

The Problems of a Developing World: A Challenge to the Sociologist*

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If one takes a quick trip to three or four of our villages (and I don't mean San Lorenzo Village) outside the confines of his academic walls he could not help but be impressed by the realities of a country which needs to be developed—and in a hurry! Even if one did not take such a trip which is bound to be hot and dusty, the realities would hit him just as much when he picks up the morning paper. For a Philippine Sociological Society which is celebrating its 12th year of existence, what do we have to offer by way of insights as to how we might move from traditionalism to modernity?

In conformity with the norms observed by Keynote speakers, I would endeavor to be both critical and exhortative in my remarks: critical—because, in general, as social scientists we have had a minimum of involvement academic or action-wise in the affairs of our developing nation. However, we could take pride in an enduring professional Society which meets regularly once a month in Manila and gets together once a year in the South to listen to each other's professional *magnum opus* which eventually find their way in a beautifully bound high prestige journal—the *Philippine Sociological Review*. All of us look forward to this volume because there is nothing more delightful

to a budding sociologist than to break into print. But one of the most embarrassing questions we could be confronted with us: "For all your years of professional work and all your publications as sociologists, what development—relevant sociological breakthroughs can you share with our policy makers and change agents? These two groups, more than any other, are concerned with the day-to-day decisions which are relevant to the problem of whether or not planned or directed change eventually occurs as planned or as directed. As academicians our "sociologizing" and "anthropologizing" have to meet the test of consumers who almost always have more exposure to and greater experience with the phenomena we quite often deal with only at a conceptual level. As one Asian professor cynically remarked: "The trouble with us sociology professors is we spend too much time reading books and not enough time studying people."

Lest I be misunderstood, I am not arguing that sociologists should become action workers, but that their sociology should provide the latter with meaningful tools, predictions, and explanations, without which they would not find order in the multiple complexities of approaches that failed and target systems that reportedly did not respond. At no time and no place can our theories be put to a greater test than here and now. We have golden opportunities for cross-cultural generalizations or inapplicabilities as the case

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may turn out to be, besides the unique occasions for creative theorizing or recasting in the light of new evidence.

With this introductory note, I will attempt to explore with you some of the avenues which might contribute to the development of sociology as an academic discipline and as a profession in this country and to define broadly some of the problem areas where we need meaningful research and heuristic theory. If you find my remarks rather caustic and exaggerated, it is because I have observed that in professional gatherings such as this, ideas that are careful, safe, and located in the middle of the road seldom provoke discussion, let alone thinking. If I could bring about a discussion simply because you disagree with me, my efforts will have been more than compensated for.

Developing Sociology as an Academic Discipline and as a Profession in this Country

A. *Proposal for Filipino Professorial Chairs*

Let me start with an assumption that high caliber trained manpower in sociology and anthropology is relatively scarce in this country. When one counts only the "natives" the number becomes pitifully small, therefore, we need this scarce resource to serve as the *goose* which will lay the *golden egg*. While most of us prefer to see this *golden egg* laid in the form of quality research products, well-trained students, and meaningful clues to action work, these desirable end-results are rarely accompanied by lucrative monetary returns, hence, the scarce resource is often tempted to accept attractive lecture hour rates which leave little time for anything else outside the lectures. Our scarce social science talents have also started to be lured by foreign assignments and

therefore they lay the *golden egg* in another country. In the meantime, we invite or receive each year a number of foreign experts to help us develop. My proposal therefore is to set up in our universities and research institutions, Filipino professorial chairs to be supported by Foundations and other agencies who provide us with our quarterly, annual or biennial dose of social science expertise. I have more than passing faith in the competence and scholarly motivation of the Filipino intellectual to think that a Foundation could get double mileage out of him regardless of whether or not he occupies an air-conditioned suite in a swanky village.

This proposal is related to the urgent need to produce Philippine teaching materials, especially for our basic courses in sociology which are usually required of all college students and for our developing graduate programs in the social sciences. At the moment we have a sizeable amount of research and interpretation for the benefit of our students and other potential social science consumers such as policy-makers and action workers in development programs. This job requires more than just a pair of scissors, paste, and paper fasteners, and unless the rewards for being scholarly are adequate, the temptation to produce a "quick seller" rather than an academic best seller will be very great. After all, favorable response to the economic incentive is not a monopoly of the economist.

B. *Cross-Institutional Borrowing, Consulting, and Exchange*

Because of specialized manpower scarcity we need to spread around, the precious specialization of 2 or 3 key persons in each institution. This may be done through a system of in-

terinstitutional personnel exchange for periods of one year, one semester or one summer. Research consulting could also be undertaken across institutions in order to take advantage of the peculiar training and experience of other sociologists in the country. If the latter is not feasible, an exchange of publications between universities and research institutions could go a long way toward solving the problem of unavailability of local materials for reference. Regrettably but true, quite often we are more aware of what is going on in the United States research-wise than we are of what each of us is doing right here. This annual Convention is certainly one way of remedying the situation, but it is still grossly inadequate. Besides cross-institutional exchange we need to work more closely with other social scientists.

All of these suggestions are premised on the assumption that academic parochialism and institutional imperialism are luxuries a developing country can ill-afford. Another path which we need to tread more and more, is that which leads to getting better acquainted with our Asian colleagues so that Asia will cease to be a "myth" and we can add our neighboring societies to our predominantly Western frame of reference. Incidentally, one of the most constructive comments anyone has ever made of my professional work came from a highly respected American colleague who told me that in one of my papers, I sounded like an American sociologist talking to Asians. I was red in the face but extremely grateful for such candor. Hence, if we do not always find professional appreciation from our American colleagues it could be because, we sound too much like them and too little like ourselves.

In this connection, can we initiate a regional sociological conference for Asians? I do not know where we can obtain funds for such an undertaking but I suppose that if our friends could support a war in Vietnam they might also be willing to sponsor a peaceful academic venture. Sociologically speaking, we have well-developed East-West relations, but what we need to cultivate is intra-East relations. Perhaps Asia Foundation might consider adding an Indian or Pakistani journal or even the *Philippine Sociological Review* to the publications covered by their grant to Asian Sociologists which is administered by the American Sociological Association. It might be worthwhile expanding the purpose of this grant to include encouragement of closer relations between Asian sociologists and not just between Asian and American sociologists. A discovery of Asia by Asians via the professional literature could be a prerequisite to a subsequent program of visiting Asian sociologists.

C. *Maximizing Benefits in Social Science Research Conducted by Visiting Researchers*

The Philippines, just like any developing country gets its share of itinerant researchers who come for any of a number of reasons such as: to produce a Ph.D. dissertation, to test a favorite hypothesis, to try out a newly developed research instrument, to acquire a degree of expertise on the Philippines, or even to fulfill the requirements incident to the adventures and pleasures of a travel grant to the exotic Orient. There is really no violent objection to any of these, except that we want to maximize benefits accruing to our side. My guess is that these researchers could very rarely pursue their projects without some amount of assistance from the na-

tive social scientists. The latter, I suggest, should find out whether such projects might not be inspired as much by the desire to contribute to the development of Philippine sociology as by the researcher's commitment to enrich some American university's Southeast Asia or International Studies Program. These projects could be conducted so they have a training value to the natives. And if the Visiting Researcher could profit from a word of advise—the native could usually teach him a few things which do not appear in standard research methodology textbooks. For every study carried out here by any researcher from abroad, I strongly recommend that copies of each completed study be given to the Philippine Sociological Society which will in turn, distribute such copies to our different universities and institutions which might profit from these publications. Besides, our membership will have a chance to know what foreigners are saying about us and our people who are the objects of their study. This, of course, automatically submits their work to a critical perusal by the Society. If possible, reviews of such works could be published in our journal. In addition to increasing our stockpile of systematic information on Philippine society, this requirement will discourage researchers who really do not care about us but regard Filipinos merely as objects of academic curiosity or as vehicles for possible immortalization in the international sociological or anthropological Hall of Fame.

I sometimes wonder if this kind of motivation is not one explanation for the disproportionate emphasis on our cultural minorities. But to say this now would be unkind and unfair. Let us just exhort visiting researchers to

focus their studies more on our majority groups. These are the people we need to know more about. A study of the contemporary politician's night life, for example, should prove to be as revealing as that of the courtship practices of any non-Christian tribe. The captivating insights which such a study will very likely yield, could probably tell us more about the dynamics of decision-making in Philippine politics than any textbook. I invite anyone to embark on this project provided he does not need to lobby for congressional appropriation.

Some Problem Areas for Research and Theorizing

Having made all these suggestions for what some of you might call *sociological nationalism*, let me turn to some problem areas which need research, theorizing, and action if we are going to make a contribution toward development efforts.

1. A challenging statement we could start with runs as follows: "Development officials and economists are beginning to recognize that worthwhile economic changes are often blocked, particularly in traditional societies by long-established institutions and practices. But improved understanding of the sociological dimension of development and evolution of methods by which this new knowledge could be applied in practice have both lagged considerably behind recognition of the importance of social psychological factors."¹ Prof. Firth abbreviates and points up this problem in the question: "In what economic sectors are what elements of the social structure most relevant and to what degree? What structural features of a

¹ From Introductory Statement on "Sociology of Development." *Development and Research Digest*, Vol. 2, No. 2, Oct. 1963, p. 65.

society affect economic choices?"² In this connection we need to determine how, where, and under what circumstances the extended family, *pakikisama*, *utang na loob*, landlord and employer paternalism, etc. function as inhibitors or facilitators to economic development?

2. We have a pronounced tendency to use American society as our frame of reference and to regard our development problems as if they were American problems, writ small or writ early and therefore we tend to apply directly American solutions to Filipino problems. Witness our extension service, our school curricula, our 4-H Clubs, our "committee" approach to development and even the group dynamics way to democracy, to mention only a few.

If I may be allowed to be naive and pedestrian in this age of elegant model building, I would like to consider the possibility of a *jeepney model* for the modernization of the Philippines. I choose this motif because the jeepney is a modern, imported but *domesticated* type of vehicle which fulfills the function of transportation suited to a climate and terrain such as ours and at the same time carries a distinct identity of its own. I imagine that there is nothing in this world which is exactly the same as the Filipino jeepney but it certainly shares many features with motor vehicles everywhere in the world. How can the features of this *jeepney model* be applied to institution-building in this country? Every blessed expert who comes around brings in biases and "great" ideas from his own

background and therefore the task of domesticating imported models for institution-building exacts the maximum creativity from us—the natives. Effective copying calls for just as much if not more imagination, for we should always expect unanticipated consequences when an institution is transferred to a new environment.

3. While to the development planner "microscopic studies of single villages add depth and realism by offering concrete examples of the kind of parametric social conditions with which his policies and programs will have to cope,"³ we need analysis at the macro level in order to take into account the interaction and interdependence between the larger society and the particular village or villages one is looking at. Would the concept of a dual or a multiple society be more heuristic?
4. Is the Filipino really wanting in national ideology, feelings of solidarity and loyalty which could be tapped for the support of national efforts toward development? What is the meaning of the reportedly rising wave of so-called anti-Americanism⁴ and what is its relation to nationalistic feelings? Is this an inevitable stage, a part of the growing pains which accompany the modernization of a developing nation? Frankly, I can not comprehend the phenomenon except vaguely at a person-to-person level but if any of us could come up with a sociological tongue-twister such as *econocology* to label this phenomenon, we might be sociologically immortalized. But name-calling is not sociology and we need to come up with useful explanations rather than new terminology.

² Raymond Firth, *The Influence of Social Structure Upon Peasant Economies*. Paper prepared for the Agricultural Development Council Seminar on Subsistence and Peasant Economies, East-West Center, Honolulu, Hawaii, February 28-March 6, 1965.

³ Samir Dasgupta, "Life in a Bengal Village." *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, Vol. 13, No. 1, Part 1, Oct. 1964, pp. 115-117.

⁴ Alfredo R. Roces, "Largely a Myth," *The Manila Times*, May 17, 1965, p. 4a.

5. Since we can no longer entrust all our population problems to God, we need to know the nature of expected resistances to population control. We do not have as yet, sufficient evidence to support the view that the resistance is there. But assuming it is present, is it a matter of ignorance, of religion or of preference? While we have population projections, the question of whether these estimates eventually turn out to be verified is almost entirely out of the hands of the demographer except to the extent that he himself is a multiplier. Every married couple, is a potential multiplier, hence, their views on the subject are much more significant than our academic concerns.

6. What is the content of our religion? Is the Filipino's propensity to leave everything to the hands of God a reflection of his being a devout Catholic⁵ or is it a general optimistic faith in an overall supernatural power which may or may not be coterminous with the Catholic concept of God? At any rate, is this optimistic fatalism a positive or a negative factor for change?

I would also suggest that in addition to dwelling on rituals and superstitions for scholarly reasons, we should look for weak links and features where new ideas may be able to wedge through. Furthermore, it would be most helpful to determine whether persistence of superstition is a function of people's avowed resistance to change or whether it is a function of non-exposure or lack of exposure to convincing alternative explanations to everyday phenomena.

7. The Filipino's high value of education is looked upon by most experts as a

favorable omen for our development. But perhaps we need to give it a second look. How much of our education is functional for development and how much of it actually alienates us from development? What does being "educated" mean in our context?

8. The Philippines is often characterized as a *bayanihan* society but cooperatives have found very little success in this country. What is the interaction base for *bayanihan* and what is the required base for a Western-style cooperative. The Bayanihan has also been invoked as our traditional nucleus for community action and therefore on that premise, a rural development worker should be able to generate instantly concerted action for community improvement. But why is *factionalism* the frequent complaint of our workers? Community action just does not seem to be forthcoming. R. D. Lambert's analysis of the consequences of segmentation and social discontinuities on the modernization of India⁶ might be a stimulating eye-opener on this problem.

9. If we are a *bayanihan-pakikisama-utang na loob*-highly personalistic society, what social mechanisms are being evolved to reconcile personalism with bureaucracy? And what are the corresponding consequences of such a blended system? When we bureaucratize at the village level and people persist in their informal ways of getting things done, are their practices illegal or is our bureaucracy unnecessary?⁷

⁵ Dr. Miguela M. Solis says that "Being a devout Catholic, the Filipino believes everything that happens to man is the will of God, or "Bathala" among the Tagalogs." from "The Filipino Value System," *The Evening News*, May 12, 1965, p. 7.

⁶ Richard D. Lambert, "Some Consequences of Segmentation in India," *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, Vol. 12, No. 4, July 1964, pp. 416-424.

⁷ Some clues regarding this problem were evident in Jose D. Olivar, *The Sources and Utilization of Funds in Selected Philippine Barrios*. M.S. Thesis, U.P. College of Agriculture, 1965.

10. Which of our traditional institutions and values might be harnessed in the interest of modernization?

As soon as we have meaningful and useful answers to a few of these questions, can we begin to have our influence felt in policy-making, in legislation, and in action programs? When do we "convert applied research into policy research"?⁸ For all our criticisms of the Land Reform Code, the Barrio Charter, the Rice importation, deforestation, Philippine-American relations, and other national issues, what sociological insights can we offer that might alter a little bit the present state of affairs or enable

⁸ C. Arnold Anderson, "Trends in Rural Sociology," from *Sociology Today*, R. K. Merton, L. Brown, and L. S. Cottrell, Jr. (eds.). Basic Books, Inc., N. Y., 1959, pp. 360-375.

us to say "We told you so"? Some of us are called upon every now and then to participate in certain policy-making deliberations but quite often we shy away from such opportunities. I do not know whether this shying away is a reflection of our allergy to politics and action or whether it is symptomatic of our unpreparedness to make a contribution.

I have observed that our leading newspaper columnists assume a more influential role in defining sociological problems than any single sociologist we know of. Can we, at the moment, do a much better job of performing such a function? How much enlightenment can we add to the journalist's perceptiveness and sensitivity to our development problems? I leave this question for you to ponder upon.

The Process of Community Differentiation: An Insight into Development

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One of the basic assumptions of science is that there is order in nature. We recognize diversity but we also search for unity. The literally millions of distinct plants and animals are subsumed by the unifying principles of evolution. Mendeleev's periodic table of the elements and quantum theory clarify what it is that is common to all compounds, whether known or yet to be put together. The genetic laws of Mendel and the Law of Gravity likewise offer orderly expectations from a morass of observations. Just as alchemy has been removed from chemistry, we might ask whether it is now possible to substitute illumination for mys-

tery in understanding the process of community development.

We speak of communities and community development but what do we know about *how* communities develop? Are there any regularities to the pattern of community growth—or stagnation? We recognize the diversity of communities, not only among different cultural and national settings, but within the same region or within the same network of an intervillage system. Are we to account for these differences as due to the random evolution of communities, and, hence, be committed to approach each community as a unique standing of communities and their development? Or can we identify