

A PRELIMINARY STUDY ON ALIENATION

by

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As a socio-psychological concept, alienation is very useful. A growing interest on alienation by contemporary sociologists is bringing about a corresponding increase in empirical studies on alienation. Though it is a popular concept, alienation is often loosely defined. Different authors have defined it in a number of different ways, the popular ones being "powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation and self-estrangement."¹ Of these numerous definitions given to alienation, there is however a common feature, i.e. man's feeling of the lack of means or capacity to eliminate the discrepancy between his definition of the role he is playing and the one he feels he should be playing in a situation.² The idea of alienation is broad but attempts nevertheless have been made to relate this concept to specific situations.

One version of alienation comes from Emile Durkheim who wrote about the condition of relative normlessness in a society or group. This concept of anomie of Durkheim is property of the social and cultural structure and not a property of individuals. Anomie results when there is a breakdown of the cultural structure or that set of values which governs society.³ Therefore, the anomic man

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¹ Secman, Melvin, "On the Meaning of Alienation," American Sociological Review, December, 1959, Vol. 24, No. 6, pp. 785-790.

² Clark, John P., "Measuring Alienation Within A Social System," American Sociological Review, December, 1959, Vol. 24, No.6, p. 849.

³ Merton, Robert C., Social Theory and Social Structure, The Free Press, Glencoe, Illinois, 1957, pp. 161-162.

viewed from the psychological viewpoint "has no longer any standards but only disconnected urges, has no longer any sense of folk or obligation. The anomic man has become spiritually sterile, responsive only to himself, responsible to no one. He derides the values of other men. His only faith is the philosophy of denial. He lives in a thin line of sensation between no future and no past."⁴ Delinquency, crime, and suicide are the common results of such a breakdown.

Melvin Seeman has 5 variants of alienation: powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation and self-estrangement.

Powerlessness, a popular variant, is derived from Marx and his thesis about the condition of workers in a capitalist system. The workers feel that "his prerogatives and means of decision are expropriated by the ruling entrepreneurs." Hence powerlessness would be that feeling of futility over the outcomes of events.

Meaninglessness is viewed as that situation when the individual is "unclear as to what he might believe in." Normlessness is the loss of social standards. Isolation describes the individual's feeling of "apartness from society." Self-estrangement occurs when the individual has lost pride in his work." Erich Fromm speaks of this as that experience of a person who considers himself an alien and estranged from himself.⁵

Studies on alienation have commonly used the total society as a background. Some studies, however, have deviated from this and studied alienation within the framework of a specific social situation.

⁴ Mac Iver, Riesman cited in Lertton, Robert K., op. cit., pp. 161-162.
⁵ Seeman, Melvin, op. cit., pp. 783-790.

Leonard Pearlín studied the organizational structure of a mental hospital and its significance to the alienation of the nursing personnel.⁶ John Clark had an agricultural cooperative organization for its setting of alienation.⁷

As previously mentioned, there has been an increase in empirical studies on alienation. Scales have been devised to measure specific variants of alienation. Leo Srole, for example, has developed a scale to measure anomie, specifically how an individual perceives his environment and his specific place in that environment.⁸ Others like Pearlín, Clark and Dean have also devised their own scales.

The Study: Purpose and Scale Used

This is a preliminary study on alienation and made use of the scale developed by Dwight Dean of Ohio University.

An attempt is made to test the applicability of this scale of alienation on other people under a different cultural setting. Developed for use with Americans, it may be interesting to find out how well it works with Filipinos.

The following is a short description of the scale.

Dwight Dean's Alienation Scale has three (3) sub-scales: Powerlessness, Normlessness and Social Isolation.

Typical of the nine items for Powerlessness were:

There is little or nothing I can do towards preventing a major "shooting" war.

I worry about the future facing the present generation.

⁶ Pearlín, Leonard I., "Alienation From Work," American Sociological Review, June, 1962, Vol. 27, No. 3, pp. 314-325.

⁷ Clark, John P., op. cit., pp. 849-852.

⁸ Srole, Leo cited in Merton, Robert K., op. cit., p. 164.

Typical of the six items in the Normlessness scale were:

People's ideas change so much that I wonder if we'll ever have anything to depend on.

The only thing one can be sure of today is that he can be sure of nothing.

Typical of the nine items of the Social Isolation Scale were:

Sometimes I feel all alone in the world.

I don't get invited out by friends as often as I'd really like.

Each question could be answered as: Strongly Agree, Agree, Uncertain, Strongly Disagree and Disagree. Each answer was assigned weight of from 0 - 4 points. The highest possible powerlessness score is 36. Normlessness score is 24 and Social Isolation, 36. Total alienation score is 96.

The Sample

The questionnaires were administered to a group of 126 students, seniors in the College of Agriculture and candidates for graduation, just before the end of the school year. The subjects were predominantly male and belonged to almost the same age group.

There was no attempt at random sampling. Some background questions were asked and related to alienation.

The Findings

Reasons for Taking Up Agriculture

The reasons mentioned for taking up agriculture were very interesting and revealing.

A. Idealism and interest were manifested in 46 responses

Some of the specific reasons were:

1. To contribute something to Philippine agriculture

2. To help farmers in the use of scientific methods of farming
3. To know more about agricultural techniques
4. To prepare for life and make good home for family (Home Technology girls)
5. I'm just interested in it
6. I like to stay in a farm
7. It's practical
8. It's basic to all courses
9. I was born in a farm
10. It's best for me

B. Twenty (20) were forced to take up the course:

Some of the reasons were:

1. We live near college and it is less expensive to study here
2. It's my parents' (father's) will
3. I had to

Only two added that they have learned to love the course.

C. Seventeen (17) mentioned practical reasons:

Some of these reasons were:

1. It's not too crowded and there's greater possibility of employment
2. I have a farm to manage after graduation.
3. An agriculturist is needed in our place.

Alienation and Reasons for Taking Up the Course

The mean alienation scores of the three groups according to their reasons for taking up agriculture were also obtained. Those who were

simply forced by their parents to take up the course have the highest alienation score--49.85. Those who expressed interest and idealistic reasons had a mean score of 46.48 and those who had practical reasons, a mean alienation score of 45.35.

It is to be noted that the "idealistic" group have a slightly higher mean score than the "practical" group. This may be due to the fact that the "idealistic" group may not have found as much fulfillment in the course as the "practical" group. As in most cases, idealists often get disillusioned.

Ranking of Professions

Another significant finding was the ranking of agriculture as a profession in relation to other professions with the prestige motive considered. Agriculture was ranked fifth only. The rating of the professions with their mean scores is as follows:

Table 1. Prestige Rank of Ten Professions Rated By Senior Students of the U.P. College of Agriculture

Professions	Rank	Mean Score
Doctor	1	2.21
Engineer	2	3.77
Lawyer	3	4.3
Chemist	4	5.17
Agriculturist	5	5.29
Politician	6	6.58
Nurse	7	6.59
Accountant	8	6.74
Army Officer	9	6.92
High School Teacher	10	7.42

It appears that the socially assigned prestige value to each of these professions, conditions the judgment of the subjects with the respondents not assigning much prestige to agriculture - their

own chosen profession.

It is not very surprising that the doctor has the highest rank among the professions. In a study made on the occupational orientations of Filipino high school seniors the doctor was ranked number one followed by the college professor and the lawyer.⁹ The doctor too has consistently obtained the highest status rating in other countries.

The politician, although his profession has been tainted with a number of unpleasant connotations, still has a high rank, higher than the nurse, accountant, army officer and high school teacher.

The prestige rank for agriculture was related to the alienation scores of the subjects. Those who ranked agriculture high (i.e. from No. 1 to 4) had a mean alienation score of 41.68. Those who assigned a low rank for agriculture (i.e. from No. 7 to 10) had a mean alienation score of 48.62. Hence, there is a difference of 6.81 points.

This low rank for agriculture by the high alienation groups may be an expression of their lack of confidence in their choice of the course they have pursued, or their skepticism in its importance. This could possibly be interpreted as a symptom of that one feature of alienation mentioned elsewhere in this paper -- "man's feeling of the lack of means or capacity to eliminate the discrepancy between his definition of the role he is playing and the one he feels he should be playing in a situation."

Comparison with Dean's Study

Dean had five samples in his study - one, a stratified sample of men, and four, random samples of women college students. In the

⁹ Castillo, Gelia T., "Occupational Orientations of Filipino High School Seniors," Department of Agricultural Education Publication No. 6.

three samples he obtained the mean scores for the three sub-scales and in all five samples, the mean score for normlessness. Compared with the mean scores of Dean's samples, this study has relatively high mean scores. This might be explained by the fact that the questionnaires in this study were administered at a time when the subjects felt uncertain about graduation and the future.

Table 2. Comparison of Mean Scores on the Sub-scales of Dean's Study and This

Component	Range of Mean Scores in Dean's 5 samples	Mean Scores in this Study
Powerlessness	10.90 - 13.65	16.4
Normlessness	3.55 - 8.63	12.48
Social Isolation	11.76 - 15.16	17.66

Inter-Correlation Among the Alienation Components

The correlations among the sub-scales are significant at the .05 and .01 levels of confidence. However, the sub-scales are not significantly related to the total alienation scores.

Table 3. Intercorrelations Among the Alienation Components (N = 126)

Components	Normlessness	Social Isolation	Alienation (Total)
Powerlessness	.33**	.17*	.16
Normlessness		.27**	.14
Social Isolation			.13

* Significant at the .05 level of confidence
 ** Significant at the .01 level of confidence

Considering these facts, there came up doubts about the items that composed the scale. Although some questions were recorded and paraphrased to make them more understandable and meaningful in terms of Philippine culture, the probable idiomatic difficulties cannot be ruled out. Hence, an item analysis was made to discover further the usefulness and desirability of the items.

Item Analysis and T-Values

Using Likert's method of summated ratings, an item analysis was made to find out the discriminating power of each item in the sub-scales.¹⁰ The results are shown in Table 4. The items have high t-values (above 1.96) and except for three items in the Social Isolation scale (items 3, 5, and 17) all of them are highly discriminating.

The high discriminative power of the items, plus the fact that the sub-scales are not related to alienation may warrant treatment of the sub-scales independently. This may yield better and more meaningful results.

Table 4. T-Values for Items in the Alienation Scale

Item No.	Social Isolation Scale Questions	T-Values
1	I sometimes feel all alone in the world	7.20
3	I don't get invited out by friends as often as I'd really like	1.61*
5	Most people today seldom feel lonely	1.95*
8	Real friends are very easy to find	3.00

¹⁰ Edward, Allen L., Techniques of Attitude Scale Construction, D. Appleton-Century Crofts Inc., New York, 1957, pp. 158-159.

(Table 4, cont'd...)

Item No.	<u>Social Isolation Scale</u> Questions	T-Values
11	One can always find friends if he shows himself friendly	4.87
14	The world in which we live is basically a friendly place	4.14
17	There are few dependable ties between people nowadays	1.44*
22	People are just naturally friendly and helpful	7.23
24	I don't get to visit friends as often as I'd really like	3.79

* Not significant

Item No.	<u>Powerlessness Scale</u> Questions	T-Value
2	I worry about the future facing the present generation	5.14
6	Sometimes I have the feeling that other people are using me	5.33
9	It is frightening to be responsible for the development of a child	6.39
13	There is little or nothing I can do towards preventing a major "shooting" war	5.39
15	There are so many decisions that have to be made today that sometimes I could just "blow up."	4.91
18	There is little chance for promotion on the job unless a man gets a break	4.77
20	We're so regimented today that there's not much room for choice even in personal matters.	6.90
21	We really don't matter very much in things that happen in this world	4.43
23	The future looks very dark	4.08

Item No.	Normlessness Scale Questions	T-Value
4	The end often justifies the means	4.25
7	People's ideas change so much that I wonder if we'll ever have anything to depend on	3.96
10	Everything is relative, and there just aren't any definite rules to live by	6.31
12	I often wonder what the meaning of life is	9.58
16	The only thing one can be sure of today is that he can be sure of nothing	7.64
19	With so many religions abroad, one doesn't really know which to believe	5.23

Correlation between Alienation and the Selected Variables

This being a preliminary study on alienation, the total scores, not the scores on each component, were treated.

The alienation scores obtained were classified into High, medium and Low, and then related to certain selected variables.

A. Rural-Urban Background and Alienation

Table 5 shows the relationship between alienation and rural-urban background. The results show that of the urban respondents, a greater percentage - 42 per cent have lower alienation, compared to only 18 per cent of the rural respondents. On the other hand, forty-four per cent of the subjects who have rural background had high alienation scores, compared to only twenty-four per cent of those from urban areas.

There is probably reason to believe that an urban upbringing gives an individual self-confidence and independence of mind more

than a rural one.

It may be significant to note at this point that the reverse is true in the findings of Dwight Dean. He found a negative correlation between rural background and alienation - with the urban subjects having higher alienation scores. This could be due to the greater economic insecurity of the Filipino rural people as compared to the greater economic security of the American farmer.

Table 5. Rural-Urban Background and Alienation

	<u>Urban</u> Per cent	<u>Rural</u> Per cent
High	24	44
Medium	34	38
Low	42	18
Total	100	100
chi square - - - - -	8.96	
degrees of freedom - - -	2	
level of significance - -	.02	

B. Father's Occupation and Alienation

From Table 6 can be seen the relationship between alienation and father's occupation.

Table 6. Father's Occupation and Alienation

	<u>White-Collar</u> Per cent	<u>Blue-Collar</u> Per cent	<u>Farming</u> Per cent
High	26	18	35
Medium	30	64	41
Low	44	18	24
Total	100	100	100
chi square - - - - -	8.63		
degrees of freedom - - -	4		
level of significance - - - -	between .10 & .05		

Of those with fathers in the "white-collar" category only twenty-six per cent have high alienation. Majority (44 per cent) have low alienation. On the other hand, of those with fathers who are farmers, thirty-five per cent have high alienation and only twenty-four per cent have low alienation.

This may be a further indication of economic and job security as a factor in alienation. The white-collar job which is considered higher in prestige than farming may also have a bearing on alienation. The prestige of the white-collar job may have something to do with the feeling of confidence and superiority of the individual.

C. Father's Education and Alienation

With regard to the education of the father, there is an indication of an inverse relationship with alienation. The lower the educational attainment of their fathers, the higher the alienation scores of the subjects. Of those whose fathers have college attainment, sixty per cent belong to the "high and medium alienation" category. The percentage of subjects belonging to this category - high and medium combined - decreased as the level of educational attainment of their fathers increased. This is shown in Table 7, with 73 per cent in a category where fathers are high school graduates and 82 per cent where fathers have elementary school attainment.

Table 7. Father's Educational Attainment and Alienation

	College Per cent	High School Per cent	Elementary Per cent
High	34	40	23
Medium	26	33	59
Low	40	27	18
Total	100	100	100
chi square - - - - -	7.92		
degrees of freedom - - -	4		
level of significance - -	between .10 & .05		

D. Membership in College Organizations and Alienation

Although the relationship is not significant, there is, however, a tendency for more of those who are members of college (34 per cent) organizations to have lower alienation scores. Of the members there are only 29 per cent with high alienation compared to 40 per cent among the non-members.

It could be that this feeling of alienation makes the individual stay aloof from organized college groups - that feeling of isolation and self-estrangement, a feeling of being apart from society. Or the individual who has become a member of the group may have derived that feeling of security, hence a lower alienation.

Table 8. Membership in College Organization and Alienation

	<u>Member</u> Per cent	<u>Non-Member</u> Per cent
High	29	40
Medium	37	34
Low	34	26
<u>Total</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>
chi square - - - - -		1.64
degrees of freedom - - - - -		2
Not significant		

E. Certainty About Getting a Job and Alienation

Table 9 shows this relationship—more self-confidence and less uncertainty is expressed by the low alienation groups. Only twenty per cent really don't know what the chances are of getting a job after graduation. Forty-seven per cent of those with high alienation expressed this uncertainty.

The feeling of not being able to do much about the future, of being sure only of nothing, of just being so many cogs in the machinery of life - these are expressions of powerlessness, characteristic of the high alienation groups.

Table 9. Certainty About Getting a Job and Alienation

	<u>High</u> Per Cent	<u>Medium</u> Per Cent	<u>Low</u> Per Cent	<u>Total</u> Per Cent
Very uncertain	28	27	29	27
Somewhat certain	25	33	51	37
I really don't know	47	40	20	36
<u>Total</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>

chi square - - - - - 9.61
 level of significance - .05
 degrees of freedom - - - 4

F. Plans after Graduation and Alienation

Table 10 shows that more of those with high alienation plan to go into farming right after graduation (33 per cent). Those with low alienation plan to go into teaching and extension work (41 per cent).

There may be reason to believe that farming, which precludes frequent association with people has more appeal to individuals with high alienation. Teaching and extension work which involve social contacts are preferred by students with low alienation.

Table 10. Alienation and Plans After Graduation

	<u>High</u> Per cent	<u>Low</u> Per cent	<u>Total</u> Per cent
Go farming	33	25	30
Do graduate work, go abroad and do research	23	25	23
Get office job	18	9	16
Teach and do extension work	26	41	31
<u>Total</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>

chi square - - - - - 3.92
 not significant .. .

Summary

The correlations among the sub-scales have a low significance but, the sub-scales, however, are not significantly related to the total alienation scores.

The items in the sub-scales, except for three in the Social Isolation Scale have high discriminative power.

The findings in this study show that high alienation is related to rural background, lower educational attainment of father, farming as father's occupation and non-membership in college organizations. The high alienation groups are also less certain about getting a job after graduation, and more plan to go into a more socially isolated occupation - farming. On the other hand, low alienation is related to an urban background, higher education of father plus a white-collar job of father and membership in college organizations. They're more certain about a job and intend to go into more "socializing" occupations as teaching and extension work.

These findings are not by any means conclusive. However, they may serve as hypotheses for further study. Some modifications could be made of the scale to yield more meaningful results. Possibly, studying alienation within the framework of specific social situation, like the Pearlin and Clark studies may be attempted. The questions could be paraphrased to make them more understandable and meaningful. Furthermore, independent treatment could be made of the components.