

Year 2011 Social Psychology Colloquium

1st Social Psychology Colloquium

Date : February 23 (Wed) 18:00~19:00

Place : Faculty of Law and Letters Bldg 2, The Third Meeting Room

Speaker : Allan B. I. Bernardo (De La Salle University)

Title : Perceptions of rich and poor persons in the Philippines: The role of system justifying beliefs

Abstract : People's lay beliefs influence they perceive individuals and groups. In the case of perceptions regarding individuals and groups of different social statuses, endorsement of beliefs that justify the social inequalities tend to be associated with negative perceptions of individuals from lower status groups. In this paper, I investigate the relationship between a range of system justifying beliefs and Filipinos' attitudes towards individuals who either rose for poverty to wealth, or declined from wealth to poverty. Participants were presented a vignette of either a man who was born poor but rose to wealth or of a man who was born rich and descended to poverty; they were then asked to rate their perceptions of the man in the vignette. Study 1 showed the basic effect that Filipinos perceive individuals who increased in wealth more positively (i.e., more positive impression, more competent, has better interpersonal skills, more virtuous) compared to individuals who descended into poverty; this effect was replicated in Studies 2 to 4. Study 2 further showed that the positive perceptions were also associated with social dominance orientation beliefs. Study 3 showed that negative attitudes towards individuals who descended into poverty were amplified among individuals who held strong meritocracy beliefs, but that negative attitudes were attenuated among individuals who held strong beliefs about the culture of poverty. Finally, Study 4 further showed that beliefs that the Philippine socioeconomic system was just were higher among low socioeconomic status participants who read about the man who rose to wealth. The results are discussed in terms of how different lay beliefs that may be used to justify existing socioeconomic inequalities in Philippine society shape attitudes towards poverty and wealth.