

THE RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR MINDANAO CULTURE XAVIER UNIVERSITY

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THE Research Institute for Mindanao Culture or RIMCU serves as the social science research arm of Xavier University located in Cagayan De Oro City, south of the Philippines. Since its establishment in 1957, RIMCU has continued to help shape the social science research, and consequently, the development programs and policy formulation especially in Mindanao.

RIMCU was founded on the direction of the Father Provincial of the Philippine Province of the Society of Jesus, who in April of 1957 commissioned the first Institute Director, a doctoral returnee to the Philippines, to start such a unit at then Ateneo de Cagayan, in answer to three years of petitions (1955-57) from successive Rector-Presidents. Its founder, Rev. Francis C. Madigan, S.J., served as the first director.

The Institute's mandate is to contribute meaningfully to the development of Mindanao and of the Philippines through study, research, reflection and writing. The RIMCU By-Laws states that, "In keeping with the University orientation, expressed through the University Mission Statement, the Institute expects its contribution to reflect a preferential option for work to help the poor and underprivileged in ways consonant with the Catholic nature of Xavier University, to improve their social and economic position, while also seeking to contribute meaningfully by its research to the cultural, social, and economic development..." (p. 1).

The word "culture" in the Institute's name is taken to relate to the broad anthropological sense of this word, and that includes whatever may contribute positively to the material, linguistic, intellectual, aesthetic, or

other aspects of the way of life of the people of Mindanao. For this reason, the Institute wishes to publish and disseminate widely the results of research work. Thus, ordinarily, RIMCU does not contract to gather data for other organizations unless mutually satisfactory arrangements of publication rights and data access can be agreed upon and included in the contract or memorandum of agreement. The local color associated with the phrase "Mindanao Culture" has proven to be very useful especially in facilitating the gathering of information among different ethnic groups all around the southern islands. Questions tend to be raised when a research project is situated in Luzon or in the Visayas.

RIMCU was established almost simultaneously with the Department of Sociology. Over the years, the Department has remained to be one among many at Xavier University with the most number of M.A. and Ph.D. degree holders, and the most number of research outputs and publications. The Department is able to keep them because they are affiliated with RIMCU as research associates. (In November 1999, the Department received a Center of Excellence Award Honorific from the Commission on Higher Education because of, among other things, the number and quality of its research outputs and publications and the academic qualifications of the faculty). The Department then is able to offer AB, MA, and PhD degree programs that attract students from inside and outside the country.

PEOPLE

There are hundreds of people from many different places who have worked with RIMCU at one time or another over the last 50 years; some as full-time employees, and others as contractual field or office workers. Table 1 shows the names of the RIMCU research associates and key personnel, and the approximate dates of their affiliation.

For 13 years, since its founding, Fr. Madigan was practically working alone at RIMCU. But he had companions from the Department of Sociology who worked with him at the Institute, such as Alfonso del Fierro, Teresa Almonte, Marilou Palabrica, Zenaida Rebolos, Rosalia Avanceña, Glicerio Tan, Enriquita Talibong, and Eduardo Calica.

TABLE I. Research associates and key personnel

	NAME	DISCIPLINE	FROM	TO
1	Rev Francis C Madigan, SJ	Sociology	1957	1992
2	Teresa B Almonte	Sociology	1965	1981
3	Marilou D Tabor	Accountancy	1971	Present
4	Magdalena C Cabaraban	Sociology	1972	Present
5	Lita P Sealza	Sociology	1973	Present
6	Imelda G Pagtolun-an	Sociology	1973 2006	1997 Present
7	Enriquita Talibong	Sociology	1971	1975
8	Alejandro N Herrin	Economics	1972	1978
9	Alfonso del Fierro, Jr	Sociology	1968	1987
10	Erlinda M Burton	Anthropology	1976	Present
11	Marilou P Costello	Sociology	1967	1996
12	Michael A Costello	Sociology	1978	1998
13	Numeriano Escalante	Sociology	1993	1997
14	Emil Bolongaita	Political Science	1994	1997
15	Beethoven C Morales	Economics	1994	2003
16	Nereus D Acosta	Public Administration	1995	1998
17	Villorimo Suminguit	Anthropology	1997	1999
18	Chona R Echavez	Demography	1999	Present
19	Edvilla R Talaroc	Ethnology	2000	Present
20	Isaias S Sealza	Educational Planning; Sociology	2000	Present
21	Rev Antonio F Moreno, SJ	Development Studies	2006	2008

Most of the appointments at RIMCU came in the 1970s with the “Dual Records Study” that focused on the methodology for capturing vital events in the community. This was also the decade when those who went to obtain their doctorate degrees abroad came back. Notable among them were Alfonso del Fierro, Jr. (University of Kentucky), Marilou Palabrica-Costello (University of Chicago), and Alejandro Herrin (University of South Carolina). There were second-liners then, who are now senior research associates, like Magdalena Cabaraban, Lita Palma-Sealza, and Imelda Pagtolun-an.

Most of the research associates had training under Fr. Madigan, in one way or another, and had earned their master's and/or doctorate degrees and special academic trainings from universities in Europe, North America, and Australia. Recently, there have been those, like Cecile Macabuac, Carmeli Chavez and Sharon Linog, who did or are doing research with the Institute as research affiliates.

Fr. Madigan had served RIMCU as Director—the longest, so far, in comparison with the three others who followed (Michael A. Costello, 1992-96; Erlinda M. Burton, 1997-2005; Isaias Sealza, 2005 till the present). For 35 years he painstakingly formed it into an institution that others can take over subsequently. He initiated the framing of RIMCU By-Laws that guided the Institute's governance, and enabled it to acquire a registration certificate from the Securities and Exchange Commission. Without financial support from the university except for office space, water and electricity, he was able to acquire some savings for RIMCU during his tenure. He placed these savings in interest-earning accounts and investments in the country and abroad. This proved to have been wise especially in the 1990s when the Institute faced a financial setback.

During the early part of the present decade, many of the RIMCU employees opted for an early retirement voluntarily, and continued to work at the Institute on project basis. The early retirement scheme that allowed the retirees continued employment on project basis, along with the number of research projects that were coming in, helped RIMCU bounce back financially.

OUTPUTS

As mentioned, Fr. Madigan was practically the lone key person at the Institute during its early years. During those years, he, together with Manuel Gapuz, wrote a monograph on college aptitude test. Subsequently, he wrote an account of the history of Bukidnon province, a book on rural technological innovation called "The Farmer Said No" (1966), a conference proceedings report on "Human Factors in Philippine Rural Development" (1967), and a book on vital local events entitled, "Birth and Death in Cagayan de Oro" (1972). (It was during the 1960s when Fr. Madigan developed a project proposal for the construction of a new social science building for

Xavier University which was subsequently funded by a German Catholic charitable organization, MISEREOR. Until now the building is housing RIMCU). The diversity of the academic disciplines and interests of people shown in Table 1 is also reflected in the variety of research outputs revealed in Table 2.

TABLE 2. Reports and publications by area of study and time period

Areas	1957-1970	1971-1980	1981-1990	1991-1999	2000-2008	Total
A. Population Studies						
General Demography	7	9	4	1	8	29
Demographic methods		20	7	1		28
Health, morbidity, mortality	4	1	28	33	17	83
Fertility and nuptiality	3	23	17			43
Fertility and mortality	3	19	7	1	1	31
Family planning/ reproductive health	1	9	14	4	18	46
Migration	1	3	8	3		15
Urbanization, human ecology		3	11			14
Population and development		9	9	3		21
(Subtotal)	(19)	(96)	(105)	(46)	(44)	(310)
B. Other Social Sciences						
General Sociology	3	4	3	2	4	16
Statistics/sampling			2	1		3
Race and ethnicity	1		4	1	1	7
Religion	2	2	2	1	2	9
Education	2	1	14	2	1	20

Table 2 (cont'd.). Reports and publications by area of study and time period

Areas	1957- 1970	1971- 1980	1981- 1990	1991- 1999	2000- 2008	Total
Women, adolescents, children, elderly		2	8	3	15	28
Deviance, family			3	1		4
Rural Sociology/community	9	14	9	8	17	57
Environment/uplands			3	11	8	22
Economics, co-ops	2	3	3		7	15
Labor market studies		2	4	7		13
Political Science/ Governance/Civil Soc			3	11	4	18
Peace studies			1	10	23	34
Local history	2	2	2			6
Cultural Anthropology	4	2	3	1	5	15
Archaeology		4	1			5
Health care services					8	8
Agrarian relations					4	4
Development programs/ poverty studies					7	7
(Subtotal)	(25)	(34)	(65)	(61)	(106)	(291)
TOTAL	44	130	170	107	151	601

The 1970s and the 1980s were years when population studies (especially on fertility and mortality) were dominant mainly because of global concerns on rapid population growth. These years were followed by a slump in the number of research projects that came out in the 1990s, as interest in population studies waned. Other research areas were explored such as reproductive health and family planning, and notably, peace studies, which have increased in number due to the volatile law and order conditions in Mindanao especially in recent years.

Most of the Institute's research outputs were reports for commissioned activities. But scores were published in Philippine journals like *Kinaadman*, Philippine Sociological Review, Philippine Studies, Philippine Geographic Review, Philippine Population Journal, Philippine Quarterly of Culture and Society, and Philippine Journal of Development; and in foreign and international journals like Demography, Population Studies, Population and Development Review, Genus, Social Forces, Journal of Southeast Asian Studies, Media Asia an Asian Communication Quarterly, and *Rivista di Intelligence*. A very large number of these research papers were also presented in national and international conferences, or published as chapters of books, or as monographs.

CURRENT PROGRAMS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

There have been some shifts in the major concerns in Mindanao, the Philippines and the world. These shape to a large extent the trajectory of commissioned research work at RIMCU. People in Mindanao have been having peace and order problems resulting from the protracted armed conflict between the Moro rebels and the Philippine government. Many believe that this conflict is rooted, among other things, in poverty and related conditions. Hence, peace, poverty, and community studies are commonly the themes of research work now at RIMCU. Along with some of these studies are ground-level action programs that are intended to contribute to peace-building efforts, and poverty alleviation especially among the underprivileged Islamic and other ethnic groups. For example, in 2004, RIMCU was involved in a project, "Creating Grassroots Corporate Ethos to Enhance *Barangay* Development," a winning entry in the *Panibagong Paraan* contest of the World Bank and partners, that helped a group of island small fishermen in Basilan. Early 2008, RIMCU got a similar project from *Panibagong Paraan* for the "Delivery of Basis Social Services to the Matigsalog Manobo of San Fernando, Bukidnon through Sustainable Participatory Development." Among the RIMCU Research Associates, Erlinda Burton has been greatly involved in both *Panibagong Paraan* projects. The work for the Matigsalog Manobo is currently in progress. From March 2005 to February 2008, RIMCU was also into the "Muslim-Christian Peacebuilding Initiative in Cagayan de Oro," a research-cum-action project in partnership

with Miserior, Germany. Antonio Moreno, S.J., and Edvilla Talaroc were running this project.

There is growing interest also in studies on governance, and on the role of civil society in socio-political transformation. This relates to another concern that is seeping into the consciousness of many: corruption. Even poverty-alleviating programs of donor organizations are suffering from corrupt practices. Hence, there are a series of poverty studies that RIMCU has undertaken in order to identify at the provincial, municipal and barangay levels, households that are really in dire need. These studies are expected to lessen significantly the number of households that are classified as poor only because of political party affiliation.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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