# THE FILIPINO FAMILY, COMMUNITY AND NATION: DESCRIPTION OR POLICY ANALYSIS?

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*Groups of data are not relevant and not supportive to the policy analysis of a PSSC-sponsored survey of 15 urbanizing areas in the Philippines. A comparative review of the sampling design and methods the survey used and a later MLGCD investigation explained the differences in the research outputs. Before data can be sensitively interpreted: (a) proper weighting must be assigned to groups from various socio-economic statuses, (b) locational comparisons of respondents should be made using local government units and a rural-urban-transitional trichotomy as points of comparison, (c) open-ended questions than forced-choice ones may be given preference, (d) macro-economic environment must be given consideration, and (e) the temptation to leap from description to inference must be avoided.*

In 1973-1974 the Philippine Social Science Council (PSSC) sponsored a rather ambitious survey of fifteen urbanizing areas in the Philippines.[1] This survey attempted to obtain responses to a large array of questions covering family, social and interpersonal behavior as well as attitudes toward the community and nation. Results of this survey were reported in 1978 in an IPC Paper written jointly by Emma Porio, Frank Lynch, and Mary Hollnsteiner (1978).[2]

In general, the report provides descriptively useful information about the sample of respondents, but inference about specific policies and programs of government are often ambiguous and unsupported by the data from the survey. This paper will suggest where methods may have caused problems of interpretation and, where relevant, comparisons will be made with a later survey done by the author and the Bureau of Local Government(BLG), Ministry of Local Government and Community Development (MLGCD).

In summary, this paper suggests that proper weighting must be assigned to groups from various socio-economic statuses (SES) before data can be sensitively interpreted, that locational comparisons of respondents should be done using local government units and a rural-urban-transitional trichotomy as points of comparison, that open-ended questions may be more useful for policy appraisal than forced-choice ones, that the macro-economic environment must be given great consideration in interpreting survey responses, and that the temptation of survey interpreters to leap from description to inference should be avoided.

### *SES and Data Interpretation*

Table 4 in PLH indicates that higher SES groups may have been over-represented in their sample by more than 50 percent. This would be of less concern if these groups were equally over-represented in the fifteen cities and in the urban and rural samples.[4] However, this appears not to have been the case.

The coefficient of variation of family income (the measure of SES reported) in the "urban" Cebuano sample is 1.63 times that of the total sample. Such a high coefficient of variation (1.06) is extremely implausible. That for Manila is only .52, while that of the "rural" sample from Tuguegarao, the next most dispersed, is .90.[5]

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This clearly implies that more adequate sampling procedures are needed, if surveys are to tap lower SES groups. The removal of extreme residence enclaves, especially that of the lowest SES groups in sampling, cannot be justified as suggested in PLH (1978:8; Appendix C). This procedure appears to have contributed little to achieving comparability across samples. In fact, a rather arbitrary definition of what constitutes extreme enclaves can increase lack of comparability.

Problems of comparability were lessened in the earlier mentioned MLGCD survey. Using years of education as a measure of SES, this survey followed a sampling procedure used in the nationwide National Tax Research Center (NTRC) survey (1976)[6] which did not exclude extreme residence enclaves. This again led to the over-representation of higher SES groups by about 50 percent, but this was uniform among the eight sample local government units. This, at least, permitted comparisons among samples, but not generalizations to populations.

Ultimately, however, surveys in the Philippines should achieve higher validity in generalizing from samples to a population, and for this neither the PSSC nor the MLGCD-NTRC approach is adequate. Perhaps a combination of purposive and quota sampling might be explored in this regard.[7]

The above discussion is not merely an academic one. PLH, for example, suggests that "urban-respondent groups are found to be very happy twice as often as the rural are" (1978: 32-40). The context appears to imply that this may be due to the well publicized benefits of urban living, including access to government services, but it is not clear whether this difference in "happiness" is due to differences in income, residence, or both. It is impossible to do statistical comparisons between samples for the reasons earlier mentioned.

## *Location*

### *The Rural-Urban Dichotomy*

The original intent of the PSSC study appeared to be to draw a rather broad nationwide sample. It later turned out that time lapses in completing the project, as well as the earlier mentioned sampling problems, made locational comparisons extremely difficult.[8] Thus, PLH concentrated on describing and interpreting some aggregate results, breaking them down occasionally into "rural" and "urban" comparisons.

"Urban" respondents were defined by the PSSC sampling procedure to be those living within one of the fifteen urban places near the research center, while "rural" respondents were those "distant from the research center by a public transportation ride of 30-40 minutes . . . even if they were within the limits of the same city or municipality" (Porio et al., 1978:66). PLH correctly noted that "the rural component is hardly a spatially remote one" (1978:4). In many cases, the authors exercised considerable care by not generalizing from the survey results to the *rural* Philippines; but discussions of government programs and policies often overlooked the fact that rural and urban areas were *not spatially remote.* For example, one would *expect,* in contrast to PLH, a low proportion of respondents to be acquainted with someone who had benefited from land reform, since a considerable portion of the sample was drawn from urban or urbanizing areas. Another example is the "suprising" finding, at least to PLH, of low differences in squatting (16 percent versus 10 percent) between "urban" and "rural" sites (1978:43).

Also, if one examines the mean rankings which respondents were asked to assign to 18 government programs, he is dumbstruck by the close correlation between the ranking of "urban" and "rural" respondents. Indeed, the Spearman's (not reported in PLH) is almost a perfect 1.00 (1978:64 Table a7). Intuitively and statistically, such a strong relationship should not be expected between truly urban and rural dwellers.

The question then is what went wrong

with the analysis. The first difficulty is the leap from a definitional construct "rural" to its referent; nothing more need be said about this since PLH recognized this, but for some reason did not consistently follow this distinction when discussing government policies and programs. Another difficulty is the validity of the locational distinction made by the PSSC for future researches on policy.

The MLGCD study provides some indirect evidence on validity, since the distinction made between the cities (as a group) and the municipalities (as a group) closely approximates the PSSC distinction between urban and rural samples.[9] A finding of this study was that the degree to which a respondent favorably evaluated national government performance depended positively upon his SES in the cities, but no relationship existed between SES and performance evaluation in municipalities.[10] This suggests that the bases for evaluating policy in the areas outside the most urban ones may be different from those inside.

Most importantly, the MLGCD study found that preferences for different kinds of services depend crucially on the residence of the respondent by local government unit. This directly challenges the validity of the PLH finding, and suggests that the PSSC distinction between urban and rural, solely on travel time, regardless of residence within a local government, may statistically wash out an important distinction among respondents.

*Residence by Local Government Unit*

The crucial question for future surveys and researches is how important an explanatory variable residence in a specific local government unit may be in explaining preference, for, and evaluations of government programs and policies. Although the PLH report deals with "community," this question is not well handled in the study for the reasons suggested earlier. In fact, the concept of community is not even defined.[11]

The MLGCD study not only found a difference in preferences for services but the kinds of preferences were in themselves of some interest. Respondents in the cities emphasized social services in their answers to various questions, but municipal respondents had a very heterogenous preference pattern across but not within local units. This suggests that respondents in more urbanized areas preferred services which directly addressed problems of interdependence, while those in lesser urbanized but still urbanizing areas appeared to express relatively high agreement in their preferences for policies which tended to address a particular perceived community need.

Possibly, in more rural areas there may not be this heterogeneity among communities, but rather a tendency to favor expenditures on economic development.[12] A hypothesis for further study can be suggested: expenditures on social services are "preferred" in urban areas, expenditure preferences are heterogenous among transitional areas, and expenditures on economic development or infrastructure are "preferred" in rural areas. In short, future studies might use a rural-urban-transitional trichotomy.

Beyond empiricism, this discussion is of some theoretical concern. The breakdown of urban respondents' evaluations of national government performance by SES suggests that a class pattern of behavior may be forming, while the transitional areas appear not to have been subjected to this phenomenon. In both urban and transitional areas, there is a "community" of interests in service preferences but the bases of these interests may be different. The more important research question may not be to what extent there is a sense of community but rather, what the basis of that consensus is. A "sense" of community may be either an impediment to change or its product, and a homogeneous preference pattern within a local government unit does not imply that the standards used for judging the *adequacy* of policies are homogeneous.

*Forced-Choice Versus Open-Ended Questions*

The respondents of the PSSC survey were asked to order 18 cards with the names of government programs on them. Two problems arise with this method. First, the large number of rankings required might have been confusing, especially since the respondent might not have found many of the programs particularly relevant to his own needs or experiences. This is supported indirectly by the fact that standard deviations were high, on the order of 4.0 and 5.0, which implies that 67 percent of the respondents might have ranked roads and bridges, for example, as high as first place or lower than seventeenth *within* the urban and rural sample groups. [13]

A second problem is that the respondent could not reject programs; he had to rank them all. This means that programs which would be rejected by a large body of respondents and supported by a few would receive a correspondingly higher ranking than would be observed in an actual choice situation. This may have happened with "family planning" which ranked sixth of eighteen (a standard deviation of 5.0) even ahead of such politically popular programs as roads and bridges and rural electrification.

Both objections, in short, revolve around the question of *intensity*. Support for a political program or policy depends upon both desire and the intensity of that desire. One can argue that only open-ended questions would permit respondents to properly express both desire and intensity (or salience). In other words, if a respondent does not mention a program or policy one might assume that its level of intensity or salience is low, although a desire might be expressed in a category ranking.

The MLGCD study asked respondents the open-ended question: "What are the three most important projects/activities on which you would like to see taxes of the national government spent?" Only .2 percent of the responses indicated any interest in family planning; moreover, this compares with 41 percent for roads, bridges, and communication facilities and 26 percent for social and labor welfare programs.[14]

The relatively high ranking accorded family planning in the PSSC results seems improbable in view of this finding, earlier findings,[15] and the belief of many political observers on the high salience of visible infrastructure improvements.[16] It is likely that a forced-choice situation may reflect exposure to information campaigns rather than a salient desire for any particular government activity.

*Lack of Attention to the Macro-Setting*

Surveys are naturally conducted during specific time periods which implies that the answers of respondents may be substantially influenced by any macro-economic or social phenomena peculiar to that setting. Most particularly, the fact that prices increased by more than 10 percent in 1973 and 34 percent in 1974 after a long history of price stability should have influenced respondents.[17] The dismissal of respondents' references to price increases as an inflation "bugaboo" by PLH is, to say the least, mystifying.

On the basis of answers to Cantril-like ladder rankings of where the Philippines is today, would be ten years from now, and was ten years ago, and fifteen questions in which comparisons were made of situations in the respondents' communities five years ago, now, and five years in the future (Porio et al., 1978:32-45), PLH note that "respondents who perceive any change at all in their personal conditions during the first year of martial law (1972-1973) are more likely than not to view the situation as having deteriorated for them" (1978:52). They suggest that the "political alienation" found in their study requires some immediate action on the part of the government (1978:53). Apart from the problem of unsupported inference implied in this statement, which will be discussed in the next section of this paper, this statement also overlooks the possibility that PLH may be observ-

ing an economic rather than a strictly political phenomenon; political alienation is not measured by any questions or scale developed by the authors.[18]

Moreover, the MLGCD survey taken two years later under more moderate inflationary pressures indicates that 89 percent of the respondents who cited national government performance as "worse" than the previous year gave reasons directly related to inflation.[19]

Although the MLGCD study findings do not necessarily contradict the PLH assertion that the "months (November 1973 through April 1974) were perceived as a low period in recent Philippine history," (1978:55)[20] the call for "fast results at the grassroots level" (1978: 56) seems unnecessarily alarmist. The survey results do not clearly imply that haste is any more desirable than thoroughness, and it is impossible to know to what extent answers were influenced by a generalized feeling of "alienation" or current macro-economic phenomena. In fact, on the basis of the evidence available one could just as easily prescribe a policy of fighting inflation at all costs rather than posing an immediate action on a broad front.

*Description Versus Inference*

A long tradition in statistics and data analysis implies that the movement from description to inference is a smooth and continuous one. Most social statistics courses are built around several lectures on descriptive statistics (mean, median, mode, range, frequency counts, and histograms) followed by comparisons of means and dispersion. Perhaps, this is the breeding ground of survey designers who try to build description and inference into the same questions. After all, one correlates responses, and he has the direction of the relationship.

Unfortunately, matters are not this simple, since policy analysis requires that unambiguous causal relationships be explicitly established between the policy and its outcome under study.[21] One can argue on either narrow emprirical grounds or broader phenomenological ones about the futility of establishing unambiguous causal relationships in social science.[22] Nevertheless, the policy analyst has a responsibility to report his results, and he meets this responsibility as *a social scientist* when his criteria of analysis and hypotheses connecting causal relationships are explicitly stated and logically unambiguous. These are not very strong requirements, and ideally most of the debate concerning policy studies should not deal with these methodological questions but rather with alternative hypotheses.

In policy studies as in much else, however, the real departs substantially from the ideal. Gigantic leaps of the imagination are not uncommon, and this tendency appears aided and abetted by the descriptive survey which seeks to be more than that.

Those designing surveys and analyzing results must constantly remind themselves that questions which provide interesting descriptions of a sample may not in themselves permit valid inferences. If the survey designer is interested in both describing and analyzing particular policy outcomes, the questions which tap policy must, like Chinese boxes, contain smaller boxes supporting subhypotheses until the analyst is satisfied that a causal relationship is established. This requires a rather long and detailed set of questions which takes the respondent virtually step by step through the evaluation process. Does he know about the policy? What does he know? How? What does he feel the effect of the policy is on him? On his neighbors? Why does he believe this? Is the perceived effect of the policy beneficial? To what degree? and so forth. Only the hypothesized chain of relationships to be studied and the art of questionnaire design can avoid infinite regress, a long search through a series of smaller but empty boxes.

Even assuming a well designed and spare questionnaire, the survey designer will have to

make trade-offs between descriptive and inference-oriented questions lest the respondent be deluged by forms and hypotheses. This raises some doubts as to whether a survey designed to obtain an adequate description of a population from a sample and one designed to deal with policy analysis should be combined. The argument is not that description and inference cannot be combined; but rather, that the primary emphasis or objective of the survey should be especially clear to the survey designer and analyst, or his report will most certainly bewilder its reader.

On this point, the PSSC survey is confused. It appears that questions were solicited from those representing a large number of disciplines, but no clear theoretical focus unified the divergent sections of the questionnaire. This would matter little, and might even have been beneficial, if the objective of the survey were merely to describe respondents. However, inferences to what respondents think about particular government policies and programs are clearly suspect.

An example is the discussion of "political alienation" mentioned earlier. On the basis of answers to a number of questions, only a few of which were specific to particular policies, PLH conclude that the respondents are politically alienated.

This conclusion follows only if the respondents are assumed to view government action as relevant to their own situation or identified problems. Respondents could well view their situation as either negative or beyond the control of government or both.

The PLH report is an example of ambiguity. Both urban and rural respondents ranked price control as the most important program of the national government which would seem to imply the need for vigorous government action; yet 67 percent of the respondents felt that inflation would be worse ten years from now than at present. This could mean either that the respondents thought that the government was incapable of taking vigorous action or that price increases would continue in spite of government action (for example, that price increases were due to international influences beyond the control of domestic policy).

Another example is the fact that 50 percent of the respondents felt that fewer jobs were now available than ten years ago but only 29 percent felt that the job situation would be worse ten years from now. This could mean either that the respondents felt that vigorous government action would produce more jobs or that more jobs would become available through ordinary economic processes without the intervention of government.

It is impossible to determine why a respondent gave a particular answer. This would have required additional questions along the lines suggested earlier.

### *Conclusion*

In summary, the positive contribution which *The Filipino Family, Community and Nation* makes as a description of a limited sample at a given time is reduced by invalid inferences. Unfortunately, many of these concern government policies which might encourage readers to assume that something is wrong with the policy not the analyses of the authors of the report.

The position of this paper is that PLH's analyses may be either correct or incorrect, but that it is not possible to determine this on the basis of data collected in the PSSC survey. Policy analysis demands a different kind of survey as well as analytical procedure.

## *Notes*

[1]Clearly no attempt was made to draw a national sample, but most of the discussion of the survey results assumes that they are in some limited sense representative of national attitudes and opinions. Also, the reader should note that one of the objectives of the survey was to train personnel of institutes outside Manila in social science research. Unfortunately, no evaluation of this objective appears in the report.

[2]Afterwards, the joint authors will be referred to as PLH.

[3]*Citizens' Attitudes Toward Local Expenditures and Taxes in Metropolitan Cebu*, Bureau of Local Government, MLGCD, 1978, is a mimeographed preliminary version of this report. Direct comparisons between this study and PLH are not possible, since it deals with only one of the fifteen areas covered in their report.

A reader of an earlier version of this paper suggested that the Cebu study and the IPC/PSSC one "seem much too different to warrant serious comparison." The comparisons made below are essentially ones illustrative of logic and method and not primarily content. Survey research is so time consuming and expensive that comparisons of results from different surveys should be made whenever possible to avoid replications of errors.

[4]Overrepresentation is, of course, of major concern if one is trying to obtain a description of a population from a sample.

[5]PLH appear to argue that these coefficients of variation reflect variation in income distribution. While it is plausible that variations of income distribution are higher in Cebu than Manila, such large variations are highly suspect.

Mostly, when respondents were directly asked to state their incomes to the interviewer, non-systematic biases were recorded. Attempts by others, including the National Census and Statistics Office (NCSO) and the BLG-MLGCD study, to obtain income data directly has not been encouraging. For this reason, the Cebu tax consciousness survey used education as a proxy for SES.

[6]This study was done by the NTRC, but funded by the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) and the BLG, MLGCD.

[7]Special care has to be exercised in purposive sampling, but this may be the only way to *economically* obtain a sufficient number of low SES respondents in Filipino samples. The cost factor is very important, since this paper suggests below that adequate samples should be drawn by local government unit. A good brief discussion of nonprobability sampling appears in Earl R. Babbie, *Survey Research Methods* (Belmont, California: Wadsworth, 1973), pp. 106ff.

[8]A major problem is that the survey period was stretched out over five months. In fairness to the authors it should be noted that the Institute of Philippine Culture (IPC) was not directly involved in the earliest phases of the PSSC research. Thus, the distinction in this paper between references to the PSSC and PLH should be noted by the reader.

[9]In the Cebu study 1165 households were interviewed during a two week period in June 1976. Interviews were done in three cities (Cebu, Mandaue, Lapu-Lapu) and five municipalities (Consolacion, Liloan, Cordova, Talisay, and Minglanilla).

[10]Chi-square tests were used giving levels of significance of less than .001 in Cebu and Mandaue and .01 in Lapu-Lapu. Gamma coefficients were .43, .61, and .56, respectively.

[11]See the discusssion on pp. 1-2 in PLH where it is assumed that there is a lack of connection between some kind of undefined formal and informal community. This should be subject to test and not assumption; the BLG-MLGCD study seems to indicate some congruence between the two.

[12]Respondents in the less developed communities in the Cebu survey expressed a strong preference for infrastructure projects. These projects usually appear under the budget classification "economic development."

[13]This, of course, is an approximation, since there is no reason to expect a normal distribution of preferences. Also, the calculation of standard deviations for rank-ordered data is not a procedure uniformly accepted in statistics.

[14]This does not appear in the BLG report; it is a retabulation of the data. One could argue here that the cut-off point of three is unrealistic, but 16 percent of the respondents could not give any answer to this question. The average number of responses for those who did respond was 1.7. These results merely suggest that government officials have not been particularly successful in linking government efforts to individual circumstances.

[15]For example, Philip M. Hauser, "Implications for Policy and Research," in Wilhelm Flieger and

Peter C. Smith (eds.), *A Demographic Path to Modernity* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines, 1975).

[16]A statement of this position in the Philippines is O.D. Corpuz, "The Presidency and the Bureaucracy," *Solidarity*, Vol. 3, No. 7 (July 1968).

[17]A good brief discussion is Romeo Bautista, "Inflation in the Philippines" in Jose Encarnacion et. al., *Philippine Economic Problems in Perspective* (Diliman: Institute of Economic Development and Research, University of the Philippines, 1976).

[18]Scales are available such as those used in Elsa P. Jurado, "Indicators of Political Opportunity and Political Welfare" in Mahar Mangahas (ed.) *Measuring Philippine Development: Report of the Social Indicators Project* (Manila: Development Academy of the Philippines, 1976) and Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963).

[19]Retabulation of BLG-MLGCD data.

[20]Note the reference here is to 1973-1974 when the earlier PLH citation refers to 1972-1973. The authors have shifted time frames.

[21]A recent work, for example, has noted: "Policies imply theories. Whether stated explicitly or not, policies point to a chain of causation between initial conditions and future consequences. If X, then Y." Jeffrey L. Pressman and Aaron Wildavsky, *Implementation* (Berkeley: University of California, 1973), p. xv.

[22]The phenomenological position is delightfully and rationally argued in Henry Kariel, *Open Systems: Arenas for Political Action* (Itasca, Illinois: F.E. Peacock, 1969). A more traditional social science critique is Richard S. Rudner, *Philosophy of Social Science* (Englewood, Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1966).

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