

Deviant Behavior among Characters of Selected Filipino Contemporary Novels in English

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Abstract – *This study aimed to analyze the deviant characters found in the selected contemporary Filipino novels in English namely *Smaller and Smaller Circles* by Felissa H. Batacan, *Gun Dealer's Daughter* by Gina Apostol, and *Blue Angel, White Shadow* by Charlson Ong. Specifically, the study determined how do the selected works manifest the deviant behavior of the different characters in terms of innovation, ritualism, retreatism, and rebellion. The study also investigated the possible causes of deviant behavior among the characters relative to psychological, sociological, and economic aspect.*

The study made use of qualitative approach specifically content analysis in research because it aims to find an honest and truthful understanding of the deviant behaviors manifested by the characters in selected Filipino contemporary novels written in English.

The three novels under study found out to have characters who are innovative, ritualists, retreatists, and rebels. The causes of their deviance are their suffering from inappropriate mental processes within their individual personality; they project that what they are doing would benefit people and society in general but their acts are indications of different interests which are not beneficial as expected in the norms of society; and the characters also suffered poverty and victims of inequality.

Thus, deviant behavior is manifested through actions of characters in three novels that violate norms of society through serial killing and being insurgent. Being overly-protected, poor and sexually harassed appear to be the major causes of deviant behavior.

Keywords – *Anomie Theory, contemporary Filipino novels in English, deviant behavior*

INTRODUCTION

Literature plays a very important role in human life as significant human experiences are captured through it. Ideals of people such as love, faith duty, friendship, freedom and reverence are preserved in literature.

Providing pleasure is not the ultimate aim of literature but more than that, it builds experience, help readers empathize with others and develop human thinking skills. It helps readers to escape from their daily troubles in life and expose them to different viewpoints and cultures. Through literature, readers can make reasoned judgments on character motivation, cause and effect and criticisms.

As a faithful reproduction of man's experiences, articulated and timeless human values are sought through literature. It uses the medium of language as a sign of being a social institution. As literature imitates life which is a social reality, the individual's natural and subjective world is also object of imitation.

Novel as a genre of literature represents life. It reflects the past and present of a country to show connections of people in terms of time and place, manifesting feelings, dreams, fears, happiness and other human emotions. There is a defining attribute of realism in the novel which the characters convey in their interaction to one another. These in turn serve as reflections of the different faces of man cloak in different coatings such as culture, religion, history and politics. This makes the novel an impression of life.

Many plots of the novel are based on social problems to dramatize the hard lives of the people or to advance private schemes for social reform. The lifeblood of a good novel is its action and suspense. A great novel is built on human experience where characters become real, convincing, and timeless. Since the length of the novel allows greater number and variety of characters, a more complicated plot, a more elaborative use of setting, and complexity of theme, a novel has the opportunity for character development, and deeper view of human nature and human experience.

Novel in compared to other forms of imaginative literature out distanced popularity of other literary genre. This is because readers experience in actual life is created by novelist. This quality sets the novel different from other narratives. A social novel focused on the mores and customs of a distinct social problems faced by people in

society. Considered a problem of society is when a person has a deviant behavior.

As defined by Macionis [1], deviance is said to be actions or behaviors of persons who violated social norms and expectations. Deviant behavior is when someone breaks the law or act in a negative manner. A person who commits deviance manifest poor self-control, impulsive, aggressive, lack empathy, lack self-respect, and prone to violence. This can be verbal or uncommunicated, flaunted with no respect for the law, or lurking stealthily ready to attack their victims.

There are reasons for the commission of deviant behavior of a person. It can be biological, psychological or sociological cause. It can also be caused by a diseased mind, inappropriate learning, absence of good role model, or strong presence of inappropriate model. Other common causes of deviant behaviors include negative peer influence, dangerous drugs, volatile adolescence stage. Whatever cause it may be, a person suffering from this behavior becomes detrimental to society. They harm other people if they are not helped.

For adolescents who are having this kind of behavior, the ill-effects include: dropping out of school, poor academic performance, bad influence on others, tarnishing reputation of the school, evolving of a negative tradition of the school, cutting classes, using filthy language, stealing, smoking, and drinking. For adults the aggressive behavior of an individual may result to sexual harassment, intimidation, and hostility.

As perceived to be disruptive in society, deviance can weaken established social norms. It can create division and disorder like those with dysfunctional families that exist in conflict. This will result to juvenile delinquency. As a product of social interaction of peer groups, representatives of formal social organization, deviance is also a sort of label which is attached to a person.

From Merton's anomie theory, Ritzer [2] explained that a person may experience the types of deviance like innovation, retreatism, ritualism and rebellion. There are causes or the reasons of such behavior. At the time the person commits these deviance, there are some contributory factors that trigger him. Likewise, a person may also use some defense mechanisms to conceal incidents happened for his own interests. Similar to deviance, there are aspects or factors that motivate the person to use such kind of defense mechanism.

With this scenario, these deviant behaviors of persons are also reflected in the characters in literary works specifically the novel. This prompted the researcher to conduct the study. In the selected contemporary novels to be analyzed, characters manifest

deviant behaviors which caused harm to other characters and society. It is of interest as to what is in their minds when they commit the acts that violates the law or norms of society. Based on the analysis, insights and values were drawn out to create awareness on the ill-effects of these deviant behaviors.

This study concentrated on the analysis of the three contemporary Filipino novels in English which are *Gun Dealer's Daughter* by Gina Apostol, *Smaller and Smaller Circles* by F.H. Batacan and *Blue Angel*, *White Shadow* by Charlson Ong. This, being a comparative study of authors dealing with similar themes in different settings, sought to harmonize the three authors' visions rather than study them in isolation in terms of the paradigm of deviant behavior and the modes of adaptation of innovation, ritualism, retreatism and rebellion in society.

In addition, the study also tried to determine the causes of deviant behavior that emerges in the interrelationships and the interaction of the characters using indicators such as the psychological, sociological and economic aspects with the end view of drawing - out wholesome insights and values. The Sociological, Psychological and Cultural Approaches to Literary Criticism were used to analyze the selected novels. The study was limited to the scenes and events found in the novel thus conclusions made were only based from the three selected novels.

Meanwhile, the researcher believes that the study is of significance to literature teachers as it can be a source of information for directing their students in appreciating novels and in deducing from them the proper values that are applicable in one's self. This may also serve as guidepost in leading their students to carry an analysis of literary work, particularly that of novels. Also for future researchers, the study will provide knowledge of the Filipino literary heritage at the same time will increase the students' awareness of cultural values, history, sociology, and psychology. Also, results will give them background information on deviant behavior and its manifestations in the Filipino English novels.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study aimed to analyze the deviant characters found in the selected contemporary Filipino novels in English. Specifically, the study looked into the manifestations of deviant behaviors of the different characters in the novels as to innovation; ritualism; retreatism; and rebellion. It also investigated the causes of deviant behavior among the characters relative to psychological; sociological; and economic aspects. Lastly, the study tried to draw wholesome insights and values from the deviant behaviors in the three novels.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

The study made use of qualitative approach in research because it aims to find an honest and truthful understanding of the deviant behaviors manifested by the characters in selected Filipino contemporary novels written in English. In order to do so, lines, text and conversation written by the novelists were analyzed. According to Hancock, et al., [3], qualitative research attempts to broaden or deepen the understanding of how things came to be the way they are in social world. Since novelists selected for this study were expatriates and most of their works were connected to social norms and current realities, qualitative approach deemed the most appropriate to utilize.

Specifically, the study utilized qualitative content analysis. Schreier [4] pointed out that content analysis is used to investigate both substantive or content and form or formal features of a text where substantive features refer to what is being said in the message while form features refer to how it is being said. Classification of parts of a text through the application of a structured, systematic coding scheme from which conclusions can be drawn about the message content is involved in content analysis.

Materials for Criticism

The novels analyzed that present the psychological and sociological realities on the people of present time were the following contemporary Filipino novels in English: *Smaller and Smaller Circles* by Felisa Batacan; *Gun Dealer's Daughter* by Gina Apostol; and *Blue Angel, White Shadow* by Charlson Ong. In selecting the above novels for analysis in this study, the criteria cited in Dimaano's [5] study were utilized which include novels chosen of study must be a full-length Philippine novels in English in terms of thematic substance and structure; setting in the novels understudy must be in the Philippines and written by Filipino authors; novels must be originally written in English, and that the novel must contain events with psychological, sociological or philosophical breadth. The materials were subjected to internal and external criticism and were analyzed objectively and carefully. Analysis was done through textual analysis, coding and categorization in line with theories cited to explain phenomena studied. The data comprised of passages from the novels. Doing sampling of the texts, defining words and sentences to comprise units, and categorizing were done under content analysis. Coding units that fall under categorization include experiences of characters in terms of innovation,

ritualism, retreatism and rebellion, and the deviant behaviors manifested such as repression, isolation/alienation, sublimation, displacement and denial as well as the cause of such behaviors like economic, sociological or psychological causes.

Treatment of Materials

The novels under study were analyzed using the three major literary approaches namely; the Psychological Approach, the Marxist or Sociological Approach and the Cultural Approach. The psychological approach was used in the study as the novels analyzed talked about people and their relationship, human behavior is understood through their characters like that of the real people. There is a kind of scientific aspect of literary criticism through close relationship between the psychological and literary worlds. This approach to criticism was used in the novel of Batacan *Smaller and Smaller Circles* as throughout the novel, the voice of the murderer, who is a specter, haunts the readers in alternating chapters of the novel aside from taking the readers into the mind of a psychopath.

Furthermore, Marxist or sociological criticism was used in the analysis of *Gun Dealer's Daughter* by Gina Apostol. The works of literature is viewed as the products of historical forces that can be analyzed by looking at the material conditions in which they were formed in this kind of criticism. In this novel ironic, often satiric, frame for looking at the retinue who profited from the US military-backed Marcos dictatorship is furnished by Apostol. Through this work, a wider set of issues such as memory, history, language, nationalism, exile, and revolution is allowed by the author to connect to one another.

Lastly, for the novel *Blue Angel, White Shadow* of Ong, cultural approach was used. There is always an unpredictable side to cultural evolution since culture is the result of collective sense-making and it is a form of social bond. Values that hold the organization together that is seen as a critical element in the management of change because of its persistency or resistance to change is shared by cultural approach in literature. In this novel, Charlson Ong talks about Chinese culture in the Philippines, their superstitious beliefs, business, and fashion including the rituals of Chinese precursors.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The different characters of the novels analyzed experienced different types of deviant behaviors which mean that their actions violated certain norms in society. There are four types of deviant behaviors manifested by

characters in the three novels. These include innovation, ritualism, retreatism and rebellion.

In the novel *Smaller and Smaller Circles*, the character that initialized innovative behavior is the lawyer who heads the NBI's investigating team. Though doing his job as the head of the law enforcer, the acting director of the NBI is somehow satire of the attention-seeking, media-loving police figure. He does not only take the case carelessly, but leads the people in the wrong direction just to make himself look good and seem in control of the case. However, in the work of Apostol, most of the characters that manifest the innovative type of deviance was found in the characters of Sol and Soli as they are attaining for goals which are fairness, equality, safety and security among the local community from the hands of the people who use power to satisfy their desires. However, in doing so, they become deviant. Lastly, in the novel *Blue Angel, White Shadows*, there are also innovators. Members of the police force who have money but achieve their wealth via deviant means are considered innovators. Having a dark past, the character of Cyrus Ledesma was having difficulty to portray positive deeds since he was stigmatized to be a killer and doing special operations for higher ranking officials and government. He performed the task in exchange of extra payment as part of his police job. The kind of deviance manifested by the characters is in line with the idea of Merton [6] of anomie which states that it is the state of normlessness, arises when there is an acute disjunction between the cultural norms and goals and the socially structured capacities of members of the group to act in accord with them. This further find support to the view of Ritzer [7] which pointed out that Merton in his theory links anomie with deviance and argues that the discontinuity between culture and structure have the dysfunctional consequence of leading to deviance within the society.

Meanwhile, as to ritualists, in the novel *Smaller and Smaller Circles*, the recurring theme of this novel is the inefficiency of the NBI, their incapability of solving some problems at a most opportune time. The role of the institution is a manifestation of being a ritualist as it was able to reject the cultural goals of preventing more killings and unhurried in making more investigation and in capturing the serial killer, yet continue to exist as a good and efficient agency. The novel also shows how the police workforce concentrates on preferred cases. Most of them just take up the more popular cases, or those that would certainly gain them much media exposure, leaving sometimes the more important and more urgent cases.

In *Gun Dealer's Daughter*, ritualistic type of behavior which is doing right things that is based on

personal intention that is sometimes selfish in nature is manifested. They would do things for the benefit of themselves. In this story, Uncle Gianni is the character that manifests ritualism. He is very optimistic type of person that even in downbeat situations, he is able to find positive output or outcome. In this novel, Uncle Gianni allowed the slaughter of Col. Grier not because he believes it is for the good of the Filipinos or of the marginalized people, but for the benefit of their ammunition business.

More so, in the third novel, the character of Rosa Misawas perceived to be a ritualist through portraying a manner of a *Mama San*. Rosa Misa claimed that she played supportive roles in helping Bituin with money matters and during the whole course of her work such as playing a protector's role by watching the women while they were on the street, writing down license plate numbers of men's cars, and maintaining contact by cell phone. They believed the women felt "safer" when they were around and being a female *mamasan*; she still tends that tender loving care which is usual with the personality of women. In the novel, Rosa Misa is a *mamasan* who gets money by looking for male costumers who will take out her girls in the bar. As Bituin needs to save money, she goes out with those male costumers. She is one of the victims of that sex exploitation. The characters were at ease with what they were doing and not taking risks conforms to the idea of Macionis et al., [8] of deviant behavior as informal violation of social norms such as rejecting folkways and mores and that members of society are conventionally guided by rules and expectations or norms.

For retreatism, in the novel of *Batacan*, the parents of the main character, Alex Carlos are retreatists. They are so because they reject the cultural goals of protecting their children from different abuse, exploitation and discrimination. Parents are the one who should protect and rehabilitate children gravely threatened or endangered by circumstances which affect or will affect their survival and normal development and over which they have no control. As they failed to protect Alex, he turned to be a serial killer because of anger developed in him by not doing anything.

Meanwhile, in Apostol's novel, the retreatist character is Sol Soledad. She is so as she accepts the activities of her boyfriend which is doing vandalism at night, joining in activist group in their university and she even made moves of helping them attain their goal, which is to kill the General-friend of her parents. She knows well the activities of her parents including their business and still she manages to get along and worked

with his friends whom she knows do not like their family business and connections.

In *Blue Angel*, *White Shadow*, the police enforcers are also human who has family, relatives and loved ones. As authoritative figure and protector, they protect the society as well as their loved ones. The conflict with this is when someone they loved is the one who commits mistakes and they will be trapped between moral and ethical dilemma. This was found in the character of Ruben Jacinto. The characters are supposed to follow norms or culture as what has been the standards of society for them to considered part of the group. They have to abide by the rules. This is in line with the statement of Rao's [9] that man depends on society and it is in society that he succumbed and encompassed by culture which is societal force and that this individual has to conform to the norms.

As regards to rebellious characters, in the novel *Smaller and Smaller Circles* by Batacan, the serial killer Alejandro Benitez-Carlos Jr. or most commonly known as Alex Carlos was found out to be as rebellion. He exhibits mysterious personality which makes the readers angry and pity him at same time. He became one as he was sexually abused by his PE teacher, but instead of seeking help to authorities, he put justice to his own hands by killing Mr. Gorospe followed by all boys who laughed at him during their high school days. He also portrays to be unusually capable of looking and acting beyond suspicion, of appearing to be more innocent than a truly innocent person, of being able to lure his victim with charm and cunning.

The character of JED or Joaquin Eduardo De Rivera Morga in Apostol's novel shows its readers of being rebellious. He wants to change the system of government but instead of doing it in a right way; he joined the group who wants to materialize the act of killing the Colonel as he believed that there is a need to stop the Colonel's training to help the government stop insurgencies. Further, Robert Cobianco in the novel *Blue Angel*, *White Shadow*, manifests the rebellious behavior for being associated with the pit bull fight syndicate where animals are used for money and income. It was a wrong doing to simply hurt an animal, moreover, using them and risking their lives for death match is much more morose than any kind of animal abuse. He is doing that as he is making revenge to his friend who killed his favorite dog.

As mentioned in the objective of the study, the causes of deviant behaviors were also investigated as to either psychologically, sociologically, or economically. On the psychological aspect, the causes of the abnormalities in mind include diseased mind, inappropriate learning, improper conditioning, and the

absence of appropriate role models or the strong presence of inappropriate role models. Psychological cause explains the characters' motivation or compulsion to violate social norms.

The characters of Alex Carlos, Soledad Soliman, and Roberto Cobianco in the novels *Smaller and Smaller Circles*, *Gun Dealers' Daughter*, and *Blue Angel*, *White Shadow* respectively, were given special names or labels due to their characteristics. The labels given to them had psychological impact thus had an effect to what they are doing and what they have become. As to the character of Alex Carlos, he was named by his classmates as special for their P.E. teacher because he is always called and asked to come with him. He is always given special attention. Every time Alex Carlos hears the word special, he gets mad, really mad. That label made him feel so angry and vengeful not only to his P.E. teacher but also to all young boys with similar features of him.

In the case of Soledad Soliman, being labeled as ignorant by her comrades despite being an only child of a very wealthy and influential couple made her become deviant. She blames it to her parents. She is too much protected and shelled. With this impression she was with her friends in the university; she became outcast and always felt left out. Due to this she wants to rebel against her parents so she joins the student activists in their school. She also disrespects her parents especially her mother. She even leads the group in stealing their armaments to be used in their plan.

As regards to the character of Robert Cobianco, he was labeled as bulldog. Thus he internalizes the label given to him and acts according to that specific label. As he was called that kind of dog, a strong and muscled dog, he has to prove that he really is; and he does it by becoming deviant, a killer. The lines tell the readers that Robert is a very strong man not only physically but also emotionally as he manages to kill people. Killing people does not only require to have strong body but one should have strong emotion too to see with his naked eye his victim dying because of him. This conforms to the idea of Charon [10] that human being must be understood as a person and as a thinking being; that humans do not sense their environment directly, instead, humans define the situation they are in; and the cause of human action is the result of what is occurring in our present situation.

With regard to the analysis of the characters in the three novels, there are few among them who are sociologically conditioned as the cause of their being deviant. The character of Joanna Bonifacio in *Smaller and Smaller Circles* indicates social pressure as her source of becoming deviant. She is a sassy investigative journalist who knows how to work her way to tap for

information in the bureaucracy. She is pressured due to the nature of her work and how the society will react on the outcome of each task she does. Further, the characters Don Mariano, Reina Elena and Frankie Soliman of the *Gun Dealers' Daughter* become deviant when they obstruct justice due to their social status. They need to do it to protect their children, Jed and Sol. They are well-known families, rich and famous and would need to maintain their family status and integrity. In a like manner, Mayor Lagdameo Go-Lopez in the novel *Blue Angel*, *White Shadow* also experienced social pressure thus becomes deviant. The mayor is pressured to make a positive outcome of any issue or event that is happening within his community and constituents. He needs to be politically effective even though he needs to make alleviations with the proper norms and proceedings. As long as he ensures the safety of the community, any possible way of resolving crimes can be socially accepted, though not rightfully accepted.

Relative to economic aspect as one cause of deviant behavior, this is best manifested when an individual commits acts violating norms because of poverty or insufficient monetary resources or vice versa and social status like being poor. In the first novel, the characters of Mr. and Mrs. Carlos commit deviance due to their indigence. Thinking of their poor situation, they did not find any way to help their son to seek justice for what happened to Alex. They did not even confront Mr. Gorospe for what they did to him. They decided to remain silent and just watch their son's change.

On the other hand, in the novel *Gun Dealers' Daughter*, though economic status is the cause of the character's deviance, it is the other way around. His being affluent made Uncle Gianni deviant. Being part of the elite society and business world, he needs to maintain his integrity through his social status. Being orphaned at an early age, he was forced to fit in into his father's socio-economic responsibility and he had visions of earning more to cope with the competitive edge of his own father. And in doing so, he forgot to deal with and reach other people. He worked for himself and for maintaining who they are.

Meanwhile, as in the case of Rosa Misa in *Blue Angel*, she became deviant by putting a bar to be her source of income. She knows she will easily earn money and will have good profit by doing this kind of job even to the point of bringing her and her ladies to sin and danger. Rosa Misa decided to put a bar because she has no work and knows nothing but to sing. She does not want to be her daughter's responsibility. This is in line with the concept of Sears [11] which states that societies are defined by inequality that produces conflict rather

than which produces order and consensus; and that the disadvantaged have structural interests that run counter to the status quo, which once they are assured will lead to social change.

The insights and values drawn from the novels include: love and responsibility, hardwork, integrity, and dignity, compassion and fairness. In the novel *Smaller and Smaller Circle*, parents must be responsible for their children and that they must provide them with love and guidance. It is not enough that parents will just give children material things. Children need love and guidance of parents. The novel *Blue Angel*, *White Shadow* indicates the value of honesty and hard work with integrity and dignity. Honesty in the sense, that one will earn money in a legal and straightforward conduct. In *Gun Dealer's Daughter*, it is important for a person to be compassionate and be just to others. Being sympathetic to other people's sufferings is a noble character. Help is at hand if one is compassionate because the feeling of concern and love for others is there.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

As the characters in the novels are innovative, ritualistic, retreatist, and rebellious, this conforms with the Theory of Anomie as they show to be influenced of a lack of norms and having a state of mind which rejected all social bonds, not minding any social obligation. The characters are full of negative thoughts, a form of having a sense of being futile.

The analysis made by the researcher may be utilized as a spring board for teaching literature. Findings of the study may also be used by literature teachers in creating awareness to students regarding ill-effects of deviant behaviour and the importance of family. Further studies may be conducted in other literary works of contemporary Filipino writers in English for academic enhancement.

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