

THE USE OF THE ELITIST-PLURALIST CONTINUUM IN THE STUDY OF COMMUNITY POWER*

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INTRODUCTION

The growth of any scientific discipline depends on the close association between its theoretical and methodological formulations. Theories gain validity through the refinement of methodological techniques; empirical findings arrived at through the use of the latter may provoke formulation of new theories. But certain difficulties may come about from this supposed association, as when a particular methodological technique becomes identified with a particular theoretical formulation. This would, of course, tend to reduce the validity of the generalization and limit its further refinements, for it would imply that varying a technique would consequently vary the theoretical formulation.

Such a difficulty is apparent in a review of theories and methods employed by studies of community power. A major conflict, one that tends to dominate community-power theories, lies in formulations regarding the nature or format of the power structure (Presthus 1964:3-63).

A good number of studies have been made bases of the theory that the distribution of power is limited to a privileged few. This *elitist*

condition, wherein a pyramid of power is established, emphasizes the role of a central core of individuals or families as the ultimate power-wielders of the community. The community is seen to be dominated by a select few while the rest of the adult community has little access to community affairs.

An opposing school of thought in community-power theory conceives of power as widely shared throughout the community, with no single group in a position of sole control. This *pluralist* condition implies that a number of private groups, interest organizations, and individuals compete with and check one another in struggles for positions of eminence and power.

This debate in theory has had its repercussions in methodology. It is interesting to note that the elitist structure was mostly drawn from and supported by researches that employed the *reputational* form of investigation. On the other hand, the pluralist structure draws support from researches that made use of the "decisional" or "event" type of analysis (Spinard 1966:219).

Briefly, the reputational approach proceeds by compiling a list of names of community leaders/possible influentials from nominations by persons considered "in the know" within the community. As such, it has mainly been thought to get at the potential (reputed) power of individuals while the decisional approach is specifically designed to measure the overt exercise of power (Presthus 1964:52-58). It proceeds by selecting a number of issues deemed to be of community-wide significance, then tracing the people involved in the initiation, articulation,

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and resolution of these issues. At present there is no consensus as to which methodological technique is the more comprehensive and valid in locating community influentials. Each school has gained its own adherents. However, in studies where they were independently used, the findings were met by a series of criticisms. Apparently each method has its advantages and disadvantages.

This methodological and analytic conflict is probably best exemplified by Delbert Miller and Robert Dahl (see Spinard 1966:219). Favoring the reputational approach, Miller, in his study of "Pacific City," finds a pyramidal, quasi-monolithic structure that is dominated by a business elite. Robert Dahl, examining the decision-makers in three issue areas, reports that the power structure of "New Haven" is relatively pluralistic and characterized by "dispersed inequalities."

Because of the general lack of agreement on theory and methodology, steps have been taken to integrate varying ideas and techniques in the hope of tightening up generalizations regarding community power. An attempt to do this is apparent in the comparative study made by Robert Presthus (1964) of two cities. In his study, Presthus proposes to view power as being distributed along an elitist-pluralist continuum and states that power may be differently dispersed, that is, highly concentrated among a few or widely shared by many, in different communities. Cognizant of the fact that the reputational and decisional methods may get at different aspects of power, Presthus employed both of the approaches in his study.

This paper aims to (a) present the results of studies of the format of power structures in two communities, and (b) examine these results with the use of the elitist-pluralist continuum. Specifically, the paper investigates the extent to which community influentials have ably gained control over all areas of influence or the extent to which community influentials have remained separately attached to their own areas of specialism. The assumption was that an elitist

tendency would more or less be fulfilled if the *same set* of community influentials are seen to exert their influence in *all* areas of activity; a pluralist condition, on the other hand, would more or less be fulfilled if *different sets* of community influentials are seen to exert their influence in *different* areas of activity.

METHODOLOGY

The communities involved in the studies were Baguio City and San Fernando, Pampanga, both reported by the 1960 census to have had 60,000 inhabitants. The study of the format of the communities' power structures was undertaken by utilizing the reputational approach as well as alternate measures aimed at locating the active participants in community activities.

The reputational approach. Gathering nominations for influentials in these two communities was accomplished in the standard manner of the reputational approach employed by earlier reputational studies. The community "knowledgeables" chosen were the officers of existing community voluntary organizations who were asked to nominate individuals perceived to exert any of the following types of influence in the community: general, political, economic, professional, educational, sociocultural, and religious influences.

The list of names was further given to a panel of *five judges* who were asked to rank and evaluate the influence of each name. Before proceeding to examine the overlaps, it is probably important to mention that the nominations were ranked along a five-point Guttman scale, where the judges were asked to rank the names in the following manner: extremely influential, very influential, fairly influential, not influential, and knowledge about the person is too limited to be able to render any judgment (Dick 1960: 395-99).

The scale in the Baguio study had a coefficient of reproducibility significant at .927, unlike the San Fernando study where the coefficient of reproducibility was below significance level (.840). However, a dichotomized version of

the same scale in San Fernando showed a significant value of .95. A correlation between ranks obtained from the scale and the number of nominations indicates a very close association between the two. The ones who received the greatest number of nominations also received the highest rankings in the scale; the lowest number of nominations received the lowest rankings. A Spearman's Rho correlation yielded both values significant at the .001 level (R values: for Baguio, .578; for San Fernando, .651). This significant correlation is taken to mean an agreement on who the influentials are and the amount of influence that they exert in the communities.

Locating the active participants. In view of the methodological conflict in the study of community power structures, it was felt necessary that some measure of actual influence was needed to check on the influence of individuals as gathered through the reputational approach. In San Fernando, the measure for actual influence took the form of tracing those individuals who participated in the deliberation of four community issues. Two of these issues were taken from the five nominated issues, perceived to be most important in the town. The three nominated issues did not, however, seem workable. The issue of dissident participation in town elections was not investigated, since no one appeared willing to offer information, much less to implicate the personages involved. The other two issues were never resolved, since they involved large financial outlays that would have to come from the national government. Two other issues were then chosen from the records of municipal council-meetings during the last five-year period. These issues included questions about the fiesta Issue and about the budget. It was felt that these issues, along with those of rerouting traffic and increasing the rental of market stalls, would represent an adequate variety of community decision-areas.

In Baguio, the nomination of local issues undertaken at the start of the study yielded issues which, though local in character, would have led to tracing national influentials as issue-referents. The issues that were prominently

nominated included the light-and-water problem and the squatter problem, the solution of which largely depended on the tie-up between city politics and national politics. After perusal of the minutes of city council meetings, it turned out convenient that the council had created a City Development Board, a body composed of the city's citizens, to formulate decisions and projects pertaining of certain aspects of city affairs. The issues dealt with by the Board involved those that could be autonomously resolved by the local city council and members of the Board. An investigation of the composition of the Board and the operation of the Board's committees was made to trace the individuals involved in community activity.

FINDINGS

Results of nominations. In the initial results of the nominations, Baguio had 435 nominees and San Fernando, 335. Since the studies were mainly interested in delineating the local community influentials, persons whose place of residence and work were outside of the communities' boundaries were eliminated from the lists. Also eliminated were persons who were nominated only once. It was felt that a single nomination did not offer sufficient support for the person's influence. The original lists were trimmed down to 191 and 181 respectively.

A breakdown of the tabulated results (Table 1) shows some amount of difference in the concentration of nominations by areas of activity. Except for the nominees in general influence and in the professional area, San Fernando nominees exceeded the Baguio nominees in all the other areas of activity. While Baguio had five more general influentials and eight more professional nominees, San Fernando had 29 more political nominees, 18 more economic nominees, 30 more educational nominees, 14 more socio-civic/cultural nominees, and 29 more religious nominees.

The fact that San Fernando had fewer community influentials (181) and more area nominees indicates that a greater number of persons

Table 1
Influentials nominated by the reputational technique, classified by area of influence, crossclassified by place of residence (1968-69).

<i>Area of influence</i>	<i>Baguio</i>	<i>San Fernando</i>
General influence	109	104
Political	25	54
Economic	63	81
Professional	85	77
Educational	38	68
Socio-civic/cultural	67	81
Religious	45	74
TOTAL	432	539

must have been repeatedly nominated in more than one area of activity. On the other hand, the greater number of community influentials in the city (191) and the smaller number of area nominees implies that the chances of a person to have been nominated in more than one area of activity were less in the city than in San Fernando.

It becomes apparent, however, that specialized areas of activity in the two communities are fast being perceived as accessible areas for gaining influence. One will note that a substantial number of nominees were gathered in all spheres of activity. This finding appears to be substantiated by the correlation tests done between general influence and each of the other specialized areas. The correlation tests yielded values that are all significant in both communities, indicating that the specialization of area leaders tended to contribute positively to their general influence. The highest correlation values (Pearson's r is .61 for Baguio, .59 for San Fernando) are found between general influence and political influence; that is, people are likely to name their political leaders when asked to name the general leaders of the communities.

An important finding of relevance to the elitist-pluralist continuum becomes apparent at

this point. That there is a considerable number of perceived influentials in spheres of activity other than political and economic can be taken to imply that there are other conceived seats of power. In general, elitist studies report the extreme dominance of influentials in business and political spheres, these areas being thought of as the more traditional seats of power. The appearance therefore of influentials in the professional, educational, sociocultural, and religious spheres would also reflect the appearance of new power centers/groupings that can *potentially* compete with and check economic and political dominants. A further implication is that community activities and decisions are not necessarily the sole domain of a few economic and/or political men. This tendency of the rise of new power groupings usually accompanies movement towards more pluralistic conditions.

It has earlier been stated that the investigation of elitism and pluralism would involve the examination of the tendency of power to extend horizontally across areas or for power to remain more or less differentiated for each sphere of activity. This has been done by (a) taking the incidence of overlaps in leadership among the top area influentials in the six spheres of specialized activity, and (b) doing a correlation test be-

tween area influentials. The correlation tests indicate whether the influence of nominees in one sphere of activity significantly contributes to their influence in other spheres. The incidence of overlaps were examined and the correlation tests done for 15 area-combinations.

It was found that, despite the smaller number of community influentials identified in San Fernando, there was a greater incidence of overlaps in leadership there (36), lending support to the earlier finding that San Fernando's community influentials tended to be repeatedly nominated in more than one sphere of activity. These overlaps in leadership were seen in eight out of 11 area-combinations. Baguio, on the other hand, had only nine instances of overlapping, found in four out of 15 area-combinations. No instance of overlap was uncovered between the political-educational, the economic-professional and the educational-economic area combinations in the two communities.

The instances of overlaps in leadership found in both communities indicate that although specialized sets of leaders have emerged in the various areas of activity, leadership in these areas has not remained mutually exclusive. The degree to which area leaders have extended their influence outside their own specialism, however, tends to be greater in San Fernando. Influence in the town appears to be distributed among a *smaller number of people* who are seen to exert their influence in *more areas* of community activity.

The low incidence of overlaps found in Baguio attests to the relative autonomy of area leaders. Possibly the most striking absence of overlap in the city is between the economic and political spheres, which earlier elitist structures found to be the usual convergence for power. This bifurcation, plus the absence of overlaps in 10 other area-combinations, indicates the greater extent to which area leaders have remained relatively distinct from one another. In contrast, influence in the city appears to have been distributed among a *larger number of people*, who are seen to exert influence in their areas of specialization.

A comparison of the values of correlation tests done between areas further validates the incidence of overlapping found in the communities. In San Fernando, the correlation tests for three area combinations (political-socio-civic/cultural, economic-socio-civic/cultural and religious-socio-civic/cultural) yielded values that are significant. In Baguio, all the values were found to be insignificant. However, the pattern of other-area-nominees also receiving socio-civic/cultural nominations is found in both communities. This pattern is quite consistent with the findings of other studies which report the involvement and presence of other-area influentials in socio-civic/cultural activity (Banfield and Wilson 1963: 246).

The active community participants. The less pluralist condition of San Fernando's power structure and the comparatively more pluralist condition of Baguio's power structure as uncovered by the reputational approach appears to be supplemented by the examination of participants of community decisions in San Fernando and by the examination of the composition/operation of the City Development Board in Baguio City.

The tracing of issue referents in four decision-areas in San Fernando indicates that the participants in decision making tend to vary with the issue, except for political officials, who were seen to have participated in the four decision-areas.

The fiesta issue, which was concerned with deciding the duration of the fiesta, whether to limit market stalls, and whether to allow the opening of night spots during the fiesta, was participated in by a committee formed by the municipal council. Those who were invited to the committee were the heads of socio-civic and religious organizations and other notable members of the citizenry.

The issue of whether to abolish the library division in the town and the items for library personnel was largely a council issue, being concerned with the budgetary appropriations of the municipality. The participants were limited to

the mayor, the vice-mayor, and the city councilors, who after a series of council meetings, decided to transform the library building into the town's police headquarters.

The issue of whether to increase the rental fees for market stalls had the largest number of participants. The increase in stall rental, proposed by a councilor, precipitated the active participation of a number of private individuals and the Market Association in the deliberation of this particular issue. Their stand was mainly to object to the proposed rate of increase. However, the position of the municipal council, favoring the increase in rental fees, ultimately prevailed, once it was clear that the additional income would be used to hire extra personnel to keep the market surroundings clear.

The beginning of traffic congestion was brought to the attention of the municipal council by the heads of socio-civic organizations, after which the vice-mayor proposed an experiment to re-route the traffic in the town. Those invited to deliberate on the experiment included the heads/representatives of transportation associations, the Market Association, and the heads of socio-civic organizations.

Of the 24 people who took part in the discussion of these four issues, seven participated in the debates on three issues, while four discussed two of the issues. The number of one-area participants (13) was larger than that of the two- and three-area participants combined.

In Baguio, examination of the composition and operation of the City Development Board appears to substantiate a high degree of specialization of area leaders. In April 1968, the city mayor called a meeting to explain the nature of the City Development Board. The body was being created in accordance with a Presidential executive order which asked local governments to form local development groups, which should formulate a development plan in accordance with the national development program. Those who were called to the meeting included the members of the city council, other public officials, the heads/representatives of private

institutions and associations, and private individuals. The succeeding meetings of the body were devoted to finalizing the organizational setup of the Board, the crystallization of specific development goals and the recruitment of additional members. As finally acquired, the Board had sixty-four (64) members, divided into 10 committees, each to work along one development goal.

In general, individuals were assigned and were recruited to become members of the committees on the basis of their expertise and knowledge about a given area of activity. Thus, the members of the Committee on Commerce and Trade were mostly businessmen and the officers of the Market Vendors Association; members of the Committee on Education, the heads/representatives of the local educational institutions; members of the Committee on Mass Media, the local publisher and representatives of radio stations and newspapers; members of the Committee on Administration, the heads of city bureaucracies such as the Chief of Police, the City Health Officer, the City Treasurer, and the City Auditor.

The task of initiating concrete community projects to pursue development goals was left to the committees. Each committee came up with a number of suggestions to work on and, at the time of the study, each had at least one project in operation. Detailed investigation of the activities of two committees indicates, however, that active participation differs from one committee to another. The Committee on Education, which had 10 members, had initiated six projects, four of which were in actual operation at the end of the study. The Committee on Commerce and Trade, with 11 members, also had six suggestions, one of which was ready for incorporation into a city ordinance; the other was up for discussion by interested parties at city council meetings.

The division of the members of the Board into committees gave each committee its own personnel and more or less insured that policy leadership and participants of one committee

would be different from those of another. Of the 64 members of the Board, only nine had dual committee memberships. It is quite safe to assume that their dual committee memberships predispose them to participate in at least two areas of community activity.

The examination of participants in issues and community activities indicates that there were more overlaps of participation of influentials in community activities in San Fernando than in Baguio. This fact lends further support to the earlier reputational finding of the concentration of influence among fewer individual in San Fernando and the more dispersed power structure of Baguio.

The reputational lists and the active community participants. The reputational approach appears to have located the majority of active community participants in both communities. Of the 64 members of the City Development Board, 43 (67 per cent) were nominated as influentials; of the 24 participants in San Fernando, 18 (75 per cent) were also nominated as influentials. It is quite clear that the members of the Board who were left out in the nominations were the incumbents of public and private posts which had to be involved for purposes of activity coordination. These persons included

the local officials of the Reforestation Administration, the Bureau of Lands, the Market Vendors Association, and the representatives of hotels, radio stations, and newspapers.

In San Fernando the active participants who did not receive nominations were the representatives of less prestigious associations, such as the Jeepney Drivers Association, the Rig Drivers Association, and the Market Vendors Association.

The greater number of participants in the city appears to stem from the recruitment of public and private officials as members of the Board. Table 2 shows that a considerable number of participants in Baguio were public officials other than the members of the City Council. San Fernando does not seem to have a similar set of public officials involved in community activity.

On the whole, the reputational approach tends to have achieved at a more exhaustive listing of community influentials. Aside from locating the majority of active participants, it also uncovered individuals with other varied resources or attributes that are probably esteemed, publicised and considered worthy of imitation by the rest of the community.

From the above findings, we are prone to conclude that both communities tend to veer

Table 2
Decision participants classified by employment sector and position,
crossclassified by place of residence (1968-69).

<i>Employment sector and position</i>	<i>Baguio</i>	<i>San Fernando</i>
PUBLIC SECTOR		
Council member	8	8
Other official	12	0
PRIVATE SECTOR		
Head of private institution/ organization	28	13
Private citizen	16	3
TOTAL	64	24

away from a strictly elitist condition. The substantial number of nominations gathered in all spheres of activity and the fact that the influentials' specializations were found to contribute significantly their general influence attests to the presence of systems of influence other than the economic or political. However, examination of the incidence of overlaps in leadership and participation among influentials indicates that the power structures of the two communities differ. The higher incidence of overlaps found in San Fernando places it closer to the elitist end of the continuum, while Baguio—by this criterion—more closely approaches the pluralist type of power structure.

EVALUATION OF THE ELITIST-PLURALIST CONTINUUM

The value of the elitist-pluralist continuum may be assessed as follows:

1. The continuum integrates varying viewpoints regarding the format of the power structure. It recognizes and provides for quantitative differences among power structures, making it unnecessary for the analyst to conceive of and classify power conditions as dichotomized into elitist or pluralist structures.
2. As is true of every continuum, the elitist-pluralist framework makes amenable the systematic conceptualization of a wide variety of types of community power

structures. By assuming no artificial cut-off points to delineate an elitist from a pluralist structure, any variation of power structure may be located at some point along the continuum.

3. Though the continuum does not explain variations of power structures, it nevertheless provokes further inquiries into possible relationships between the power structure and other variables, such as population size, degree of community differentiation and complexity, or the nature of the economic base—variables that may be important in determining the format of power structure.

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