

## **Political Socialization in the Philippines Today: An Empirical Study: Discussion**

DR. JOSE V. ABUEVA: My comments may be classified into those that are methodological in nature; those that are substantive, raising questions about the findings and inferences from the findings; and those which are theoretical in nature which would question some of the explicit or implied theories.

First of all, I would like to pose a methodological question. This is very basic to the validity of the whole study and its findings. As we know in survey research, the principal method used, there are certain conditions that have to be satisfied for the results of the study to be valid and reliable. One certainly would be the absolute freedom of the respondents. Can they truthfully respond to the questions? There are several aspects to this: one is the identity of the research and the researcher. How was the research presented to the would-be respondents? This is one question that I would immediately like to be answered before I proceed to the next question having to do with high school students in Metro Manila.

I can sympathize very well with Dr. Sicat's constraints (mainly financial) in the survey, and of course the problem of time. The survey of high school students is a good start, but it makes it imperative that the findings and inferences be limited to this sample that was used and that no projections are made beyond that sample to the total youth of the land.

SICAT: I was quite aware that under the conditions then prevailing, there would be some constraints. And so the way by which we tried to go around this, if we could, was to present this as an academic study, which it really is. And so I think that the respondents believed that they were free to repose their trust in the one administering the research as somebody coming from the U.P. and that it was with the blessings of the foremost state institution; and then again, too, the anonymity of the res-

pondents was assured. We told them that if they did not want to be identified, then they were free not to put their names. As for your question on the sample, we naturally had a pretest to know the appropriateness of the items for respondents not only here but also for students coming from outside Manila — from as far north as Baguio to as far south as Bukidnon. Then it turned out also that, even in the pretest stage, many respondents came from the provinces. We pretested this among a sample of freshmen who were obviously new in the vicinity.

ABUEVA: Another point methodological in nature is the use of the political cynicism scale. First of all, I noted in the construction of the eight items that all statements were stated positively. In other words, in my understanding of this kind of scale, at least half of the items should be tested negatively, because it is easier especially in our culture to agree rather than disagree. If half of the items were negative, a more reliable response could be elicited with a NO rather than a YES answer. But if the statements were posed negatively, the tendency would be to think and the responses would perhaps be more truthful. This is a very debatable issue, but anyway, the finding is that, generally, the sample was cynical. At least half were medium cynical, and by medium, that is out of a possible total of 40 points. Medium is 26 to 31 points and the balance of the other half is divided almost evenly between the highly cynical and low cynical scorers. So if you were to add up the medium cynical with the highly cynical, you have about three-fourths who are cynical. When you have a cynical sample, it raises the issue of the validity of responses. One inference stated here is that a similarly cynical group in a study earlier conducted by Dr. Sicat was highly negative towards the political system before martial law (implying that if political cynicism is to be consistent, then that cynicism has to linger). It seems to me that on theoretical grounds, basic attitudes do not change very easily overnight. Therefore, the persistence of deeply held attitudes would tend to make it go on to this day — beyond September 21, 1972. But anyway, if this group is at least medium to highly cynical, then favorable attitudes towards the regime will have to be interpreted in that light. Is this a truthful approval or is it a cynical approval? Given the conditions of the research which, to the credit of Dr. Sicat, was done most scientifically, she in fact allows this possibility in the distortion of the results. The statement of Dr. Sicat, and I quote, "Although our respondents are generally cynical, their answers indicate support for the govern-

ment, New Society and martial law," could be put in the emphatic "Because they are cynical . . ." It is a matter of interpretation which could go either way.

Now let me go to some of the specific questions in the survey. One is "Do you believe that politics is a desirable career for an able young man or would he tend to be better off in some other career?" This is very hypothetical in these times. When you ask about politics in these times when there are no elections, no political parties, it's very hard to imagine being interested in a political career.

Another very important question is, "Do you think there is an increase or decrease of public faith in the government under the New Society?" It is a basic principle of questionnaire constructure to pose questions to the respondent which he is competent to answer. Would a high school student be competent to answer whether throughout society there is an increase of public faith in the government? If the question were: "Do you, your parents, or your family think that they have greater faith in the New Society?", then the high school student would be competent to answer that. Presuming that he is educated, he certainly has access to the sentiments of his parents, and he can answer with competence.

Another question: "Do you support the goals of the New Society?" If you say no, what is the implication? I don't know whether that was a factor in answering that kind of question.

I should limit myself to just a few basic questions and comments that I have raised; and let me stress that if I raise these questions, it is our function. It is most admirable that this kind of study, which is a difficult study on a sensitive subject, has been undertaken. It is the beginning of improvements in survey research under these times and it is a kind of study that is conducted on a very laudable premise, and that is important. It is indispensable for the leaders and the citizens of this country to know the facts—the true sentiments of people in our society. It is only when these true sentiments are known that our leaders can respond to them in appropriate ways. And it is an approach, a basic methodological device in the social sciences that is worthy of continuing trial and application and I would like to congratulate Dr. Sicat for undertaking this kind of study.

DR. AUGUSTO CESAR ESPIRITU: Do the results of your empirical study indicate that political socialization is going on now at a fast pace? Is this process of political socialization necessarily

geared towards the idea that there is an objective science of society?

SICAT: With regard to Dr. Abueva's observation about the apparently high proportion of respondents who were rated as highly cynical—that if you put them all together about three-fourths of them would be highly cynical, I would say yes, but that is only if you do put them together; but we did try to separate them according to the actual distribution into low, medium, or high. As for the interesting point which Dr. Abueva said by way of correcting the expression "although they are cynical . . ." I think that it is well taken because as a matter of fact I gave that kind of explanation in a previous study which was published in the *Philippine Journal of Public Administration*. There I made the analogous statement "precisely because they were idealistic . . ." And so, if you like to make that kind of interpretation, I don't think I'll object strongly.

As to the competence of the respondents, yes, again I would say that you are right. That is why at the start I thought I gave fair warning that the time context should be taken into consideration when looking at the respondents, as well as the fact that we should naturally allow or take cognizance of the environmental context against which the respondents were making their responses. Naturally we ought to be aware that whatever evaluations they are making, they can make only upon the immediate environment. And this is where all other agents of political socialization would have to come in.

But now to swing to the question given by Dr. Espiritu. No, the results do not indicate that the fast pace of political socialization which appears to be obvious nowadays is the thing that has given rise to these findings that we are reporting now. Again, precisely, I told you that our title "today" will have to take in a bit of yesterday. Whatever they learned before will naturally have to impinge upon their attitudes.

There was the question relating to the time dimension. At that time I said that martial law was relatively new, and probably we could aver that these idealistic young people were rather hopeful about the promised changes which martial law claimed it would bring.

QUESTION: I'm somewhat curious about the relationship between socialization and politics, propoganda, and social politization. Is there such a relationship?

SICAT: It depends on which side of the fence you are in when you're using either word. But I heard sometime ago that propaganda is making use of some kind of device or another to mislead. As to the extent to which these devices are used in the present context, I don't think I'm competent to say until I have made a study on that also. And so I would rather desist from using the word for the time being.