conducted by Ma. Teresa G. Tuason in English.

Ultimately, follow-up interviews and focus group discussions were not conducted for Group 2, as it was difficult to gain access to these participants a second time. Participants from this group were approached in the field and interviewed as we helped out in their homes, in their work, doing laundry, selling cigarettes or flowers in the street, and the like, or while waiting with them for passengers for their jeepneys, cabs, or tricycles. The participants did not have phones or cell phones and went where their jobs demanded; they did not have fixed schedules and could not be contacted to arrange appointments. Initially, we attempted to go where participants said they would be the following week, but they were not there. After several failed attempts, we decided not to do follow-up interviews, as we were concerned that scheduling further contact would have imposed not only on their time but also by

impeding their flexibility to seek opportunities to earn money during the period when we were conducting the follow-up interview. Despite this, however, it was deemed that Group 2 had sufficient data given the length of the interviews (90–120 min) and the number of participants interviewed (13 participants). Group 2 interviews were conducted by a Filipino graduate student who was part of the second research team because she was deemed more culturally responsive, accessible, and sensitive. These interviews were conducted in Tagalog (a Filipino language) and were analyzed in Tagalog as well. Although many Filipinos are bi- or trilingual, most people who are poor have difficulty and discomfort speaking in English. In the analysis, only the core categories and subcategories were translated into English and then back-translated for accuracy (Brislin, 1970).

Data Sources

The interview protocol was developed from the existing literature on the experience of poverty in the Philippines (e.g., Guerrero, 1973) and the research on coping and resilience (e.g., Garmez, 1991; Richardson et al., 1990). Specific questions were developed and then were pilot tested on two interviewees from Group 1. Also, an outside expert on qualitative research, Ma. Teresa G. Tuason's qualitative professor, reviewed the interview protocol's content coverage and the focus group guide questions. The same questions were translated into Tagalog for the second group of interviewees and were modified accordingly after pilot testing on 2 participants from this group. For instance, instead of being asked about the differences between their situations of childhood poverty and their current situations, they were asked to elaborate on their ways of coping with poverty. In the semistructured interviews, all 25 participants were asked three main questions: "Tell me in as much detail as you are comfortable with about your experience of poverty when you were growing up. How is your experience of poverty now? What did you do to cope with poverty?" The complete interview protocol, including the main questions and the follow-up questions, appears in the Appendix. The interviewer actively listened, gave empathic responses, and asked follow-up questions when necessary.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using grounded theory (Charmaz, 2000; Corbin & Strauss, 1990), which focuses on studying people in their natural settings, seeking participants' meaning constructions while recognizing the researcher's. Using the rigorous analysis prescribed, the procedures of grounded theory enabled the development of a well-integrated set of concepts that provided a comprehensive explanation (Corbin & Strauss, 1990) of poverty and its process of change—a starting structure for the analyses. After Ma. Teresa G. Tuason developed an initial list of meaningful units from the interview content, these yields of the analyses were presented to the research team. Through the research group discussions, core categories and subcategories were validated, modified, and further refined. Moreover, constant comparisons guided the data collection, and hypotheses about the relationships of the categories were continuously identified.

Analysis for each of the two groups was conducted over the course of 1 year, in the United States for Group 1 and in the

Philippines for Group 2. For Group 1, the people who were born poor and became materially successful, the initial core categories and subcategories were first presented to the participants during follow-up interviews and then to the three focus groups. In line with the rigor of grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 1990), core categories were further identified, renamed, and categories were abstracted in these discussions and analyzed by the first research team. The second set of data underwent the same data analyses, aside from the translation/back-translation process and the absence of focus group discussions.

In the following year, the two sets of data were reviewed by a faculty colleague. The colleague randomly selected transcripts to review the core categories and subcategories assigned and to verify how well the constructed categories had abstracted the raw data. The colleague, serving as peer reviewer, also checked the recurrence of core categories and the subcategories within them then worked with the author to integrate the findings of both data sets.

Researcher as Instrument

A constant feature of the ongoing analysis was the principal investigator's self-reflectivity (Altheide & Johnson, 1994). Her reactions, thoughts, feelings, or subjective experiences were logged into a journal. Additionally, she participated in three research teams over the period of data gathering. The research team discussed the themes and categories and verified them with the data, guarding against bias and assuring collaboration in the analysis (Strauss, 1987).

Ma. Teresa G. Tuason is a counseling psychologist from an impoverished background in the Philippines. She acknowledges that her background may aid in validating participants' experiences but could also bias her analysis of the findings. In participants' personal accounts, she expected to hear that the differences in the life outcomes between the two groups were due to contextual and societal circumstances more than to individual or personality characteristics. As well, she expected to hear helplessness and of insurmountable barriers to improving lives of marginalization. Participation in the research teams afforded not only an avenue to discuss and verify her coding but also support in processing participants' heartrending stories of poverty.

Research Teams

Because the data were gathered and analyzed over a span of 3 years, there were three different research teams involved in the study. The first research team was composed of Ma. Teresa G. Tuason, then serving as a postdoctoral fellow in the western United States, and three graduate students attending the same university who were each pursuing their own research projects using qualitative methodology. This team was composed of a Caucasian doctoral student, a Caucasian master's student from Canada, and a doctoral student of Native American heritage. Each of the team members voiced identification with or attraction to studying the topic because of their own personal experiences with poverty, religious affiliation, or sexual orientation. This first research team, who were all part of a qualitative research class, served as a sounding board for qualitative methodology in data gathering. The team continued to meet after the class ended over the course of 1 year as the first group's data, the participants who were born poor

and who had become materially successful, were gathered and analyzed.

The second research team was composed of Ma. Teresa G. Tuason and three Filipino graduate students in the Philippines, one of whom served as the author's paid research assistant and two others who volunteered their time and effort in order to gain research experience. One team member, a woman raised in southern Philippines, which has the highest poverty rate among the regions (Synergos, 2004), was a first-year graduate student in social psychology who was raised poor. Her inclusion in this research was recommended by her research advisor because of her interest in societal issues such as poverty. She conducted all the interviews of the second group because she was deemed best able to connect with the participants who were raised poor and had stayed poor. Moreover, she expressed empathy and concern for the issues the participants expressed; she was so sensitive to their plight that she initiated helping them in what they were doing while she was interviewing them. The other two team members were graduate students in counseling psychology, one woman and one gay man. They were both born to families that had been poor but had become materially successful: one family due to a parent's achievement in business and the other due to a parent working overseas. This research team met over the course of 7 months and analyzed the data of the participants who were born poor and stayed poor. The data gathering was conducted in the Philippines, and all of the members of this research team were fluent in Tagalog.

The third research team was composed of the author and a male faculty colleague, a cognitive psychologist who was interested in the issues of people who are poor, cultural/indigenous paradigms, and qualitative methodology. He was raised in a family of lower-middle socioeconomic status in Germany but described himself as currently being in the upper-middle socioeconomic level. Over the course of 1 year, this colleague served as peer reviewer for both groups of participant data and verified the adequacy and abstraction of the core categories and subcategories from the data.

Trustworthiness

In establishing trustworthiness (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993), several methods were used in the study. To ascertain credibility, the researcher used prolonged engagement and consistent observation, living very close to the studied communities in the United States and the Philippines for at least 8 months in each place. It is this substantial amount of time and observation that provided contextual understanding (Erlandson et al., 1993). The research teams provided many opportunities for peer debriefing. The teams not only allowed for expression and offered support to the researcher when the interviews were difficult but also served as critical sounding boards. Between-method triangulation (the audiotaped interviews and observations) was used to increase credibility. Member checks were used with the first group through follow-up interviews and focus group discussions to verify interpretations and initial core categories and subcategories. Because follow-up interviews and focused group discussions were not feasible for the second group, member checks were conducted at the end of the interview to immediately verify the summaries and interpretations. A reflexive journal was kept throughout the study, not only as a way of coping with the stories of struggle, hopeless-

ness, and destitution but also to establish transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Erlandson et al., 1993). The third research team, composed of the author and a faculty colleague, provided a check for dependability (i.e., verification of the processes used by checking interview notes, memos, and the journal; Erlandson et al., 1993) and confirmability (i.e., verification of the yields of the data analyses; Erlandson et al., 1993). To institute transferability, the author used a thick description and purposive sampling, in addition to the reflexive journal.

Results

The results follow the guidelines prescribed by Morrow (2005) in terms of reporting the products of analysis, providing quotes to substantiate the investigators' interpretations, and using a contextual base and a conceptual model. The results include the commonalities and differences between those who were raised poor but became materially successful and those who were raised poor and remained poor in these core categories: (a) the experience of deprivation, (b) the perceived causes of poverty, (c) the ways of coping with indigence, and (d) the cultural characteristics of poverty. Results are presented for both groups, starting with the most frequent categories under each of the core categories.

Differences Between the Group Who Became Rich and the Group Who Remained Poor

Comparisons made between the two groups using category frequencies are presented in Table 1. The classification is determined by the frequency with which a category is mentioned: *variant* represents 1–4 people (up to 30% of the cases), *typical* represents 5–8 people (up to 60% of the cases), and *general* represents 9–13 people (up to 100% of the cases) in each of the two groups. Differences between the two groups are illustrated in the four core categories. To protect confidentiality, pseudonyms were used in lieu of participants' names.

The Ones Who Became Rich

Those who became rich are people who grew up in poor families but had something happen in their lives that led to a change in their socioeconomic status. Despite their poverty in early childhood, they now find themselves materially successful. Almost all of them recalled experiences of their families' poverty, especially the lack of things they wanted or needed. They also generally believed that their early poverty was the result of their families' circumstances. Compared with those who remained poor, those who became rich more frequently described themselves in positive terms and expressed their dreams for themselves. They usually coped with hardship by asking for help, relying on others, and persevering through work or education despite the odds.

The experience of deprivation. The people who became rich typically experienced negative and positive feelings. Though their experiences of poverty were in the past, they had vivid childhood memories of deprivation, generally about insufficient food, clothing, and shelter. Tito, a 53-year-old male businessman, recalled:

Sometimes, we only ate once a day, and most of it was just rice and fish. We can't buy meat, there was no money to buy. . . . Clothes were mostly hand-me-downs, second-hand clothes. . . . I can't remember

Table 1

Core Categories, Subcategories, and Differences Between the Two Groups

Category	Poor (<i>n</i> = 13)	Rich (<i>n</i> = 12)
The experience of deprivation		
Experience of material deprivation	General	General
Negative feelings	Typical	Typical
Positive feelings	Variant	Typical
Positive self-descriptions	Typical	General
Reliance on children	Typical	Variant
Dreams for self	Typical	General
The perceived causes of poverty		
Personal attributions	Typical	Variant
Family attributions	General	General
Sociocultural attributions	Typical	Variant
The ways of coping with indigence		
Giving help	Typical	Typical
Asking for help	General	General
Marriage	Typical	Typical
Faith in God, reliance on luck/fate	Typical	Typical
Acceptance	Typical	Variant
The cultural characteristics in poverty		
<i>Utang na loob</i> (debt of gratitude)	Typical	Typical
<i>Suwerte</i> (luck)	Variant	Variant
<i>Bahala na</i> (letting go)	Typical	Typical
<i>Pagpupunyagi</i> (perseverance)	General	General
<i>Pakikipag-kapwa</i> (reliance on others)	General	General

Note. A category was identified as *general* when it included most of the cases (from 60% to 100% of the subsample), a category was called *typical* when it applied to about half of the cases (from 30% to 60% of the subsample), a category was called *variant* when it applied to a few cases (from 1% to 30% of the subsample).

that I had new shoes until probably when I went to college. . . . We have to make our own toys at that time, toys made from trees and the scraps of saw dust.

The participants who became materially successful generally recalled wearing the same clothes every day, having no shoes, and eating lard, one piece of dried squid or dried fish and rice.

The ones who became rich typically expressed feelings of self-pity, envy, loneliness, fear, pain, and anger because of their previous poverty. There were feelings of anger, resentment, and hatred toward their situation in general; themselves for being poor; and their parents for marrying early, having many children, and being unable to provide for the family. Mia, a 37-year-old-female chemistry researcher, narrated:

When I was young, I didn't understand why others would have more. My cousins, and all of us, we lived in the house of my grandparents, with my uncle and cousins, and then at one time, my uncle was able to save enough money to buy a house. . . . We couldn't buy our own house. At that time I was thinking why my cousins get to leave and live in a nice house while we have to stay here. I was so angry, but that's how it is. I resented it.

The individuals who became materially successful also typically expressed positive feelings like happiness, satisfaction, enjoyment, and self-pride, sharing their sense of contentment, of not longing for more, and of acknowledging that their poverty had built good character. Juan, a 36-year-old physicist, said,

When I get into these fits of deprivation, I stay with it, and then later on, I see that it passes. Then I learn to appreciate the many gifts God gives to us. I can always find something that I do not have . . . I can gripe, or I can cling to the little I have. All is God-given.

Generally describing themselves as hardworking, good, resourceful, talented, brave, persevering, competent, resilient, disciplined, driven, appreciative, and as having self-love, the ones who became rich narrated that poverty taught them to be flexible, to bounce back, and not to be easily discouraged, accepting the bad days, as there would always be good and bad days. They had experienced improvement in their lives, having been freed from poverty, which strengthened their belief and hope in themselves. This was what Paul, a 72-year-old retired banker, had to say,

Even if it was too hard a life, I never thought of quitting. I knew I had to fight. I knew that my only chance in life was to obtain the best education possible. . . . So I worked hard, not only work during the day, but also in my schooling. We had to go to school, after working, we were working from 8 in the morning to 4 in the afternoon, and then we would catch the bus to go to school with 10 centavos, and then stayed in the university from 4:30 in the afternoon to 8:30 in the evening, go home, and at night, we had to walk because we had no money.

The ones who became materially successful generally mentioned more dreams and plans in terms of career, education, and going to the United States. They reported more career and academic interests and interest in computer science, chemistry, physics, law, accounting, cosmetology, and nursing. Almost all of the participants (10 of 12) who were raised poor and became rich had dreamt of going abroad to work, and most of them now live and work in the United States. They studied hard, working full time while studying full time. They went to school when they had no shoes or only rice to eat. The ones who became rich dreamed of finishing school no matter the odds—going through vocational school first, stopping school at times because they could not afford it, and supporting themselves in school by working. Herman, a 41-year-old male chemist, said:

I was lucky enough to pass these exams offering scholarships. . . . I was surrounded by friends who were the same age, we grew up together, but they were in the middle class, so from them I learned to set higher goals than the usual to just finish high school or work . . . I wanted to pursue my interests regardless of whether that field I'm choosing would give me a lot of money or not. It was almost a foregone conclusion that I would be coming here to the U.S. for graduate studies.

The individuals raised poor who became materially successful generally had some plan on how to fulfill their dreams, like to save money, borrow money for school, exchange labor for help with tuition fees, apply for scholarships, work to send their children or siblings to school, marry right, and learn from peers. It was only on occasion that the people who became rich relied on their children for help.

Perceived causes of poverty. Regarding perceived causes of their poverty, the participants who became rich occasionally attributed poverty to personal (e.g., frequently quitting jobs) and sociocultural (e.g., government corruption and high unemployment) factors. However, they generally attributed their childhood poverty to familial causes such as their parents' unemployment,

marrying early, having many children, or death. Laura, a 48-year-old woman, said,

That is why we are poor, my Mom, she did not know nothing, she just stayed in the house, and my father just did buy and sell. My mother, every year, had a baby. That is the hard part . . . I told my father that I wondered why he does not think of the future of his kids, he just makes babies and babies.

Coping with indigence. The individuals who became materially successful generally coped with poverty by asking for help, typically gave help in return, typically married well, and typically had faith in God and in luck. Only on occasion were they content or accepting of their circumstances.

In strategies for coping with poverty, those who became materially successful generally had requested help, asking relatives and friends for money for school tuition in exchange for work or a place to stay. This was Paul's experience:

My brother-in-law underwrote my studies because they had a house close to where I was going to school. That is where I lived, that is where I got my food, in return for which, which is my initiative, I was scrubbing the floor of their house, I prepared fuel, wooden fuel for cooking, I would do some marketing in the public market . . . I was also the gardener . . . I really had no leisure hours, but my ambition was such that I kept on studying diligently, working while in school.

The participants who became rich typically coped with childhood poverty by giving help—money to their parents, sending siblings to school, and giving relatives a place to stay. Laura, a hair stylist, said,

Then I just gave my salary, P65, to them [parents] every month. Then my brother, I sent to school to finish tailoring. Then I have a brother and a sister who stayed with me in my house in Manila, because my parents, they are poor, and my mother asked if they can stay with me.

The people who became materially successful typically married later in their lives and made conscious decisions about who to marry and how many children to have. Paul said this of courting his wife,

So, I was courting my wife then, she was a working student . . . she is also a certified public accountant . . . at age 70, she is still working. That was it. That made me choose her. I knew I probably had a good sense to appreciate it, that I could not marry above my stature in life. So, I was very careful in choosing the ladies I court. And she happened to be somebody who is just as poor, whose situation in life is just like mine, and she was very hardworking . . . somebody who is intelligent, and above all somebody who had a religious background, she has always been a very devout Catholic. She is the one who holds the family together. She is a woman of prayer.

The participants who were raised poor but later became rich also typically put their hopes on external and more powerful forces—God, luck, and fate. They trusted in God to provide for their needs and bless them with fortitude. They prayed to God and asked Him to reward their hard work. Tito admitted:

I rely on myself and I believe in a higher power. Probably that's the one that helps me a lot . . . no matter what you do, there's always that higher power. I believe so, that higher power's always there. There's that saying my father used to always tell me, "God helps who help themselves." If we want to be successful, we have to work harder.

Then He will help us. It's like saying the more you do your work, the more He will help us. That's what I believe.

The participants who became materially successful only occasionally mentioned poverty as their destiny or having to accept and work with what God gave them. They worked to survive.

Cultural characteristics of poverty. The participants who grew up poor and became materially successful generally persevered and generally relied on others' help and consideration. They typically experienced gratitude, which motivated them to give back what they had received and also typically let go of their worries and relied intensely on God—help and grace from someone other than themselves. Only on occasion did the ones who became rich rely on luck.

The participants who became rich generally expressed a realization that they did not want to continue a life of poverty. Instead, they persevered (*nagpunyagi*) to make life different for themselves. Because they did not want to experience poverty anymore, nor did they want a life of poverty for their siblings, children, or parents, they worked hard. Laura said:

Why should I have my kids live like I did, like that, like their dad? My husband could not read and could not write. Why would I want that for my kids? . . . Oh, the hard life, that is why I put in my mind, I drill there in my brain, that that life, I do not want my kids to experience that life . . . I am not going to suffer myself, by having a lot of kids.

The people who became materially successful did not seem accepting of their deprived fate, choosing instead to capitalize on a skill, such as physical agility, computers, or science. One participant, Juan, responded to a parent's challenge to excel despite the poverty:

The way I coped with it [poverty] was I tried to be good in school and other things like physical. I would be very good in sports. I developed physical agility, I was the fastest in my class. Also, I did very well in school. That's how I learned to cope and feel that I wasn't that deprived. . . . Even as a child, I liked tinkering about with things and that was one of my joys. . . . I don't like taking things for what they are. I like to see how far I can get with things, pushing new things, like I push myself.

Those who became rich also generally relied on other people (*pakikipag-kapwa*), such as their extended family, for help and support and typically expressed their need to give back and help their families, to return the favor they had been given (*utang na loob*), or to serve other people in need. They also typically prayed to God and expressed their trust in God and their availability to His grace and will (*bahala na*). They spoke of a deep sense of trust and hope that God would provide—not just enough to survive, but courage and strength to take the risks necessary to change their circumstances. According to Noel, a 73-year-old judge:

Well, when I was young, I wish I had that, I wish I had this, but there's nothing you can do about it. It's a challenge. It gives you the inspiration, the motivation, that one day I'll get out of this hardship and that's the way it should be.

Juan said:

Trust in God is the foundation for any person who wants to love fully. That's the expression of what I feel now. Not what I can do, or what I deserve, or what I can get, but God knows better than I do and

provides more than what I thought I need. . . . It has been years of grace. I will go on, I will not fear what the future holds. . . . The requirement is greater listening [to God].

The ones who became materially successful only occasionally expressed reliance on luck (*suwerte*), which they defined as being in the right place at the right time. However, from their accounts, it is evident that these chance events greatly influenced access to opportunities and resources. In Paul's words,

We were still really poor, really poor. I had the fortune, however, to meet two of the future presidents of the Philippines, during the war, Marcos and Ramos. They were both in the guerilla warfare, and we helped them then . . . When the time came for them to be presidents, they asked me to serve in their terms.

The Ones Who Stayed Poor

Those who stayed poor are the individuals who grew up in poor families who, despite their many efforts and attempts to bring about change, have remained in poverty. Like the ones who became rich, almost all of those who stayed poor could vividly describe the experiences of their families' material deprivation and attributed their poverty to their families' circumstances. Similar to the ones who became rich, the participants who remained poor coped with hardship by asking for help, relying on others, and persevering through work despite the adversities.

The experience of deprivation. The participants who were raised poor and stayed poor generally experienced material deprivation and typically experienced negative feelings. They typically described themselves positively and mentioned dreams for themselves. They, however, typically relied on their children to get them out of poverty and only occasionally experienced positive feelings.

In their experiences of poverty, those who remained poor generally expressed material deprivation in the form of food, clothing, and shelter, describing their lives as "*isang kahig, isang tuka*" (one peck, one grain of rice), a hand-to-mouth existence. Cecille, eking out a living by handwashing people's clothes, stated,

We are able to eat three times a day, we just eat simple food, so as not to go hungry. We have some rice, fish, sometimes we eat sweet potato, sardines, or there are times, my family eats everything, and so there is none left for me.

The participants who stayed poor typically reported struggling with negative emotions such as shame, anger, envy, self-pity, loneliness, fear, and hopelessness. Melchor, a 64-year-old male store owner, said, "For us who do not have much money, there are no options. We are pitiful, that is true. . . . We just stay here and hope to survive. This is poverty; this is how it is for us." Expressing that they are better off without ambitions, they fear taking risks because of the possibility of greater obligation (*utang*) and greater loss.

This deprivation extended to positive feelings and self-descriptions. The participants who remained poor reported only occasionally experiencing positive feelings such as enjoyment and happiness. They typically described themselves in positive terms such as *hardworking*, *good*, and *loyal*. The individuals who were raised poor and stayed poor typically mentioned working hard to get their children an education or a job in hopes that their children

would have better lives and also that their children would help bring them out of poverty as well. Their children were their hope for change. Betty, a 40-year-old widow and mother of six said,

My only hope is that my children finish school. If we are able to have one child finish school, then this child can get us out of poverty. . . . I was not able to finish studying so I tell myself to not dwell on it, that although I was not able to study, I want my children to finish school. That is my dream in life.

The people who remained poor also typically expressed aspirations like earning money to survive, having a house or a car, saving money, or starting a business. Or, they refrained from having aspirations. Said Francis, father of 13:

I do not have ambitions in life . . . just like other [poor] persons in Manila. Unlike others who have very high ambitions . . . I am afraid of acquiring wealth . . . my desire is just to have . . . something to eat . . . no longer to have so much, nor to be up there and feel powerful.

The participants who stayed poor hesitated to dream, as “dreams are only for the rich” (Bong), and they felt that having ambitions was futile. If they had dreams, then they rarely had plans attached. Roman, a tricycle driver, expressed:

Sometimes, I no longer know what day or month it is. This is not important to me, what is important is that I drive every day. I just need to know if it is a Sunday, since there are more passengers close to church. Just that . . . but I no longer desire for more money . . . I no longer think of that, since I never have much money. . . . My dream is just to have my own house. Even when it is small, provided I have my own lot, my own house.

Perceived causes of poverty. The people who grew up poor and remained poor generally attributed their poverty to familial causes like a parent’s addiction to alcohol or drugs, unemployment, or death, or having many children of their own, or no money for school. They also typically attributed their poverty to socio-cultural causes; for instance, there is no health insurance system in the Philippines, which is reflected in the experiences of Marilou, age 49 and one of eight children:

Previously, we had a good life. My father was a musician. However, when my father got sick, we became very poor. . . . My father was bedridden. He was paralyzed . . . we had no money to buy him his medicines. We were the ones helping him. I was only grade 3, I was already working. . . . My mother washed clothes for other people. We all helped. Then, we were the ones who looked out for ourselves to finish school. I reached second-year high school. I was able to support myself through school.

The ones who remained poor typically attributed their poverty to personal (e.g., low level of education, low salary) and sociocultural (e.g., government corruption, high unemployment, high inflation) factors. Bobby narrated,

I probably can blame the government for this. Because of the greed of whoever sits in such powerful position, our economy does not improve . . . this is the reason why no one invests in the Philippines, and why we cannot look for jobs. Also, if only I had an education, then perhaps I would not have to stay here . . . I could go to another country and work and earn money.

Coping with indigence. The participants who grew up poor and continued to be impoverished coped with indigence generally by asking for help from others, typically giving help to others, and typically by marrying early. Also, they typically relied on God and on luck to get them out of poverty, though they were typically accepting of their circumstances.

To cope with poverty, those who stayed poor generally asked for help from other people by borrowing money for children’s schooling or asking for food, free health care and medications, or a place to stay. They also typically gave help, giving parents money, sending siblings to school, and giving relatives a place to stay. Betty spoke about helping her parents:

I just finished . . . elementary when I was employed as a maid/house helper . . . because my parents could no longer support me through school . . . I had many siblings. So, I just helped my parents send my siblings to school and be able to have food.

The individuals who continued to be poor typically reported marrying young (14- to 19 years old) and not having a choice in who to marry. Women often stopped working when they got married, like Marilou, “after coming to Manila and after having worked for a year as a maid, I went back to the province and got married . . . I was only 15.” Their lack of control and power was manifested by their inability to plan how many children to have. For instance, Rosanna, mother of eight, said:

I told my husband that we should do family planning, use pills, or have a ligation. My husband did not want because he did not want me to get sick. I was worried that we would have many children. He says that even if we had many children, we can afford to support them, since he has a job . . . we would be able to support them in however . . . whatever way. Whatever the future brings!

The persons who stayed poor typically put their hopes on external and more powerful forces such as God, luck, and fate. They asked for God’s pity and for reward for their honesty, loyalty, and hard work. Betty, age 40 and mother of six, articulated, “I pray to God that He repay my hard work. I pray to God that He take us out of poverty.” Francis, a married male participant who claimed to have no stable source of income, declared, “Nothing is impossible with God. It is important to just keep trying and praying.” Rosanna admitted, “Every Sunday, I go to mass, even before I sleep, I pray, the Lord is the one I rely on.” Melchor, age 64 and father of three, stated:

Once you are close to the Lord, He will not abandon you . . . because of His mercy I do not suffer much. He is always there in our hour of need. We have enough of what we need. We are blessed that the Lord has mercy on us.

The individuals who continued to be poor typically spoke of poverty as their fate and of accepting and working with what God gave: “Being poor is my destiny”; “whatever God gives us, that’s it”; “I am used to being poor”; “whatever I do shall not matter”; “things will turn out well.” Cecille said:

In terms of dreams, they just remain as dreams. I could not finish school anyway, with how difficult life is. Dreams will never come true, since my parents are poor people. Ambitions come true only when one is born rich, or when one has wealthy relatives. How will my ambition ever come true? When I am poor, nothing will ever be

attained! . . . And so, I am just content with my life right now . . . yes, I no longer desire for anything. . . . I am okay with just being able to eat three times a day . . . provided I do not get sick.

Cultural characteristics of poverty. The people who grew up in poor families and remained impoverished generally persevered and relied on others' help and consideration. They typically felt indebted to people who helped them and typically let go and relied on God for their fate. Only on occasion did they mention relying on luck.

Participants who stayed poor generally expressed the need to persevere (*magpunyagi*); working hard every day; saving; and being patient, resourceful, and tolerant of difficult circumstances. Rosanna, mother of eight, spoke of budgeting:

I sell the cigarettes, candies, and food items first. Then when I do not have money to buy soda, I borrow money from my neighbor, so I have soda to sell. Then I set aside money to pay the water bill. Then, I set aside about P20 per day to pay electricity. . . . For water, I pay everyday, so that my debt does not accumulate. Then, if we still have rice left from last night's dinner, I just need to buy half to add to the rice we still have. . . . I need to budget and be flexible because I have eight children to send to school, and my husband only works part time.

Melchor narrated:

Through the mercy of God, we survive. We are able to get by, we do not go hungry . . . things are okay. Provided you are good in praying to God, whatever hardship becomes lighter. For instance, if we only have egg and rice to eat, then that is okay. We get by. We survive. Then we just economize and save. Then when we are given a bit more money, then we can buy more delicious food. But if what we earn is a small amount, then we just economize . . . it is that simple!

The individuals who continued to be poor generally relied on other people (*pakikipag-kapwa*), especially neighbors and relatives, and also gave when asked in return. Cecille said, "When you don't have anything, you approach your neighbor to borrow money. . . . We help each other. If you are selfish, no one will come to you and you cannot approach people for help in the future." Those who have stayed poor typically express their need to return favors (*utang na loob*). Betty said:

Of course I help my parents . . . so they have something to eat. I help them and give to them, since they are my parents. So now, my children help us also. So, it is the same pattern, now that my children have grown, they are helping me and providing for me.

Participants who stayed poor cared for others however they could, giving their time or a bag of rice. They also typically coped through prayer and reliance on God, taking comfort in the belief that their fate was God's will (*bahala na*), and God would not have given them poverty if they could not handle it. Rosanna said, "Life is hard . . . but I am already used to a hard life. I do not regret anything." Francis, a 63-year-old man with no job, said, "You no longer think of the difficulty, you just do your best with God." Cecille, 38-year-old mother of two, admitted, "Life is really that way, there are times when we just truly run out, but that's how it is." Benny, a female of 38 with eight siblings, added, "Life is truly hard. There is nothing you can do, but just take it and tolerate it. . . . There are no other people to ask for help. So there's nothing you can do, but just tolerate things."

Occasionally, the participants who were raised poor and stayed poor expressed reliance on luck (*suwerte*), which they defined as God's pity. Betty, a street vendor, jokingly said, "It has been very long. Our luck has not yet arrived. If the Lord grants it, if He allows for our luck to arrive, then we will be rich."

Discussion

This study was conducted in response to APA's call to understand poverty in a global context and to be accountable and responsible for identifying ways to alleviate it (APA, 2000). For counselors, this means understanding people's psychological experience and conceptualization of their poverty as well as social class and classism (Liu et al., 2004). This study offers a salient and meaningful framework of the experience and study of poverty in a developing country. Specifically, the findings illustrate the differences and similarities between two groups of participants raised in poverty: one group that remained poor and another group that became rich, elaborating on their experiences of deprivation, their attributions of poverty, coping mechanisms, and poverty's cultural elements.

Notably, the two groups showed more similarities than differences in most categories. As can be seen in Table 1, the groups mostly vary by only one frequency category, and none of the categories are meaningfully different between the two groups. One particularly noteworthy resemblance is that the individuals who are rich experience deprivation and express negative emotions similar to the people who are poor. These emotional experiences validate an internalized sense of social class (Nelson, Englar-Carlson, Tierney, & Hau, 2006). Although actual poverty is behind them, the rich continue to cope with poverty internally. Both groups similarly experience emotions of self-pity, envy, fear, and anger—emotions that motivate people to continue to survive their conditions.

Another important similarity between the two groups is the perceived causes of poverty, which is generally attributed to familial causes. Both groups only occasionally (for the people who became rich) and typically (for the people who stayed poor) identified sociocultural issues as causes of poverty. This signifies that those who suffer from poverty, and not only those who attribute the causes of other people's poverty (Hine et al., 2005), frequently commit the fundamental attribution error (Ross, 1977), through which the participants overestimate dispositional reasons for their poverty while underestimating the impact of situational causes. That poverty was more often attributed to personal and familial causes than to sociocultural roots is surprising, especially given the structures in place that perpetuate poverty in the Philippines—graft and corruption in government, failing infrastructures and services such as roads, public transportation, healthcare, education, employment, affordable housing, and so on. As the present corrupt, ineffective, and unstable government is the only one that Filipinos know, it may not even occur to them that it is possible for the government to be a source of help. Their government has never been such a resource. People from the Philippines may have been conditioned not to expect government to accept responsibility for alleviating or for causing poverty and not to consider the present societal structures as contributors to their impoverished circumstances. Unaware of these underlying causes, they cannot look to government or society for change and, seeing nowhere to turn,

experience feelings of powerlessness and helplessness. As an example of this phenomenon, 1 participant noted that he was unemployed because he did not get an education but did not acknowledge that education in the Philippines is not affordable, any job he might find would be quite unlikely to pay a living wage, and that there have always been high unemployment (11.3% in January of 2005) and underemployment rates in the Philippines (21.5% in December 2006; National Statistics Office, Republic of Philippines, 2007).

According to Harrison (2000), within the same culture, persons who are born poor but become materially successful may be creating a new culture or paradigm for human progress—primarily, this is accomplished through educational attainment. These results are similar to Graaf and Kalmijn's (2001) findings in the Netherlands regarding the primacy of culture in the intergenerational transmission of status. Transmission of cultural status was stronger than of economic status, and strongly related to the influence of education. Nelson et al. (2006) also regarded education as the main resource for transitioning into another class.

Another resource for jumping into a different class that was apparent in this study was by leaving an impoverished country to live or work in another country affording more resources—in this case, by leaving the Philippines to live or work in the United States. Ten of the 12 participants who became rich are living in the United States. That those who became rich were primarily those who immigrated to the United States is particularly striking. The ability to emigrate depends on access to resources: education and/or training that make one valuable to the U.S. labor force; money to apply for visas; family who are already in the United States. Furthermore, the significance of working abroad in these participants' lives indicates the necessity of this circumstance to making mobility possible and, inversely, just how unlikely mobility is for those who remain in the Philippines. For participants in the present study, opportunities to obtain an education or emigrate to the United States were primarily due to chance circumstances, such as having a wealthy relative or a relative living near a university willing to help house and support the participant, or even access to friends who were more materially successful or had an education who could serve as role models and encouragement—offering hope that something more was possible.

Participants who stay poor, due to their present poverty experiences, express negative emotions such as anger, self-pity, envy, fear, and pain. Compared with the rich, their decreased positive emotions and positive self-descriptions may be manifestations of deprived conditions—the dearth of past successes, material comfort, and reasons for satisfaction and self-efficacy from which to draw. In addition to the material deprivation, the people who are poor are also deprived of personal dreams and interests. This may be due to the oppressive factors in society, such as discrimination and prejudice, that close the door to opportunities for success or work. This may be due to the fact that no matter how hard they try, their efforts still would not yield any change in their circumstances—the wages are too low, inflation is too high, the rich people are too powerful, and the poor people are not heard. This lack of dreams and ambitions is a plausible coping mechanism, protecting them from hurt and disappointment. Fear of risk, lack of self-confidence, and acceptance of their circumstances protect them from hopelessness and despair, giving them a sense of control and enabling them to survive poverty. Hope for persons who are poor

lies in their children—although they themselves continue to live in poverty, their dreams are for their children to finish school in the hope that their children will get out of poverty and will help them to as well. This finding replicates that of Guerrero (1973).

Helping their families of origin is a priority for both groups, even at times when they have very little to give. Researchers have hypothesized that close emotional ties and reciprocal obligations to family or *pagka-pamilya* (Grimm, Church, Katigbak, & Reyes, 1999), helping when asked to receive help when needed, debt of gratitude or *utang na loob* (Madigan, 1972), and human concern and interaction with others or *pakikipag-kapwa* (Enriquez, 1977), enhances their sense of security within a social support group. In the Philippines, governmental infrastructures cannot provide social security, sufficient retirement, or a functioning health care system, leaving those who are poor to rely on each other.

This study's results showed that both groups have similarities in terms of perseverance, resourcefulness, and faith in God, confirming resilience previously found among people who are poor (Jarrett, 1997). Other beliefs, norms, and values ascribed to by both groups include debt of gratitude (*utang na loob*), reliance on luck (*suwerte*), reliance on others (*pakikipag-kapwa*), strong family ties (*pagka-pamilya*), hard work, honoring the needs of others, and letting go (*bahala na*). In this sense, letting go implies faith in God accompanied by optimism and responsibility (Marcelino, 1990), rather than fatalism. The individuals who remain poor use these values and beliefs to survive their present difficulties, whereas for the rich, it is to distance themselves from their past lives of poverty.

For the people experiencing poverty, the limitations posed by their past, their society's failing infrastructures, the stifling burden of everyday survival, overwhelming unemployment and underemployment, and the oppressive culture of power and privilege make it impossible to get out of poverty. The rich, however, spoke of chance events, such as lucky or timely acquaintances with people, awards, scholarships, or investments that helped them, which mirrors Nelson et al.'s (2006) findings on serendipity—chance events or lucky encounters with people that provided opportunities for career development. In developing countries such as the Philippines, where poverty rates are not only steadily increasing, but the gap between rich and poor is also widening, getting out of poverty is almost solely dependent on getting out of the country.

Limitations and Recommendations

Although the present study involved 25 Filipino participants, results cannot be generalized to all Filipinos, individuals who are poor, or persons who are poor who have become materially successful. As qualitative research relies on self-report, data on the two groups about their experiences of childhood poverty were retrospective. Although both groups reconstructed their past, the participants who became rich had only retrospective data on their poverty, whereas the participants who stayed poor had both retrospective and present data. That the experience of poverty for those who had become materially successful was in the past may have had influence on their recall. Additionally, both groups were presumed to be poor because the participants defined themselves as such; however, the two groups may have differed in other significant ways that did not become apparent during the course of this research. Another limitation of the study is that, although we gathered sufficient data from Group 2, the amount of data gathered

from both groups was not equal. The data in Group 1 included initial interviews, follow-up interviews, and focus group discussions, whereas in Group 2, data included only initial interviews. Also, though it is known that all 25 participants are Roman Catholic, no further questions about their religious affiliation and devotion were asked of them. Therefore, it is unknown whether differing levels of religious faith might be related to the outcomes. Future studies on poverty in different cultures could explore the extent of people's religiosity and faith.

There is not enough data to be able to compare the participants who became materially successful while remaining in the Philippines with the participants who became materially successful by migrating to the United States. During the course of the study, it became apparent how rare it is for Filipinos living in the Philippines to self-identify as materially successful. This phenomenon may be a function of the standard of living in the Philippines, the difficulty of accumulating wealth in a developing country, and the limited opportunities available in such an impoverished place. I surmise from this study that mobility from poverty is mostly made possible by external circumstances that are mainly beyond the individual's control. Further studies could do more to compare people who have become materially successful in their impoverished country of origin with people who have become rich due to migration.

One avenue of further study would be verification of these results among people who are poor in different parts of the world, where the circumstances and cultural contexts are different. Future research is needed to investigate poverty longitudinally and its determinants in the different facets of the world if global concern in alleviating poverty is to take effect. This research would benefit from varied methods, such as quantitative, qualitative, questionnaire, single-case designs, and interdisciplinary approaches. Future research could also examine not only the personal, social, and societal attributions and meaning constructs of poverty but also cultural. Culture provides an important backdrop to the coping processes of the people experiencing poverty. It is hypothesized that there would be different perspectives on poverty depending on where it is happening in the world, which might lead to different paradigms for eradicating it.

Implications

The present study poses important implications for counseling psychologists, providing meaningful information on how socioeconomic concerns dictate individuals' experiences of emotions, self-efficacy, coping, and dreams and aspirations. In counseling, the acknowledgment of people's resources and deprivations, whether they are poor, were poor, or have internalized poverty, is significant to their healing and well-being. Moreover, the study of Philippine poverty is also relevant to counselors in the United States, where Filipinos presently constitute the second largest immigrant group (Rumbaut, 1994), as it contributes to counselors' understanding of the psychological and economic well-being Filipinos create for themselves in the United States and the oppressive realities from which they come.

Social class is important in psychological research related to therapy's effectiveness (Carter, 1991). Following Liu et al.'s (2004) advice on using social class in intentional and meaningful ways, this study's findings may help counseling psychologists better comprehend people's needs, motivations, and decisions

borne of social class. This study acknowledges that the individuals who are poor, whose lives are wrought with social injustice, are the ones most underrepresented in counseling (Sue et al., 1991).

Conclusion

The present study's relevance lies in its investigation of the phenomena of poverty between two groups of people who were raised poor. The results provide a palpable cross-section of experiences of poverty in a developing country, the Philippines. The study provides rich narratives of people's psychological experiences and conceptualization of their poverty. These narratives and conceptualization significantly add to the cross-cultural literature, especially those in which the psychology of poverty from people who are not directly involved in it are analyzed (e.g., Hine et al., 2005; Shirazi, & Biel, 2005) or in which poverty experiences between cultures and not within a culture are compared (e.g., Ruback, Begum, Tariq, Kamal, & Pandey, 2002; Twomey & de Lacey, 1986). As Liu et al. (2004) reiterated, for counseling psychologists, research on cultural variables is intended to illustrate how individuals interpret their context. In addition, culture explains the coping strategies that bring about change from or survival of childhood poverty. Essentially, the two groups of people who grew up poor mirror each other—they are more similar than different. To the individuals who remained poor, the people who were once like them but became rich may serve as inspiration, a reminder that hope and change are possible. To the individuals who became rich, the people who are poor serve as validation of their own internalized poverty, a picture of their humble beginnings and a reminder of how far they have come and of their responsibility to help people who were once like them.

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Appendix A

Interview Guide

1. Tell me in as much detail as you are comfortable with, how was your experience of poverty when you were growing up?
 - a. How was it for you then? How do you think it was for your family?
 - b. How did it affect your schooling? Your relationships with friends?
 - c. What were your reactions to poverty? How did you feel? What were your thoughts?
 - d. If you were not poor, then what would be different?
 - e. What do you think caused your poverty?
2. How is your experience of poverty now?
 - a. How did the experience of poverty change over time?
- b. How do you feel about your life right now? Where do you feel you are at?
- c. When do you experience poverty now?
- d. What does your poverty in the past mean to you now?
3. What did you do to cope with poverty?
 - a. How did you get to where you are now?
 - b. What made circumstances easier to handle?
 - c. What do you do when you are feeling overwhelmed by your poverty?
 - d. Who are the people you can turn to for help?

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