

Introduction

Women, Disaster, Cybersex and Counseling

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THIS SECTION CONTAINS PAPERS of three UP Diliman faculty members on three situations faced by Filipino women: disaster, cybersex in the era of information and communications technology and battering within the home.

“Baha, Bakwet: Implikasyon ng Kalamidad sa Kakayahan ng mga Kababaihang Naninirahan sa Evacuation Center ng Brgy. San Vicente, Angono” by Victor G. Obedicen revisits how disasters “exacerbate women’s conditions and further reinforce their marginalization.” Through a focus group discussion with five mothers who evacuated to a covered basketball court in 2009 at the height of the typhoon Ondoy and who again went back to the same evacuation center after the 2013 onslaught of Habagat, the research focuses on the situation of mothers in evacuation centers after a calamity and the additional burdens and hazards they face as women. Disasters have become a regular part of the Philippine landscape and this study highlights once again the importance of organizing communities to address disaster preparations and to recognize women’s special needs and vulnerabilities as well as contributions in times of disasters.

Nathalie A. Verceles’ “Uncoerced Cybersex by Low-Income Women Using Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)” tackles a relatively new phenomenon in the

age of globalization: cybersex or the "lascivious exhibition of sexual organs or sexual activity" online. Commercial cybersex would mean that this is done in exchange for money. Through an in-depth interview with a woman involved in commercial cybersex, Verceles traces the process of cybersex transactions, the persons involved and the actual experiences of the Filipino cybergirl. The research subject's reflections on cybersex and her involvement in it are described as "uncoerced cybersex," meaning there is no "pressure, threats, intimidation, domination or control" in her being a cybergirl. The article raises controversial points regarding the interpretation of Amartya Sen's "development as freedom" and the research subject's choice of cybersex over other informal economy opportunities which are obviously far from being as financially rewarding. As the research is based on a single in-depth interview, further research on the topic not necessarily adapting a similar framework as Verceles' would enhance our understanding of commercial sex in the era of ICTs and Third World women's "agency" and "choice" in the period of globalization.

Jaclyn Marie L. Cauyan's "Counseling Needs of Battered Women and Counseling Strategies: A Study by a Feminist Counselor" tackles the nature of violence experienced by battered women, details their counseling needs and the feminist counseling strategies employed to address these needs. As a feminist counselor, the author contributes to current efforts to integrate feminist perspectives and strategies in guidance and counseling. She writes:

Guidance and Counseling, being a field of study and practice, has a lot to offer in the empowerment of battered women who need a counselor who could help them overcome difficult circumstances. However, addressing women issues requires a paradigm shift because traditional therapeutic approaches are criticized for failing to address the needs of abused women. Femi-

nist counseling challenges conventional beliefs, structures, and orientations. Guidance and counseling practitioners and educators taking on feminist lens can accomplish a great deal for abused women clients.

The papers once again reveal the multidisciplinary approach to women's studies. Obedicen's research on women and disaster indicates his community development perspective with a clear standpoint against women's oppression. Verceles' adopts a liberal feminist viewpoint as a component of her women and development studies background. Cauayan highlights how counseling of battered women becomes more effective and more responsive with the adoption of feminist standpoint and method in the counseling process. The contributions of the studies are not limited to scholarship in academe. All three provide clear recommendations on how women's situation can be improved based on their findings. This is consistent with the essence of women's studies and feminist research—women's studies and feminist research as both scholarship and advocacy.