

# The Lower Class Cebuano Family: A Preliminary Profile Analysis

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## I. Introduction

The interpretation of the lower class Cebuano family behavior is to be understood in two ways. First, like the urban poor in most underdeveloped societies, a majority of lower class Cebuano families consists of first generation migrants from surrounding rural areas. A great majority of such migrants is engaged in unskilled, service and sporadic employments, if they work at all. Terms like 'protracted unemployment' or 'under-employment' characterize the job situation. The evolving patterns of the family system, therefore, are associated with the uprooted existence and the subsequent adaptation of the family to meet contingencies and crises. The family structure of the urban poor invariably reflects the survival patterns in a hostile environment. Second, there is a

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manifest process of stabilization of family patterns throughout the years of gradual adjustment, in which stress on folk beliefs, traditional values, and inter-familial mutual identifications have created a special kind of neighborhood solidarity. This mode of adaptation has tended to strengthen the "folk" aspect of the lower class community rather than to secularize it.<sup>1</sup> It appears as if the effects of migration from rural barrios to the city—at least to a certain extent—have resulted in the emergence of counter effects, which make it possible to have folk solidarity amidst an urban existence.<sup>2</sup>

It seems necessary to view the family system in terms of the relationship between the macro- and abstract orders of society, and the small, nuclear family unit involved in the total metamorphosis. In our study we became aware of the wide gap between social classes in terms of the functions of the family with respect to family solidarity. For the upper class, fam-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Nieva Damo's study report on the functions of the Mananabangs quoted in the author's *Second Progress Report* of the Cebu Family Health Project, mimeographed for distribution, April 1, 1968.

<sup>2</sup> Similar counter-effects have been reported by Helmut Schelsky in his study of the urban German family system. Cf. *Wandlungen der Deutschen Familie in der Gegenwart*, Ferdinand Enke, 1960.

ily wealth is invested in a variety of diversified and oftentimes functionally related businesses. Through a process of interclan alliance,<sup>3</sup> the upper class family exhibits an amazing degree of kinship of solidarity by providing opportunities for capital formation as well as minimizing competition through agreement. The economic aspect of such kinship relations requires younger members to submit their own interests to the interests of the larger collectivity. On the social structural level, spouse and parent roles are accordingly extended beyond the nuclear family to other kinship groups in the community through marriage, compadrazco arrangement, surrogate parenthood, and other ritual ceremonial relationships designed to reinforce both business and kinship solidarity.

While the upper class family assures kinship solidarity through the control of finance, the middle class family has neither the financial power nor the structural requisites to assure kinship solidarity. There is, in a sense, a built-in mechanism which determines the precise manner according to which nuclear units are related to each other within the larger kinship system. A cross pressure results from the desire to improve one's economic and social positions on the one hand, and the need of the individual to work with limited resources under the constant threat of unexpected crises in business or at home, on the other. A middle class dweller is essentially aspiring to achieve, but at the same time threatened by the fear of failure. Under such circumstances, assistance from kinship relatives can make the difference between a disgrace of downfall and a temporary,

salvageable crisis. It is because of the desire to liberate oneself from his modest past associations, including his less fortunate relatives, and the constant need, whether imagined or real, to seek assistance from more affluent relatives, that the middle class kinship solidarity is difficult to achieve. The paradox is, that, while the middle class man is conditioned to seek assistance from his kins, he must also be prepared to assist other relatives in return. A legitimate *norm of reciprocity*, so to speak, defines the limits as to how much assistance he can expect from his relatives, vis-a-vis of how much he is expected to share his own resources with less affluent relatives. In the course of finding such limits, the solidarity of the middle class kinship system is greatly weakened.

For the lower class family with extremely meager resources and facilities, however, the individual member must use whatever means possible to meet the demands of bare subsistence. Without a clear vision of the opportunity structure for the current generation, and much less concerned about the next generation, lower class children are encouraged or compelled to look for opportunities which may help the family now—opportunities of any kind. Child labor is not only a convenient way of adaptation, it oftentimes is the only way. Limited by the available physical space to live in, the entire family is crowded into one room at night, but many of the members—especially teen-age or adult males—spend their daytime hours outside the house. The lower class family is thus unable to extend the nuclear unit beyond its very elementary form. Functional dependency between any two nuclear units is more socio-emotional than instrumental. The closely knit neighborhoods within the lower income sections of the city give a

<sup>3</sup> Though this may be common among the Chinese, it is not at all uncommon among either the Spanish or the Filipino powerful clans.

kind of nebulous quality to the kinship relations as they often coincide with one another. Under these conditions, the family pattern of the lower class family in Cebu remains characteristically *nuclear* in form, but *extended* in quality. The data reported in this paper will bear out this hypothesis.

## II. The Study

The data on which this report is based come from one hundred lower income group families in Cebu City, Philippines. The primary objective of the Notre Dame/USAID Cebu Family Health Project is to describe in micro-details the socio-cultural factors surrounding the reproductive behavior of the Cebuanos. A decision was made to focus specific attention on the family structure and processes in relation to the level of reproduction.<sup>4</sup> The present paper utilizes some of the data from the larger study.

In order to determine the approximate class structure of the City of Cebu, several criteria were used as working guides. These included initially the type of residence, place of residence, and the interior decoration of the living room.<sup>5</sup> In addition, after the interviews were completed, information on educational attainment and occupational categories enabled us to compute a total Socio-Economic Status score for each family. Income information was difficult to obtain and is said to be an inaccurate measure of the respondent's

social standing in the community. It was, for these reasons, excluded from the index.<sup>6</sup>

For the selection of sampling households, a multi-stage sampling procedure was employed. "Social ranking" of the various areas in Cebu City was not a simple task. Most districts have both the very rich and the very poor. As a preliminary step to outline different sections of the city, research assistants made their rounds on foot through every street in the city in an attempt to define the boundaries of "natural areas". For sampling purposes, industrial, business, warehouse and shipping areas were eliminated from the universe. What remained was then given scores in terms of first impressions garnered from housing types and general neighborhood conditions. A homogeneous area was defined by the scores assigned to different neighborhoods. The next stage was to count the number of homes clustered together in small groups in one city block. Within sampling areas every fourth household was selected for interviewing. Completed interviews for the lower income group numbered approximately 1,200, representing about 70 per cent of the total sample. Table I shows a breakdown of the sample by social class.

The term 'lower class' as used in this report includes both the lower lower and the upper lower levels of society. Lower lower class includes the squatters who live on private land either without rent or for a very few pesos rent each month. Some squatters reside on government land, such as the edge of the road or the dump.

<sup>4</sup> For a detailed description of the study project, see the *First Quarterly Progress Report* of the Cebu Family Health Project, mimeographed for distribution, February 1, 1968, Cebu City.

<sup>5</sup> Criteria used for such judgment are reported in the *First Quarterly Progress Report*, *Op. cit.* All interviewers were given a thorough training in judging. See *First Quarterly Progress Report*.

<sup>6</sup> Even though income was not asked, all respondents were questioned about the approximate amount needed for maintaining and running their homes. This information was used for cross references.

TABLE I. Sampling Distribution by Social Class, Cebu City, 1968

Social Class	Number of Households <sup>a</sup>	Approx. No. of Persons	Sampling Fraction	Total
Lower Lower Upper Lower	1,200	7,200	1/25	180,000
Lower Middle Upper Middle	450	2,700	1/25	67,500
Upper	100	600	1/25	15,000
Total	1,750	10,500	1/25	262,500

<sup>a</sup> Approximations prior to coding.

The average income for a family of this class is about ₱4.00 per day, or ₱120.00 a month. The upper-lower class family averages ₱7.00 or ₱9.00 daily. Common occupations are: scavenging the dumps and debris piles, selling raffle tickets, newspapers or broken bottles, and sometimes driving jeepneys and/or taxis. The residences of the lower lower class are huts or tiny houses constructed of discarded wood, paper, metal and junk, or small pieces of wood, bamboo and nipa. Among the upper lower class a more substantial structure is the rule. Usual utensils are earthen pots, a kettle, an earthen water jar, and a few plates and spoons. Lower lower class families normally have no tables or chairs. A gas lamp is used for light. Upper lower class families possess a few chairs and a table. In neither case are there private toilets or running water. Water is usually fetched from a public artesian well, and bathing and toilet facilities are public.

### III. The Structural Aspect

In contrast to the ideal nuclear family, the Cebuano family system has been de-

scribed as being characterized by bilateral kinship extensions.<sup>7</sup> In interviews, respondents were asked to list all members of the household. Household composition affects external relationships and, in turn, is itself a consequence of kinship obligations. Firth has emphasized the fact that "kinship information in the possession of an individual is not a static quantity. It is not normally exercised by and for him alone, but tends to be drawn from and contributes to a household pool."<sup>8</sup>

Two aspects of the structural effect on family behavior are important: First, since the household pool actually determines the significance of the kin, a total enumeration of the household composition will give a measure of kinship solidarity, however crude. Secondly, an obvious fact is that the household composition is by no means a static phenomenon — its members change at different cycles of family development.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Ronald Himes, "Bontok Kinship System" *Philippine Sociological Review*, Nos. 3 and 4 (July-October), 1964, p. 159-172.

<sup>8</sup> Raymond Firth, "Family and Kinship Ties in Britain and Their Social Implications," *British Journal of Sociology*, XII, 1961.

Following Eslao's classification of the Filipino family,<sup>9</sup> of the 100 lower class households which fell within the random sub-sample selected from 1,200 completed interviews, 60% could be classified as nuclear families. Fourteen per cent were of the nuclear-lateral type in which the household has a nuclear core consisting of the respondent's elementary family, but extended by the presence of persons who are not lineally related to the respondent

<sup>9</sup> Nena Eslao, "The Development Cycle of the Philippines Household in an Urban Setting," *Philippine Sociological Review*, 1966.

or her husband, and whose parents are not residing in the household. Fifteen per cent with either one parent, or both, or married children living with them, represented the nuclear-lineal type. Only eight per cent were joint families with more than one set of the elementary nuclear units. The remainder belonged to the nuclear-joint category.<sup>10</sup> (See Table II)

<sup>10</sup> The difference between nuclear joint and nuclear lateral families is that the latter contain at least one of the lateral extensions to the household, i.e. a person is currently married or has had conjugal experience in the past. Cf. Eslao, *Ibid.*

TABLE II. Family Types in Cebu City, 1968  
(Based on 100 Cases)

Family Type	% of Each Type	Cumulative %
Nuclear	60	60
Nuclear-lateral	14	74
Nuclear-lineal	15	89
Nuclear-joint	3	92
Joint	8	100

The table suggests that the majority of families belonging to the lower income class can be characterized as elementary nuclear. This elementary family with the addition of one or a few married persons (with no spouse present) and their dependents constituted nearly ninety per cent of all lower class families in the sample.

The size of the current sample does not permit a meaningful breakdown of household types by age of respondents. In order to get at the "average" number of years during which a typical family is either laterally extended (i.e., married brothers or sisters of either the husband or the wife living with the couple) or lineally extended, several sets of data were used: Information on median age of first

marriage,<sup>11</sup> the point in time when either lateral or lineal extension took place, and the time when such extensions were terminated. Additional information about pregnancy histories of women revealed additional information as to the number of households composed of three generations, and to the length of time this multi-generational unit stayed together.

Out of the 100 cases selected, only about 1/4 had been lineally extended. The range of inter-generational cohabitation was between less than half a year to fourteen years (ended prior to the time of interview). The longest cohabitation with married siblings reported was ten years.

<sup>11</sup> Due to the smallness of the sub-sample all marriages included were first marriages.

The mean duration of lateral extension was about six months, and the mean number of years of lineal extension about four. Both types of extension usually took place shortly after marriage. Table III shows the pattern of extension in relation to family development cycles.

TABLE III. Patterns of Family Extensions  
Cebu City, 1968

Family Types	% of Total
Lineal extension only	25
Lateral extension only	6
Both lateral & lineal extensions	8
No extension	61

Preliminary findings suggest:

1. That among the low income Cebuano families only a small proportion shows extended family patterns. In terms of actual social influence most nuclear families, either complete or incomplete, formed loosely structured federations. There is little evidence of inter-generational continuity.
2. For the majority of low income families, newly formed nuclear families start to break away from the parental homes about thirteen months after the start of marital relations. About one out of every four couples experiences an average of three to four years of lineal generational cohabitation.
3. There is little evidence that a grown-up child will assume the responsibility of caring for his parents during their old age.

#### IV. Lower Class Family Interaction

Any social researcher dealing with a large universe of families, about which he possess only scant information obtained from a questionnaire, faces large difficulties

when asked to give a detailed account of family role constellations and friendship cliques evolving around individual family members. Yet, it is indispensable to establish a statistically relevant profile of conjugal and extra-familial activities performed by each family member if the researcher wants to understand the overt behavior that he has observed. 'Social structures' and 'social interaction' are complex and conceptually nebulous phenomena.

The lack of a well established extended family system in the Cebu lower class, for example, does not necessarily mean that the Cebu lower class family is an isolated and closed system. There exists a sizeable discrepancy between household composition and dwelling composition. The former simply means that all of the people share their meals together, whereas the latter may include several households. This means, that in the lower income neighborhood the system of kinship inter-dependency can not be evaluated on the basis of living arrangements. In one neighborhood the interviewer noted that the inhabitants of most of the dwellings facing a small public yard were members of a loosely structured kinship group.

The field-work problem was further complicated by the lack of normative statements as to how to distinguish joint families from elementary nuclear forms.

Such lack of empirical clarification concerning the nuclear versus the extended family system is now being investigated during the second phase of the present study. Available survey data may shed some light on this problem. A specific set of questions was used to elicit information on the role constellation of the conjugal pair and to relate these patterns to either the husband or the wife's par-

ticipation in a specific social system external to the nuclear family.

In an attempt to understand the relationships between the social participation patterns of the conjugal pair outside the nuclear family in relation to husband and wife's interactions at home, some of the earlier theoretical and empirical findings on family network and clique types were followed.<sup>12</sup> In a lower class neighborhood, the intensive husband and wife attachment is somewhat diluted by the respective friendship patterns held by the husband and the wife outside the family. Since conjugal identification with each other in terms of emotional needs is insignificant, household chores are therefore seldom undertaken jointly by the couple. For the wife, life evolves about the home with little or no participation from the husband. In contrast to an isolated nuclear family with little outside influence, joint task performance in the Cebuano family is frequently devoid of any expressive significance.<sup>13</sup>

Because of the lack of economic opportunity and a real chance to improve things around the house, the lower class male finds emotional outlets in the *barkada*, which greatly reduces social participation in other voluntary organizations. The average social participation score for the wife was .5 and for the husband, .9.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Elizabeth Bott, *Family and Social Network*, London: Tavistock Publications, 1957; Michael Young and Peter Willmott, *Family and Kinship in East London*, Glencoe: The Free Press, 1957; J. M. Moge, *Family and Neighborhood*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1956; Peter Townsend, *The Family Life of Old People*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957; and more recently, Joel I. Nelson, "Clique Contacts and Family Orientations," *American Sociological Review*, 31 (October 1966), 663-672.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Yonina Talmon-Garber, "Social Change and Family Structure," *International Science Journal*, 14 (1962), 467-468.

<sup>14</sup> Using S. Chapin's Social Participation Scale, these results indicate that the majority of the families do not belong to any voluntary groups.

To explore the exact nature of the *barkada* system is beyond the scope of this paper. It can be described as powerful mechanism of social control known as *pakikisama* (or *pakighugoyhugoy* in Cebuano), which means "follow or go along with your friends." In a sense it is the Filipino concept of *togetherness* and has extensive influence over adolescents and young adults. The father-son non-involvement process begins early in the adolescent years, which paves the way for the *barkada* to take over.<sup>15</sup>

Although the *barkada* system can exist for both sexes, a girl ordinarily finds it difficult to continue her relations with members of the *barkada* after her marriage. Childbirth and household chores draw her closer to the family kinship group, particularly to other adult females. While the husband finds his security, social acceptance, and masculine identity in his *barkada*, the wife serves as the socio-emotional linkage between her children and the bilateral extended kinship system.

In order to support the notion that the *barkada* system is functionally contributory to the role isolation between husband and wife, Herbst's method was used to identify the decision and activity styles in the household.<sup>16</sup> Herbst's position is that all household activities can be roughly grouped into the husband autonomous region, the wife autonomous region, and the joint or cooperative region, depending on the combination of decisions and activities carried out singularly and/or jointly by the couple. With the two aspects, decision and activity, a two-way table as illustrated below, has been set up by Herbst.

<sup>15</sup> The *barkada* system somewhat resembles the *amigo* system in Mexico.

<sup>16</sup> P.G. Herbst, "The Measurement of Family Relationships," *Human Relations*, V, 1952, p. 3-35.

## Decision by:

		Husband	Jointly	Wife
Activity by:	Husband	HdHa	JdHa	WdHa
	Jointly	HdJa	JdJa	WdJa
	Wife	HdWa	JdWa	WdWa

Utilizing this classification scheme, seven categories of household task areas were defined: Children's schooling and education, family health care, household money spending and budgeting, leisure time social activities, food preparations, family economic security, and child control. The respondents were asked who makes what decisions and who carries out what activities. Wherever applicable, it was also asked: "Does he (or she)

do this alone or with someone else?". The data revealed that there are two closely related patterns of family role constellations. The first is called the *dominant pattern* because it is evident in the majority of the cases. The second is called the *major variant pattern*, since it represents a shift from the dominant pattern but which likewise was found present in a sizeable number of families. Table IV shows the relations of these two patterns of household task performance.

TABLE IV. Household Task Performance Patterns,  
Lower Class Cebu Families 1968

	Husband Decides			Jointly Decision			Wife Decides		
	Ha	Ba	Wa	Ha	Ba	Wa	Ha	Ba	Wa
School	8	1	10	4	19 <sup>o</sup>	(27)	0	0	11
Health	1	0	17	1	2	24	0	1	(50)
Money	5	7	6	1	10	6	8	21	(36)
Leisure	7	4	11	5	(22)	16 <sup>o</sup>	2	5	15
Food	1	0	2	0	2	1	1	5 <sup>o</sup>	(83)
Economics	9	3	2	3	(26)	15	11	6	24 <sup>o</sup>
Child	9	4	6	2	19 <sup>o</sup>	3	8	3	(42)

( ) Dominant Pattern  
<sup>o</sup> Major Variant Pattern

In the Herbst's report about household task performances in Australia, certain chores were found to be exclusive prerogatives of the husband, such as fixing things around the house mowing the lawn, etc. There are other things which fall into the wife's autonomous region, as for in-

stance washing and ironing. Child care and control, and social activities, according to Herbst, fall into the joint categories (JdWa, JdJa, etc.). From his data Herbst concluded that if the husband does participate in any of the household tasks ordinarily assigned to the woman, he would

first invade the area of child control, and only last that in which the wife is autonomous.<sup>17</sup>

The dominant pattern in the lower-class Cebuano family shows the wife to be autonomous in four out of the seven household task areas listed, namely: family health, money control, food preparations and child control. However, she is also the executor of another family task: schooling of the children. For the remainder of the areas, the major variant pattern showed that the wife exercises predominant influence in the planning leisure time activities for the family. In these two areas, the dominant pattern is joint cooperation between husband and wife.

Significant is the fact that if we assume that the wife does most of the chores at home, the variations would be discerned in the area of decision making. If the wife assumes the responsibilities in performing tasks as well as making decisions about them, they would be in the wife's autonomous region. If the power of the wife is eroded by the demand of the husband to take part in activities, the expectation is that the husband would participate in making decisions rather than actually doing the chores. In areas where we had first expected joint decision making, such as leisure time activities and economic planning, the difference between the dominant pattern in the lower class family culture and the major variant pattern would be in performance of the activity, whether jointly or by the wife alone.

In both cases, the important question seems to be whether the dominant pattern of task performance and the major variant pattern are one order apart or more than one. Our theory is that the major variant pattern represents an alter-

native of the most salient order in a given culture. Alternatives must closely resemble the original — namely, the dominant patterns. It is, in other words, only one order apart from the original, because a more contradictory pattern might seriously unbalance the existing social norm.

To illustrate this point, a one order distance would be from JdJa to JdWa or from JdWa to JdJa. Similarly, the distance between WdWa to WdJa would be only one order apart. The same can be applied from WdWa to JdWa or from JdWa to WdWa.

On the other hand, a change from JdHa to JdWa would be two orders apart. This is to say that from JdHa to JdJa is one order apart; and from JdJa to JdWa is an additional order apart. Thus, a change from JdHa to JdWa would require more drastic change in the culture than those changes of one order distance.

Table IV illustrates this point convincingly. In all seven areas, the dominant and the major variant patterns are only one order apart. This demonstrates a remarkable consistency and stability of the lower class role constellation pattern. Also, the obvious fact is that none of the seven household tasks fall into the husband dominant (HDHa) or husband leadership (HdJa, HdWa) regions.

A corollary to this pattern of feminine-dominated households is that husband and wife would rarely participate *together* outside the elementary family. The fact that role segregation patterns are a concomitant of the clique segregation pattern also becomes evident in the lower class Cebuano culture. Of the 100 cases, only two families reported common friendship circles between the husband and the wife. The sex-segregated *barkada* is overwhelming in its effects.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

## V. Conclusion

Based on the 100 cases analyzed several tentative conclusions can be drawn. First, the usual assertion that the typical lower-class, urban Cebuano family is extended is perhaps not accurate. The extended family ideal must be measured against the realities of the survival pattern. To say that the lower class in Cebu considers the nuclear family ideal is equally erroneous. The fact that physical space and living conditions require an adjustment of the elementary form of the family system does not necessarily mean that family relations derive from a nuclear family ideal. Perhaps it is more accurate to say that the lower class family system in Cebu is nuclear by *default*. The quantitative summarization of the family structure in the present paper shows that the nuclear household does not have an important corresponding characteristic of nuclear family relations — high emotional loading on conjugal relations. Second, the social relationships of other people with the husband and the wife affect the relationships between the husband and the wife. The emotional satisfaction that the husband derives from his *barkada*, with the corresponding clique patterns between the wife and her female relatives, have enhanced the segre-

gation of familial roles considerably. Whether or not the husband of the lower class Cebuano family considers that some of the household tasks, including the control children, belong exclusively to the wife's world, does not matter here. What seems to be the convincing fact is that the wife does claim that most of the household tasks belong to her exclusively. To what extent changes in family behavior will eventually motivate the husband to share household responsibilities as the lower class male moves up the social ladder and becomes a member of the middle class community is indeed a theoretically relevant question, particularly if such changes have implications for the eventual reproductive behavior of the couple. Third, a loosely knit network dominates the life and behavior of the lower class persons. This network of intimate friends may or may not be composed of members of an extended kinship group. In the absence of voluntary organizational memberships, *barkada* plays an important role in the life of the lower class male. The *barkada* system, therefore, is both the consequence of the closed society of homogeneous neighborhoods, and the prime factor in creating a kind of family relations characterized by the lack of strong emotional demands between the husband and the wife.