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THE RELATIONSHIP OF ECONOMY TO COMMUNITY

Kathy Long Holland

Research Proposal

The value system of a society defines and grades the ends actors seek. The ends sought in the economic sphere must be consonant with, or complementary to, goals in other spheres. Economic activity derives its meaning from the norms of the society, and people engage in economic activity for rewards often extrinsic to the economy itself. In any community (society) the norms and values used to define a resource, a commodity, control over certain goods and services, the distributive process, and standards of economic behavior are norms governing most social interaction. The economy is not so structurally differentiated that one set of values holds there and other sets hold in other contexts. In the language of social science, the economy is "embedded" in the culture and does not exhibit an ethic counterposed to the regnant value system.

The functional interdependence of economy and society stems from the fact that the same persons are actors in the economic, social structural, political, environmental and cognitive systems.

The causal interaction of economy and society pivots on the provision of facilities. For given forms of social structure a given variety and volume of goods and services are required, and if there are shifts in facilities available there will be shifts in the rest of society. The converse is also logically true; shifts in the social structure will change the volume and variety of goods and services a society produces.

Studies in economic change have shown that modifications in economic activity set up a series of pressures and tensions in the society and culture. The possibilities for the resolution of these pressures and tensions are limited by the situations in which they exist.

Economic systems are one of the most dynamic parts of a society. Economic activity, in the sense of providing facilities for the organization of the rest of society, is one of the most pervasive and determinative aspects of social life. It sets some of the limits within which social structures and cultural patterns may fall.

Problem

During the past semester (Spring 1974) I have been doing fieldwork in a Planned Parenthood Clinic at 3830 Adams Street in Lincoln, Nebraska. All facets of this research have been stimulating; but the economic sphere particularly interests me. When I first started my fieldwork in January 1974 the clinic was a Family Planning Clinic. The change to Planned Parenthood officially took place March 1, 1974, but from the time I entered the community there was an on-going process of culture change in preparation for the actual transition.

From the data that I now have there is only one visible sphere of major change in the transition from Family Planning to Planned Parenthood and this is the economic one.

Family Planning was aimed specifically at the low-income population and was supported primarily (80-82%) by federal funds from the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) and Health, Education and Welfare (HEW) - with the addition of local donations, charges accepted for services rendered¹ and time given by volunteers.

With the change to Planned Parenthood the clinic will cease to receive federal funding this summer (1974). The repercussions of this transition from Federal to local funding is what I propose to study.

Some of the problems to be examined are:

1. How the formal objectives of the clinic will change and how this will affect the organizational hierarchy of the clinic.
2. How the selection criteria for members of the "community" (Planned Parenthood) will change and how interpersonal relationships among the staff will be influenced by this.
3. What the relationship of the clinic to the outside community will be. Since they will be more autonomous and economically freed from the federal government and thus more responsive to community attitudes and needs? What type of image will they try to project (one of social work, strictly medical or as a counseling center) and what attitude will they take concerning publicity?
4. Will their attitude toward patients change?
5. How will they view volunteers?

¹ The amount of this charge was based on the patient's weekly income and the number of individuals supported by this income--"sliding pay scale".

6. Most importantly, how do the relationships between the clinic and the doctors and the clinic and the Family Planning Specialist change?
7. Why do doctors volunteer? What are their motives and benefits?
8. In the political sphere - is the program more or less vulnerable politically since the change from Family Planning to Planned Parenthood?
9. What is the advisory board, how does it operate, who are its members and how do they fit into the community?
10. What are the changes in shared and non-shared cognition among members of the community?

Method

In order to gather the data needed I would propose a one year study. I would remain a volunteer during this time, hopefully on a full time basis (approximately a 30-40 hour week). In doing this, I would continue as a participant-observer of the culture and thereby develop enough rapport and trust to gain access to the advisory board members and the doctors involved, as these are members I have not yet had direct contact with. I would hope to be able to conduct intensive interviews with at least some members.

Another topic of investigation would be the "satellite" clinic which was added when Family Planning changed over to Planned Parenthood. This clinic is now restricted to low income - nonpaying patients and operates only one night a week. If I were doing a one year study I would want to include this satellite clinic in my research. It is located in a church in the low income area of Lincoln rather than at the main clinic.

I would also want to gather information for a comparison of the Omaha and Lincoln Planned Parenthood clinics as I have information at this point in my research that leads me to believe there is a significant difference in how the two clinics are operated. I would also like to obtain information concerning other clinics in the United States and possibly even in the world. Planned Parenthood is a national organization but it appears that each clinic is operated locally and this leads me to believe that you will find no two clinics that are run in the same manner. In order to do this I would also make use of any historical materials dealing with Planned Parenthood.

A Specific Approach for Integration

In looking at the relations between economic and other

societal variables, I feel it may be beneficial to organize my study making use of Parsons and Smelser's (1956) three-level approach:

1. A study should be made of the roles and organizations, that specialize in economic activity paying special attention to sources of recruitment, career patterns, life styles, and role strains. This would also involve looking at the organization of the structure itself, that is analyzing status systems, power and authority relations, patterns of deviance, cliques and coalitions. Finally, the relations among all of these phenomena should be investigated.
2. Relations between the economic structure of society and other structures should be examined. It is important to look at the conditions under which the structure exists, especially the historical conditions.
3. One should consider the economic and other types of social variables as organized into analytic systems which cut across concrete social structures and the relations among these systems.

I feel that this type of study would be a contribution to the field of social and economic anthropology. There are few if any "micro" studies done in complex societies that make use of the ideas and theoretical orientation of economic anthropology. In so doing, I hope that it will be of use to someone else in this area and I look forward to similar studies in the future.

Funding

In order to carry out this study I would apply to the National Institute of Mental Health or some other similar organization for a \$13,000. grant. Since I will be acting as a volunteer during this time I will need \$9,000. to cover living expenses (room, board, car, etc.) and this would allow \$4,000. to cover the following:

1. Travel expenses between the Adams Street clinic and the satellite clinic, travel around Lincoln in order to interview various people, transportation to and from Omaha in order to run my comparison study, and perhaps travel expenses to visit some other Planned Parenthood clinics in the United States and to go to the national headquarters in Washington, D. C.
2. Obtaining books, especially those pertaining to Planned Parenthood specifically.
3. To cover interview lunches.

4. And to cover any other miscellaneous items.

Personal Statement

Choosing a community in which to do fieldwork is a very personal statement about yourself.

The only way to ever really understand fieldwork is to do it and I feel that starting with my own culture has been extremely useful. When you realize the problems of communication and rapport that exist with people of your own culture who speak your own language it makes you acutely aware of the problems that will occur in working in another culture. In this way, I feel it has been a good preparation for further fieldwork.

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