SOCIAL SCIENCE IN THE WIDER SOCIAL FIELD: UP MINDANAO'S BASS AND BAA PROGRAMS

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The paper presents an exploratory study—using UP Mindanao's two sequential programs under the Department of Social Sciences: BA Social Science (BASS) and BA Anthropology (BAA)—on the sensitivity of disciplines (and their materializations, the disciplinal programs) to wider social forces, especially when the focus is on their institutional operations and in the 'market behavior' of their 'takers' (freshmen enrollees) and 'products' (program graduates). Interesting empirical data (in visual graphs) are given to highlight the dynamics of the operations of disciplinal programs in the wider social field (like political economic structures), emphasizing their workings at certain fine-grained levels: (1) a 'zigzag tuning-in' of disciplinal programs to university-level changes; (2) the sensitivity of enrolment figures to extra-academic factors; and (3) a study on BASS and BAA students' job placements reflects patterns of 'well-rhymed' social reproduction, occuring within short-term phases. The patterns are all presented as exploratory points. In the last case, the actual reproduction (of dominant social realities) works statistically and gives a view of a pattern wherein new work-attractors (like the "call-center" phenomenon) gets a greater share (or probability) of the program's products, while still allowing centrifugal forces to work (students consciously opting out of the market attractors), but with lesser share (or probability). The paper ends by reflecting on the need for curricular design (or re-design) and pedagogical practices to respond ('update' or restructure) itself, not only to the program's knowledge productions (researches), but also to the actual experiences of a program's products (the yearly graduates).

The actual field of 'Anthropology' (or 'Social Science') and the dynamics of social reproduction

Social science disciplines (like anthropology and sociology) are strongly embedded in a wide social field of layered contexts. They actualize

themselves as contentiously-designed programs and are reproduced via diverse pedagogical and institutional practices.

The social force of any (otherwise abstract) discipline like 'anthropology' materializes itself in so many ways: (1) in the written program itself of the course (compressed in the prospectus), (2) in the institutional dynamics of the academic hierarchy governing the program (department, college, university levels) and, beyond this so-called 'academic settings,' (3) in the 'products' (graduates) of the program that then enter into, and interact with, the wider political and economic forces. The real field of any disciplinal practice is the social/global structure dialectically enwrapping it.

The three selected material elements of a discipline just mentioned (the process of crafting and the resulting program, the institutional hierarchy that maintains and governs the program, and the behavior of the discipline's enrollees and graduates, as important transformative force, of/for the program) will form the framework of this paper's discussion on the social/material embeddedness of the disciplines and the educational system's role in social reproduction. Although there is nothing new to that point (from one coming from the social sciences), the paper hopes, working closely along that view, to contribute two things for the present problematizing of Philippine (tertiary, social science) education:

(1) An empirical presentation showing the sensitivity of the discipline to extra-academic forces (within and outside the university settings), almost 'in (zigzagging) tune' with the short-term changes of the social field. The paper will present (a) relevant patterns in the history of two UP Mindanao social science programs, and (b) a preliminary job placement study conducted by the Department[1] showing what most of our 'products' actually end up doing, circuitously (or even reluctantly) helping reproduce the 'system.'

(2) An exploration (or a problematizing) on how curricular design (or redesign) and pedagogical practices could respond to the (surface but important) changes of the market and social field.

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[1] University data (faculty size, enrolment, department's history) were taken from OUR records and DSS files. Initial data on job placements (batches 1996, 1997, 2002, and 2003) were gathered by Prof. V Clamonte and Ms Arlene Largo. Interviews (recorded or recalled by memory) and informal conversations (face to face and via celphones) relevant to the present theme of the paper were done on several occasions by the author (from his involvement in crafting the BAA program up to the present). The processing and visualization of the data were done in Microsoft Excel and SigmaPlot. Additional data (see appendices for printscreens of company, NGO and government websites) were taken from the internet.

Institutional vicissitudes of disciplinal programs and being 'in (zigzagging) tune' with the changes in the social (institutional) field

The institutional context of disciplines. The following graphical visualization compresses an important dimension of the history of UP Mindanao's (Department of Social Sciences) two programs—the BA Social Science program (or BASS, operative from 1996 to 2004), and the BA Anthropology program (or BAA, operative since 2004, after the abolishment of BASS)— using the changes in the number of full-time faculty members as critical indicators:


DSS Full-Time Faculty 1996-2008
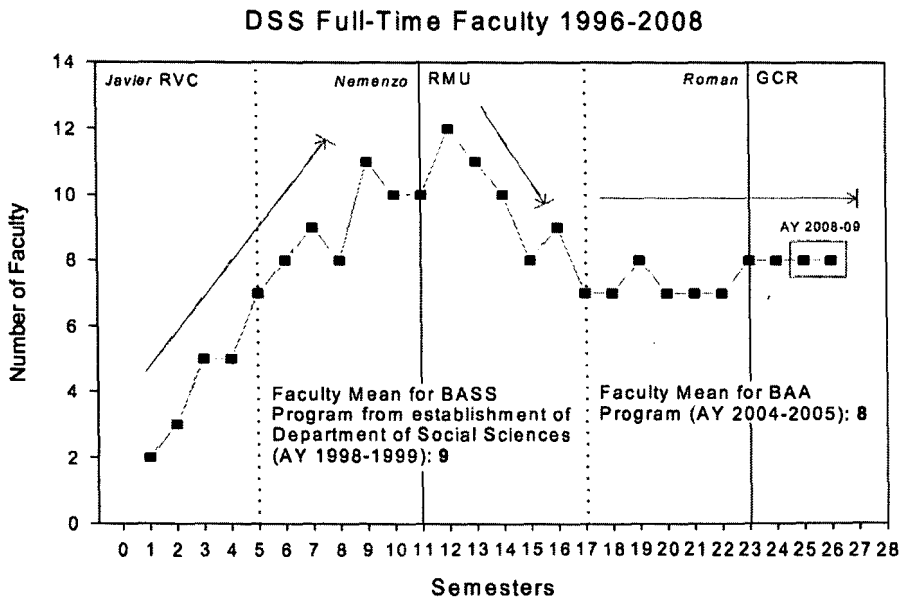
The interesting pattern in the above is how the semestral flow of the program's full-time faculty members (appears to) periodize itself 'in rhyme' with the changes of the University System's presidential terms. The three 'periods' are graphically observable: a rising slope during President Emil Javier's term (and then-Chancellor RV Cuyno); a downward slope during President Francisco Nemenzo's term (and then-Chancellor RM de Ungria); and a (roughly) levelling line in the present dispensation.

Roughly the same pattern is seen in the graph below: that is, the departmental 'turning points' roughly coincide with the administrative changes at the university-system level. The only difference is that (declustering anthropology and non-anthropology faculty members), in the

middle phase, with the institutional field (both at the university and at the UP-system levels) busy urging/designing an alternative (the favored buzz word was 'anthropology') to the existing BASS program, there emerged a sharply contrasting trend (upward and downward) in the number of anthropology and non-anthropology faculty members serving the existing/phasing-out BASS and the emerging BAA programs.

Ratio of DSS Anth/Non-Anth Faculty
(AY 1996-1997 To AY 2008-2009)
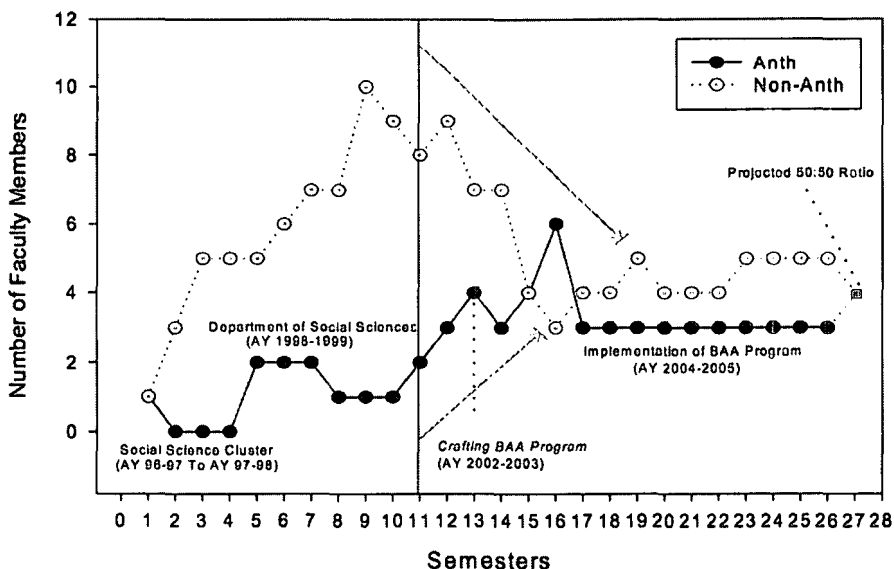
The disciplinal politics at this period ('what is the most appropriate discipline for Mindanao?', 'How will an anthropology program be designed?') was also at its starkest, with the departmental discussions overflowing into the discourse of the students (with the last-batch BASS students spearheading a symposium on a symptomatic topic, 'is social science an inferior science?' and with one philosophy professor of the department giving a University lecture, almost in echo with the students' discourse, 'is social science a science?').

Although linear causality (UP-system and departmental dynamics of program-crafting) is certainly not at play here, the synchrony of the periods from two institutional levels suggest the theme of disciplinal embeddedness in wider social fields.

The extra-academic factors of disciplinal enrolees. The same theme is reflected in UP Mindanao's enrolment figures, within a four-year segment. The following graph on enrolment figures was done in response to a senior student inquiry on why freshmen enrolees in anthropology declined (comparing AY 06-07 with AY 07-08). The department checked BAA enrolees' standing vis-a-vis the other disciplines/programs and the following graph emerged (see next page).

The almost-similar flow-lines of the eight programs of UP Mindanao (with very little 'noise') immediately suggest factors that are not confined to the intrinsic 'attractiveness' of any course (for why should they rise and fall, although in differing magnitudes, in synchrony?). In dealing with the last two academic years (AY 06-07 and AY 07-08), the implementation of the new tuition fee increase (2007) offers a gut-level hypothesis for the synchronized drop of enrolment across disciplines.

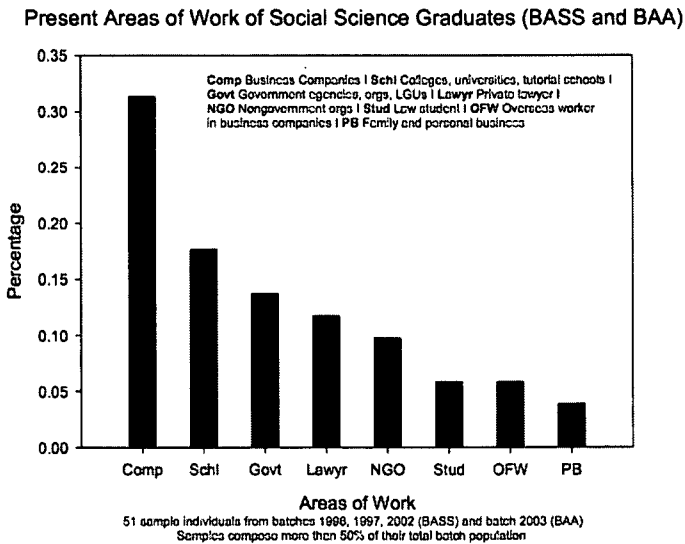**Freshmen Enrollees AY 2004-2008**

Academic Year
[1] 04-05 *[2]* 05-06 *[3]* 06-07 *[4]* 07-08
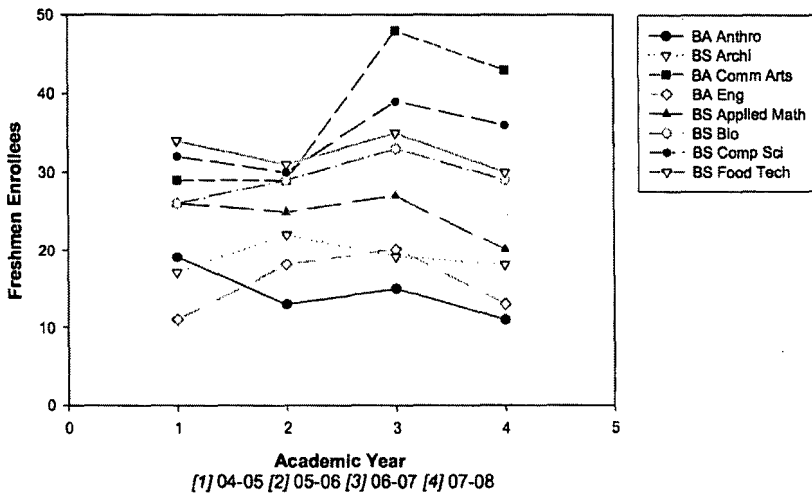
What do social science students actually end up doing?

With the following graph, a case can be made for the statement that however theoretically 'critical of the system' social science is, its products still end up 'feeding the needs' of a reproducing system (see graph below).

More than thirty percent of the four sampled batches (both BASS and BAA programs) show the department's graduates working in business companies (in the popular multinational companies, Ford, Honda, IBM; and in the recently emerging service/human relations and "callcenter" companies).

Present Areas of Work of Social Science Graduates (BASS and BAA)

Comp Business Companies I Schl Colleges, universities, tutorial schools I Govt Government agencies, orgs, LGUs I Lawyr Private lawyer I NGO Nongovernment orgs I Stud Law student I OFW Overseas worker in business companies I PB Family and personal business

Areas of Work
51 sample individuals from batches 1996, 1997, 2002 (BASS) and batch 2003 (BAA)
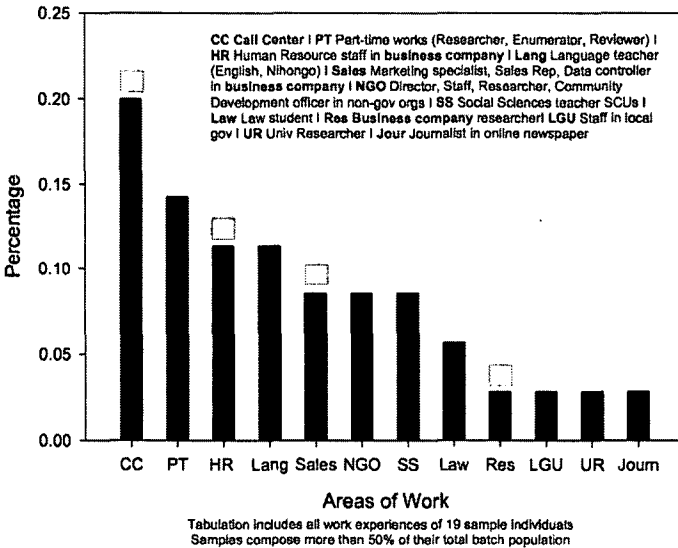Samples compose more than 50% of their total batch population

The two graphs in the next page further highlight the role of newly emerging features of the global political economic structures (internet-based companies and "call centers") as work-attractors for the recent graduates of the social science programs (see Appendix 1 for the nature of companies that absorbed most of the 2002 and 2003 graduates):

Statistical (non-deterministic) social reproduction and ripples of resistances. One should note that the actual reproduction (of dominant social realities) works statistically and gives a view of a pattern wherein new work-attractors (like the "call-center" phenomenon) gets a greater share (or probability) of the program's products, while still allowing centrifugal forces to work (students consciously opting out of the market attractors), but with lesser share (or probability).

The critical (even radical) roots of the social sciences still manage to surface, in varied ways, in the areas of work of the graduates of the two programs: in the conscious efforts of some individuals to look for teaching,
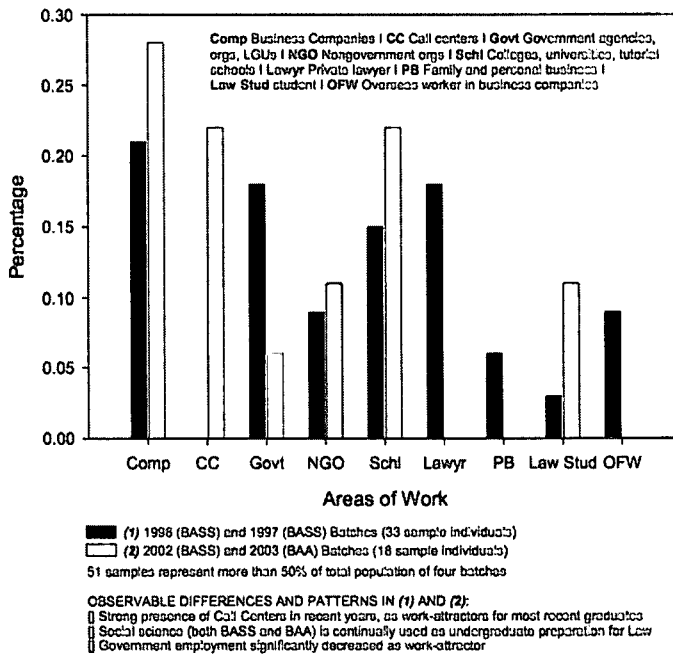
NGO, or community-based organizing work[2] even with the open attraction of high-paying "call center" jobs (*"para bang, ano ngayon, I graduated four years and then I would just entertain these calls, ana lang ba akong life, so routine, mga anti-ano kami";* 'it's like, so what now, is my life just like this, so routine, we are anti-something'); in their vocalized 'dreams' of 'one day getting out of the company work, when one has saved enough money, and pursuing masteral anthropology studies'; in what one BAA student (somewhat dramatically) confided, that 'during times when call-center or company works become too dull and repetitive (*maka-uga ug utok,* 'brain-drying'), I would dig out my old anthropology readings just to refresh my mind.' But, sometimes, reminding oneself of a classic Paul Willis (1977) theme of a circuitous social reproduction, 'resistance' as the very mechanism for reproduction, one also feels, hearing many of the complains of 'routine works,' the little tactics and vocalizations of resistance, that these might simply serve as necessary vents to 'refresh' the dominant social field.

Areas of Work Experienced by 2002 and 2003 Batches

CC Call Center I PT Part-time works (Researcher, Enumerator, Reviewer) I HR Human Resource staff in business company I Lang Language teacher (English, Nihongo) I Sales Marketing specialist, Sales Rep, Data controller in business company I NGO Director, Staff, Researcher, Community Development officer in non-gov orgs I SS Social Sciences teacher SCUs I Law Law student I Res Business company researcher I LGU Staff in local gov I UR Univ Researcher I Jour Journalist in online newspaper

Tabulation includes all work experiences of 19 sample individuals
Samples compose more than 50% of their total batch population

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[2] See Appendix 2 for a sample of the NGOs entered into by some of the graduates; see also Appendix 3 for an example of a different government-related institution with community-organizing bent.

Comparison of (1) 1996 and 1997 and (2) 2002 and 2003 Batches in Present Areas of Work

Comp Business Companies I CC Call centers I Govt Government agencies, orgs, LGUs I NGO Nongovernment orgs I Schl Colleges, universities, tutorial schools I Lawyr Private lawyer I PB Family and personal business I Law Stud student I OFW Overseas worker in business companies

(1) 1996 (BASS) and 1997 (BASS) Batches (33 sample individuals)
(2) 2002 (BASS) and 2003 (BAA) Batches (18 sample individuals)
51 samples represent more than 50% of total population of four batches

OBSERVABLE DIFFERENCES AND PATTERNS IN *(1)* AND *(2)*:
[] Strong presence of Call Centers in recent years, as work-attractors for most recent graduates
[] Social science (both BASS and BAA) is continually used as undergraduate preparation for Law
[] Government employment significantly decreased as work-attractor

Reflections on program governance and the wider social field. Given the wider social field of a discipline (from the crafted program, to institutional set-ups, to the wider political economy of the educational system), it is imperative that the departmental governance of a program inputs into the design and pedagogy of the course (for example, anthropology) the dynamics of these various layers of the social field. A social science (or anthropology) of 'social science' (or anthropology of 'anthropology') in institutional settings, or an ethnography of the educational system (in the model of Paul Willis), might be relevant in preparing social science students to the complexity of the social field they will be entering after graduation.

The development of a formal feedback mechanism from our yearly graduates (skills demanded from them by their jobs, difficulties, strategies in the workplace, new ideas for redesigning their courses, critiques) should help greatly in generating data for the above-mentioned 'social science of social science' and the eventual restructuring (or deconstruction) of the present social science disciplines.

References cited

Paul Willis. (1977). *Learning to labor: How working class kids get working class jobs*. Columbia University Press, New York.

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