

*Economic Development and Individual Change: A Social-Psychological Study of the Comilla Experiment in Pakistan* by Schuman Howard. (Occasional Papers in International Affairs, Number 15) Cambridge: Centre for International Affairs, Harvard University, 1967. Pp. 59. US\$ 2.00.

Rural East Pakistan is confronted with poverty, population pressures, fragmentation of land, indebtedness and inefficient farming, all of which conspire to depress productivity in rural areas. The Comilla Academy for Rural Development has been working since 1960 on a pilot programme to stimulate productivity through village cooperatives in Kotwali Thana of Comilla district in East Pakistan. Here is a report by an American sociologist who tests the results of the Comilla experiment on individual attitudes and values. He finds fundamental 'modernizing' changes in motivation and value among the villagers in the pilot area.

The basic structure of the Academy programme consists of primary cooperatives at the village level, which are joined to a Central Association, linked to the Academy, and possess outside funds from government and other sources. Members of the primary cooperatives jointly save and borrow money and rent modern machinery, although land remains individually owned. Rather than concentrating on sending extension officers, the programme encourages cooperatives to choose their own leaders for various roles and then attempts to expose these 'natural leaders' to new ideas, values and techniques, which they, in turn, will communicate to others. The programme includes a project on family planning, which is connected with still other projects such as women's education in mutually-reinforcing ways. The various projects undertaken by the Academy give the total programme a comprehensiveness that is supposed to make the average villager, through a series of pressures and incentives, change his methods of farming, his ideas and values.

In order to test the results of the Academy's programme, this book attempts to compare a sample of 51 cultivators drawn from 17 cooperative villages in

Comilla Kotwali Thana with four control samples of 151 cultivators from villages in other thanas of Comilla, Noakhali, Barisal and Mymensingh districts, with respect to some important social psychological characteristics such as belief in the possibility of efficacious change and control of environment, attitudes to birth control, openness to new social experience, aspirations and even verbal abilities. The hypothesis is that the Academy's programme, if successful, should have produced measurable changes in these characteristics of cultivators in cooperative villages. Although no one control sample provides a perfect equivalent of Comilla Kotwali Thana, the selection of four control samples is considered to afford a wide range of comparisons with the cooperative villages, there being no radical differences in the socio-economic characteristics among the five sample areas.

The sampling procedure shows elements of purposive, quota and probability sampling. The respondents are selected from full-time cultivators of 20-30 years of age without urban experience, with the education quota regulated to obtain equal numbers with less and more schooling in each sample.

Judging by response to a number of questions, the author finds quite consistent and fairly substantial differences in socio-psychological characteristics between the two groups. These differences are considered to have resulted from the Academy's efforts. It appears, however, that not all the questions regarding change in individuals are particularly appropriate. For example, such responses to the two closed-circuited questions as *a*) work and not family connection is more important for success in life and *b*) a poor but ambitious man can succeed, are considered efficacious. But in the absence of fair competition and of equality of opportunities, this may not be so.

As for the desire to acquire the material objects, the cooperative villagers are little different from others. Only the coding of objects as 'means vs. ends' shows that the cooperative villagers more often use their imagined option to obtain capital rather than consumption goods. The cooperative villagers do not show any significantly higher educational and occupational aspirations for themselves and their sons. The author suggests that their means for economic improvement are presumably increasing but their aspirations seem to remain stable relative to other cultivators, and that this is in keeping with the Academy's goals of rural development.

Openness to new social experience is judged partly by openness to strangers. By this criterion, the cooperative villager appears to be receptive to new social experiences gained by contacts with strangers. Such contacts are arranged by the Academy. The significance of these characteristics for rural development is,

however, not obvious. Moreover, the author's conclusion that these important differences in social-psychological characteristics are mainly the result of Academy's programme rests on the assumption that such differences did not exist prior to the Academy's efforts and that other factors did not affect the sample areas in different ways during the period of the Academy's activities.

The cooperative villages are located in Comilla Kotwali Thana, which contains the district town of Comilla and also the Academy, but the control areas are not located so near the district headquarter towns. One may suspect that long-term urban influence has been a major source of these differences. But, on the basis of computed product-moment relations between mileage-from-town and indices of various sorts, the author suggests that the distance-from-town is not a meaningful factor in accounting for variation in the characteristics studied. The reviewer remains unconvinced. Moreover, as the author admits, although the respondents in all sample areas are full-time cultivators, nearness to city provides special occupational opportunities. Because of this and similar other factors total populations in the cooperative villages may differ from those in the control villages. This, in turn, may affect the psychological characteristics of full-time cultivators.

The literacy percentage in the Comilla Kotwali Thana is higher than that in any of the control areas. Although the respondents in all areas have been equated in personal literacy, the differences in educational climate might lead to variation in traits of equated individuals of different areas. The author compares the respondents of high-literacy villages with those of low-literacy villages on the verbal-ability and the efficacy scale. He dismisses the contextual effects of education because he observes only a slight trend in the expected direction. Again one may not agree. The selection of control areas might be made in such a way that factors like educational climate and nearness-to-town are better equated.

With respect to economic condition and father's education the cooperative villages stand above all control samples. The author considers this economic variation to be the more likely result of the Academy programme. He maintains that, even if such differences represent evidence of some initial selection by status, the operation of such factors seems marginal. It is not, however, obvious why it need be insignificant.

However, one may like to be skeptical and make qualifications and still not refute author's broad findings on modernizing changes in attitudes and values in cooperative villages. The evidence of social-psychological changes would deserve greater credence and importance when they are found to occur

along with economic, agricultural and social-structural changes. The latter, however, are beyond the scope of this study. The book contains no mention of the cost of financing the Academy's activities, which extended to about 100 villages in 1964 when the study was made. This question is of great importance because of the necessity of estimating the likely costs of modernizing the 58,000 villages of East Pakistan if the Comilla approach is adopted.

Another important question concerns the extent to which the success of the Academy depends not on new principles of organisation and communication but on the dedication and drive of one or a few exceptional individuals. One may even suspect if the charisma of the present Director of the Academy is not a highly important factor, which it may not be possible to reproduce in other areas.

The book is a welcome addition to the literature on the Comilla experiment and will be of interest to those who are concerned with rural development not only in Pakistan but also in other developing countries.

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