

AN EXAMINATION AND CRITIQUE OF ROBERT REDFIELD'S FOLK-URBAN CONTINUUM¹

Basic Assumptions

REDFIELD'S basic assumptions and orientation to Anthropology were set forth in his essay, "Anthropology : Unity and Diversity."

"The scientist. . . . finds singular propositions referring to definite place and time of service only as they illustrate or contribute to general propositions as to the nature of classes of phenomena. These last are the center of the scientist's interest. He deals with types abstracted from particular experience. So he does not relate one particular fact to that next to it in space or time, but rather analyses the observed or recorded facts, breaking them down so as to abstract so much as may bear upon a class of phenomena also recognizable elsewhere. . . ."

"Radcliffe-Brown is near this non-historical end of the series ; he is concerned with the general nature of society ; particular factors serve for him to illustrate or to yield by comparison, general propositions as to society and culture ; he makes use of considered concepts somewhat systematically arranged. . . ."

The foregoing passage establishes three features of Redfield's theoretical position : his interest in typology, his belief in the possibility of establishing general laws applicable to all peoples, and his identification of his position with that of Radcliffe-Brown.

Theoretical Writings

For the sake of convenience and coherent treatment, Redfield's theoretical writings will not be treated in a chronological sequence to show the growth, revision and refinement of his ideas. Rather, his theory is presented in its most developed form, combining elements of his older and newer writings.

Redfield's theoretical interests led to his formulation of a methodological device for the classification of societies : the Folk-Urban Continuum. This continuum is specifically stated as an 'ideal type' presented to us for its heuristic value.

1. Robert Redfield, "The Folk Culture of Yucatan."

"The type is an imagined entity, created only because through it we may hope to understand reality. Its function is to suggest aspects of real societies which deserve study, and especially to suggest hypotheses as to what, under certain defined conditions may be generally true about society."²

It is significant to note that Redfield has developed in detail only the "folk" end of his continuum. The folk society is a composite picture of certain functionally interdependent characteristics which he has abstracted from an analysis of primitive communities. He believes his description to be typical of a majority of them, but not an accurate description of any of them.

The folk type of society is characterised as follows :

"Such a society is small, isolated, non-literate, and homogeneous, with a strong sense of group solidarity. The ways of living are conventionalized into that coherent system which we call "a culture." Behaviour is traditional, spontaneous, uncritical and personal ; there is no legislation or habit of experiment and reflection for intellectual ends. Kinship, its relationships and institutions, are the type categories of experience and the familiar group is the unit of action. The sacred prevails over the secular ; the economy is one of status rather than of the market."³

At other times Redfield has added more attributes to this core complex, or has expanded the treatment of the elements already mentioned. Folk culture has been characterised as 'an organization of conventional understandings' and folk society described as collectivistic, sacred, homogeneous regarding division of labour, etc.

The above definition of the folk society when scrutinized, seems to be just a collection of traits, which are not organized into some meaningful conceptual scheme. In it we have references to certain properties of the community (small, isolated, homogeneous, etc.), to cultural organization on the value level, to group solidarity, to nature of relationships or modes of action (traditional, spontaneous, etc.) and lastly to aspects of social structure and institutions (family, religion and economy). But it is Redfield's claim that this collection of attributes is not just a trait list, but that they are functionally inter-related so that a change in one characteristic produces change in the others.

2. Robert Redfield, "The Folk Society," in *Sociological Analysis*, ed. by Wilson & Kolb, New York, 1949, pp. 349-366, see p. 351.

3. Robert Redfield, "The Folk Society," *The American Journal of Sociology*, 52 (Jan. 1947), p. 294.

This is a significant statement because in many ways it concerns the validity of Redfield's formulation of the 'Folk Society,' of the Folk-Urban Continuum, and of the nature of the transition from one pole to the other, implied in the continuum. These problems lead us into deeper considerations of Redfield's conceptual scheme for characterizing a society, and of the nature of the inter-relationships between the factors he has posited. Redfield has been subject to much criticism on many of these points, especially in respect to the logical inter-relationships between the traits he has listed, and the validity and adequacy of his classificatory system in dealing with mixed types.

It has been observed that Redfield largely concerns himself with the folk pole of the continuum. The qualities of the urban type are taken to be the logically opposite ones to those which characterize the folk society. The urban pole implicitly refers to the urbanized society of today, specifically modern Westernized society.

Redfield states explicitly that the Folk-Urban continuum can be used for interpreting culture change which he regards as a folk-urban progression. This smacks of an 'evolutionary' or 'progress' formula, characterizing the course of civilization.⁴ "It (the continuum) may be the lens through which we review the entire history of mankind, from its beginnings to the present, with the hope of identifying some of the characteristic forms of societies developed through transformation of folk societies by way of the rise and spread of civilizations." Thus the folk society is regarded as the basic ideal type, approximated by the societies of the pre-civilization era, and away from which they have developed under the impact of civilization.

The process of transformation of folk into peasant into urban society has been developed by Redfield in his latest book.⁵ The chief moving force in this transformation is seen to be the city (which is synonymous with civilization). Redfield posits an intermediate type of community—the peasant society which has mixed characteristics of both polar types.

In the remaking of the later histories of folk societies, he thinks that the role of the city has been very important. The developing city cast out tentacles to influence and convert the folk people. The city required economic support from a wider and wider area of production, so that folk people in the hinterland, once they had submitted to the influence of the city, were converted into peasantry.

4. Robert Redfield, "The Natural History of the Folk Society," *Social Forces*, Vol.31, No. 3, March 1953, p. 226.

5. Robert Redfield, *The Primitive World and its Transformations*, Cornell University Press, 1953

Redfield discusses the sociological impact of the city on folk societies by the use of the two concepts, 'moral order' and 'technical order.' The 'moral order' consists of a body of undeclared but continually reorganized ethical conceptions, to which the technical order is subordinated in folk societies. The moral order of the precivilized community drew its strength from the close acquaintance of the members, isolation of communities, emphasis on kinship, etc. The technical order "is that order which results from mutual usefulness, from deliberate coercion, or from the mere utilization of the same means. In the technical order men are bound by things, or are themselves things."⁶ The impact of civilization results in the technical order gaining eminence over the moral order. In sociological terms what this means is that industrial division of labour and money relationships change the older social structure based on personal ties working through kinship, neighbourhood and similar groups.

In "Civilization," however, a new equilibrium is reached. "The old moral order suffers, but new states of mind are developed by which the moral order is, to some significant degree, taken in charge. The story of the moral order is attainment of some autonomy through much adversity."⁷

This historical reconstruction of the course of civilization does not concern the problem to be dealt with in this paper. The criticism has often been made that Redfield's continuum, thought handy for classifying culture synchronically, sheds little light on the developmental processes which have contributed to the emergence of different societal types. This perhaps explains why he attempts in this book to state his view of social evolution, and to weave the skeins of history into his continuum. These historical sweeps are beyond the present writer's more myopic interests. Perhaps Toynbee and Spengler have shown more academic scholarship and sophistication. Perhaps on the sociological plane Max Weber has analysed the different types of action, and Toennies the different types of relationships and community life, better. But Redfield claims one's attention on this subject matter.

Peasant Society as an intermediate type in the continuum merits further treatment. It is not defined as a 'community of small-scale producers for market.' The chief feature about a 'peasant' is that he did not exist before cities sprang up. He lives in terms of the city.⁸ "The peasant is a rural native whose long established order of life takes important account of the

6. *Ibid*, p. 21.

7. *Ibid*, p. 25.

8. *Ibid*, 1953, p. 31.

city." This account is threefold—economic (money becomes the measure of economic transactions and the urban middleman begins to play an important role as a buyer of agricultural produce, etc.), political (either the village leaders will perforce have to deal with the outside centralised power, or there will be a representative of the central power in the village, who will be derived from the local community), and moral (cultural advances of city will be incorporated into village life, e.g., secular entertainment divorced from religion and mythic content of local life, and the necessity of getting adjusted to 'writing' for communication with the outside.) Thus the peasant knows himself as part of the moral world in which the city man is also included.

"We may summarize the economic character of the peasant village by saying that it combines the primitive brotherhood of the pre-civilized folk community. So far as the peasant community faces inward, the relationships that compose it are still personal and familiar, but now they are modified by a spirit of pecuniary advantage."⁹

The process of conversion of the folk into peasant society is described thus :

"The introduction of agriculture presumably bent the moral order of many people who became farmers into ways of thought and feeling that were congenial to peasantry. The development of the market and the coming of the city completed the transformation."¹⁰

In broader terms, the transformation of folk to peasant can come about it two ways. A local transformation can occur within one culture, through its internal development which generates cities. Further, change is extended through contact with different cultures, especially westernized societies. In the second category Redfield distinguishes social types such as imperialized folk, transplanted or re-made folk (e.g., Negro plantation) and folk societies taken into partnership by an invading society (e.g., Maori).

In summary, the following may be said to be the characteristics of peasant society :

Elements of Folk Culture that are present

- (a) A traditional moral solidarity akin to isolated folk society.
- (b) Kinship relations of first importance.
- (c) Ends of living implicit and strongly felt.

9. *Ibid*, 1953, p. 33.

10. *Ibid*, 1953, p. 41.

Elements of Civilization that are present

- (d) Trading spirit, money, formal and impersonal control both economic and political.
- (e) Division of labour and specialists.
- (f) Style of life—a balanced adjustment between the moral order and technical order.

We have dealt with Redfield's characterization of Peasant Society in some detail, because it is of relevance to social scientists studying Oriental societies. Since the Peasant Society is a mixed type between the polar types, Redfield claims that it occupies a logical intermediate position in the continuum. The usefulness of this method of looking at peasant society, and the question whether peasant societies can meaningfully be treated within this framework, are important and interesting problems.

THE FOLK CULTURE OF YUCATAN¹¹—AN INTENSIVE ANALYSIS

Having presented Redfield's theory in general outline, a more intensive study of his best-known monograph, *The Folk Culture of Yucatan*, will now be made in order to see how he applied his continuum in a particular research. This book is of particular interest to us because as a practical application of his theory we are in the fortunate position to see what indices for his traits and characteristics he used. Further, the substantive results pertaining to the nature of the inter-relationships between the characteristics will also interest us.

It is Redfield's claim that the Folk-Urban typology was particularized in this study by reference to facts, and also further generalized by grouping the cultural characteristics in relation to which differences were found under three headings—Cultural Disorganization, Industrialization, Secularization. Redfield seeks here to demonstrate empirical validity for his theory; and claims that he has used a more 'meaningful' scheme for organizing his facts than he has done hitherto.

It was observed earlier that Redfield's characterization of the nature of the folk society seemed to be a jumble of many things (elements from social organizations and structure, values, etc.). It appeared as if Redfield had no refined conceptual scheme to characterize folk society, in spite of his claim that the traits were inter-related, and that a change in one implied a change in the others. Redfield realized this and attempted to rectify it in this book.

11. Robert Redfield, *The Folk Culture of Yucatan*, The University of Chicago Press, 1948, p.344

"The problems suggested in that earlier paper are too comprehensive in scope and too vague in definition to be suitable guides for research. Nine or ten characters, each simply denoted by a phrase or two, are thrown together and called a "type." It is not clear how we are to determine how any particular society partakes more or less of any of these characters. It is not made clear how we are to determine which of these characters is naturally associated with any other. It is necessary to ask more special questions, and relate them to particular fact, to define more precise lines of inquiry."¹²

Methodology

The method employed in this study is "the approximate simultaneous investigation of a series of contemporary communities differing chiefly with respect to the degree to which each has been affected by communication with a simple important centre of modifying influence." He selected four communities in Yucatan—a city, a town, a village, and a tribal group, each representing different degrees of Westernization and amount of communication with the city. Yucatan, considered as one moves from Merida, southeastward into the present hinterland, presents a sort of social gradient in which the Spanish, modern, and urban culture gives way to the Maya archaic and primitive. "This volume results from a study of 4 communities chosen to represent points, not too unevenly distributed, along this gradient."¹³ The four communities have differences in respect to isolation, homogeneity of population, literacy, division of labour and size of community. (Some of these become the independent variables in the study). In spite of the differential Spanish influence on different areas of Yucatan, Redfield assumes that all Yucatan presents a general cultural bloc, in which both Spanish and Maya cultures have interacted to produce a new whole. This assumption is important for the research, because it takes care of many difficulties.

The Hypotheses in the Study

Redfield derives certain hypotheses from his folk-urban continuum. The hypotheses investigated are the following:

1. The primitive and peasant societies have in general, characters of the first type (folk).
2. When such societies undergo contact and communication with urbanized society (or at least with modern Western urbanized society), they tend to change in the direction of the opposite of these characters.

12. *Ibid*, p. 344.

13. *Ibid*, p. 13.

3. There is some natural or interdependent relation among some, or all, of these characters, in that change with regard to certain of them *tends to bring* about or carry with it change with respect to others.

These hypotheses are generated from his general theoretical statements. There are two more hypotheses which are derived from the conceptual scheme adopted in this study, which may be briefly stated as follows :

Independent Variables	Dependent Variables
1. Loss of Isolation	a. Organization—Disorganization of Culture
2. Homogeneity—Heterogeneity of Community	b. Secularization
	c. Individualization.
4. The above independent variables imply the hypothesis that loss of isolation and increasing heterogeneity are causes of disorganization, secularization, and individualization.	
5. There may be co-variant or causal inter-relationships between cultural disorganization and secularization, or between cultural disorganization and individualization.	

Independent Variables

Homogeneity : “ A homogeneous society is one composed of the same kind of people doing the same kind of things. In it the habits of any individual tend to conform to the customs of the group ; or, in other terms, the organized mental life of any individual tends to coincide at many points with the organized mental life of other individuals.”¹⁴

Isolation : “ A society is isolated to the extent that contacts among members of the local society (community) are many and intimate and characterized by a high degree of mutual understanding of much of the habitual mental life of one another, while contacts between members of the local society and outsiders are few, not intimate, and characterized by a lower degree of mutual understanding.”¹⁵

A careful consideration of the way these independent variables are defined leads to considerable doubt and confusion as to the position and nature of the first one—homogeneity : heterogeneity. Obviously, from the definition it appears that this refers to the nature of culture in a society—its homogeneity and its organization into a body of shared conventional

14. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

understandings. But it is precisely this problem that Redfield is concerned with as a dependent variable—the disorganization of culture as an effect of loss of isolation. In fact, it is the relative disorganization of culture as a result of increasing communication that is supposed to affect the other dependent variables—secularization and individualization. Hence it may be said at the outset that Homogeneity—Heterogeneity occupies a confused position as an independent variable. In fact, it is isolation and degree of communication with the city that becomes Redfield’s important variable, and it is around this that the whole analysis is built up.

Dependent Variables

The three dependent variables—Cultural organization : disorganization, individualization, and secularization—are the rubrics under which Redfield classifies and marshals the facts that relate to the consequences of increasing contact and communication with the urban centre.

I. Cultural Organization—Disorganization

Urban influence, in connection with Culture Organization—Disorganization, is treated in terms of communication.

“ Communication with other societies tends toward a disorganising of the conventional understandings ; and a serious invasion of new ideas or compulsive change with regard to the old may result in great disorganization.”¹⁶

It is important to note Redfield’s characterisation of culture. It is defined as “ an organization of conventional understandings manifest in act and artifact.”¹⁷ “ We may as well identify culture with the extent to which the conventionalized behavior of the members of the society is for all the same.”¹⁸

So it appears that the amount of homogeneity of culture is going to be decided upon the extent to which the conventionalised body of meanings is shared equally by the members.

Theoretically, the indices or yardstick by which Redfield hopes to measure the degree of cultural homogeneity is specified in four ways.

1. The Unity of Culture—the extent to which it may be described as a simple culture, and the extent to which it must be seen as a series of related sub-cultures, etc.

16. *Ibid.*

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 132—133.

18. *Ibid.*, pp. 132—133

2. The extent and nature of the alternative lines of thought and action, conventionally made available to the individual (degree of ambiguity and permissiveness (?)).

3. The extent of relationships of interdependence between various elements of culture. In other words, the degree of discreteness and separations of ideas and the extent of ramifications into other elements of belief and value preference.

4. The extent of conflict and inconsistency between various elements of culture, i.e., the frequency with which conventionally recognised lines of thought and action within the same culture are inconsistent with one another.

Several theoretical problems crop up in relation to Redfield's formulation of cultural organization and the indices he hopes to employ for measuring it. For instance, Redfield confounds cultural homogeneity with cultural organization. Does this preclude any possibility of a heterogeneous culture being organized? Another problem is that of unity of culture. Presumably, if Redfield means by conventional understandings mainly *value elements*, how much unity in such elements is necessary for a society to function? Many writers (e.g., Aberle, Levy) agree that a certain common value system is a functional pre-requisite for a society, but how much of this unity and shared conventional understandings is necessary before a society becomes disorganized is a matter of empirical finding and not necessarily of a priori theoretical postulation. Sub-cultures need not hamper the functioning of society as long as there is some agreement throughout society on ultimate and fundamental value aims; on the other hand, where this is lacking, sub-cultures may fail to produce a minimum of necessary shared understandings.

The use of 'alternative lines of thought and action' as another index also raises problems. In using this criterion Redfield is in considerable agreement with Linton, that the difference between folk culture and modern civilization is "primarily a matter of the proportion which the core of universals and specialities bear to the fluid zone of alternatives." The correlative proposition to this formulation by Linton is that we may expect to find a large number of alternatives associated with a low degree of interdependence of the elements of culture and of consistency among them.

Does the presence of a large number of alternatives really lead to inconsistency of culture? What if the commonly accepted value system is an individualistic ethic which makes free choice in action imperative? Would we then have a consistent value complex and also a culture tending

towards disorganization? Furthermore, value conflicts in society can be minimized by segmentalization and segregation of roles, insulation of groups with differing values, etc. This shows that value conflict by itself does not inevitably lead to anomic and social disorganization.

The next important empirical consideration concerns the empirical referents Redfield uses to examine this dependent variable of cultural organization—disorganization. A close scrutiny of the relevant chapters reveals that the following facts are used by him to prove that increasing communication with the city leads to cultural disorganization.

I. Empirical Referents

1. New idea of progress. Imitation of the ways of city (in Chan Kom and Dzitas). Emphasis on standard of living and material conditions of life.
2. Change of costume as a result of taking over values of town.
3. Change in the role of women who become wage-earners.
4. The variety of occupations.
5. The presence of people who are socially ambiguous.
6. Greater indications of feelings of insecurity, because meanings attached to acts and objects are less highly standardized by convention.
7. Increase in the range of knowledge and choice of conduct presented to the individual.

Do these facts adequately express the relative degree of cultural organization—disorganization? Statements 6 and 7 are made without adequate factual support. Further, although Redfield promised to treat the subject in terms of unity and plurality of culture, alternative lines of action, interdependence of culture traits, conflicting rules of behavior, etc., the facts have not been marshalled in a way that adequately follows the theoretical mode of inquiry initially set out by the author. When Redfield talks of 'conventional understanding' one expects a treatment of culture in terms of values, value orientations, normative patterns, institutionalized patterns of behaviour, etc. The facts he cites seem to be drawn indiscriminately from elements of social organization, values, evolution of new roles, without adequate specification or statement of their relevance.

II. Individualization

The independent variable, urban influence (or loss of isolation), is in the treatment of individualization taken to mean commercialism. The

extent of commercialism in the four communities is estimated by such considerations as degree of commercial development, money relationships between people and the extent of barter, and pecuniary versus ceremonial nature of economic transactions.

Individualization (dependent variable) is defined thus: "We may understand a society to be individualistic to the extent that the socially approved behavior of any of its members does not involve family, clan, neighborhood, village, or any other primary group."¹⁹

Empirical Referents

1. Property Rights—the development of individual rights in land and in conjugal estates; the persistence of the family as an economic unit after death of a partner versus partition.

2. Disappearance of collective labour in connection with civic enterprises and religious worship.

3. Division of labour—Redfield says that development of civilization is best described, aside from technological changes, in terms of multiplication and specialization of functions, and changes in the character of functions discharged. Increasing division of labour is seen to manifest itself in the following ways in the communities:

- a. Individuals devote more time to particular functions.
- b. More functions are required for the maintenance of the community.
- c. The presence of full-time secular (not sacred) specialists, i.e., from specialized functions performed on behalf of the community to functions executed for the benefit of the specialist himself.
- d. Participation of women in economic roles.

4. Family Organization: Consideration of family structure seems to be a focal point in Redfield's treatment of individualization. He says that increasing individualization is only incidentally to be seen in changes in division of labour, etc., and directly seen in changes in family organization. The pivotal question in Redfield's thinking is whether an individual is controlled by his family or not. He says that it is the disorganization of the family that leads to cultural disorganization because kinship embraces all social relations in well organized communities. In the communities the author deals with in this book, there is hardly any difference in the form of family structure between them. He therefore focuses his attention on

19. *Ibid.*, p. 356.

the *relative stability* of the families and on the nature of ties with kin relatives and the behaviour towards them. The factors and types of relationships examined are:

- a. The stability of the elementary family.
- b. Manifestation of patriarchal or matriarchal authority.
- c. Reduction in respect relationships towards relatives.
- d. Shrinkage in application of kinship (classificatory) terms to members outside the elementary family.

Redfield's treatment of individualization appears to be more competent than his treatment of cultural organization. He defined individualization as the breakdown of the control by primary groups over the behaviour of an individual, and he does proceed to show the changes in family organization decline in communal activities etc. as proof of the growing individualization in communities as a consequence of greater urban contact. His treatment of growing complexity of division of labour does not logically fall into his definition of individualization, but no one can disagree that increasing division of labour (in the Durkheimian sense) indirectly if not directly, leads to greater individualization. The importance of the multiplication and specialization of tasks in producing a new type of solidarity has already been amply demonstrated by Durkheim.

III. Secularization

Redfield defines sacred and secular attitudes and behaviour thus: "An object is sacred to the extent that there is a reluctance, emotionally supported, to call the thing rationally or practically into question. Secular objects are treated in a practical or even critical manner without reluctance."²⁰

The chief empirical facts cited in his discussion of secularization can be organized thus:

1. *Treatment of crops especially maize*: 'Sacred' behaviour is seen when field reasons of practical advantage and considerations of market are not enough to make a man decide whether or not to step on the kernels of maize or even to plant or not to plant. In secular behaviour maize is separated from the context of religion and is treated as a commercial product. Actions with regard to maize in the market are readily adapted to considerations of expediency.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 353.

2. *Religion*: It is very difficult to organize the data on religion. Redfield does not make a systematic comparison of the same categories between the four communities. His task was perhaps rendered difficult by the fact that Paganism and Catholicism were both practised in varying degrees in the four communities.

(a) *Paganism*—The decline of the Native Gods as one goes to the town and city. (Since belief in pagan gods is connected with agriculture and agricultural ceremonies, a decline in this belief is not necessarily a measure of secularization because agriculture is not practised in the town and city. The loss of pagan beliefs may not be due to the 'loosening of the web of meanings' but due to the loss of connection with agriculture. Hence the 'decline of the Native Gods' is not a valid comparative index).

(b) *Practice of Catholicism*—Under this topic Redfield sizes up the number of believers *vs.* non-believers in the various communities, the effectiveness of communal symbols and saints *vs.* individual symbols and saints, the informal *vs.* the formal hierarchical nature of church organization and participation.

(c) *Magic*—Magic in the less urbanized communities is connected with religious beliefs. What was religious in the peripheral communities become merely magical in the town or city. From a sacred practice and an act of piety, it changes into an act indulged in for defensive purposes. Redfield presents the very interesting fact that the incidence of magic is greater in Merida (city) than in the other communities, and he interprets this as a symptom of the disorganization and insecurity in the city.

(d) *From Holy Day to holiday*—i.e., how 'religious' days are treated more as holiday as one nears the city.

Redfield's definitions and treatment of the third dependent variable—Secularization—are acceptable; but it is questionable whether he has successfully demonstrated that as you get nearer the city, you get more secularized behaviour. His data on traditionalism—rationalism in relation to Maize cultivation is convincing. But his treatment of religion seems more a confused comparison of different facts rather than a systematic comparison of parallel categories to show presence or absence, or an increasing or decreasing change in the nature of the variable.

Criticism of "Folk Culture of Yucatan."

I. Theoretical Scheme

The Folk Culture of Yucatan is concerned with culture change (or to adopt other terms, acculturation or culture contact). Redfield insists that

his study is not a mere documentation of diffusion from a westernized centre to the peripheral areas of Yucatan. Therefore it is appropriate to ask whether Redfield has attempted an explanation in terms of the necessary inter-relationship of changes involved in acculturation (i.e., some sort of functional analysis). It was Redfield's claim in this book that his Folk-Urban typology was particularized in this study by grouping the cultural characteristics in relation to which differences are found, under three headings—Cultural Disorganization, Individualization and Secularization. (By implication, the Folk Culture is culturally organised, leads a collectivistic life, and many aspects of its behaviour are sacred).

Do these three general concepts adequately subsume all the relevant features of a society? Further, perhaps what is more important, "Are these concepts tied together meaningfully so that all possible relationships, important to be considered in a study of this sort, can be derived from them?" The inadequacies of his conceptual scheme can be expressed in these terms:

1. Are the three concepts exhaustive and mutually exclusive? Redfield often cites the same facts to express cultural disorganization and secularization. Aspects of value, social behavior, structural features are indiscriminately lumped together. For example, cultural disorganization could have been treated in terms of values and norms, and secularization, individualization in terms of certain institutional behaviour and group structure.

2. Are the concepts meaningfully tied together so that relationships important to the study can be derived from them? Redfield started with a relationship of concepts which may be expressed in this form: Loss of Isolation—→leads to Cultural Disorganization—→which leads to Secularization and Individualization. Throughout his book he finds that such a statement of the direction of change does not always hold, because secularization and individualization can result independently from increasing division of labour rather than from a breakdown of cultural meanings and conventional understandings as the necessary antecedent factor.

II. Methodology and Research Procedure

A source of dissatisfaction with the study is the inadequacy of the research procedure. A criticism of the methods and procedures of most anthropologists may be branded as a sociological bias. Still, Redfield's comparative study would have been more systematic and more convincing in terms of proof, if he had used categories of comparison consistently, and

furthermore, computed quantitative indices. His description of facts is unsystematic and he often resorts to presenting unique and disparate facts in a community to prove a point, without giving a notion of what the relative distribution of the same facts are in the other communities. More systematic comparisons are necessary for the evaluation not only of change but also for the validation of his theory, concepts and empirical indices for those concepts.

Criticism and Evaluation of Redfield's Theory

The Theoretical Status of the Typology and Continuum

1. Implied in Redfield's polar type is the continuum of change from Folk to Urban. Kroeber has questioned this interpretation of culture change and the course of history. "The question arises whether the trend from rural to urban... holds throughout for the change from folk culture to urban sophistication. We know of pieces of history that show the change... But the trend is not universal and is not irreversible. The folk-sophisticate polarity, especially when it is viewed not so much as a scale but as a one way drift, definitely overlaps with the idea of "progress" and is emotionally tinged." To this Redfield has replied that as far as he knows no one has disagreed that the general tendency does not exist. He asserts that he is in the direct line of a number of writers like Maine, Durkheim and others who have pointed out that change takes place in the direction he has described. To a student from the East, interested in the process of transition and secularization of 'under-developed' countries, Redfield's description of the direction of change seems indisputable. However, this question cannot be resolved until we have investigated another problem. (As for Redfield's belief in progress, Horace Miner has pointed out that Redfield has also been criticised for the opposite—that he has painted Folk Society in Rousseauian terms).

2. The question arises as to whether the groupings of traits included in his characterization of the polar types are necessarily and functionally interdependent, or whether they might not just as well be an accidental historically determined congeries of facts. Is a folk village always culturally organized, isolated, homogeneous, collectivistic, sacred, etc? Sol Tax²¹ has pointed out that some of the Guatemalan societies he has studied were mobile and impersonal, with well-developed patterns of communication and economically motivated exchange with surrounding societies. Yet

21. Sol Tax, "Culture and Civilization in Guatemalan Societies," *Scientific Monthly*, XLVIII, 1939, pp. 463-467.

he maintains that these societies were small, homogeneous and unsophisticated. Herskovits has observed that many urban communities are to be found in West Africa, ranging from one hundred thousand to over three hundred and fifty thousand. "These populations have complex specialized economics, exhibiting the use of money and the profit motive. Yet in these cities relationships are just as personal as in any folk society. And religion is the focal aspect of culture."²² Oscar Lewis²³ has described a situation where commercialism was accompanied by little evidence of family disorganization in T pozatlan.

These criticisms question the very validity or usefulness of using ideal polar concepts because certain empirical facts disprove the necessary inter-relationship and co-existence of the categories in Redfield's typology. Redfield makes the following reply to his critics :²⁴

"To describe the constructed folk society as one that is small, isolated, personal and sacred is to imagine a limiting case of society that has qualities, that real primitive societies tend to have, in that extreme degree still consistent with human living. It is not to assert that this combination is invariably present."

"The conception of the folk society gathers up these many separately received impressions of the civilized on the one hand and the primitive on the other into one or a pair of imagined but viable societies, and so makes the asking of these kinds of questions more thorough and orderly."

Redfield in effect asserts that the polar types are useful in determining how much of the characteristics of Folk or Urban or both, a particular community possesses. He also claims that there is some natural or inter-dependent relation among some or all of these characters of the ideal type in that change with regard to certain of them tends to bring about change with respect to others of them.

In the light of the above controversy, an examination of the logical status and methodological function of typological concepts may be useful. Hempel²⁵ in discussing typologies, distinguishes between three main kinds of type concepts : classificatory, extreme and ideal types.

(a) *Classificatory types* are constructed as classes. There are however rare in Social Science because "Attempts at typological classification are often frustrated, however, by the realization that those characteristics of

22. M. Herskovits, *Man and His Works*, New York, 1950, p. 606.

23. Oscar Lewis, *Life in a Mexican Village: Tepoztlan Restudied*, University of Illinois Press, 1951.

24. Redfield, "The Natural History of the Folk Society," *Social Forces*, Vol. 31, No.3, March 1953.

25. C. G. Hempel, "Symposium : Problems of Concept and Theory Formation in the Social Sciences. American Philosophical Association," Eastern Division, Vol. II, 1952.

the subject matter which are to provide the defining basis of the classification cannot fruitfully be constructed as simple property concepts determining... classes with neatly demarcated boundaries."²⁶

Clearly Redfield's typology is not a classification.

(b) *Extreme types*. Certain constructed entities are conceived as extreme or pure types, "of which concrete instances are rarely to be found, but which may serve as conceptual points of reference or 'poles' between which all actual occurrences can be ordered in serial array."²⁷ Redfield's typology falls under this category.

(c) *Ideal types* (a la Max Weber and Becker), though usually presented in the same fashion as extreme types, are as Hempel points out, logically of a different status from that of extreme types, because they are not used for *ordering* types, but are invoked as a specific device for *explanation* of social and historical phenomena and for construction of theoretical systems. Hempel goes on to reason why ideal types as explanatory devices, are based on logically false grounds. But this is outside the range of this paper.

Since Redfield's typology falls under the category of extreme or pure types, it is pertinent to inquire into their logical form. Since they are not class concepts, individual cases cannot be subsumed under them as instances, but can only be located as to the extent to which they approximate them. A description, however, vivid, of an extreme type with which concrete cases are to be compared *does not by itself provide standards for such comparison*, though it may focus attention on certain empirical facts and suggest a programme of research. "But if an extreme type is to function as a legitimate scientific concept in scientific statements with clear objective meaning, then explicit criteria for the 'more or less' of comparison must be provided. These criteria may take a non-numerical, 'purely comparative' form, or they may be based on quantitative indices such as rating scales or measurement." Thus it can be argued that Redfield's types can be defended on logical grounds, if it is realized that "the folk-urban continuum deals with problems of the relative degree of presence or absence of polar characteristics, which vary not only between cultures but within them."²⁸ The chief drawback in the use of such typologies is that adequate methodological techniques have not been devised for operationalising and quantifying the characteristics themselves. The logic of pure types would then be the logic of ordering relations and of measurement. But if used in this fashion, they do not differ from other comparative and quantitative concepts of empirical science.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 67.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 68.

28. Horace Miner, "The Folk-Urban Continuum," *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 17, No. 5, October 1952, p. 531.

The above does not exhaust the use of pure types however. Pure type can become theoretical systems if (a) the characteristics with which the theory is to deal with are specified, (b) a set of hypotheses in terms of these characteristics are formulated, (c) these characteristics are given an empirical interpretation, (d) finally as a long range objective, the theory is incorporated into a more comprehensive theory as a special case.

Societies, for comparative purposes, can be measured in relation to the characteristics. After accomplishing this, they may be grouped into different classes, provided the various characteristics show a consistency in variation in relation to the particular societies studied. Even if the variables change at differential rates, ordering into classes after measurement is possible, provided the differential variations take place according to certain hypotheses derived from the postulated inter-relationship between the variables, e.g., that variable A tends to change faster than B. But if the differences between societies in relation to the characteristic is unpredictable, then no such grouping is possible, after measurement.

If the researcher proceeds in the manner stated above, it is possible to come out with mixed or transitional types between the polar antithetical types. It is plausible that the societies described by Sol Tax, Herskovits and Oscar Lewis are really intermediate types. But if their evidence disproves the necessary inter-relationships between the characteristics in the pure types formulated by Redfield, then his pure types need revision. But this does not invalidate the logical status of the pure type.

3. The usefulness of Redfield's folk-urban types rests on their heuristic value. Redfield has been criticized for focusing primarily on the city as a source of change. In the "Folk Culture of Yucatan" he used loss of isolation and increasing urban contact as leading to cultural disorganization, which results in secularization and individualization. Other writers have rightly asserted that this is not necessarily the direction of change, and that change can take place independent of the breakdown of cultural organization through urban contact. Secularization and individualization can result through the growth of trade and of a money economy, or through the development of formal, hierarchical government. This has been, for instance, the case in Guatemala and West Africa. Redfield, in his book, agrees with this and grants that, depending on the focus of the researcher and the facts of the case, any variable may be taken as the independent variable (the source of change).

4. G. P. Murdock has criticized the folk-urban concept as having limited theoretical insight, because it does not make use of historical,

functional, or psychological theory and method. It is true that the continuum does not include any theory of process or function. All it enables is formal comparison, without interpreting the nature of the functional relationships between the characteristics. Miner writes: "Any body of theoretical knowledge in the social sciences can be related to the continuum if it can contribute to our understanding of the process through which the characteristic traits are inter-related."²⁹ It is my belief that the continuum is useful as a formal pattern for comparative purposes, but that as an explanatory device, it should be combined with a structural-functional analysis, which is best adapted to interpret process in dynamic change.

Conclusion

In conclusion, a few points made by Ralph Beals³⁰ in his discussion of Acculturation may be cited. Some of the basic steps to be undertaken in Acculturation research are, in his opinion, the following:

1. Since study of Acculturation is primarily concerned with process, and since process is primarily inferred, a clarification of the methods of inference is needed.
2. Quantification should be extensively developed, to provide techniques for determining relative rates of acculturation between various aspects of culture and between individuals in a given society, to establish types and classes, and to provide better comparative methods.
3. Quantification should be developed in close relation to the advance of structural and functional types of analysis, to prevent unrealistic fragmentation of cultures, without means of re-integrating the results.
4. The need to explore the utility of typologies, the possible existence of continua and the usefulness of Polar concepts.

This essay has been concerned more with the logical status and the methodological issues pertaining to Redfield's Continuum than with his substantive statements on the nature of culture contact and change. In fact, a discussion of the latter inevitably led us to consider the former problems. Lack of precision in systematic comparison, and the failure to use comparative quantitative indices are important factors preventing conclusions about culture change that are theoretically acceptable. His continuum as a methodological device is useful. His conceptual scheme and polar types need refining. Coupled with a body of theory that can explain

29. H. Miner, *op. cit.*, S. 537.

30. Ralph Beals, "Acculturation," in *Anthropology Today*, ed. Kroeber et al, University of Chicago Press, 1953.

change, and better methodological techniques, the use of 'types' will not only enable us to establish 'empirical types' between the two polar types, but also give us theoretical conclusions about the nature and processes of culture change.

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