

THE CHANGING FILIPINO FAMILY

(The Research on "Youth Perspective on the Changing Functions of the Filipino Family" was done by the Social Research Center of the University of Santo Tomas; the whole study will be published early next year. This summary report was written by Professor Adelina Go, Senior Researcher of the UST SRC and Director of the said research on the Filipino Family.)

The remarkable institution

It takes some distance to observe the fascinating qualities of the family. It is the oldest social institution, existing irregardless of place, time, belief system, and culture. It takes on varied forms from society to society, even changes its form to meet new realities.

Yet, for its being too familiar, like the air we breathe, we realize its value only when it is threatened to be lost. When we read Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* or George Orwell's *1984*, we marvel at technology's efficiency but we shudder at the loss of human attributes nurtured in a home. Divorce statistics, illegitimate births, *Kramer vs. Kramer*, are reminders that some drab and common things in our lives are precious.

Even social scientists of the past generation have tended to minimize the institutional significance of the family as an area of scholarly investigation. Whereas grants have been made readily available in the areas of population, economics, and cross-cultural relations, funds for the study of the family have been rather hard to come by. Recently, the recognition of the role of the family as a social control agent has revitalized interest in family studies. Basic to all types of social organization is the family, the institution which concerns itself with love, sexual relationships, marriage, reproduction, socialization of the child, and various statutes and roles involved in kinship organization.

For a while it seemed that the family was enduring *in spite* of modern influences, now it is clear that the family is ever alive *because* of these trends. Technology and its uses have broken down many human relationships. The ensuing alienation leaves no alternative but finding a warm place in one's family, where one needs no impressive dossier in order to be accepted.

Filipino Family Trends

Even in the predominantly, traditional society like the Philippines, the forces of development have transformed the solid structure of the family. The Filipino family shows signs of changing in the direction of the more developed Western societies. Gone are the days when children are only seen but not heard, or when *Tata's* political conviction is also *Nanay's*. On a larger scale the immediately perceivable symptoms of the acceptance of changes in the Filipino family are the disappearance of the extended family in the urban areas and the rise of the isolated nuclear family; the mounting pressure to enact a divorce bill; the growing independence of family members in their recreational, political, economic activities; and similar trends.

Minimal changes have occurred in the Filipino marriage and family structures but are nevertheless significant to the changes in their functions, the aspect which appears to advance at a faster rate.

1. Average marrying age has definitely become older since a generation ago. In 1976, 50 percent of the brides were 21.5 years and older while 50 percent of the grooms were 23.9 years and older. Older marriages mean shorter fertility periods for women. Hence, future families are expected to be smaller in size.

Marriages by types of ceremony: 1976

In 1976., there were 303,988 marriages performed in the country, 13.6 percent of which were recorded in January, perhaps owing to the Filipino belief that this month brings happy unions. Fifty-six percent of these marriages were solemnized in a Roman Catholic church. Thirty-one percent was married civilly and the rest in other non-catholic religious rites.

Roman Catholic Marriages	55.7%
Civil Marriages	30.8%
Other Religious Rites	13.5%

2. In terms of composition, Filipino families are gradually becoming more "nuclear", that is, consisting of the father, mother and their unmarried children. Traditionally, most families are extended, where one household has the original couple and the families of their

married children including other relations. In 1975, 86 percent of all the households recorded are single-family households. Five percent is even non-nuclear, meaning no core family included. Of the families, 31 percent is situated in the urban areas and the rest in the rural areas.

Number of Families Per Household All Philippines: 1975

One Family	86%
Two Families	8%
Three and Four Families	1%
No Family	5%

The fourth category of households, that is, "no-family" household, refers to those groupings which are not family-oriented as in cases where students live together in a dorm or when unrelated persons live together for convenience.

3. Illegitimate births and separations (divorces) have increased in a small proportion. Although records of these 2 events are often inaccurate, the increasing trend is discernible.

In 1976, there were 63,615 illegitimate births registered throughout the whole country. The social life for these children are no longer so secluded as society becomes more tolerant of them. Divorces are obtained by wealthy people outside the country.

legitimate births	95%
illegitimate births	5%

The proportion of divorced/separated couples to the total married population is very small and this could be due, among other reasons, to the absence of divorce in the country.

Youth and Future Families

To catch a clearer glimpse of the future families, we are presenting here part of a study which we have done on the youth. The youths in this study, aged 18-22, rural and urban, have been asked to respond to situations which reflect their values. The extent to which these youths have assimilated the new values about the family, mirrors their acceptance or rejection of the new functions of the family.

The following data have been gathered in a survey done by the UST Social Research Center in March 1980. The sample used was a group of 525 rural urban schooling youths. Three hundred are residents of Metro Manila, representing the urban sample and 225 are residents of Batangas, representing the rural sample. All interviews were conducted in English; hence, a limitation of this study was the exclusion of out-of-school youths. However, modern marriage trends, or any other Western trend for that matter, are believed to be first introduced to the middle and upper class people. The choice of the sample rests on an assumption that they will be the next generation of family members who would be affected in their values about the family. Their attitudes now could be a preview to the kind of values which future families will hold. Half of the sample are males.

1. *The Biological Function*

Fundamentally, the family serves to regulate sexual practices in a society. It is traditionally believed to be the only legitimate outlet for the biological sexual urge. This function has served well in controlling promiscuity and illegitimate births. But the "new morality" is questioning this exclusive right of the family. New phenomena have emerged as a result of this questioning, such as pre-marital and extra-marital sex.

Pre-marital sex symbolizes, for the young, a liberation from the confines of tradition. It celebrates two people's right to express themselves more freely. The following case was presented to the sample in this survey.

Rey and Tess have plans of getting married after graduation from the University next year. They have been going steady for 2 years and lately started having sexual intimacies saying, "we will get married each other anyway." Do you agree with that belief?

strongly disagree	26%
disagree	47
not sure	9
agree	16
strongly agree	2
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	100%

The overwhelming disagreement with this premarital practice could be an indication of a continuing belief in the sacredness of marriage. This, however, cannot be taken to be a gauge of actual youth practice. In the Philippines, where the practice has not gained wide acceptance publicly, surveys on intimate relationship could be misleading especially if the method of data collection is formal.

The society we are familiar with has set monogamy as the norm in marital relationships. The exclusive expression of sex in marriage also connotes fidelity of one man to one woman. The cases below show how our youth react to the violation of this norm.

Tony loves his wife and children but having been assigned to work for 3 years in Bangkok, away from his family, he maintains a temporary love affair there. He believes it is not wrong because he plans to terminate it when he goes back to his family. Do you agree that there is nothing wrong?

strongly disagree	22%
disagree	44
not sure	8
agree	24
strongly agree	2
	100%

Of 525 youths, 25% agreed to this extra-marital affair. The extenuating circumstance of going "back to his family" appears to have saved Tony's case. Most Filipinos value the family so much that a "fleeting" affair is often tolerated to preserve the family despite the obvious unfairness. This attitude is an old one, specially among wives of the last generation. Younger people are expected to be less tolerant of preserving the family honor in exchange for honesty. Majority of the youths interviewed here have shown disagreement with the practice, in keeping with their rejection of premarital sex.

In the case of the Philippines, this norm is more strictly enforced where the woman is concerned. Men are allowed more leeway in this rule. Let us see how the double-standard appeals to the younger generation.

Susan's husband is a busy doctor and has simply not time for her. He is usually cranky and irritable when he comes home tired

from the hospital. In her loneliness Susan develops an intimate relationship with her counsellor who understands her situation. Do you agree with the relationship?

strongly disagree	32%
disagree	49
not sure	7
agree	10
strongly agree	2
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	100%

A large majority of those interviewed disagreed with the case. However, one notices that the proportion in comparison with the previous case favors more the infidelity of the husband than the wife. The double-standard of morality still favors the husbands in the two cases as far as the youths interviewed are concerned.

When asked directly under what condition they believed sex was permissible, the youth were classifiable into 2 groups.

Sex is never correct before marriage	54%
OK when couples are engaged	11
OK when couples are "on" even if they are not engaged	1
OK during courtship	1
Whenever 2 mature people agree	33
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	100%

One group (54%) is definitely traditional with their attitude to sex. The other group is more liberal towards the subject. "Whenever 2 mature people mutually agree" was the response of 33% of those interviewed.

2. *The Socialization Functions*

In past primitive societies, there was no other social institution except the family. There were no schools, legal codes or books to transmit knowledge and culture from one generation to the next. The family was the sole agent of socialization, It nursed the sick because there were no hospitals. It taught the child because there were no nursery schools. In our society, most of these socialization function have been transferred par-

tially or completely to specialized organizations. Children between the ages 6 to 18 spend the longer of their waking hours in schools, the rest in movies, sports, and other preoccupations outside the home. Due to this and other developments, mothers started leaving the home for employment.

The "working mother" has received a lot of attention, mostly supportive. It is one of the few trends in family structure which has easily gained wide positive response. Families benefit from educated and informed parents. Mothers need not be confined to housework, more so in the Philippines where household helps are still affordable. In this survey, 33 percent of those interviewed reported that their mothers worked all the time while they (the respondents) were between the ages 1 to 14 years old.

Seventy-eight of the youths favored working mothers against only 22 percent which do not favor it. However, one interesting finding here is a correlation between youths who were raised by working mothers and those who were not. Both groups are asked to react to this case.

Lita has to work because her husband does not earn enough for her and their 6 young children. She notices that the children show more affection to their maids, who regularly care for them, than to her and their father, but she has no choice. Do you agree with this arrangement?

<i>While I was growing up my mother</i>	<i>Do you agree with arrangement?</i>	
	Yes	No
Worked all the time	174	0
Never worked	0	276

The table above shows that all those whose mothers worked all the time while they were growing up approved of leaving children with maids while those whose mothers never worked disapproved of the arrangement all together.

Based on another question used, there is an indication that where the family welfare is intact, the concept of working mother is acceptable. In conflict situations where the family's good is in jeopardy, the value of the working mother is diminished.

3. *The reproduction function*

Although as Catholics, Filipinos should not disassociate the sexual from the reproduction function, most couples differentiate between the two. Child-bearing is associated with more serious and difficult responsibilities, such as child rearing.

Children are no longer blindly accepted as "gifts of God", which may not be rejected. The number of children in a family should be a rational decision, not an accident. In the recent national effort to control the sizes of families several new trends may be noticed like abortion, family planning and the use of birth control methods.

Among the youths sampled, 35 percent reported that they will use artificial birth control techniques to plan the number of their children, although most of them did not specify the exact method they will use.

The arguments in favor and against family planning may not yet be too clear for young people. Their responses in the following cases reveal that they tend to vary their opinion in conflict situations. Due to extreme poverty, Rose takes the pill even if she is a Catholic. She sees nothing wrong in it because there is no human life involved before conception. Do you agree?

agree	54%
not sure	6
disagree	40
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	100%

Boy and Linda decided not to have any more children to be able to provide their 5 children with good education later on. Upon learning that Linda is pregnant again, the couple decided to abort the unwanted baby. Do you agree with their decision?

agree	8%
not sure	2
disagree	90
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	100%

In a related question, 57 percent of the same group favored abortion "when the mother's life is in danger." In the *Boy and Linda* case 90 percent disagreed with the specific abortion.

Youth opinion on family planning and abortion tends to become more tolerant where conflict situations are involved. Usually, where a living person or persons' welfare is concerned (like the mother or other children), the unborn child is decided against.

4. *The Economic function*

The Filipino family functions as one economic unit. Its members contribute to the family income in supporting the material needs of the household. An admirable arrangement exists in many Filipino homes where the older members of the brood take on some of the parent's tasks. For a middle-class family, the parents are considered lucky if the elder children are earning. These unmarried children are often expected to deliver in full their earnings to the family pot and divided equally among the family. This way, younger unemployed children benefit from other siblings. In turn, they are someday expected to help the still younger members of the family. Parents' load seems lighter with more of their unmarried children contributing to the family fund.

Among the youths interviewed here, 77 percent said they will support their younger brothers and sisters in school. This is perhaps in gratitude to other older siblings. There was a total of 69% of 525 youths who claimed that right now, some of their brothers/sisters are giving their earnings to their parents. In addition, 51% said they are being sent to school by either a brother or sister who is working but unmarried. The answer to the following question is also typical.

After graduation, when you are already working but not yet married, do you plan to give some of your earnings to your parents?

yes	91%
perhaps, yes	3
not sure	2
perhaps, no	4
no	3
	100%

The responsibility of supporting the material needs of the family clearly belongs to the parents and yet most Filipino children, even today's youth, do not seem to mind the transfer

of tasks. In fact, many Philippine students have shown that our family structure has a hierarchy of authority which automatically transfers the rights and duties to the next eldest son/daughter in the absence of the parents. Orphaned children have survived as a "family" on the basis of this arrangement.

5. *The Affectional function*

One vital function of the family is providing the human need for love. Psychiatrist and psychologists have repeatedly emphasized the ill effects caused by an inadequate human response to a child's emotional needs. For indeed the family structure provides for companionship and intimate relationship. The family goals become the individual goals of its members. Failures and success are shared. If it is a failure, the burden is lighter for the individual because moral support is strong. If it is a success, specially if it is economic, the spread is thin because the benefits and merits are divided. There is no success that is considered one's own, somehow the family deserves the credit. The Filipino society is family-oriented rather than individual-oriented.

The debt of gratitude or "utang-na-loob" among Filipinos is interwoven with love and affection. It comes in the form of gratitude to parents, identifying one's goals with family goals or living together as in the following case.

George is an only child. When his father died, he asked his mother to live with his family even if she does not get along too well with his wife. George feels it is his obligation to take care of his mother. Do you agree?

agree	66%
not sure	11
disagree	23
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	100%

6. *The Status function*

The family prepares the child for the status and various roles he will perform in life. In a society which allows little social mobility, most of the statuses and roles acquired in childhood do not change a great deal. Family status is preserved by the transfer of values and beliefs from parents to children. For

most lower-class people, this entails the preservation of the family's community standing and the transfer of superstitious and other beliefs common within the class. For middle-class people, status-definition is realized by adherence to certain habits and behaviors which approximate those of the upper class people.

Traditionally, this could mean a family support for a political party espoused by the father, complete authority of parents over their children and similar practices. The youths in this survey were asked to respond to these traditions.

Ed has always considered the approval of his family important for his decisions. But it was put to a difficult test in his choice of a wife. Being of legal age, he married Yoly in spite of strong objections from all the members of his family. Do you agree with Ed's decision?

agree	13%
not sure	12
disagree	75
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	100%

The response of the youths indicates that they still respect the status conferment function of the family. When asked under what conditions they considered it right for a son to vote for the same political party as his father, the youths also surprisingly answered in the traditional direction.

never, even if he believes in the same party	4%
when he has doubts about the opposing party	8
when he believes in the same party	21
if the father tells him and he has no other party in mind	54
even if he does not believe in the party	13
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	100%

Related Factors

In accumulating the data from the survey, it was possible to put the youths in specific classifications. This section will present the relationship of one characteristic with another. "Relatedness" will be shown by the result of tests used (chi-square and contingency tests). Two factors are related when a change in Factor One also coincides with a change in the second factor.

1. *Family values and sex*

Are traditional values or attitudes related to whether a person is male or female? It is believed that men are generally more "liberal" than women for some reasons which are unclear. Filipino men are less involved with family functions and as a rule women take the family more seriously than their husbands. This could be due to stereo-typed roles of husbands as bread-winners and women as housewives.

<i>family values</i>	<i>male</i>	<i>female</i>
traditional	13%	38%
moderate	65	56
modern	22	6

$$(x^2 = 58.3)$$

The test result reflects a strong correlation between one's sex with one's family values. Males exhibited significantly more modern views about the family than the females.

2. *Family values and origin*

Origin here has been dichotomized into rural and urban. Are the youth's values associated with their place of origin?

<i>family value</i>	<i>urban</i>	<i>rural</i>
traditional	18%	31%
moderate	64	58
modern	18	11

$$(x^2 = 11.46)$$

The test computed also shows a high degree of association between family values and their origin. A higher percentage of rural youths fall under the "traditional" classification. This is expected because the influence of western values is first transferred and assimilated in the city of Manila and later reaches the suburban areas and the nearby provinces. The rural-urban differences, however, are lesser where media use is widespread.

Batangas, where the rural sample was taken, is relatively more exposed to the Manila culture than the youths of Mindanao. More and more, the culture transfer is faster as a result of innovations in television and print media.

3. *Family values and religious exposure*

Religious exposure, as used here, refers mainly to the amount of religious instruction the youths have had until the time of the interviews. Data belows tries to see if the amount of religious exposure of an individual determines the kind of family values he will eventually have.

<i>family values</i>	<i>high exposure</i>	<i>low exposure</i>
traditional	15%	12%
moderate	32	37
modern	8	6

$$(\chi^2 = 4.46)$$

"High exposure" means from 5 and more hours of religious instruction received in the elementary and high school every week. "Low exposure" means 4 hours and less of religious instruction every week. The test shows that there is no association between family values and the amount of religious instruction received by an individual.

This result may have been affected by the fact that while lower and middle class children go to public schools and receive minimum religious instruction, most of their parents are Catholic. There is hardly any Filipino child who has not imbibed Christian teachings, properly or improperly.

4. *Family values and SES*

SES or socio-economic status is a concept which is a combination of the person's education and occupational prestige. In simplistic terms this is referred to as the social class or the place of a person or a family in relation to other people. This kind of classification divides people into rich, middle-class and poor. The data presented here relates class with family values.

Wealthier people are supposedly different from poor people in their values and beliefs. Filipinos generally believe the rich are more liberal with their family values than the poor people.

<i>Class</i>	<i>Traditional</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>Modern</i>
Lower	21%	10%	10%
Middle	11	7	9
Upper	9	9	14

$$\chi^2 = 32$$

A very high degree of association has been found between class and family values. Inspection of the tables shows that the lower the status the higher the tendency to be traditional, and in like manner, the higher the class, the higher the tendency to be modern with views on the family.

Concluding Remarks

Our present national statistics show that Filipino families will be smaller in the future. This is further proven in our study of the youths who mostly claimed that they prefer a family of 3 to 4 children. This claim is further substantiated by the youth's acceptance of artificial birth control techniques in planning the size of their future families.

"Working mothers" have already entered our labor force. This trend is likely to be boosted by the emerging generation. Most of the youths interviewed favored this practice very highly. Chances are, when their time comes, the females of the group are going to work and the males of the group are going to allow their wives to work. Of all the modern trends this phenomenon has received support even from the rural youths.

Children will remain to be highly valued even if family planning is accepted. The traditional respect for elder children and parents are very much alive as of now. Sibling relationships will continue to be close and lasting. The family-orientedness of the youth's families is clearly mirrored in the results of the study.

Modern ideas have penetrated the family for sure but the most basic traditions are still valued by the youths interviewed. The more outstanding of these are the concern for the stability

of the family, the precedence of the family welfare over one's own, close links with family members. Parent-child relationships are still perceived to be traditional, with parents wielding a lot of authority over the children in terms of small and big decisions up to age 18.

Some of the traditional roles have been affected by modernization. Woman as a co-equal of the man in running the household; more permissive child-rearing practices; and abhorrence of the *querida* systems are front-runners among the innovations in the family. Most of the youths interviewed reported themselves to have been reared in rather strict manner but refuse to do the same to their children. They see a tomorrow where their children will enjoy more freedom in decision than they ever did.

In the area of stability, although statistics show increases in divorce and separation, the survey of youth attitudes does not show evidence that an American divorce trend is likely to happen in the near future.