

## SOCIOLOGY AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES IN THE PHILIPPINES

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*This paper attempts to analyze the basic premises of IPC sociology, offers a critique of that perspective, and concludes with a statement of the types of questions concerning development studies in the Philippines.*

### *Introduction*

Development studies, in the sense of formal degree programs, have only been recently instituted in the Philippines.<sup>1</sup> But development problems, more specifically problems of modernization, have been the subject of systematic research in a few universities from the early 1960s. The disciplinary base of these early studies was sociology, and the particular institutional setting in which they flourished was the Institute of Philippine Culture (IPC) of the Ateneo de Manila University.<sup>2</sup> Today, no program in development studies can ignore this legacy, for IPC-style sociology continues to set the tone for social science departments in most of the universities and colleges in the country. And indeed, research on development problems, especially where they explicitly focus on the so-called "human factor" in development, invariably goes back to the early themes on Philippine values and social structure introduced by Frank Lynch and company. This paper attempts to analyze the basic premises of that perspective, offers a critique and concludes with a statement of the types of questions concerning development which point to the direction of a new type of social science that a younger generation of Filipino intellectuals are raising today.

### *The foundations of Philippine sociology*

While the teaching of sociology as a subject has a fairly long history, perhaps going back to the turn of the century when social ethics and penology were taught as sociology by the Dominicans at the University of Santo Tomas,

modern social science as we know it today flourished only after World War II. Much of the serious research that we can easily recall now in fact was undertaken only in the early sixties, and under the aegis mainly of the University of the Philippines (U.P.) and the Ateneo de Manila University though in later years, the Ateneo took the lead by pioneering in organized social science research.

It is, therefore, no accident that today what is taught as Philippine social science in our schools and universities consists mainly of the concepts, problems and approaches popularized by the Ateneo's Institute of Philippine Culture. Indeed, it is not an exaggeration to suggest that Philippine social science is commonly taken to be synonymous to *hiya*, *pakikisama* or *smooth interpersonal relations*, *amor propio*, *bahala na*, and *utang na loob* (reciprocity).<sup>3</sup> Or, that social science research in the Philippines is typically associated with the authors of the anthology entitled "Four Readings in Philippine Values," namely, Frank Lynch, Mary Hollnsteiner, John Carroll, and Jaime Bulatao.

In the UP at around this time, returning Ph.Ds were kept busy performing administrative tasks as deans, directors or heads of departments — for these were the usual roles into which new Ph.Ds returning from abroad were cast. The emphasis was to open masteral programs — in a word, teaching rather than research. There was almost no time for them to do any serious writing or research after finishing their obligatory dissertations.

To be sure, if we look back to the late fifties and the early sixties, we did not lack serious and often biting social comment. Renato Constantino, S. P. Lopez, Teodoro Agoncillo, and later Jose Ma. Sison were busy interpreting the general drift of society and culture during that period. But their writings were typically not considered social science. Indeed they wrote about society, but the topics they addressed were not on the agenda of conventional western social science, and as importantly, they were not considered empirical and rigorous when viewed from the standpoint of orthodox social science methodology.

Thus, what we regard today as the Philippine social science tradition takes us only as far back as the IPC watershed. What is even more important, perhaps, is that this same watershed has remained the dominant source of what is considered academic social science in the Philippines. It is for this reason that this paper focuses on the type of social science thinking that was produced at the IPC.

Lynch and Hollnsteiner never articulated their theory of society in any single monograph or journal. This, however, was intimately woven into their numerous analyses of the concrete problems facing Philippine society. Perhaps the closest they ever got to explicating the basic elements of the general theory that underpinned their writings was the previously mentioned anthology, "Four Readings on Philippine Values." What I shall attempt to do here is highlight what I consider as the basic features or presuppositions of their general approach, and to show how these have influenced their choice of research problems and shaped their perceptions of the problems of Philippine society.

#### *The basic features of IPC sociology*

##### 1. The primacy of values in society

The IPC school viewed the organization of society as essentially accountable in terms of

its leading values. Values — meaning conceptions of desired or desirable things held by the community are seen as operating in the form of rules or norms, even as they manifest themselves also in the form of attitudes. In turn the norms or rules define the content of the roles that individuals play in society. These roles come in clusters, and when they appear as such, they are called institutions. Institutions are the primary sub-systems of society through which society fulfills the requirements of survival. Values, therefore, are the basic guiding principles of the entire social order. To know the values of a community is to decipher the logic of its social structures. No one explains where the values come from, though we are told they are premised on beliefs — more precisely on the world view of a people. But again, no one explains why some communities come to possess a certain view of the world and not another. The world view of a society is largely treated as a given, in much the same way values are also treated as givens. They are to be studied and known, but not explained.

This, in brief, summarizes Lynch and Hollnsteiner's views of the role of values in society. When we begin to see values in this light, the logical urgent research problem for anyone who starts out to understand a society is to determine its leading values. There are many ways of doing this research: the more common ones utilize Fr. Bulatao's Thematic Apperception Tests, in which respondents are asked to tell stories about pictures of social situations shown to them. The dominant themes that surface are then taken to reflect their value orientations. The other methods utilize questionnaires and interviews. Here the typical method is to ask respondents to indicate their choices in hypothetical situational dilemmas described to them. Typically, the items included seek to distinguish the traditionalistic individual from the modernizing individual, based on values associated with traditionalism and modernity as expressed in the writings of western social scientists. Traditionalism and modernity,

which depend on one's scores on a given scale, are then correlated with social and demographic variables, such as level of education, religion, sex, place of residence, and socioeconomic status.

Having been trained as a social anthropologist in the University of Chicago, Lynch was very partial to ethnographic material and case studies, and in the course of his work he marshalled all the available local studies, sifted them to extract evidence that would lend credence to his schema of Philippine values. He coined the term "SIR" or "smooth interpersonal relations" to indicate what he considered as the Filipino's penchant for social acceptance.

No other Filipino social scientist had previously attempted a listing of Filipino values. The possible charge of arbitrariness and of unrepresentative and inadequate samples could so easily be made that even to this day, no one really claims the status of a theory for the listing of values made by the IPC team. Still, having arrived at a tentative determination of what Filipino values consisted of, the IPC group figures that the next thing to do was to unlock the mystery of Filipino customs, politics, structures, and arrangements using the insights provided by their interpretation of Filipino values.

The sense of discovery and accomplishment that accompanied this enterprise was amazing. The Filipino farmer's refusal to change his farming methods, even if he was convinced that to do so would raise his yield, was now understandable, using the value perspective, as proceeding from the need for *social acceptance*. His world view tells him, according to this perspective, that "good is limited." Whatever he reaps in excess of what he ordinarily gets is a loss to others. This will bring the ire of others upon him, and the farmer cannot and will not risk that. So he refuses to change his methods and foregoes the opportunity to increase his yield.

The same explanations are repeated for other spheres of human activity. The manager is unable to fire an incompetent employee because of values. An employee is forced to hire a relative over and above a very promising applicant, again, because of values.

For a whole decade — the sixties — the emphasis on values became the common denominator of all IPC studies. Translated into their practical implications, these studies provided interesting lessons to modern managers and entrepreneurs on how to handle problems of human relations arising from the conflict between traditional expectations and the functional requirements of modern corporate bureaucracies.

The era of import-substitute industrialization which opened the floodgates of the Philippine economy to subsidiaries of American transnational corporations (TNCs) also encouraged the development of a social science that was geared to the needs of an emerging modern capitalist sector. The Ateneo offered a course entitled "Understanding Philippine and American Values," which was conducted mainly by Lynch and Hollnsteiner. It became very popular with the religious missionaries and Peace Corps volunteers who were also trying to learn Tagalog at the same time, but soon they were joined by an increasing number of expatriate executives from the parent companies of the foreign subsidiaries.

The natural affinity between this kind of social science and the social control concerns of business houses and state bureaucracies found concrete expression in the eventual publication of a book on problems of management in the Philippines, which was written by a Harvard Business School team working closely with the IPC and incorporating much of the work on values of the Institute. This was J. B. M. Kassarian and R. A. Stringer's "The Management of Men," published by the Solidaridad Publishing House in 1971. Even before that, however, the

standard IPC themes popularized by Lynch and his group were already resonating in the halls of the leading graduate schools of business and management.<sup>4</sup>

## 2. The importance of values and modernization

By the mid-sixties, local social scientists had already picked up the language of modernization, urbanization and economic development. Modernization was the special sphere of the social scientist since this term dealt mainly with changes in the institutional framework — in short, changes in value orientations.

To be sure, the IPC took a liberal attitude towards Filipino values. In themselves, within the context of their traditional settings, Filipino values were not considered undesirable; in fact, they were seen as generally supportive and integrative in their effect upon society. However, we were quickly warned, they were fast becoming inappropriate and anachronistic in the emerging milieu of modern Philippine society — by which of course was meant capitalist society. Modernization required the learning of new ways of dealing with people, of new relationships, and equally importantly, it required also the unlearning of customary reflexes especially where they clashed with the ethos of modern organizational systems. The traditional values must be allowed to survive within their strictly circumscribed social contexts, but under no circumstances must they be allowed to interfere with the rationality of modern organizations. Only in this manner can the Filipino people attain development, for development is synonymous with modernization. These, in brief, constituted the major policy implications of IPC social science.

Some of the imported members of the IPC, notably the American psychologist George Guthrie, devoted much attention to the value prerequisites of modernization. In this

congenial community, the writings of David McClelland found a sympathetic audience. Soon everyone was mouthing the need-for-achievement (nAch) slogan — to a point where it seemed as if the problems of underdevelopment were completely explainable in terms of the Filipinos low nAch level. This was supposedly measurable through the standard scales produced in America, and there are supposedly effective ways of raising nAch levels — though training programs and exercises, through children's textbooks, etc. Today, however, only a handful of corporations in Makati have remained hooked on this incredible sorcery.<sup>5</sup>

## 3. Urban problems as a function of urbanization

In viewing cities and the problems of marginalized groups, the prevailing orthodoxy is that urbanization naturally carries with it the attendant problems of overcrowding, blight, criminality, and the deterioration of basic services in the transitional areas of the city. Structurally, the cities are seen as the natural cradle of the so-called modern sector or the capitalist sector. In the underdeveloped countries of the Third World, the modern sector is viewed as an island amid the sea of obstinate traditionalism. The country grows as the modern sector expands its reaches. The faster this sector engulfs the rest of the country, the greater the leap to development.

The movement of people from the countrysides to the cities is treated as a natural phenomenon, for rural migrants have been observed to be inescapably dazzled by the lights and gaiety of city life. From this point of view, what emerges as *the* interesting research topic is the manner in which these migrants adjust to or cope with the recurrent difficulties of survival in an unfamiliar social terrain away from home. This interest has actually spawned a number of studies centering on "coping mechanisms" as the basic element of the "culture of poverty." The model of analysis used here is borrowed

from Oscar Lewis, who put out a succession of books dealing with the intimate and often juicy life histories of Mexican and Peruvian families. The IPC contributed many of the studies in this tradition, but perhaps the most typical of these culture-of-poverty studies in the Philippine setting is F. Landa Jocano's *Slum as a Way of Life*.

Such studies start out with a lively account of the little adaptations and inventive adjustments developed by slum dwellers as a way of coping with the exigencies of daily life in the city. The quality of strangeness of these habits is so effectively conveyed that one sometimes gets the impressions that the people being described are not "lowland Christian Filipinos" but maybe a newly-discovered cultural minority. But what is significant, from a theoretical point of view, is when they start suggesting that the slums breed their own social patterns and values appropriate to the conditions of life within them, and that these values acquire a force of their own, so much that in the course of their transmission from one generation to another, they become valued for their own sake. What is thereby implied is that the culture of poverty can perpetuate the conditions of poverty. Here, again, poverty is treated primarily in internal terms, internal both in the sense of being socio-psychologicistic instead of structural, and internal also in the sense of confining one's attention to the parameters of the national society.

#### *Notes towards a critique*

In the foregoing I have tried to indicate what I consider to be the leading features of the dominant social science tradition in the Philippines. In the discussion I constantly referred to the legacy left by Lynch and Hollnsteiner from their work at IPC. In focusing on them, I did not mean to suggest that there were no other significant social scientists who followed another tradition. Indeed there were, but I simply wanted to make the point that whether we like it or not,

it is the IPC influence that has been most pervasive in the Philippine social science community and in our universities. Pervasiveness and dominance however have nothing to do with validity. In this paper I wanted to argue that the ways of seeing embodied in the approaches popularized by the IPC group prevented us and continue to prevent us from recognizing and reflecting upon some vital issues related to our development as a people. Specifically, I mean:

1. The excessive attention assigned to values has effectively drawn our attention away from the economic and political structure of our society, from the contradictions of class interests, from systematic exploitation and injustice, and the class character of our political and cultural institutions. It has confined us to solutions that seek only to change individuals but not the oppressive structures under which they live.

2. The explanation of social problems in terms of dominant anachronistic values has prevented us from appreciating our colonial past, and specifically the role of colonial powers in defining the basic contours of our social institutions and in laying down the foundations of our present economic underdevelopment. It is often said that the essential defect of much historical writing in the Philippines is that it lacks a social theory. It may also justly be said that the basic defect of orthodox social science in our country is that it lacks a sense of history.

3. To that we can also add that the entrenched social science tradition in the Philippines lacks a global dimension, for it treats the national society as if it had been spared the ravages of colonialism and the vicious plunder of contemporary imperialism. To view development as the expansion of a modern capitalist sector is to assume that our so-called traditional communities have not been touched by international capitalism. To view development as a matter of nAch levels on the other hand is to insult our own people

and to credit Americans and the Japanese with too much intelligence and creativity.

Throughout the 1960s and early 1970s, Philippine social science nevertheless revolved around the themes identified by the IPC researchers. For those who sought answers from the social science community to the burning questions that were already being raised in student demonstrations, the IPC studies simply sounded smugly irrelevant. Ironically, from their titles at least, they all seemed to be addressing the concrete problems of real people. Yet in fact, they never attempted to draw conclusions that could be related to some coherent image of the societal structure. Consequently, this sociological community — together with social science in general — was decisively swept aside by the radical splash of the early 70s. A dangerous but perfectly understandable anti-intellectualism took the place of this anachronistic social science in the campuses of the leading universities. Even the university was pronounced totally irrelevant. Serious reading and theoretical discussions were considered a bourgeois pastime. Everyone wanted to change society, but the simplistic slogans had preempted the space for deep reflection.

Things slowly changed towards the second half of the 70s. There was more time to read and discuss. Earlier, many had recognized the need not only for theory but also for systematic documentary and field research. The university itself was restored to its previous importance as a crucial arena in which to confront the dominant ideology. Thus, at about the same time that the old sociology of modernization had resurfaced as development studies, serious radical scholarship was gaining wide acceptance especially among the younger faculty members. The thinking of this growing community is the subject of the last section of this paper.

#### *An alternative role for development studies*

Because of the deepening crisis of our

society and the consequent misery of our people, social scientists are more than ever called upon to explain the roots of the current national malaise, the structures that reproduce it, and the direction towards real and lasting change. Furthermore we are asked to identify the obstacles that stand in the way of meaningful change. Is it the international forces that control the levers of the global political economy? Is it the collusion between big business, corrupt politicians and power-hungry military officials? Is it the consciousness of the people themselves? In short, how can we make sense of what is happening in our society? And where do we go from here?

In the Philippines, like elsewhere in the Third World, existing development studies have become too much the instruments of international agencies and national governments. The information they generate may carry pragmatic value to those who are concerned with stabilizing the existing power structure, but it is absolutely of no use to the people. An alternative social science for development must correct this. It must stop addressing regimes, corporations, international organizations like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, journal editors, fellow academics, and desk-bound participants of international conferences. It must address the people themselves and reach them in their communities, because they alone are in a position to make those lasting changes that we can only talk about.

A number of intellectuals in the Philippines although working in many separate groups, believe that it is their proper task to provide these concepts and the systematic information — about the larger international context, about our history, about the structures of our society, and the forms of life that have grown within these structures, as well as the possibilities and conditions of real societal transformation — to our people.

Certainly there are enormous difficulties

in carrying out intellectual work of this nature. Not only does this form of activity not advance one's academic career, or contribute to one's income as in the case of commissioned studies, it is also fraught with danger. For this kind of work directly confronts power wielders who are able to exercise power through coercion, deception and outright suppression. Moreover, even the intrinsic rewards do not amount to much: there is little revolutionary romance in systematic data-collection.

Yet reason tells us that this type of work must be done, that concerned intellectuals must serve as a kind of technocracy for a genuine people's movement. The largest available space within which this type of studies can be done is still to be found within universities whose academic freedom and institutional autonomy provide a protective mantle — even if only in a limited way — for critical research.

The agenda for this kind of undertaking is overwhelming. Recently a number of us sat down to consider the most urgent questions requiring systematic attention. We drew a list that is too long to reproduce here. I shall attempt to summarize the orientation that informed our choices here. What we had in mind was a set of studies that could:

1. clarify what kind of society we have become as a function of our colonial experience;
2. define the salient features of the global and regional environment within which our society is moving, and bring out the basic constraints of these supra-national systems;
3. reveal the precise mechanisms by which the existing system is able to reproduce and perpetuate itself, and bring out the ways and techniques of this power, as well as identify its most vulnerable points;
4. identify and understand how people are able to effectively organize themselves in order to gain some control over their lives,

or simply to effectively insulate themselves from the instabilities of daily life;

5. constantly assess the possibilities of real structural change in our society, specifically by defining the basic characteristics of the environment within which a people's movement for change must operate; and formulate the conditions under which spontaneous people's organizations can become part of a larger process of societal renewal; and
6. conceptualize a vision of alternative structures in conformity with our people's desire for a free, just, dignified and prosperous life for all.

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#### *Footnotes*

<sup>1</sup>The U.P. College in Manila opened its A.B. Development Studies in 1981, while the U.P. College in Baguio will offer an M.A. in Social Development Studies starting 1982. While other universities and colleges are beginning to institute courses on development, I am not aware of the existence of a degree program in development in any other higher institution in the Philippines.

<sup>2</sup>The Ateneo is a Jesuit-run school in Quezon City, which enjoys, among all private schools, the reputation of having very high academic standards. The founder and first director of the Institute of Philippine Culture was the late American Jesuit anthropologist, who later became a Filipino citizen, Frank Lynch. Together with Mary Hollnsteiner, and a host of Peace Corps Volunteers and transient social scientists from America who joined the Ateneo-Penn State Basic Research Program, Lynch inaugurated the first real program of organized social science research in the Philippines. The seminar studies that emerged from this program were published in the IPC Papers, series of Modernization.

<sup>3</sup>These concepts, constituting the hallmark of IPC sociology, refer to basic values and norms in Philippine society as these have been identified by the Ateneo sociologists.

<sup>4</sup> It became typical to include a course on Filipino Cultural Values in the Masters in Business Administration programs of the leading graduate schools. These were taught by sociologists and anthropologists.

<sup>5</sup> A number of management consultancy houses still offer training programs inspired by the nAch approach. This approach is also very popular with trainers and discussion leaders at the U.P.'s Institute for Small-Scale Industries.