

SDRC Talking Points

Issue No. 3 August 2019



A Life Shaped by Research

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Director's Message



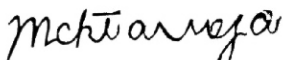
SDRC celebrates its 40th anniversary as a research center this 2019. With the theme ***Celebrating 40 Years of SDRC: Research Lessons toward Building a Sustainable Future***, the Center reflects on the numerous lessons and the learning gained from the last 40 years, and looks forward toward the many possibilities and growth to come in the next 40 or 50 years. The Center has been the home of various social scientists, researchers, faculty, research associates and assistants who have spent much time conducting studies, going to the field, analyzing data, and writing reports. The breadth and depth of learning is beyond what the first few researchers of SDRC perhaps dreamt of in 1979. This third issue of ***Talking Points*** offers some relevant reflections on the research lessons that have been acquired through the years.

In this issue, four researchers share the knowledge they have arrived at in different stages and facets of social science research conducted the SDRC way. Dr. Melvin Jabar of the Department of Behavioral Sciences highlights the importance of seeing research as a mission more than a University requirement. For him, research does not only shape policies and programs, but people's lives as well. As a PhD Research Apprentice, Ms. Patricia Simon, on the other hand, writes about her journey in doing fieldwork on a research topic that is highly sensitive: online sexual abuse and exploitation of children. She shares her personal learning, which has resulted in being a better human

being with more compassion and greater cognizance of her limitations. Dr. Crisanto Regadio, a graduate of the PhD apprentice program and now an SDRC research fellow, shares how his involvement with an IP community enriched his experience as a researcher and sociologist. Community service and research engagement, for him, defines his research endeavors. The last feature of this anniversary issue is Mr. Wilfred Luis Clamor's article on thinking out of the box in doing interdisciplinary research on health and disaster. Working as a research assistant of the late Scientist-in-Residence Dr. Exaltacion Lamberte, he shares the many professional and personal lessons he has gained from being mentored by one of the best social science researchers in the country. He seeks to continuously embody the wisdom of Dr. Lamberte.

As a Registered Psychologist, doing clinical psychology work, the Center has been my home in doing social science research in various fields—health science, reproductive health, education, family, women and children. The multi-disciplinary nature of research has given me the opportunity to learn about other disciplines and their research methodologies. The lessons I have learned go beyond mere research topics. The process of conducting and managing a research study is equally important. Sustainability is a big idea; a sustainable future is more so. From my years at SDRC, I have come to appreciate research as a mode of inquiry, a goal, and a process, understanding that it is an important endeavor providing evidence on how to attain sustainable development goals from community, national, and global perspectives.

May we all continue to passionately seek answers to many questions through research!



MARIA CARIDAD H. TARROJA, PhD

Director, Social Development Research Center

Learning through Research: Lessons from my work with Unilab Foundation

Melvin A. Jabar, Ph.D.
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I sensed long ago that I was meant to be the father of a child with Down syndrome. This hunch was conveyed to me through different life experiences, including research engagements through the years with the Social Development Research Center. All these circumstances as I see them now were part of God's scheme. They were like messages God had sent to prepare me for what was waiting in my future. When these moments were unfolding, I did not think that they would help me to nurture a differently-abled son.





Five years ago, I was asked to join a team that would assess the employability of people with special needs. Through UNILAB Foundation, our center was tapped to do research exploring the work experiences of people with exceptionality (also known as differently-abled individuals). Specifically, our team explored the issues and prospects of hiring persons with disability, and also tried to better understand their behaviors in the workplace.

I was assigned to look at the social aspects of mainstreaming these individuals in the workplace. I did interviews with neuro-typical "normal" co-workers to find out how persons with disability relate well in the context of workplace organization. I also did socio-metric tests to find out if differently-abled individuals are able to establish meaningful

interpersonal relationships at work. Most interesting of all, we were able to observe them as they perform their work tasks.

Our findings identified several important insights regarding the work attitude of differently-abled individuals. Despite their cognitive limitations, they managed to deliver the tasks expected of them. They were also able to interact well with their colleagues, although much was needed to break down the negative stereotypes surrounding mental disabilities. Like their co-workers, our differently-abled informants were able to contribute productively to the organizations they work in. It was also apparent that differently-abled individuals would be more effective if they were given tasks based on their interests and personality profile.



For instance, children with Down syndrome are believed to have a relatively high level of social relatedness. Thinking along this line, companies can consider giving these children tasks that require social interaction. Such kids are, after all, known to be jolly and fun.

Several months after the completion of the UNILAB Foundation project, I had to face another life chapter. This time, it was fatherhood. God sent His message to me on my birthday. My wife gave birth to our son, who was later diagnosed to have Down syndrome. However, partly because of my earlier experience in doing research with differently-abled people, everything was light and my son's diagnosis was easier for me to accept.

My research experience involving differently-abled persons was thus

nothing short of a miracle. The entire exercise turned out to be not simply a professional but a personal one. It made me open my eyes to the world of Down syndrome patients, and indeed prepared me to embrace my role as the father of a son with special needs. My engagement in the research, in effect, served to reassure me that I should not worry so much. My son will have a better future, as social inclusion is becoming part of our societal reality.

My UNILAB research experience somehow offered me a new perspective about research. For me, doing research is not simply addressing a University requirement but rather, because it is a mission, it is a mission to transform societies. A research becomes relevant when it does not only shape policies and programs but ultimately shapes lives – Including my own.

What My Involvement in the OSAEC Study has Taught Me



Patricia D. Simon, MS, RPsy
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Before I became involved with SDRC as a PhD Research Apprentice, I was but a young faculty member trying to balance my teaching duties with fulfilling coursework requirements for my doctorate degree in Clinical Psychology. I was constantly shifting roles—teacher in the morning, student at night. When I went into the research apprenticeship program, I had one major goal in mind: I wanted to be done with the PhD program in the soonest possible time.

Moreover, as much as I loved teaching, I craved for something novel that could satisfy my thirst for knowledge, which is the reason why I decided to pursue a PhD in the first place. I left teaching with a heavy heart, vowing to finish as soon as I could just so that I could go back to teaching my students, whom I have grown to be fond of. It's ironic how I used to not like research back when I was a college student in UP. But since I pursued my Masters degree in DLSU, research has occupied a special place in my heart. As I have always had an inquisitive mind, research not only gives me the means to find answers, but also allows me to ask more questions. Fieldwork for the "National Study on Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children" —the SDRC project I am currently involved in—could be exhausting at times. However, one of the best parts about doing research in the field is meeting new people and learning tons of things in the process. I was thrilled to be involved in a UNICEF project that is the first of its kind in the world, and I got to meet social workers, lawyers, law enforcers and a bunch of other people. It became a source of validation for me (and who does not need validation from time to time?), as I told myself, "Hey,

Tracy, you are doing something important!" with a matching pat on the back.

Research on OSAEC was, of course, not without its hurdles. We were like investigative journalists in a sense, and it was hard getting around stuff like the Data Privacy Act and confidentiality issues, especially with such a sensitive topic. While this is completely understandable, it's not so much fun when crunch time comes and you have to meet your deadlines. Notwithstanding these difficulties, my exposure expanded my heart and widened my views in ways I never imagined it could. Hearing about the children's stories from the social workers and house parents who handle them gave me a whole new perspective about what I consider to be my problems. Extreme poverty always came up as one of the main reasons why the children had to go through such a horrendous ordeal. What's even more appalling was that the abuse they suffered was at times perpetuated by their own parents. In the face of such reality, I came along—a "sheltered girl researcher" who grew up in a complete family, and was raised in a household where everything had been



provided for her. I never had to scramble for food or for money to pay for my education. How was I supposed to fully understand what these children had to go through? I have always been aware of social inequalities, yet as I discovered just how unfair and crooked the world could be through the interviews and FGDs I conducted, I felt an amalgam of emotions: great sadness for those who had to constantly fight their way through life, anger toward those responsible for their suffering, and gratitude for my current life situation. It has always been my dream to be part of research that matters—and this is definitely one of those projects where I feel like I am making a difference. It seems like the best thing I can do for now

is to give my best effort in this project so that the right people can hear and be aware of these children's plight. Reaching one's destination (in my case getting that PhD diploma) is undeniably a worthy goal to aspire for, but I recognize that the process of getting there is even more important. I know now that everything I have experienced through my involvement in this project will definitely enrich my capabilities not only as a researcher but also as a teacher and a future Psychology practitioner. Most importantly, it has taught me how to be a better human being, to feel compassion, to recognize my limitations, and to just do whatever I can in the best way I know how.

My Engagement with an IP Community

Crisanto Q. Regadio, Jr., Ph.D.

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My first involvement with an IP community was during my undergraduate years when my classmates and I were asked to stay for a week with an Aeta community in Nabuclod, Floridablanca, Pampanga. That experience introduced me to a life that is a far cry from that with which I was acquainted, in the city. After that week-long immersion, we had finished gathering the data for our assigned topic and returned to Manila to write our research report and reflection paper.



I fostered a desire to learn more about the Aeta and through simple means be able to help them. But I also developed an unspoken assumption—that it was easy to establish an engagement with an IP community. You just need to go there and live with them. This unspoken assumption was challenged by my recent experience as a research assistant to Dr. Hazel Biana for her project "Reclaiming Filipino Indigenous Culture through Teaching and Learning" under SDRC. The project was funded by the United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia (UBCHEA). It was intended to promote the integration of IP knowledge and culture into the revised Higher Education Institution curriculum

of Liberal Arts and Education courses. To realize this objective, educators from different higher education institutions were invited to participate in a two-day workshop on March 28-29, 2015. In the workshop, they were taught how to integrate IP knowledge and culture in the curriculum. The second day of the activity was reserved for a site visit to an Aeta community in Pampanga, to provide an opportunity for the participants to be exposed to IPs' living conditions, and to interact with and interview elders of the community so as to put into context what they had learned on the first day of the workshop. I was assigned to process the documentary permits for the immersion activity in Barangay



Villa Maria, Porac, Pampanga. I thought that the tasks were simple: All I needed to do was to go to the community and secure permission from the barangay captain or barangay leaders to work among the Aeta. I contacted a parish priest from San Fernando, Pampanga who regularly celebrated mass in the barangay and conducted nutrition activities with the young Aetas. I was referred to a contact person—a lay person who manages the parish—and visited the community. Ma’am Jenny (may her soul rest in peace) provided me with an overview of the economic, political and cultural character of Villa Maria. She said that the community was a good choice because it was safer for visitors, and articulated the reason why. She warned me that there were certain cultural practices in nearby communities that we needed to seriously consider. She narrated a recent incident in the community for which a 13-year-old boy was sentenced to death, under the traditional justice system upheld in the barangay. This was in relation to the demise of a female playmate, who had been attacked by a carabao while she and other friends spent an afternoon at the nearby river. I was surprised to hear of this occurrence, and inquired about how it ended in the trial and death of a 13-year-old boy. The explanation was quite simple: The boy was the

reason why the girl was at the river that afternoon. He was the one who invited her and other friends to come. If the girl had not been invited, she would not have been at the river, been attacked and died. Until now, I find it difficult to imagine how the young boy felt when he was informed by his family and the elders of the community that he would be executed. What was he thinking when he woke up on the day of his execution, when he had his last sumptuous meal, prepared by the community. How did he feel as he was blindfolded and struck on the left shoulder by a long knife, with his heart as a target, and the intention of delivering a swift death? I asked myself, if I were to organize an activity in that community and one of the participants had died during the event, would I be blamed by the elders and suffer the same fate as that young man?

This is a question that I think should be considered by people from academe who wish to promote programs and activities in an IP community. Although having Ma’am Jenny as a contact person was quite convenient for our team, she did not have the authority to grant access to the community. Thus after our discussion, I did not follow her



advice that we limit our coordination efforts through a liaison, and instead proceeded to the house of the barangay captain.

I was informed by the barangay captain of Villa Maria that the welfare of the community, like any other indigenous cultural community (ICC) or indigenous peoples group (IP), is overseen by the National Commission on Indigenous People (NCIP). And so, I was told by the village chief to coordinate with the Commission. At that time, Dr. Biana had already established correspondence with the national secretariat of the NCIP, which directed our team to the regional office located in San Fernando. Dr. Homer Yabut, a collaborator of the project, agreed to help coordinate with the office for the

immersion activity. It was not difficult for us to locate it because Dr. Yabut is a Kapampangan and was familiar with the area. However, the regional director was attending a week-long conference, and we were attended to instead by the director of the office's research department. Our conversation with the director turned into a short course in the rules of engagement with an IP community. We learned that there are five existing laws that aim to regulate visitation, conduct of programs and activities, implementation of community interventions, research, and operation of business and industrial activities within the ancestral domain claimed by a particular IP or ICC. Thus, all the programs and activities to be undertaken by

both government and private parties must follow the guidelines set in this legal framework, which include the following:

1. Republic Act No. 3871, also known as "An Act to Recognize, Protect, and Promote the Rights of Indigenous Cultural Communities/Indigenous Peoples, Creating a National Commission on Indigenous Peoples, Establishing Mechanisms, Appropriating Funds Therefor, and for Other Purposes";
2. National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) Administrative Order No. 1 series of 1998, also known as "Rules and Regulations Implementing Republic Act no. 8371";
3. National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) Administrative Order No. 01 series of 2006, also known as "The Free and Prior Informed Consent Guidelines of 2006";
4. National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) Administrative Order No. 1 series of 2012, also known as "The Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices (IKSPs) and Customary Laws (CLs) Research and Documentation Guidelines of 2012"; and
5. National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) Administrative Order No. 3 series of 2012, also known as "The Revised Guidelines on Free and Prior Informed Consent (FPIC)

and Related Processes of 2012". It can be inferred from these laws that the FPIC is expected to be an instrument of empowerment of ICCs/IPs in the Philippines. The guidelines inhibit the disenfranchisement and marginalization of ICCs/IPs and the entry of policies, plans, development programs and projects that may be prejudicial to their rights and interests. Thus, it gives ICCs/IPs the right to accept or reject any intervention in their particular communities.

Once informed of the nature and scope and the objectives of our project's immersion activity, the regional office endorsed us to the NCIP Service Center in Floridablanca. The office has direct supervision over IP communities in Porac, Pampanga, which include Barangay Villa Maria. The Service Center was housed in a small room that can hardly be called an office, and when I arrived, the office head—again—was not around. A staff member received my letter, called the head by mobile, and passed the phone to me. I discussed our plans with him and secured an endorsement for our activities at Villa Maria via phone, and headed back to the barangay captain.



I scheduled the visit to Villa Maria for another day and presented the barangay captain with the endorsement from the Floridablanca office. He called the secretary of the barangay and asked her to prepare an FPIC from the community for our immersion activity. Once I had the consent form, I returned to the Floridablanca office to finalize the schedule, only to learn that we could not conduct the activity on our own and needed to be supervised by NCIP personnel. After dealing with all the complications involving the time, meeting place and duration of the activity, the schedule of the immersion was finally set and the event was conducted successfully.

Working as a research apprentice at SDRC, I have been given the opportunity to establish a

renewed engagement with an indigenous people's community. I believe my commitment to IP communities will extend beyond my contract as an apprentice at the Center. Community service and research engagement is another dimension of social and cultural life in the Philippines that will define and lead my scholarly endeavors in the future.

It is interesting that my brief involvement with the UBCHEA project at SDRC provided many opportunities to expand the spaces in which I can work as an academician. I am trained to become a Sociologist in the PhD program, and it is good to note that at the same time, I continue to engage in and learn the craft of anthropologists and linguists.

Thinking Outside the Box:

Doing an Interdisciplinary Research on Health and Disaster

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After completing one's studies, an initial response for the typical fresh graduate is to find a job. Having obtained a Masters in Health Social Science made me think: "What will my career be after this?", "Am I going to med school?", and "What is the best job for me?" After analyzing all my experiences in grad school, one thing came to mind: I should pursue my dream of being part of the academe. I applied to different colleges as a senior high school teacher, but my efforts felt empty. I was not enthusiastic at all, because of worries over what to teach my students, given my limited





experience in the field. It felt like I would be teaching them by-the-book theories and experiences, which would be too plain and unappealing for my millennial audience. One day, I received an e-mail from my former professor in Health Statistics, Dr. Exaltacion Lamberte. She offered to hire me to be her research assistant for a project entitled "Mapping of Health Risks from Agents of Disaster and Extreme Events". Reading through the title, the first thing that registered in my mind was that it would be an interdisciplinary research study. The team was composed of individuals from various fields. Dr. Lamberte, the main proponent of the study, whose research interest was in Disaster and Sociology, introduced me to Dr. Feorillo Petronillo Demeterio III, whose field was in Philippine Studies; Dr. Renan

Tanhueco, whose field was in Urban Planning and Regional Planning; Mrs. Diane Lim Ramos, whose field was in Information Technology; and Mr. Crisanto Regadio, Jr., who was completing his doctoral degree in Sociology, and who I had already worked with on a project led by Dr. Melvin Jabar entitled "Health Conditions, Health Seeking Behavior, Access to Insurance among Overseas Filipino Workers."

Initial Experiences in the Mapping Project

In the "Mapping of Health Risks" study, my first task was to look for different sources of data. The data would be used for a literature review, and also for identifying different background studies related to health risks in various disasters. It was a crucial task



because the data would be the basis of our field work. I was able to successfully identify different parts of the Philippines that are very vulnerable in terms of health and disasters using data from various sources. With the background literature and database, our team decided to go on ocular visits to various areas in the country that are seen to be vulnerable in relation to different disasters and health risks. We chose to go to places such as Biliran, Leyte, Cagayan de Oro, Marawi, and Surigao for our initial visits. I was assigned to go to Leyte and Biliran with Dr. Demeterio and Mr. Regadio. It was my first time to visit Tacloban and I was enthusiastic to see the development of the area after Typhoon Yolanda. As the plane landed at the simple yet helpful airport, I saw many remnants of the Typhoon. A sudden feeling of gloom

and depression struck me due to the rainy weather and disheartening environment. However, the people of Leyte seemed not to be affected, and they were very happy and enthusiastic. The cities of Ormoc and Tacloban were viewed as being very vulnerable in times of disaster. In a village in Ormoc, our team managed to go to different households. However, the main concern that our team encountered was that their streets were covered with knee-high mud. We managed to make our way around the area by wearing colorful boots as protection. From Leyte, our team proceeded to Biliran, where landslides were prevalent based on various reports. It was my first time to encounter an after-landslide situation. I was met by

large boulders and fallen trees. I was indeed scared at that time because it was raining hard and residents were saying that the area was vulnerable due to the soft base of the mountain. However, our team managed to talk to different residents and barangay officials regarding their experiences in disaster and health.

Relevance and Challenges in Writing Interdisciplinary Research

Dr. Lamberte entrusted me to write a systematic review and a meta-analysis on the researches made regarding health risks and disasters in the Philippines. Most research papers explore the idea that there are numerous and various health outcomes resulting from different agents of disaster in the country. Also, it seems that most research papers are very interdisciplinary. I had a hard time incorporating some terms because

they were not used in my area of interest. I had to talk to my friends in the engineering field, since most disaster researches focus on human resettlement and community-based infrastructure. At that moment, I told myself to think outside the box, and get out of my comfort zone. I was very fond of using sociological, anthropological, and health social science terms, but civil and mechanical engineering were not part of my forte. I learned a lot of concepts and ideas from other disciplines. It was a very enriching experience to write a systematic review of interdisciplinary researches.

With the different research papers and proposals I presented to Dr. Lamberte, she decided to promote me to the position of research associate in the "Mapping of Health Risks" project. I felt very blessed to be promoted. But with a



high position came high expectations. Dr. Lamberte told me to always believe in myself and to trust that I can do better than what I expect to become. After my appointment as research associate, Dr. Lamberte told me to accompany her to a PCHRD meeting regarding health resiliency. At the meeting, we presented the initial findings of our study to a panel composed of officers from PCHRD and NDRRMC. I felt very nervous because it was my first time to deliver a presentation in front of well-known public officials. After all of the presentations had been made, the panel discussed how, if the country is to be a global hub for disaster risk reduction research and health resiliency, research must play a vital role. A focus on mental health, psychological services, security, and infrastructure was proposed for researchers to look into. However, the panel seemed to be conflicted about how to view these topics in relation to disaster risk reduction, since not much had been written about it, particularly with regard to how to reduce loss, create an effective response, and foster resiliency, according to our presentations. Presenters such as Dr. Lamberte and I proposed that these issues be viewed in an interdisciplinary manner. In that sense, different researchers from different fields must work together in order to look at these issues. One

panel from the University of the Philippines stressed that research centers must follow the format and style of De La Salle University as the leading university in terms of research, in order to produce more studies in the Philippines regarding health resiliency in disasters.

As I embarked upon the pursuit of knowledge in doing interdisciplinary studies, Dr. Lamberte assigned me to work with Mrs. Ramos, who was assigned to do the database of the study. Mrs. Ramos and I worked with her students who were developing an information system regarding health and disasters in the Philippines. I was also asked to sit on the panel for their thesis defense as a representative of Dr. Lamberte. At first, I was very anxious about being on the panel because I did not know information technology terms. I only knew the basics such as HTML, JavaScript, and so on. Thankfully, Mrs. Ramos guided me in learning the complex terminology. I was able to critique the students' thesis regarding the analysis of health and disaster data, since these are my forte. As the discussion continued regarding the information system development of the project, Mrs. Ramos and I had an idea about making the system larger. We



spoke to Dr. Lamberte and Dr. Demeterio about a possible research output regarding the information system upgrade. Dr. Demeterio suggested that we write an URCO interdisciplinary paper regarding the development. I was again anxious because I am not really good with computer science terms, but Mrs. Ramos told me that in order to make it interdisciplinary, she would need my help regarding organizational change management. This made me think about whether doing interdisciplinary studies could be my focus as I climb up the academic ladder.

As a young researcher, gaining more experience in writing interdisciplinary researches broadens my mind and knowledge and allows me to look at more topics related to health resiliency, infrastructure, and information

systems. As the Philippines is set to become a global hub for disaster risk reduction research, having more experience in doing interdisciplinary research is an advantage. It has helped me in writing more studies to broaden the existing literature in the country regarding health and disaster. Just as our team was about to complete our papers for publication and final report, Dr. Lamberte passed away. When I heard the news, I was shocked and denied everything I heard. Dr. Lamberte was the reason why I am here in the academe. She inspired me in every way. At the end of the day, we must still finish the project, or else Dr. Lamberte will be very disappointed. As I help the team to finish, I will repeat her words of wisdom, to continuously believe in myself, as writing is another stepping stone to success. Her words will live inside of me forever.

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Cover Photo by: Maria Catherine D. Domingo
"Batanes: Rocks and Stones"

