

## THE BEHAVIORAL SCIENTIST IN A DEVELOPING NATION\*

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This two-day gathering is especially significant because it will accomplish a rare feat; it will bring together under one roof for many hours of discussion a large number of specialists in the behavioral sciences—anthropology, psychology, and sociology. Such a gathering is seldom seen in the Philippines, for the demands on the behavioral scientist's time and skills are many and varied. And in satisfying these demands, he performs functions that are sometimes in conflict with the expectations of the public in general, his colleagues in particular, and even himself. It is these oftentimes conflicting demands and the dilemma that they present to the behavioral scientist that I should like to speak of in these brief remarks.

What is the behavioral scientist in the Philippines doing today? I am not pretentious enough to define for *every* behavioral scientist what I think *he* does. Nor am I so well organized that I can tell you everything that *I* do. But I shall be bold enough to sketch in impressionistic outlines what I think *most* behavioral scientists are doing.

### THE DEMANDS OF THE SOCIETY

For the greater number of us, teaching and research are constant tasks, the main happening in our professional lives. But they are welcome tasks. Many of us derive our livelihood from

them but, more important, we derive professional satisfaction from them. Indeed, the other things that we do we regard as extensions of these twin tasks of teaching and research.

What are these other tasks, these functions beyond teaching and research, that we have to perform?

Within the university environment in which most of us find ourselves, we see many of our highly qualified behavioral scientists occupying responsible positions in administrative structures. If they are not involved directly in administrative work, they are called upon to lend their competence, through various university committees, to the formulation of critical policies on curriculum, academic standards, administration, and the like.

Our harassed colleagues often wish that the demand on their time and expertise would stop with teaching, research, and administrative work. Unfortunately, it does not. For behavioral scientists are also called upon to share their knowledge with, and interpret the pertinent findings of their disciplines for, various groups with specialized objectives. Thus, it is no longer surprising to hear of a colleague describing for some parent-teachers association the traditional Filipino child-rearing practices and their implications for the creativity of the child; or making suggestions at a businessmen's meeting as to how the conflict between traditional expectations of the individual and the requirements of modern complex organizations may be reconciled for greater efficiency.

Closely related to this task of interpreting

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the findings of the behavioral sciences to further the practical objectives of various groups is another function that the behavioral scientist is called upon to perform: that of direct participation in a program designed to achieve some practical objective. Here he is called upon, not only to play his role of analyst of social and behavioral facts, but also to help plan and execute those plans for the realization of a program's objectives. He is called upon to go beyond suggesting what should be done to helping do what he thinks should be done. In other words, instead of studying the way of life of a community, he is asked to help plan and implement a program of planned change in the community: to promote the growth of cooperatives, to introduce agricultural innovations, or to improve the community in some other way. Instead of analyzing how a particular organization works, he is asked to become a part of that organization and to use his skills to help it achieve its objectives.

Finally, among the functions he is asked to perform is that of a social critic and an advocate of some position on many of the social issues confronting our nation today. He is asked to take a public value stand and devote his time and energy for peace and against war; for controls on population growth and against an unbridled birth rate; for clean and honest and efficient government and against graft and corruption and ineptitude among our political leaders.

These functions—teaching, research, administrative work, interpreting and disseminating behavioral science findings, acting as an applied worker, social critic, and advocate—these functions and others may be seen as a catalogue of the demands that Philippine society makes on the behavioral scientist. As a member of this society, he is challenged to make a response commensurate to the needs of the society; in a developing nation like the Philippines, there is no doubt about the gravity of those needs.

#### THE DEMANDS OF THE PROFESSION

But in responding to these demands the

behavioral scientist inevitably gets caught on the proverbial horns of a dilemma. For cutting across these societal demands are two others—more fundamental and very often conflicting—that his profession makes on him as a professional. These demands have to do with the conflict between the theoretical and the practical. They pose two questions: Should the behavioral scientist devote his energies, talent, and training to a possible contribution to the stock of knowledge in his field of specialization? Or should he direct them towards those things that are “relevant to the needs of the society at this time”?

Looking at the roles that behavioral scientists in the Philippines are called upon to perform, we see that many of them call for practical use of one's knowledge and training. Indeed, within the university itself, a major indicator of one's effectiveness is the number of hours he spends in the actual training of students, or the number of hours he devotes to administrative or committee work. Public recognition in the form of press notices or awards is most often given to the man who contributes to the ventilation and solution of a currently felt problem.

Indeed, the pressure for activities that produce immediate practical results is very high. This is the way it should be; behavioral scientists can hardly ignore the specific and immediate problems confronting this society. But one also wishes that the pressure on activities aimed at producing more basic and systematic knowledge about the Filipino and his society were similarly approximately as high, if not equally so. For these activities are an essential component for the healthy growth of the behavioral sciences in this country.

By these latter activities I mean research, of course. Here, again, the two-edged knife of theoretical vs. applied cuts through. It is, in fact, in this activity area that the conflict is more often realized and more often talked about. Bunnell, for instance, sees the need (1966:196–97) for bridging the divergence between sociological research and social action and suggests, among other things, that

. . . . an action agency, might conceivably introduce a continuing research element into its action programs, and in the process of meeting its responsibilities, be more effective as a result of what is learned through concurrent research . . . . When the research in question is of the rarer type undertaken to gain knowledge for knowledge's sake, the researcher reigns supreme, once the policy question as to whether he should be permitted to do it has been answered.

Santos-Cuyugan (1962), on the other hand, sees such agencies as having detrimental effects by their very insistence on applied research which diverts the qualified researcher from "scientific, dispassionate, and untrammled" inquiries.

Should there be a conflict between theoretical and applied in research objectives? Merton says (1959:xxii) there should not be, but there actually is.

A practical rationale and a theoretical rationale for a sociological question may be, and indeed often are, quite consistent. But there is, however, . . . repeated testimony to the ease with which this double relevance for practice and theory can get out of balance. Because our society provides a place for both kinds of rationale and because interest in one or the other differs from person to person and from group to group, it is not surprising that each kind of imbalance has been heavily criticized as vitiating one or another social value. In some cases, it is said that primary or exclusive concern with the practical purposes of a sociological inquiry has held up the advancement of sociology . . . . But telling criticism has also been leveled at imbalance of the second kind, in which a problem originally having import for social values and social practice becomes wholly lost to view as it is transformed in the course of sociological investigation.

#### RESOLUTION

How are these conflicting demands from the society and the profession to be reconciled and made mutually compatible? In suggesting one resolution, I should like to start by distinguishing two levels of demands: one, those made on the individual behavioral scientist; the other, those made on behavioral scientists as a group.

When we look at all of the tasks that we are asked to perform it is obvious that no individual behavioral scientist can perform all of them and perform them uniformly well. For most of us, some emphasis in the direction of our work

emerges after a while; moreover, this emphasis changes from time to time. At any one time, the individual may decide to put most of his energies into basic research, or applied research, or teaching, administration, the galvanizing of public action for or against some issues, or into a combination of these and other activities. The fact is that each of us is continually making his own choices, devising his own system of priorities based on his ability, resources in time and money, and personal inclinations. The individual behavioral scientist clearly has a right to do this, to determine where and how he will make his contribution. This right should be understood and respected by his colleagues and by society at large.

On the other hand, behavioral scientists, *as a group*, have an obligation to respond to the needs of this society. It is in making that group response that a professional association such as ours can perform a vital function. We can go beyond those factors that usually draw members of an association together—propinquity, community of interests, possession of the same skill, establishment of status by exclusiveness—to insuring that this society derives maximum benefit from our knowledge and skills as a group. At the minimal level, the association can perform the role of an intermediary between the individual behavioral scientist and the institution that is in need of that particular individual's skills and interests. At the broader level, the association can work towards providing its members a framework for determining priorities: which tasks should be undertaken by behavioral scientists, and in what order. It can also help provide the facilities and the incentives, as they are available, for doing these tasks expeditiously. I am happy to report that, in recent years, not only the Philippine Sociological Society but also related member-organizations of the Philippine Social Science Council have been undertaking work towards these ends. We will continue to take part in this cooperative endeavor. For one of our hopes is that, out of this working together, our associations can become more effective in helping the individual

behavioral and social scientist stay right where the action is, whether his interests be theoretical or applied.

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