

**MODERNIZATION**  
Its Impact in the Philippines

*edited by*

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## Sociological Surveys in the Rural Philippines: some suggestions for interviewers \*

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PERLA MAKIL

In July 1964 a large-scale social science survey was undertaken with the primary purpose of evaluating the impact of the United States Peace Corps in the Philippines. Peace Corps Washington had awarded the contract for the project to the University of Hawaii, but the management of actual operations fell to the senior author.<sup>1</sup>

The survey, publicly known as The University of Hawaii Philippines Project, gathered information in and about 61 poblaciones and 119 barrios, in a total of 75 Philippine municipalities. This included a randomly chosen sample of 48 municipalities where Peace Corps Volunteers had served, and a matching control group of 27 additional places. The 2,248 people interviewed were stratified according to dominant mother tongue and represented speakers of 12 different Philippine languages. Thirty respondents, systematically distributed into four sampling groups, were interviewed in each municipality (see LMBBN, Appendix H and Table 7.1).

For the seven months that constituted the field phase of the research (November 1964 to May 1965), 49 Filipinos were

\* The research on which this paper is based was part of the Philippines Peace Corps Survey, sponsored by the United States Peace Corps, with the University of Hawaii as sole contractor (PC-[W]-395).

<sup>1</sup> Principal investigator of the project was Thomas W. Maretzki, chairman, Department of Anthropology, University of Hawaii. A brief explanation of the design, findings, and conclusions of the survey is found in the statement by Roy, Lynch, and Maretzki, above. For a detailed discussion of the survey the reader is referred to the final report submitted to Peace Corps/Washington (Frank Lynch, S.J., Thomas W. Maretzki, Alfred B. Bennett, Jr., Susan B. Bennett, and Linda D. Nelson, *The Philippines Peace Corps Survey: Final Report* [Honolulu: International Programs and Social Science Research Center, 1966; p. vii, 688]). In the present article the first statement will be identified as RLM, the second as LMBBN.

trained as social science interviewers. As far as we could judge, the problems they repeatedly met in their subsequent work were those that all field researchers face in the rural Philippines. Hence, because we hoped to benefit from their experience and to share it with the broader scholarly community, we decided not to let this trained force disband before gathering them together to review what they had learned about doing field research. In pursuit of this goal, on May 22-23, 1965, we assembled at Project Headquarters in Quezon City 35 of our field force. Plenary and small-group discussions were held on the subject of research procedures and experiences.<sup>7</sup>

Several social scientists not on our regular staff joined us for the occasion. Notable for their contributions as discussion leaders were Milton Barnett of the Agricultural Development Council and Isao Fujimoto of Cornell University and the College of Agriculture, University of the Philippines. Their wise counsel, along with that of our regular consultant, Dr. Mercedes Concepcion of the University of the Philippines Statistical Center, made of the conference a productive enterprise.

All discussions were tape-recorded. Very soon after the conference, Perla Makil, one of the field staff and junior author of this paper, wrote the first rough digest of the proceedings. This was further refined by the suggestions, substantive and editorial, of Alfred B. and Susan M. Bennett of the UHPP office staff, and Mary R. Hollnsteiner and Martha Woodhams, research associate and publications editor, respectively, of the Institute of Philippine Culture. The senior author did the final draft.

The report presented here is not an exhaustive review of the problems of social science field research in the Philippines. Rather, it summarizes those difficulties about which the researchers felt moved to speak, and the solutions they had found helpful. In many cases both the problems and the solutions will impress the experienced researcher as routine. But the norm for inclusion of material was not novelty, but the mere fact that the Peace Corps Survey interviewers thought the information worth including. It is hoped that at some later date we might review the subject more comprehensively, exploiting for

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<sup>7</sup> We are indebted to the Asia Foundation for a grant that made it possible not only to assemble the participants, some from distant parts of the Philippines, but also to feed many of them for the days of the conference.

this purpose the good will and wisdom of those social scientists who have distinguished themselves as field researchers in the rural Philippines.

#### Preparing for the Field Work

*Understanding the rationale of the research.* It is standard procedure, of course, for interviewers to be given some special training for the survey they will conduct. This training may vary considerably in the goals it attempts to achieve, but certain elements are usually present; namely, indoctrination in the nature and importance of the study, familiarization with the interview schedule and other instruments to be used, and some trial interviewing.

Members of the Philippines Peace Corps Survey (PPCS) field staff, reflecting on their own training in the light of subsequent experience, felt that their understanding of the overall aims and strategy of the research had an important influence on their work. Knowing how and why their own efforts complemented the work of other members of the project gave greater meaning to what they were doing and strengthened them considerably under difficult field conditions. Beyond this, understanding of this kind enabled them to judge the relevance of a respondent's digressions and to discern even in vague answers a possible contribution to the research goals. It also made it easier to answer questions about the project and to settle, on the spot, certain procedural problems not foreseen in the course of training.

*Proper pairing of researchers.* To enhance the accuracy of interview reports, PPCS field research was done by teams of two, both of whom participated in every interview. While each interviewer kept his own running record of the respondent's replies, the senior of the pair normally took primary responsibility for questioning; the junior, for making notes. After the interview, each prepared his report according to a prescribed form and compared it with that made by his teammate. A reconciliation form was then completed, showing where and why their reports differed and how, sometimes only after checking back with the respondents, they reconciled their differences.

Cooperation of this order is best achieved when team members have, on the one hand, internalized the strict rules that

must guide their research and have, on the other, become close friends. By this twofold provision the harmony so essential for their task is guaranteed, but not at the expense of care in the collection of data.

Researchers said that compatibility was virtually assured if, as in their case, teams were formed on the basis of the members' background and their performance during the training period. They referred especially to the results of personality tests, to staff observations, and to their behavior in the trial communities.<sup>3</sup> Many researchers mentioned that good feeling and interpersonal communication were further assisted by a project routine all field staff members were enjoined to follow, namely, making every Saturday their "heart-to-heart" day. By this arrangement, agreed on beforehand, each was expected to discuss openly and frankly any nagging annoyance he had felt at the other during the preceding week. Following this instruction proved a great help in preserving and enhancing the team's harmony.

#### Introduction to the Community

When they reached the site of their research, the interviewers' first task was to present themselves in an acceptable manner to the community where their work was to be done. The success with which they managed this would affect both the quality and the progress of their operations in that place. To allay any suspicion about their activities and to win the community's good will, they had to offer the proper authorities a clear account of what their purpose was, what they intended to do, and how they would do it. An equally immediate, if more practical, concern was housing.

*Prior arrangements.* The main office of the PPCS paved the way for its researchers by sending the mayor of each community a letter of introduction explaining the purpose of the research and the role of the research team, and requesting that accommodations be arranged for them. On occasion it happened that the research teams reached the communities before the letters did, and so found themselves in the awkward position of

<sup>3</sup> A detailed description of the recruiting and training of personnel appears in LMBBN, pp. 87-93.

having to make hasty explanations of their presence and to press the mayor to locate accommodations. In view of this, PPCS researchers attending the project's termination conference were invited to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of an additional measure suggested to guarantee that notification would precede them; namely, the sending of an advance party to explain the project personally and to arrange accommodations.

Their opinions varied. Since even when the introductory letter had arrived, researchers still had to explain their proposed activities in greater detail than the letter contained, some favored the advance party on grounds that it might relieve the researchers of this task of explaining, and so allow them to begin research immediately. Others felt that this arrangement would deprive the researchers both of a valuable challenge to their resourcefulness and skill in human relations and of an excellent opportunity to establish that rapport which they must eventually establish in any case. A more general objection was the duplication of effort that the suggested measure implied; it was felt to be neither necessary nor economical, particularly for so extensive an operation as the PPCS, since the aims for which an advance party would be sent out were adequately achieved by the letters of introduction and by the researchers themselves once they reached the community. Finally, there was the conjecture that the advance party might actually hinder the research: such heralding might create an anticipation and excitement about both the research team and the research that would bias potential respondents.

*Housing.* One of the advantages seen in the advance party was that it could obviate the problem that arose in some cases when the mayor's housing arrangements were unacceptable to the research team. Knowing the nature of the team's work, the advance party would be able to make an informed choice of accommodations, or at least find out which houses were undesirable and pass on the information to the team. On the other hand, it was suggested that a graceful transfer could even more easily be provided for if the letters of introduction would request that the mayor arrange only *temporary* housing.

There was rarely any difficulty in finding a conveniently located house with enough space to accommodate the research

team. As a matter of fact, people were usually most hospitable and even eager to provide the best possible place for the interviewers. But in communities where factions existed, the researchers were well advised to locate, at the very beginning of their stay, someone who could identify for them a fairly neutral household. Of possible sources of this information, other outsiders were found most likely to have a relatively objective view of the community. However, since they were also likely to have an *incomplete* view, researchers found they had to evaluate it with caution. Among the residents of the community, government employees were usually reluctant to comment on factions, particularly those connected with politics. Where the region had a record of political unrest it was found helpful to consult the commanding officer of the local Philippine Constabulary detachment before going to the community.

*Payment for room and board.* Researchers' hosts usually refused to take payment for board and lodging. It was sometimes possible to persuade them by telling them that the money would otherwise revert to office funds, or that the head office insisted they pay for room and board. Where hosts were adamant, however, the researchers either donated the sum to a local voluntary organization in which the host was involved, or left it in an envelope with a note suggesting that the host donate it to some charity. When insistence on payment, direct or indirect, threatened to destroy rapport, researchers found it wise to accept the refusal and leave without any payment, but send a gift to their hosts at a later date.

When hosts were willing to take payment but left the amount to the discretion of their guests, researchers calculated the amount on the basis of local prices and the standard rates for boarders in the community.

*Presenting credentials.* Not only as a courtesy, but also to enlist the aid of local authorities in the conduct of the study, researchers had to identify themselves to these leaders as soon as they entered the community. A call on the mayor was invariably the best beginning. Even in communities where factions existed, it was found that residents became more cooperative and friendly when they knew that the survey team had already introduced themselves to him. Before attempting any interviews in a barrio, researchers also called on the barrio captain.

A visit to the parish priest was important for establishing rapport in any community predominantly Roman Catholic. Besides giving the researchers his approval, he often assisted them in other ways, such as helping them locate accommodations and providing information about the community. In predominantly Protestant communities this role would be played by one or more ministers; in Muslim communities, by the imam or imams.

Field teams also said it was helpful to meet the school principal and, through him, the teachers. Both because of their prestige in the community and because they were, as a group, such notably intelligent informants, meeting them early in the research period was recommended. The same advice was given regarding several other municipal leaders, in particular the local representative of the Presidential Assistant in Community Development and the municipal secretary. The latter was especially useful because he was generally available.

The Rural Health Unit usually had a spot map of the community, and acquaintance with the midwife helped in establishing rapport. For reasons of security, it was also prudent to call on the Chief of Police and, especially in areas such as the southern Philippines, where outsiders might be confused with Indonesian "invaders," the Commanding Officer of the local detachment of the Philippine Constabulary. Finally, researchers presented themselves to the local postmaster in order to facilitate rapid delivery of mail. The postal ID cards obtained in Manila before going to the field proved indispensable for cashing money orders and telegraphic transfers in the provinces.

Some researchers suggested asking the mayor to call a general meeting of all town officials to introduce the survey team and the project; these officials would then be asked to disseminate information about the project to their constituents. Others feared, however, that such a request would appear presumptuous on the part of the researchers.

#### Establishing Rapport with the Community

The quality of community research depends largely on the establishment of harmonious relations between the researcher and the people living in the place he studies. Several factors affecting this rapport were discussed at the termination confer-



ence: the researcher's knowledge of the local customs, the length of his stay there, his sex, age, manner of dressing and behavior, and his social and religious activities in the community.

*Knowing the local customs.* It is of course essential that the researcher have at least a general knowledge of the customs of the community where he will work. But for an insight into those peculiarities of behavior and belief which affect "smooth interpersonal relations" and yet cannot be known beforehand, whom can the researcher consult? The native may not be a very good informant in this matter, because the residents of a community are often quite unaware of how their most highly valued ways differ from those of people who live elsewhere.

Researchers found no one "best" source of information. There were certain likely prospects—an insider who was slightly removed from the life of the community, the parish priest perhaps; or outsiders, possibly teachers or national level officials who had lived in the place for a time but were not native to it—and researchers learned from their insights. But they found that ultimately their most reliable guide was their own sensitive response as they interacted with the people of the community.

*Length of stay.* The PPCS survey teams found that within a week, provided they were personable, they could win complete acceptance in the community, at least as transients with a special role to perform. This acceptance was evidenced by the fact that they received many social invitations and were occasionally even asked to become *madrinas* or *padrinos* (godparents at baptism). In places where outsiders were regarded with suspicion or hostility, getting the acceptance of the community required more time, but even there it was felt to have been achieved in three or four weeks.

It should be noted, however, that the development of rapport may be limited not only by the duration of time allotted for the municipality, but also by the amount of work to be finished in that time. In this connection the researchers explained why they generally took one to two weeks more to study a municipality than the three weeks allowed for it, and why they wished for even more time for the job.

Time was needed for creating a feeling of ease and confidence between interviewer and respondent, particularly when the respondent was reluctant to cooperate. While in some cases they did conduct the interview only on the second visit to a respondent's home, they would like to have done this routinely. Aside from making the interview more enjoyable for the respondent, this arrangement would probably have reduced the number of respondent substitutions (which was actually relatively small). A longer stay would have offered the additional advantage of leaving more time for such work as zoning, mapping, and the gathering of non-interview and community data, as well as for freer participation in community activities. Furthermore, the field staff could, with more time, keep themselves in better physical condition; the PPCS researchers, especially in experimental communities where more data and longer reports were demanded, often stayed up late at night to complete their reports. Some even thought that the weariness and pressure they felt might at times have affected the quality of the data they collected.

On the other hand, researchers suggested that it might be possible to overstay in a community, with results fatal to both rapport and data. The longer the stay, the greater the possibility, first, that gossip might arise about the researchers and their work, and second, that a researcher might antagonize the people in the community and so create hostility to the study. It was pointed out, third, that if the researchers stayed too long, the community's interest in the research, and consequently their cooperation with it, might dwindle.

It seems then, that the length of stay in a community should be determined solely by the scope of the research. For the PPCS, a period longer than the three weeks allowed for each municipality was definitely needed, especially in the experimental, or Peace Corps, places.\* For less extensive studies, a shorter period might be adequate, since a long stay is not essential for community acceptance.

*Acceptable behavior.* Male and female researchers unanimously agreed that people in the communities were more re-

\* Field teams did, as a matter of fact, adjust their stays to the work load for the municipality, the average residence being not three weeks, but four and a half weeks.

responsive, more cooperative, and more hospitable to female researchers than to males. Male researchers were initially regarded with suspicion and caution and consequently were slower to establish rapport. Moreover, in interviews with females, the male teams were forced to accept the presence of a "chaperone."

The youthfulness of the PPCS researchers (average age, 25.9) supported the student role they generally assumed. It was observed, however, that a researcher's age, so long as he was an adult, had little discernible effect on his acceptance.

Suitable dress was a factor affecting chiefly the female researchers. The standard followed approximated the expectations of the community in general and of the respondent in particular. Normally it was found that simple dress (usually a skirt and blouse and flat shoes) was acceptable for interviews with respondents in the lower-income categories. Slightly more formal clothes and half-heeled shoes were appropriate for meetings with higher-category respondents such as the mayor or principal, and, as a precaution, a long-sleeved dress with high neck for calls on the parish priest. One outfit was needed for town fiestas, parties, and such special occasions. Jeans were considered inappropriate for formal interviews but usually acceptable at home, for visits to rugged barrios, or where "Peeping Toms" were a nuisance.<sup>5</sup>

Behavior, like dress, should satisfy community expectations. Generally the PPCS researchers were most readily accepted when they showed a willingness to greet and chat with all the residents of the community. However, female interviewers were expected to avoid any signs of familiarity with the younger men and to abstain from drinking or smoking. Male researchers found that a cigarette was a good means of establishing rapport and that they were expected to drink, but not to get drunk. More than moderate interest in and friendliness with the younger women were discouraged.

*Participation in religious and social activities.* Participation in local activities was felt to be an important factor in establishing rapport with the community. Since acceptance of social

<sup>5</sup> In many places, men and boys with nothing more interesting to do spent considerable time peering through windows or floor boards or over shower-stall partitions.

invitations was limited, however, by the amount of work to be completed, the researchers faced a problem of tact in declining some invitations while accepting others. An appeal to the demands of their work normally served to prevent offense.

Participation in religious activities beyond attending church on Sunday was generally not expected of the researchers. In some communities, however, Protestant interviewers sensed that local Protestant pastors wanted them to attend all Sunday church activities held in the local church. Since Sunday was the only day when many respondents were free to be interviewed, and attending the various services would take up the whole morning and part of the afternoon, these interviewers often had to excuse themselves by explaining the requirements of the research.\*

*Expression of gratitude to the community.* Researchers felt that the help and cooperation extended to them in a community should be acknowledged in some way other than by the official card of gratitude mailed to all respondents from PPCS headquarters. They suggested, for instance, the sending instead of one general letter of thanks, or the awarding of a certificate of merit to the municipality through the mayor. Personal notes should be sent, in any case, to the mayor and to other people who assisted the surveyors in some very special way. If notes were sent from the main office, it was felt they should be personalized and carry the handwritten names of the researchers. Researchers might also want to add names of helpful people to their Christmas card lists or make donations to charitable or civic causes in the community.

### The Interview Situation

Establishing and maintaining rapport in the interview situation poses a complex of problems for the researcher, for it is in this context that the variability of human behavior often becomes most evident. A respondent may react to the interview in any number of ways: he may cooperate or not, and, if he does, he may or may not do so with complete honesty and zeal for accuracy. Under these conditions it is clear how important

\* A more complete statement of how community expectations can interfere with the research timetable is presented in LMBBN, pp. 109-111.

it is for the validity of the data and consequently for the success of the entire project that the respondent's suspicions be allayed and anxieties reduced from the outset. Beyond that, even when the respondent is completely cooperative, the circumstances of the interview must be controlled so as to give the respondent freedom to state whatever he feels he should.

#### **Time of interview**

It is a problem in itself to find a time for the interview when the respondent is most likely to be free and undisturbed for several hours. In the case of most professional people, such as government officials, principals, teachers, and municipal religious leaders, it was usually possible and advisable to arrange an appointment. However, since the relatively uneducated members of the community-at-large had a tendency not to keep the appointments they made for interviews, field researchers found it best to interview them whenever and wherever the first suitable opportunity arose.

Certain "best times" were found for various sex and occupational categories. Housewives were most conveniently approached at any time during the day when their attention was not distracted by household chores. Most men had to be interviewed after the day's work was done, in the evening. Farmers were both available and undistracted at lunch as well, but they were likely to fall asleep afterwards (as were the interviewers). Bad weather augmented the problem of getting to a respondent's house, but also ensured his being there once the interviewer appeared.

Teachers preferred appointments during class hours, assigning their pupils seat work to keep them busy while the interview was going on, but for this arrangement prior permission had to be sought from the school principal. Interviewing physicians, especially members of the Rural Health Unit, who seem always to be busy or on call, presented a special difficulty that could not be overcome even by making appointments.

#### **Rapport with respondents**

*Establishing one's identity.* Members of the PPCS field teams were on occasion suspected to be Communists, "Indonesian spies," detectives on the track of people with police records, representatives of collection agencies or religious movements, or

agents of a political party trying to assess the strength of certain candidates. Given the tendency of some respondents to cast the interviewers in such colorful roles, researchers should make their identity clear to the respondent.

This is accomplished most quickly, first, by having their credentials ready for inspection, and then by supporting them with evidence of earlier recognition by the local authorities. Indeed it was with this ultimate aim that introductory letters were sent by the PPCS main office and official visits paid to the mayor and parish priest by field teams. Researchers reported that a letter from the mayor to the residents of the community was invaluable in opening the interview. Researchers could further reassure their respondents by mentioning the names of prominent people living in the community, along with some facts about them. The naming of some persons already interviewed, especially those belonging to a higher status group, also put respondents more at ease. If the field team was staying with the mayor of the town, it helped to say so. A very great help in winning the initial cooperation of the respondent was to be accompanied by a local official or some other well known resident of the community.

The role that made a researcher acceptable varied with the background of the individual to be interviewed. Almost all respondents, regardless of educational attainment, had high regard for a "scientific survey"; but less well educated respondents reacted most favorably to an emphasis on the interviewer's *student* status, while more sophisticated respondents accepted him more readily in his *professional* role. In either case it always helped to explain that the data were not being gathered merely for personal use, or for limited purposes, but for a nation-wide project that would contribute to an increased knowledge of Philippine culture.

A respondent's first impression of the interviewer was influenced by the materials he carried. Researchers said that respondents were impressed to see the interview forms well organized. However, if an interviewer arrived at the respondent's home carrying the attache case issued to all researchers for their various research materials, he was often greeted with a suspicion that rural Catholics reserve for proselytizing Seventh-

Day Adventists. It was found better to carry papers on a clipboard, which would often be needed anyway since the homes of many respondents had no table in the sala.

*Helping respondents relax.* Some respondents were less anxious about the identity of the interviewers than they were about how they themselves would appear. To put such respondents at ease, and to form a better judgment about how to deal with this particular one, it helped to engage them initially in casual conversation and encourage them to ask questions about the interview before beginning it. Sometimes, with a humbler respondent, one might impress him with the honor of being chosen for the interview.

During the interview itself respondents had other common sources of disquiet. Not infrequently a respondent mistook the interview for an examination and was afraid he would give the wrong answers. Sometimes, especially in rural areas, the respondent's reluctance and timidity stemmed simply from his lack of familiarity with research and research techniques. No matter what the cause or causes of respondent anxiety, establishment and maintenance of rapport depended on the interviewer's detection of the symptoms and his discovery of those means most likely to remove the basic difficulty.

In anticipation of the tension that note-taking might create during an interview, researchers were first trained to make notes as infrequently and inconspicuously as possible. Field experience proved this precaution unnecessary, however. We found that respondents *expected* interviewers to make notes, and some even instructed them to do so.

On the other hand, we decided against using a tape-recorder to supplement note-taking because of the anxiety it might create. We feared that, among the less well educated respondents in particular, mixed reactions of fear and amusement to an unfamiliar mechanical device would certainly influence their answers. Further, the novelty of the demonstration

\* Note-taking interfered less with the respondent's task than with the interviewer's. The interviewer needed all his wits about him to keep the interview going, to follow up responses, especially in the probe section, and to keep the respondent's interest. Researchers said that while note-taking was essential in an interview schedule as long as that of the PPCS, it might well be dispensed with in short interviews.

would attract an audience—precisely what the interviewer usually seeks to avoid. Even higher category respondents would react with suspicion, not from lack of comprehension, but from fear that despite reassurance of anonymity, their responses might somehow be used against them. They would therefore be inhibited from giving truthful answers.

*Language of interview.* An element in the interview situation that is bound to have far-reaching effects on both rapport and the validity of the gathered data is the language or languages that are used. In the experience of UHPP researchers it was essential that the interview teams speak the local language fluently. Beyond that, they found that the researcher was more completely accepted if he spoke the language *as a mother tongue*, and that responses to his questions about ethno-linguistic groups had in that case a validity they would not have otherwise had.

The policy of the PPCS was to allow the respondent to select the language of interview.<sup>3</sup> With relatively uneducated respondents the local language was generally used throughout. Problems arose chiefly in those interviews where the interviewer, having accepted English as the language for starting the interview, later discovered the respondent was not so competent in this language as he had first appeared. It then became advisable to switch to the vernacular. The transition did not invariably result in discomfort; indeed, it was occasionally requested by the respondent himself. But more often than not it was embarrassing.

Interviewers found it best not to assume that a respondent could be interviewed in English simply because of the sampling group to which he belonged. For while these groups differed significantly, in a statistical sense, in the percentage of those members who chose English as the language of interview, one could not easily predict how any particular member would choose. Some interviewers made it a practice to begin all interviews in the local language, regardless of the respondent's category, since they discovered that changing later into English

<sup>3</sup> The percentages of respondents choosing as their language of interview the mother tongue alone, English (when not mother tongue), English plus another language, or the local language alone or with mother tongue are shown in LMBBN, Table 7.18.



presented no difficulty. Other interviewers started by mixing English and the vernacular, allowing the respondent to choose the more comfortable. The latter course was also followed—using more vernacular than English—to discourage a respondent who insisted on using English in spite of his inadequacy in it.

*Duration of interest.* As a rule, the full attention of a respondent could be held for the first 30 minutes of the interview, or for an hour at most. Since the PPCS schedule was both long and relatively complex, interviewers allowed for intervals of rest, particularly when the signs of fatigue or tedium became evident. Those parts of the schedule which respondents consistently found to be dull, notably such repetitive sections as the social distance inquiry, could be distributed systematically through the interview rather than presented successively. Planned variation in the sequence of questions reduced boredom for both interviewers and respondents.

Toward the end of the lengthy interview, an exchange of roles between the two interviewers, the questioner and the note-taker, served as an antidote for failing enthusiasm on the part of interviewers and respondent alike. Because of the difficulty often experienced in making appointments, researchers became adept at keeping the respondent interested long enough to make a second session unnecessary.

#### Controlling the circumstances of the interview

*Presence of other persons.* Researchers liked as much as possible to interview respondents alone, or at most, with only children present. For while the presence of other persons at the interview might have served to reassure those respondents for whom the interview was a strange experience, it was also almost certain to influence their answers, even when respondents had the best intentions of honesty and accuracy.

In its most extreme form, the problem arose when a crowd of onlookers volunteered answers before the respondent could give his, made comments, or even argued with the respondent—a situation which not only destroyed the validity of the particular answers involved in the exchange but also unsettled the respondent and annoyed the interviewers.

Interviewers sometimes subdued a garrulous audience by the tactful explanation that only the respondent's opinions were relevant at this point, and that the length of the schedule unfortunately did not permit them to hear out the audience's comments. At other times the interviewers were forced to compromise, agreeing to listen to the others' remarks, but only after the respondent had spoken. In either event it helped to be accompanied by a local official or some other well known resident who could explain the nature of the interview and discourage audience participation.

Yet this volunteer assistant, while helping to solve the problem of people's interrupting the respondent, might himself inhibit the respondent *by his very presence*. Especially when the respondent had to give an opinion regarding local people or events, he was likely to be very much influenced by the presence of an official or some other high-status townsman.

The same kind of restraint could be introduced by a mixed audience, some of whom were viewed as opposed in one way or another to the respondent. Thus in parts of Cotabato Province, a Christian interviewed in the presence of Christians and Muslims felt constrained at times to trim his answers to suit the situation.

When interviewers could not arrange a private interview beforehand, their general strategy was to use what discretion their instructions permitted them, reserving sensitive questions until such time as the onlookers, finally bored by the proceedings, went away. By deliberately playing dull, interviewers could hasten the process.

*Interviewer's bias.* The firmness and breadth of the interview data are partly determined by what the interviewer does about his own feelings toward the subject of inquiry and toward the respondent.

If it is true, as it is often said, that most Filipinos tend to answer what, in their view, the friendly questioner wants them to say, then an interviewer may influence the respondent's answers if he communicates his own opinions and attitudes about the questions.<sup>9</sup> The danger is particularly great in probe ma-

<sup>9</sup> For a discussion of the means taken to ensure valid answers by minimizing respondent bias, see LMBBN, pp. 100-104.

terial where the line between *probing*, which seeks to clarify the respondent's answer, and *leading*, which actually suggests it, is very thin. PPCS researchers said that in their training period interviewers should be made aware that they all possess biases, that they can convey these feelings by means as subtle as tone of voice, and that they must learn to dissimulate insofar as they can.

Interviewers mentioned two specific situations in which the interviewer's opinions and attitudes were apt to show through his neutral facade. First, when the interviewer was tired, hence impatient at a respondent's hesitation in answering, he was tempted to lead. To avoid this, he could leave the topic of inquiry for a moment and exchange a few friendly personal remarks with the respondent, until such time as he felt his self-possession return. Second, some interviewers felt that in giving analogies or examples the interviewer was dangerously close to suggesting the respondent's answer; they found it better to use some other method of helping respondents answer questions.

There is another danger besides that of leading. The interviewer's pre-formed judgments of the respondent may distort the data, not by influencing the respondent's answers but by relaxing the objectivity with which the interviewer elicits and records those answers. After the distinctions between sampling groups became clear, interviewers found themselves *expecting* certain answers from respondents, with the result that they sometimes neglected to pursue a line of inquiry, so accustomed were they to the "predictable" turns it would take. In one such case an interviewer discovered he had even recorded an answer for a group IV respondent before it had been given. This incident is understandable, of course, for when one is interviewing the 25th respondent in a community and has heard the same answers not just 24 times there but in other communities as well, he is sorely tempted to get the interview over with as fast as possible. It is a major challenge to the researcher to make each interview seem fresh, not just to the respondent but to himself as well.

Researchers said that team interviewing greatly reduced the likelihood that carelessness, fatigue, or impatience on the part of the interviewer might affect the data in the ways described

above. Although his chief duty was note-taking, the junior interviewer was always prepared to take part in the questioning. He could perceive and warn the senior interviewer when he was leading, relieve him if he seemed tired or irritated, or pick up a line of inquiry that might otherwise be passed over.

#### Problems in eliciting information

*Repetition of questions.* Inevitably, interviewers had to repeat questions when the respondent did not understand them on first hearing. When, as often happened, the respondent asked to hear the question again, there was no fear of offending him by repeating it. However, if the respondent's answer revealed that he had failed to grasp the question but was not aware of this, the situation became a problem. One ran the risk that the respondent would construe the repetition as a judgment on his answer, and he would be sure to answer differently the second time. The best one could do was to repeat the question with a prefaced explanation such as, "I don't think I made myself clear. Let me try again."

However, especially when the interview was long even without any repetition, frequent repeating of questions was apt to fray the nerves of respondent and interviewer alike. Under these circumstances, the interviewer had to take special care to preserve a neutral tone and not allow his manner of questioning to betray exasperation, boredom, or anger.

*Order of questions.* Surveyors confirmed the fact that some variation in the sequence of questions gave relief to both interviewers and respondents. Beyond this, it also reduced the bias introduced by one question influencing the answer to the next. It was observed, for instance, that the last question in Part I of the PPCS interview schedule might have influenced some respondent's answers to the first question in Part II. At the end of Part I, the questions concerned the respondent's religion; the beginning of Part II asked what kind of Filipinos there were. It is possible that at least some of those respondents who classified Filipinos by religion might have been influenced by the earlier discussion of this subject.

*Open or closed questions.* The relative effectiveness of open-ended or closed questions was found to vary among the sam-

pling groups studied. Generally speaking, poorly educated respondents preferred forced-choice, closed questions. However, interviewers discovered that there was a danger that these respondents would avoid the "other" alternative and invariably select one of the specific alternatives offered them.

For the relatively well educated respondents, however, open-ended questions were easy to handle. Here the problem was often not one of stimulating the respondent to answer. Rather, it was one of knowing how to turn him off when he began to digress too widely from the topic at hand.

*Sensitive topics.* When asked if they thought respondents were reluctant to speak about certain subjects, the PPCS researchers replied that it seemed to be so. However, it was also clear that none of the subjects caused the respondents more than mild and passing discomfort.

Among the topics mentioned by the interviewers were the following, arranged in descending order of sensitivity: wealth (income, landholding, and the like); educational attainment of self, spouse, and ascendant relatives; actual names of people; age (where wife was older); religion, parentage, number of children ("if they number more than 12"), and places respondent had visited in his lifetime (but only if respondent lived in a "spy-scare" region).

Respondents from the community-at-large (group IV) sometimes found it difficult to answer questions which projected them into hypothetical or contrary-to-fact situations. Moreover, they were reluctant to express a strong dislike for an event, apparently for fear of inviting that very disaster on themselves. Expressions of dislike for persons or groups were similarly avoided, requiring the researcher to ask which persons or groups the respondent liked best, second best, and on. By this process of elimination he eventually isolated the "least liked" individual or group. The opposite version of this fear seemed also to be true for some group IV respondents, for researchers detected a reluctance to indicate a strong liking for an event or person, this time for fear that the event or relationship would thereby never materialize.

*The use of visual aids.* To relieve the tedium of the lengthy and repetitive social distance inquiry, interviewers used a lam-

inated card which showed five different faces. Each face had an expression appropriate for the reaction verbalized below it, ranging from "I like it very much" through "I don't care one way or the other" to "I dislike it very much."

As a matter of fact, this visual aid caused confusion. Well educated respondents did not like to use the "childish" device, while poorly educated respondents tended to miss the point entirely. Instead of using the card to identify their own feelings, the latter identified the faces as representing one or another of the various ethno-linguistic groups about whom we were inquiring. The use of the card was discontinued.

A second card showed a ten-step ladder, and was used as a reference point for rating Peace Corps Volunteers personally known to the respondent. Every interviewer agreed it was indeed helpful: coming towards the end of the interview, it served to revive flagging interest.

### The Interview Rapport

*Reconciliation.* According to UHPP procedure, after individual-typed reports were prepared from each set of notes following the interview, the two team members compared their separately-recorded responses to detect and reconcile any discrepancies. Here the technique of team interviewing proved its value. A cursory glance at the reconciliation sheets submitted by each team shows how much valuable data would have been lost or inaccurately recorded had the interview been left to one person.

The doubt inevitably arises, however, that in discrepancies, the response noted by the stronger personality will appear on the reconciliation sheet. While no sure check was found against this human failing, researchers thought the validity of reconciled answers was reasonably ensured when the interviewers discussed the interview situation as soon as possible—ideally, according to some, immediately after the interview on the basis of rough notes, before writing the interview rating and other reports.

In cases of disagreement, the team member whose primary responsibility was taking notes was often given the benefit of

the doubt. If they still differed, they could approach the respondent again and ask him to recall his original answer. More often than not, however, this measure was impractical, owing to the difficulty of reaching the respondent a second time. Finally, if the conflict remained unresolved, the office procedure called for coding the item as "Not ascertainable" (NA) for that respondent.<sup>10</sup>

*Supervision.* Researchers said it was important that the main office should check their reports when they arrived from the field. They found it particularly useful, after submitting their first reports, to receive not merely an acknowledgment of receipt from the main office, but a detailed criticism regarding both the merits and the defects in their work.

It may be mentioned here that regular communication with the main office was, in the PPCS experience, important not only for guidance and advice: it significantly affected the researchers' morale, which in turn affected the quality of their work. Field workers welcomed any kind of communication, including personal letters and birthday cards. A monthly newsletter compiled of items of interest culled from researchers' official diaries and of news and instructions from the main office renewed the solidarity researchers felt with their far-flung friends and co-workers, and reassured them that their problems were recognized and understood. Interim conferences on field problems, bringing the field staff together at regular intervals, were also considered important sources of renewed enthusiasm.<sup>11</sup>

### Conclusion

Reflecting on the performance of our interviewers not merely during the termination conference but also during their months in the field, we find one conclusion inescapable; namely, that the key to success in an enterprise like this is the possession of a certain pleasant proficiency. This happy combina-

<sup>10</sup> The subject of accurate reporting is treated in greater detail in *LMBBN*, pp. 104-105.

<sup>11</sup> A fuller account of supervision and field support procedures, especially those designed to keep morale high, is given in *LMBBN*, pp. 93-97. An elaboration of arrangements for compensation, and in particular the explanation of how payment was geared to performance, may be found in pages 86-87 of the same publication.

tion derives, in turn, from a number of convictions and skills that all or most team members seem to have had.

Their task demanded every ounce of energy they could command. But they were convinced that to meet the challenge was well worth the effort it took. The task required an intelligent grasp of myriad details. Nonetheless, because the team's role had been clearly defined and carefully taught, they were sure they could do what was expected of them. In other words, they believed in their jobs and their own ability to do them.

Nor was this a delusion. They really were a highly skilled group. However, their skills did not stop at familiarity with the research process. Beyond this, they had a much more basic preparation for the job they undertook. They excelled in the ability to get on well and effectively with all kinds of people. In this they were not very different from most Filipinos of our acquaintance, but they made model field researchers.

The lesson we learn is that one cannot plead proficiency as an excuse for unpleasantness; the two can co-occur. The unpleasant professional is, in the final analysis, a second rater.



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