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The Shuttle Box of Subsistence Attitudes

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The Impact of Modernization in the Philippines

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Although they make up more than fifty percent of the world's people, peasants have received relatively little attention from social scientists. Because they live in large villages and towns and because they have commercial and social contact with cities, peasants are bypassed by many anthropologists who prefer an isolated group so that they can have a clearer idea of the total pattern of social interaction of their subject population. Psychologists and sociologists have given little attention to peasants because peasant groups are usually too far from our classrooms, and because they are often unable to fill out our questionnaires even in their own dialect, or respond to our interviews in ours. Neither governments nor social scientists can continue to ignore them, however, since peasants are in the forefront of the population explosion, the revolution of rising expectations and, if you please, the expectation of rising revolutions. We shall be concerned with aspects of peasant behavior which function in ways to maintain their poverty-ridden status and which restrict the extent to which peasants are able to gain the better things in life which they see in the cities.

In contrast to pre-literate or primitive peoples, peasants are usually participants in one of the world's major religions: Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, or in the case of Latin America and the Philippines, Christianity. Furthermore, they have given up tribal costumes, they usually manage a couple years of school, and they carry on their transactions for money rather than by barter. A western visitor is reminded of the extremely poor in our own society and is tempted to think of peasants with the

same concepts and expectations. In many cases, however, peasants are not like the extremely poor in America. They are not excluded from the larger society because of racial or ethnic factors; they speak like and look like the industrialized citizens of the cities. When they move to the city, as many do, they often succeed in making a transition to an industrial style of life. Their family structure is strong and intact so that there is little of the alienation, anomie and lack of social control which may appear in extremely poor groups in industrialized countries. In the case of Filipinos who migrate to the United States, even those from peasant backgrounds make a remarkably satisfactory adjustment to an urban, industrial pattern of living. Many of us entrust ourselves to their care when we enter an American hospital, a sure indication that someone is convinced that they have entered the modern world.

In this paper I would like to describe a constellation of attitudes associated with a subsistence style of life and propose an egalitarian motive which has many of the properties of avoidance learning and which may bring some order out of contradictory observations. From this we may be able to deduce some steps which might increase the effectiveness of action programs calculated to bring about social and economic development. The research on which this paper is based was done in the Philippines.

The Philippine Setting

The Philippines shares a great many similarities, economic and historic, with many other developing countries. It is located in the tropics; the majority of the citizens are engaged in food production in agriculture or fishing; average income is low with a distribution skewed so that a few are wealthy and the rest are below the mean; industries are small and oriented to processing or assembling for the immediate local market. The Philippines was governed by Spain for 300 years and

by the United States for half a century. As is the case with many new nations, the Filipinos achieved political independence after World War II. Some remarkable changes occurred in the 1960's with the arrival of transistor radios and television and the development of air travel. Rural communities, where three quarters of the nation lives, were brought into much closer contact with cities, particularly Manila, the source of modern ideas and manufactured goods, and much that embodied or symbolized a better life.

Americans helped to establish a nationwide system of schools, beginning shortly after they conquered the islands at the turn of the century. As a result of this policy, more than half of adult Filipinos are literate and the use of one of the world's major languages, English, is widespread. The infrastructure of human resources in the Philippines is developed better than in most emerging nations. In spite of her human resources, the Philippines is not developing as rapidly as Filipinos or outsiders would like to see. With conditions of education and communication satisfied, with a central government in control of the whole nation, and with at least modest agricultural and other resources, the country should be moving ahead more rapidly than appears to be the case. There are many reasons for this slow development: the extensive damage of World War II, a population growing at 3.5 percent per year, the island structure which makes communications difficult and costly, and the history of foreign occupation during which the economy developed as a supplier of raw materials. Even with these handicaps, however, there is much that could be done at the village level which would improve the level of living for all, steps which would not require outside capital. Because we Americans debate foreign assistance expenditures so much we come to believe

that development is dependent on outside funds. We lose sight of the fact that development can be influenced by decisions and actions taken within the community. Individuals and families can take steps which will enhance or deplete their resources and these individual decisions are frequently determined by social psychological factors within the group.

I would like to outline some of these processes as we have observed them in the rural Philippines. Similar processes probably operate in other developing countries as well. It appears to us that a set of attitudes--a readiness to respond in certain ways and a direction of behavior--characterizes many of the social interactions of rural Filipinos. There appears to be behavior motivated to reduce inequalities, to maintain good feelings between neighbors and to make sure that no one perishes from hunger or lack of other basic necessities. This constellation of attitudes functions in a way to inhibit the economic development of the community since it restricts the increase of the total supply of goods which the group might produce.

Observed behavior patterns

I would like to describe a series of observations which prompted my formulation since these are the data I have. In contrast to most presentations on attitudes, I do not have scales, nor evidence of change on scales; all I have is behavior.

A number of us have just completed a series of studies of modernization in the Philippines. In addition to my own material I shall rely heavily on that of David and Cristina Szanton, anthropologists who studied the fishing industry and the public market in a town in the central Philippines. Our own work was directed at four communities in the Tagalog-speaking area near Manila. The communities selected were 50, 100, 200, and 400

kilometers from Manila since a major independent variable in our study was exposure to modernizing influences.

For example, the most distant town was on the coast of an island south of Manila. The island had a north-south ridge of mountains reaching up to 6,000 feet which effectively isolated the narrow eastern and western coastal plains. Until the 1920's the population had remained small but it grew quickly after malaria was controlled. Logs provided the first livelihood, and after the forests were removed the people tried to grow bananas on a commercial basis. Defeated by recurrent typhoons, they have turned to coconuts. As the forests have been cut up the slopes of the mountains, a few entrepreneurs have begun to raise cattle at the higher altitudes. We also studied people in a barrio, or rural cluster of houses, outside the town but still on the plain, using a standard interview and participant observation techniques. The community was on rolling land which was planted in coconuts which had reached the age of bearing. The people also grew corn, and some rice where the land was level enough to collect water during the rainy season. Although much of the land was owned by one family, the tenancy situation was relatively benevolent; neither tenant nor landlord was making enough to lead either to try to grasp a greater share.

In our research we were concerned with differences in attitudes associated with access to modernizing influences (distance from Manila), sex, and social class. In our preliminary work we encountered a serious problem of response bias--peasants are even more eager to please than are sophomores. We coped with this problem by posing alternatives equated for desirability. The results of our 4x2x2 analysis showed no differences associated with sex, virtually none with distance from Manila, but considerable

differences associated with social and economic factors (Guthrie, 1970).

It was not a case, however, that landowners held modern attitudes and peasants traditional; both tended to choose the modern alternatives.

It was this considerable disparity between the modernity of attitudes espoused and the current style of living and technology which prompted the present analysis. What factors prevent rural Filipinos from achieving a level of living commensurate with their knowledge and attitudes?

Here are some of the observations on which I base my inferences:

1. A school teacher and his family began to grow vegetables at their home and to establish vegetable plots at the school, plots which the children tended. Neighbors came, or sent their youngsters, to ask for help--a share of the vegetables--as soon as they were ready for harvest. Other neighborhood children helped themselves. As soon as the school year was over, people who lived near the school destroyed the fence so that pigs could eat the vegetables from the school plots. The teacher reduced his own garden plot and continued the plots at the school only because the government required schools to do so.

2. A woman kept three native hens under her house, feeding them scraps of food from the house and permitting them to forage in the vicinity of the house. The hens laid a couple dozen eggs a year, most of which were hatched to supply fighting cocks and chickens to eat on special occasions. She was fully aware that improved breeds would lay five to ten times as many eggs but she kept her present flock because, "They are as many as I can watch. They roost high in the trees where no one can reach them at night. If I had purebreds, people would ask for them in the day and steal them at night. This way they can see that I have none to spare."

3. In another community an ambitious farmer had purchased a pedigreed boar in order to improve the quality of his hogs. One morning, shortly after he brought it to his piggery, he found it with its throat slashed from ear to ear.

4. A particularly perceptive Peace Corps volunteer, Albert Bradford, pointed out a Filipino expression which was used quite commonly in his place: "He will be brought down." Whenever anyone prospered or appeared to be progressing more rapidly than his neighbors this folk saying was heard. When President Kennedy was assassinated the townspeople grieved but explained the catastrophe by referring to the principle that anyone who goes up will surely be reduced. In the face of this outlook, individuals felt obliged to deny their own effort, insisting that their economic achievements were a matter of luck and that their successes were undeserved.

5. In one of our communities a man wished to open a savings account at a recently established bank. At great inconvenience, however, he opened his account in another town in order to avoid the problems which he anticipated if others learned that he had some savings. The demand for help would be based on the supplicant's need and the other's surplus. To fail to lend under these circumstances would be to brand oneself as proud and callous, and would lay oneself open to active resentment expressed in gossip, theft, and even the threat of physical damage.

6. A sentence completion technique developed by Phillips for use in Thailand (1966) yielded many interesting insights with a Philippine population (Guthrie and Azores, 1969). Of particular interest to us here was the emphasis on pakikisama, or skill in getting along with people. One was expected to be sensitive to the feelings of both peers and subordinates. One must never behave in a proud way, implying that one is superior

to others. Even the most menial of employees demands consideration by virtue of his own humanity. Supervision then becomes the art of gentle persuasion in which the manager avoids drawing attention to differences in status and is especially careful not to humiliate when he points out mistakes. Furthermore, a good employer is concerned for the personal welfare of his worker and that of the worker's family in a blend of paternalism and sharing. Power relationships, in general, are hazardous since the exercise of power yields pleasure, but there may be a great deal of resentment from those upon whom the power falls. In many situations, relationships are personalized, with the individual using the power of his office as though it were his own and with the subordinate interpreting all directions as personal rather than as expressions of a duty of the office-holder.

7. In her study of markets Cristina Szanton (In press) observed that a fish vendor who bought a good supply at a good price was expected to share his merchandise with other vendors who did not buy enough to support a day's sales. In this way a reasonably profitable supply might be divided into three or four parts and each vendor would make only enough to stay in business. While individual vendors acknowledged that this sometimes provided protection against losses, they were quite aware that good profits were lost when they sold half of their day's supply at their cost. Fistfights might break out where male vendors refused help to other vendors who had been less enterprising or fortunate. Female vendors of vegetables and corn shared in much the same way. Any woman who refused to share was the object of righteous indignation and angry comments.

8. In his study of commercial fishing, David Szanton (1970) found that small entrepreneurs set out early each morning to meet the returning fisherman to buy a couple of cases of fish directly from the boat crew.

In doing so they deprived the boat owner of his share if he was not on the boat to protect his own interests. Even if the owner was there, the small boat owner would plead the need to make a living, the right to survive, and would often succeed in making a transaction with the boat owner. The owner, or the crew, could not resist the expectation that they share their catch with another who also "has the right to live."

Meanwhile, the crew and the operator of the fishing outfit show a similar process of dividing the catch into so many portions that no one has a surplus. The crew is larger than necessary; the fisherman take some of the catch as their payment and additional fish without the owner's knowledge. The captain and the owner pad the expenses and understate the value of the fish so that there is little apparent profit to share with the fishermen. The fishermen make only enough to survive from one day to the next to the extent of reducing the amount they eat when the full moon makes night fishing poor or impossible.

9. A Filipino acquaintance returned from the United States where she had been studying for three years. In the course of her time abroad she had picked up colloquial American English and had become much more fluent than she was when she left. This, incidentally, was one of the purposes of her going abroad. Upon her return she was teased for her new speech patterns and called various humiliating or embarrassing names until she reverted to her former style of speaking with its limited vocabulary, errors of construction, and local intonation pattern. Only then was she acceptable because she was not getting ahead of the others.

10. There are a number of expressions one hears among rural or fishing people which express the idea that one is getting by. Dilihensiya

and remedios na lang express the idea that one is succeeding each day in making it to the next and that this is what one might expect. Occurring with this low margin of safety is a pattern of extensive hospitality to strangers. I was, for example, very uncomfortable when a rural tenant farmer killed his only hen to feed me, a visitor. To have failed to feed me would have been considered inhospitable; to save the chicken would have been an act of greed. He will not starve, of course, because he can ask a neighbor for a hen to start a new flock, continuing his relationship of sharing with his neighbor. One gets by not by accumulating material resources and savings but by maintaining and enhancing one's status in the community through sharing any surplus that exists. Security lies in having a good reputation as one who helps others when he has more than he needs.

So much for observations. What we find is a situation in which the vast majority of people live from one day to the next with no savings, even with an insufficient supply of food for the next meal. Children gather "food for the day" in the shallow water along the shore, or dig for clams on the sandy beach. Children are stunted in growth and adults experience recurrent periods of hunger. There has been sufficient exposure to education and to media of mass communication so that the people know that life is different for others, including other Filipinos. One is forced to raise the visitor's question, "Why don't they . . .?"

These observations were selected to illustrate facets of a social process which might be called the subsistence attitude or the egalitarian motive. The subsistence attitude, in which one plans ahead but provides

only enough for the day, is maintained, I believe, by the fact that any surplus is more or less immediately surrendered to acquaintances who claim a greater need. The egalitarian motive persists because sharing reduces the intensity of anger and resentment which arise when one person gets more than others and refuses to share it.

How, one may ask, is this pattern of life experienced by those who participate in it. Since peasants produce few social scientists or philosophers, one can hardly expect an elaborate philosophy. They did, however, tell us a good deal when we asked them about their town, especially what was good or bad about it in comparison with other towns.

A town was good if it offered an opportunity to earn a living. It was good if there was law and order and if the mayor required the police to protect the people. A town was good where all the people are equal and where no person or family feels proud and superior to others, even if they do have more money. A town can be proud of a son who has been industrious and has prospered, provided that he has not forgotten his roots.

Not only is goodwill necessary for him but so is political power or influence to protect achievements and possessions. All important families hold public office or sponsor candidates in order to protect themselves against laws or regulations which discriminate against them. Even the formal apparatus of government is brought into the struggle between families and factions. When the balance of power is tilted the winners are not content merely to win but they seek to demolish their competitors. The vanquished survive by joining the victors. An oligarchy in each town or village is not maintained, however, because factions spring up within the victorious group, reconstituting competing factions with a slightly different

membership. So we see at the political level many processes which parallel those I have described between individuals.

The picture we get is of a society where individuals behave toward one another in ways such that the total supply of goods and services generated is barely enough to keep people alive. There is little incentive for individual members to increase their own contributions even though as individuals they know how, and they would enjoy having more than they have at the present time.

Peasants and poverty

When we think about peasants in developing countries we are reminded of the poor in our own cities and the pioneers we read about as school children. Unlike many of our urban poor, peasants are not members of ethnic or racial minority groups. They constitute the overwhelming majority of the population and they are not excluded for reasons of color, religion or ancestry, as is often the case in the United States. In contrast to pioneers, peasants do not have expanses of land waiting for them; the little available land is "grabbed" by those who know the right procedure and the right people. Although many pioneers almost certainly were peasants in their homeland, they broke out of the peasant bind when they left Europe and prospered to a degree that had not been possible before. Notice that, in the transition, they did not obtain additional education; no one provided the infrastructure; communication probably got worse rather than better; and the government administrative structure under which they lived was probably no more sophisticated in America than it had been in Europe. They did not have the conditions for development which we have been told are essential for developing countries.

The same is true of many who migrate from one country to another within the developing world, including the Chinese. For a century Cantonese and other south Chinese have migrated to Southeast Asia, making the transition from peasants to merchants quickly and completely without any outside assistance or special training. Peasants, pioneers and the urban poor share a number of characteristics but we cannot equate them beyond the fact that all may be exceedingly poor.

Peasant attitudes

As we indicated at the beginning, although they are the most numerous social group on earth, peasants have received attention from only a relatively small number of social scientists. Since peasants produce, or at least retain, few poets or novelists in their number we are also denied a contribution to their understanding from the humanities. Fortunately, experienced anthropologists such as Redfield (1960), Lewis (1960), Foster (1967), Nash (1966), and Wolf (1966) have moved the locus of their research from exotic hill tribes to the heavily populated peasant lowlands. In addition, other social scientists, including Inkeles (1966), Lerner (1958), Banfield (1958), and Rogers (1959) have inspected aspects of peasant social and economic organizations with particular attention to factors which might affect change. Much of their work has been summarized by Wolf (1966) and by Rogers (1969, Pp. 19-41). According to Rogers the subculture of peasantry has ten central elements:

1. Mutual distrust in interpersonal relations
2. Perceived limited goods--there is only so much to go around and the total supply cannot be increased

3. Dependence on and hostility toward government authority
4. Familism
5. Lack of innovativeness
6. Fatalism
7. Limited aspiration
8. Lack of deferred gratification
9. Limited view of the world--little knowledge of the world

beyond the confines of their village or neighborhood

10. Low empathy--inability to imagine themselves in some other role.

We have observed that many of these qualities are present to various degrees in Philippine rural people. The problem with such a list, however, is that one is tempted to equate description with explanation. Peasants do not try new ways to make a living because they lack innovativeness; they use up any gain immediately since they are unable to defer gratification. It is clear that this list was prepared by an outsider concerned that peasants functioned in a way to keep themselves in poverty. This analysis does not, however, suggest steps which might be taken to modify the culture of peasants so that social and economic development could be promoted. The remedy most commonly offered for this bill of complaints against peasants is education, apparently in the belief that educated people would be smart enough not to treat one another as peasants do. The unfortunate fact, however, in the Philippines at least, is that virtually the same pattern of jealousy, lack of cooperation, and resulting low productivity occurs even in the education establishment, and among rural people who have obtained an education and returned to the rural areas. Many of these qualities beset the highest levels of government in the developing countries. Even the wealthy are rich peasants.

The most significant attempt to analyze this constellation of attitudes and behavior is that of Foster who begins by observing,

"The members of every society share a common cognitive orientation which is, in effect, an un verbalized, implicit expression of their understanding of the 'rules of the game' of living imposed by their social, natural and supernatural universe. . . basic premises and sets of assumptions normally neither recognized nor questioned which structure and guide behavior in much the same way grammatical rules unrecognized by most people structure and guide their linguistic forms." (1965, p. 293).

Foster continues that peasant behavior can be understood in terms of the "Image of Limited Good." This cognitive orientation, or basic un verbalized view of the world, leads peasants to act and feel in certain consistent and predictable ways.

". . . broad areas of peasant behavior are patterned in such fashion as to suggest that peasants view their social, economic, and natural universes--their total environment--as one in which all of the desired things in life such as land, wealth, health, friendship and love, manliness and honor, respect and status, power and influence, security and safety, exist in finite quantity and are always in short supply, as far as the peasant is concerned. Not only do these and all other "good things" exist in finite and limited quantities, but in addition there is no way directly within peasant power to increase the available quantities." (p. 296, Foster's italics)

Foster follows with many examples of the operation of the implicit belief that not only are physical goods in a fixed, limited supply but so are love and honor as well. This belief is not as fixed, however, as the above quotations might imply, because we find him saying at the end of his paper, "Show the peasant that initiative is profitable, and that it will not be met by negative sanctions, and he acquires it in short order." (p. 310).

Some attitudes of rural Filipinos

When we asked peasants about themselves, however, we got a somewhat different answer, different than Rogers' list of ten characteristics and with no mention of an Idea of Limited Good. Our Filipino respondents had some rather clear ideas about the qualities of a good community; understanding these qualities enables us to see some of the processes which may contribute to the retardation of development. A good community is one in which:

1. The citizens have pakikisama. This virtue among Filipinos refers to positive skills in interpersonal behavior--charm, hospitality, awareness of the others' feelings and ability to make the other person feel important and worthwhile.
2. People are respectful toward older family members and neighbors, and aware of their obligations.
3. There is a good mayor who is able to maintain law and order by driving out lawless elements and who is able to obtain pork barrel expenditures for the town from the national government.
4. There are opportunities to make a living through such activities as buy-and-sell in the local market.

5. There is entertainment in the town in the form of a movie theater and possibly some cabarets; but gambling joints and prostitutes are bad for the town. (Guthrie, 1970, Pp. 35-41).

When we asked for the characteristics of a good person our respondents mentioned helpfulness more frequently than any other characteristics. Where the majority are very poor, and where there are virtually no formally organized sources of help, each family must count on its neighbors and friends when needs arise due to sickness, unemployment, or a pressing ceremonial function such as a wedding or a funeral. The most undesirable characteristic was snobbishness, looking down on those with less money. The best models for children were men who were hardworking, sincere, gentlemanly, courteous to older people, obedient to parents and intelligent; and women who were hardworking, industrious, modest, religious, courteous, obedient and home-loving.

Peasants have ideals too, although we have not paid much attention to them, and their ideals and their day-to-day behavior often do not coincide. Many of their behavior patterns are a realistic adjustment to their social and material environment. There is not much point in accumulating a great deal of food in a tropical environment. Food spoils; friendships keep. One's goods can be stolen but not one's good name or one's favors due. With no security in old age one is obligated to have many children and to raise them with a strong sense of family obligation. With the ever-present danger of hunger one must also get along with his neighbors.

What we have now is three perspectives on peasants: the social orientists' characterization which is calculated to account for their

backwardness, the peasants' own view which points out the satisfactions of their way of life and, at the beginning of this paper, some observations of behavior patterns which suggest that peasants frequently behave toward one another in ways that keep them at an extremely low level of material possessions. Many actions which would increase the overall supply of goods and services in a community arouse reactions in others which are aversive to the actor, while other activities are reinforced which act as restraints on increased productivity. The reasons peasants or social scientists offer for these restraints to development do not matter for the moment. The importance of these practices which function as reinforcement contingencies can be assessed only if we change them.

Changes in attitudes

Fortunately for our purposes, such changed situations can be found and, when contingencies are altered, peasant behavior is replaced by that typical of industrial peoples. The changes are dramatic and quick because peasants have been exposed through various media to the industrial style of life; they know how it works. Filipinos who move to Manila and, with an education, enter the business or industrial life of the city are able to function very effectively. They often succeed in carrying on two styles of life, if they retain land and ties in the provinces, even to the extent of conducting the affairs of city life in English while transactions with tenants are in a dialect. Even more complete is the transition of a Filipino who comes to the United States in a professional role such as physician, nurse or engineer. They may become very homesick but they encounter little difficulty coping with most phases of American society in a way which is typical

of members of an industrial society. One may say that their education has made a difference; but their classmates who returned to the barrios and provincial towns functioned equally well in those traditional settings.

The peasants' way of life is established and maintained by its consequences; change those consequences, or the factors that control them, and the behavior will change. The persistence of peasant traits is due to the persistence of pervasive, environmental factors such as the threats of hunger, crop failure, epidemics, or powerful landlords. In the face of such threats sharing of meager possessions was essential to survival. This ethos has been preserved, and by continuing to act as though an emergency were present, peasants maintain a state of shortage, a low-grade emergency which keeps behavior appropriate to an emergency at a high state of strength. Furthermore, as is the case with other avoidance behavior, peasant behaviors are difficult to extinguish when alternative behaviors cannot be elicited. Once elicited, however, the alternative behaviors increase rapidly and avoidance activities extinguish quickly. Having moved to the city, peasants find it impossible to return to the countryside. They say it is sad or boring. In our analysis we would say they can no longer continue the avoidance behavior of peasant life.

Those who continue to live in rural areas, however, do not change because their social or material environment has remained constant. They continue the pattern of mutual distrust, dependence on the family, fatalism, low innovativeness and limited aspiration. They act in many ways as though the total supply of goods available to them were limited and that another's prosperity caused their deprivation. Within this pattern of attitudes there develops a set of interpersonal activities which can be called leveling. To make clear that it is not merely a

deficiency in the achievement motive, we would like to refer to this strongly motivated, enforced sharing as the egalitarian motive. This motive operates so that an individual feels threatened when another person is successful and ashamed when he himself is more successful than others. Since he has learned that he has little control over his fate he denies that his success could be due to his own efforts, insisting that it is a matter of luck. In doing so, he may deflect somewhat the envy of others.

Discussing Filipino values, Lynch (1964) pointed out that associated with this view of the world is the belief that any success should be shared. There is also an intense reaction against anyone who declines to share or who acts as though he were superior to others because he has more than they. Furthermore, not willing to accept full responsibility for his successes or failures, he is willing to take poorly calculated risks because he sees outcomes as beyond his control. Finally, a neighbor who has a good crop, or a good catch of fish, or some extra chickens is under strong obligation to share his luck rather than hoard his surplus as though he felt superior to other people.

It is within this cognitive-emotional configuration that the leveling activities occur which I described earlier. Peasants act toward one another in ways which work against the overall improvement of their condition. Lynch (1961) labelled this process a sociostat when he observed it among Filipino college students in Manila. Nash, from whom I have taken the term leveling, has described in his report on peasant and primitive economies processes which protect the values and norms of a society.

"Leveling mechanisms are a way of forcing the expenditure of accumulated resources or capital into channels that are not

necessarily economic or productive. Every society has some form of leveling mechanism, but in primitive and peasant economies leveling mechanisms play a crucial role in inhibiting aggrandizement by individuals or by special social groups. Leveling mechanisms may take various forms: forced loans to relatives or co-residents; a large feast following economic success; a rivalry of expenditure like the potlatch of the Northwest Coast Indians in which large amounts of valuable goods were destroyed; the ritual levies consequent on holding office in civil and religious hierarchies in Meso-America; or the giveaways of horses and goods on the Plains Indians. Most small-scale economies have a way of scrambling wealth to inhibit reinvestment in technical advance, and this prevents crystallization of class lines on an economic base." (1966, Pp. 35-36).

The emphasis in Nash is, however, on processes which go on between larger social groups and on the disposal of surpluses rather than on factors which inhibit the production of a surplus by an individual or a family.

An interpretation

One cannot help asking how this apparently self-defeating behavior came about and what processes maintain it in the face of apparent opportunities to change. Many observers have pointed out that such peasant conservatism is a fundamentally sound strategy for people who have few reserves. The old agricultural practices usually yield enough to get by; a new crop or cultivation technique might increase the harvest,

but it might fail completely. In the latter event, which is frequent enough to be widely feared, the peasant cultivator is in dire straits with no reserves to see him through to the next season when he can go back to the reliable way of doing things. His margin of safety is so close that he cannot risk unproven, unfamiliar ventures.

But the leveling activities, or the egalitarian motive, I have described is another matter. I believe that leveling can be understood as a form of avoidance behavior. The people of the rural Philippines, and peasant groups the world over, have been subject throughout history to events which have seriously threatened their existence. They have survived only because their meagre resources have been shared. What little food there was took care of everyone. In this circumstance the image was literal; to the extent that some members hoarded, others starved.

Every year in many parts of the Philippines there is a period of weeks or months when food is scarce. In rice-growing areas this occurs in the interval before the harvest when the last stores of rice have been depleted. In fishing communities there are months when fish migrate to other waters; and there is a full moon every month which takes away a week of fishing because the boats' lights cannot compete with the light of the moon. In addition to these predictable events there are typhoons which sweep in from the Pacific inundating the rice and destroying the coconut and banana harvest for many months. These storms also flatten their houses, destroy the roads and boats, and loosen slides which take away houses, terraces, and lives. In the period which follows, people must help one another, sharing whatever may be left. Anyone who holds back in such an emergency is a most despicable person.

Finally, epidemics have, until recently, ravaged the countryside. Up to the beginning of the present century cholera, small pox and malaria were well known and feared. Even today a form of cholera strikes the more vulnerable. With resistance lowered by poor nutrition both children and adults fell victim to tuberculosis. The plea for money to pay for treatment goes to relatives, landlords and government officials, anyone who may have means or influence to get help for the one who is in danger. In short, there are frequent emergencies in which a man looks to his neighbors for help and makes it the greatest virtue to be helpful. In these circumstances it is not shameful to ask of another, because each has a right to survive. The needy one avoids disaster by asking, and the fortunate person avoids the anger of the supplicant and the scorn of his friends by giving. Because each individual has a right to live, a person in great need is justified in stealing if no other course is open. One form of sharing or another enables an individual or a family to avoid the consequences of the frequent and severe emergencies they face. The perseveration of sharing after the outside danger is gone is to be expected from research on avoidance responses under controlled experimental conditions.

Avoidance learning

We have outlined a set of persistent behavior patterns which restrict or eliminate an increase in the gross municipal product. Leveling activity, or enforced sharing is widely accepted as proper and is enacted under many different circumstances. Leveling frequently disappears when an individual or a family moves to a different living environment. We believe that we can increase our understanding of leveling, and possibly develop some methods of altering its more anti-development

manifestations, by examining some of the psychological research on avoidance learning, particularly that of Solomon and his students (Solomon and Wynne, 1954).

Briefly, it has been found that an animal such as a dog or a rat can be trained to move from one end to the other end of a box when he hears a sound which precedes the onset of a shock administered through the wires in the floor of the end where he is standing. Having moved to the other end he must return to the first end to avoid the shock when he hears the sound again. Appropriately named a shuttle box, the apparatus enables an experimenter to study the behavior changes of an animal as it learns to shuttle back and forth. This learning presents a few problems for learning theorists who want to avoid the anthropomorphism of saying that the animal knows a shock is coming and moves in order to avoid it. But these problems are as nothing compared with the problem which arises when the shock is discontinued and the animal continues to shuttle back and forth at the sound without any sign of extinction.

The dogs received a few intense shocks during the acquisition trials; the shock was turned off; but dogs went on jumping, giving as many as 600 avoidances without any indication of extinction. The experimenters gave up before the animals quit! Furthermore, with occasional reinforcements avoidance reactions remained at maximum strength.

Speculating about the significance of the age at which traumatic events have occurred Solomon and Wynne suggest:

" . . . early, severe traumata are likely to produce classically conditioned emotional responses of a lasting sort. Later severe traumata are more likely to produce a variety of instrumental acts of a high strength" (1954, p. 380).

The traumatic experiences, to which we have referred, occur at the later stage since infants are, as a rule, protected and unaware of the danger which adults face. Concerning threatening experiences after infancy, Solomon and Wynne suggest:

"Later traumata will have somewhat different consequences. Here we can expect quick instrumental action, so that the repetition of CS-US pairings would be greatly cut down. We would expect a lot of conditioned avoidance reactions of a fairly discrete nature to develop, but no extremely strong classically conditioned anxiety reactions in most cases" (1954, p. 380, their italics).

This description fits the behavior we have been observing very closely: threatening experiences in later childhood and adulthood, which are reduced by the instrumental acts of sharing, persist after the danger has passed without manifestations of marked anxiety. In the experimental setting and in the countryside they become more stereotyped with the passage of time; in the lab the latencies of avoidance responses reduce over time, and in the field people's leveling activities appear as quickly as anyone gets just a little ahead of his peers.

Solomon, Kamin and Wynne (1953) explored the efficacy of various extinction procedures when extinction did not appear after hundreds of trials, at the rate of 10 trials each day, in which no shock has been administered. The experimenters raised the barriers between the halves of the shuttle box so that the dog had to exert considerable effort to jump from one section to the other. After 490 trials of this sort they electrified the opposite compartment so that the dog jumped

into shock from a compartment in which he would not be shocked if he would only stay. After 100 additional trials the dog still jumped regularly. They continue:

"As he jumped on each trial, he gave a sharp anticipatory yip which turned into a yelp when he landed on the electrified grid in the opposite compartment of the shuttlebox. We then increased the duration of the shock to 10 seconds and ran the dog for 50 more trials. Latencies and behavior did not change. Evidently punishment for jumping was ineffective in extinguishing the jumping responses" (Solomon, Kamin and Wynne, 1953).

Proceeding with the same dog, they placed a glass barrier on trials 4-7 so that the dog bumped his nose if he tried to leave the compartment. As before, he was shocked on trials 1-3 and 8-10 if he jumped into the other compartment. On the 8th - 10th trials of the first day the glass barrier was used the dog did not attempt to jump when the CS was presented.

"At long last, after 647 extinction trials, the dog failed to jump in the presence of the CS alone. On the following day, the dog jumped into shock with short latencies on the first three trials, thus showing complete spontaneous recovery.

He did not jump on trials 8-10" (Solomon, et al 1953).

On five subsequent days with no glass barrier he jumped only once. Extinction was, as the authors observed, an all-or-none affair.

The results obtained with this dog were replicated with others. Of 23 dogs, trained to a criterion of 10 avoidances on 10 trials,

13 showed no extinction after 200 ordinary extinction trials and the other 10 dogs who were carried to only 10 extinctions continued to jump without fail. The glass barrier brought about extinction in only 2 of 9 dogs over 10 days or 100 trials. The shock procedure resulted in extinction in only 3 of 13 dogs over a similar 10-day period.

Combining shock and barrier, however, eliminated jumping for 14 of 16 dogs.

In later research (Maier, Seligman and Solomon 1969), Solomon and his colleagues found that if a dog was given a number of shocks from which he could not escape, and then placed in the shuttle box within 24 hours he would not learn to avoid by jumping to the other half of the box when the sound was presented prior to the onset of shock in the floor of the half in which he happened to be. The authors report:

...a dog which has experienced inescapable shocks prior to avoidance training soon stops running and howling and remains silent until shock terminates. The dog does not cross the barrier and escape from shock. Rather it seems to give up and passively accept the shock. On succeeding trials, the dog continues to fail to make escape movements (Maier et al 1969, pp. 319-20).

If several days elapsed between the inescapable shock and the shuttle box experience the dog learned to escape as rapidly as did unshocked controls. Apparently the inescapable shock will lead to the development of learned helplessness only if the dog is called upon to learn to escape immediately after he has had the experience of stress from which he could do nothing to escape. As in the earlier experiments the researchers sought to modify the persistent behavior:

(They) reasoned that forcibly dragging the dog from side to side in the shuttle box, in such a way that the dog's changing compartments terminated shock, might effectively expose the dog to the response-reinforcement contingency. This was the case. The experimenter pulled three chronically helpless dogs back and forth across the shuttle box with long leashes. This was done during CS and shock, while the barrier was absent. After being pulled across the center of the shuttle box (and thus terminating shock and CS) 20, 35, and 50 times, respectively, each dog began to respond on his own. Then the barrier was replaced, and the subject continued to escape and avoid. The recovery from helplessness was complete and lasting.

The behavior of animals during "leash pulling" was interesting. At the beginning of the procedure, a great deal of force had to be exerted to pull the dog across the center of the shuttle box. Less and less force was needed as training progressed. A stage was typically reached in which only a slight nudge of the leash was required to impel the dog into action. Finally, the subject initiated its own response, and thereafter failure to escape was very rare. The initial problem seemed to be one of "getting the dog going." (pp. 329-30)

Other techniques, such as calling to the dog from the safe side of the box, dropping food on the safe side, kicking the dangerous side of the box were of no avail. The dogs did not learn to escape until they had been tugged into the correct response and reinforced (by escaping the shock) for doing so.

Solomon's research may help us to understand peasants, who caught in a social shuttle box, continue to behave as though the shock was still on. The persistence of their behavior is inherent in the circumstances

in which it was acquired. Modification of their behavior requires that they have the opportunity to acquire other avoidance strategies and that they become desensitized to the situations which prompt the jumping so insistently. These conditions apparently are met when the peasant experiences a physical and social move to an industrial setting. Much more study is needed to devise means of changing his behavior in his home community. The first step is to get a clearer picture of why it continues in spite of its obvious self-defeating results.

There are two qualities of avoidance responses which bear especially on the behavior we seek to understand: Avoidance responses extinguish very slowly and a single reinforcement restores the response to a high strength after it has been partially extinguished. A period of severe deprivation and threatened extinction is highly disturbing, possibly leading to a condition akin to the dog's learned helplessness. Sharing activities not only reduce the danger for many individuals in the physical sense of making food available, they also reduce the panic. Sharing removes the necessity of developing responses which cope with the recurrent sources of danger. Since the emergency took place within the family and the home territory, there are many cues wherever our peasant turns which have been associated with anxiety-ridden intervals. Under these circumstances anxiety-avoidance responses--forced sharing, and suspicion of anyone who may be getting more than he needs--are likely to occur. Activities which prevent an aversive stimulus are remarkably resistant to extinction. Furthermore, when avoidant responses have been extinguished they can be readily reinstated at high strength by a recurrence of the original aversive experience.

aversive

Human beings, with their symbolic activities demonstrate all of these phenomena. In addition, they learn a good deal by imitation, a process that leads to some of the homogeneity and stereotypy of peasant behavior. It seems likely also that they can reinstate symbolically or vicariously aversive experiences by seeing or hearing about others who are undergoing threat or deprivation. Once avoidance behavior has been acquired the mere execution of it is reinforcing; it extinguishes very slowly in the absence of repeated aversive experiences and it remains at a very high level with the help of occasional aversive episodes. Once he adopts a peasant's defence it takes only an occasional crop failure or typhoon, or maybe just the news of such a disaster to keep him behaving like a peasant.

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ABSTRACT

Many patterns of behavior among rural Filipinos suggest that they behave toward one another in ways which limit any surplus of goods or money which an individual or a family may accumulate. These leveling activities are seen by the participants as being helpful or equal, as sharing, and as not showing off. The patterns do help when there is an emergency, but they limit an overall improvement in the standard of living. Each individual has a "right to survive" but not a "right to get ahead".

An attempt is made to interpret the persistence of subsistence living patterns in terms of avoidance behavior, following the research of R. L. Solomon. The experiments of Solomon show that once a dog has learned an action which enables it to avoid a shock it continues the behavior even though the danger has passed. Furthermore, if the dog receives shocks from which he cannot escape he will show a "trained helplessness" in which he fails to learn the responses which would enable him to escape subsequent shocks.

It is suggested that many of the apparently self-defeating actions of Philippine rural people can be understood in terms of avoidance learning and that remedial steps can be suggested from Solomon's research.