

INTERPERSONAL STRESSES AMONG URBAN FILIPINO MEN FROM DIFFERENT SOCIAL CLASSES*

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Introduction

Within recent years, investigators of Philippine culture and personality have evidenced an increased interest in the study of interpersonal relations (see, for instance, Bulatao 1964; Guthrie 1969, 1968; Jocano 1966; Lynch 1964; Sechrest 1969). Among these investigators, two distinct research interests have emerged. One interest concerns the identification of idealized normative interpersonal values while the second focuses on the study of actual interpersonal behaviors. For the most part, results from the latter studies have revealed a large discrepancy between the idealized normative values which have been attributed to Filipinos and the actual behaviors which have been observed.

For example, Lynch (1964) concluded striving for smooth interpersonal relations (SIR) was a core value among lowland Filipinos and influenced such behaviors as *pakikisama* (going

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along with someone to prevent arguments or interpersonal tension), the use of the go-between to settle arguments, and the use of indirect or euphemistic speech patterns. On the other hand, in a study of actual interpersonal behaviors, Jocano (1966) reported he recorded over 87 quarrels and 150 cases of misunderstanding during his observations of community life in Panay. Similarly, Sechrest, basing his conclusion upon data derived from public records regarding precipitating causes of mental disorder and homicide, stated (1969:312) that interpersonal relations in the Philippines were no more smoother than in other parts of the world and were, perhaps, "more difficult." He further noted that this may be true because of the ". . . careful, constant monitoring and . . . nearly transparent deviousness designed to obscure difficulties . . . (and) the strong sense of amor propio . . . he (the Filipino) is constantly risking . . . in areas that would be regarded as trivial in other societies."

department, including Leonor Pablo, Assistant Director, Aimee Albino, Pilar DeGuia, Madeleine Flores, Carol Maglaya, Rosario Marasigan, Luwalhati Pablo, Evelina Pangalanan, and Lydia Valdez, served as interviewers for the study. Final appreciation is extended to Dr. Howard Blane, Dr. George Guthrie and Karen Essene for their helpful comments and assistance in data processing.

The Marsella-Escudero article was submitted to *PSR* before Frank Lynch had completed his article, "Social acceptance reconsidered" (Lynch 1970). Dr. Lynch took the opportunity to comment on the Marsella-Escudero article (*ibid.*, 44-46 and 57, note 35) before its publication. Neither Dr. Marsella nor Dr. Escudero, however, saw the Lynch (1970) article before submitting the paper we publish here.

The discrepancy between the conclusions of Lynch and those of Jocano and Sechrest is striking but understandable since their aims were so different. However, a number of issues remained unresolved centering not upon "SIR" or "No SIR" but rather upon the specific conditions in which these behaviors occur—what interpersonal *situations* and interpersonal *relations* are, in fact, stressful for the Filipino?

In order to study this latter question, efforts were made to assess social class differences in the frequency of interpersonal stress among urban Filipino men and to identify the particular *situations* and *relationships* which might be most stressful. The present paper is concerned with the results of these efforts.

Method

Subjects. The subjects were 96 male, married Filipinos residing in the Sampaloc municipal district of Manila. Each subject was randomly recruited for participation and was assigned to one of six groups according to his age (young [30–42], middle [43–55], old [56–68]), and social class position (high or low), thus permitting a 2 x 3 research design with 16 respondents in each cell.

Social class was determined by the subject's reported monthly income, occupation, education, and father's occupation. For inclusion in the high-class group, an individual had to have a monthly income above 900 pesos, have a professional, administrative, or business position, have a minimum of a B.A. degree, and come from a high-class family. For inclusion in the low-class group, an individual had to have a monthly income below 500 pesos, have a labor or clerical position, have at most a high school diploma, and come from a low-class family. The average monthly household income of the low-class subjects and the high-class subjects was 266 pesos and 1047 pesos, respectively. These amounts should be interpreted in terms of 1967 standards when the approximate rate of exchange was 3.80 pesos to the dollar. Occupations of the low class subjects included the

following: laborers, barbers, drivers, and vendors; those of the high class subjects included lawyers, physicians, executives, and educators. The groups were matched for age to minimize the effects of age-role differences.

Procedures and materials. Each subject was administered an extensive interview schedule, of which the interpersonal stress frequency checklist was a part, by a team of two supervisory-level Filipino social workers. A total of four interview teams participated in the investigation with each team interviewing four subjects in each of the six conditions for balance. Each subject was interviewed over a period of four sessions for a total number of eight to 12 hours. This procedure decreased fatigue and increased interviewer-interviewee contact. For the interpersonal stress task, subjects were asked to give the frequency (often, sometimes, seldom, never) of their being upset (angry, sad, worried) in 12 different interpersonal situations across five different interpersonal relations (family, relatives, friends, superiors, strangers). Of the 12 interpersonal situations, the stress focus was internally-oriented for five situations and externally-oriented for seven situations (see Tables 1 and 2). Thus, there were a total of 25 internally-oriented stress situations and 35 externally-oriented stress situation-relationship combinations which could be explored. The nature of the task permitted the investigation of interpersonal stress more closely than previous studies by focusing upon the frequency of stress associated with specific interpersonal *situations* and specific interpersonal *relationships*.

Results

The results are presented in Tables 1 and 2. In each case, the percentage of "often" and "sometimes" responses to the stress statements are cited according to social class. The results can be summarized as follows:

1. For both social classes, the percentages of subjects reporting a high frequency of

Table 1
Percentages of "Often" and "Sometimes" responses to the self-oriented interpersonal stress statements, classified by respondent's social class, crossclassified by status of people to whom statement referred (Sampaloc, Manila, 1967-68).

Statement		Family ¹	Relatives	Friends	Superiors	Strangers	MEAN
1. Not meeting obligations to <i>others</i> :	HIGH	(47) ^{***} 36%	(47) ^{**} 23%	(47) 29%	(46) [*] 32%	(47) 6%	(47) [*] 26%
	LOW	(44) 77%	(44) 50%	(44) 44%	(40) 52%	(44) 11%	(43) 47%
2. Having to ask <i>others</i> for help:	HIGH	(47) [*] 29%	(47) 20%	(47) 25%	(46) [*] 10%	(47) 3%	(47) 17%
	LOW	(44) 47%	(44) 29%	(44) 29%	(40) 30%	(44) 9%	(43) 30%
3. Saying things you wish you would not have said to <i>others</i> :	HIGH	(47) ^{***} 40%	(47) ^{**} 27%	(47) ^{**} 27%	(46) 30%	(47) 10%	(47) [*] 28%
	LOW	(44) 74%	(44) 54%	(44) 52%	(39) 47%	(44) 23%	(43) 49%
4. Doing things you wish you would not have done to <i>others</i> :	HIGH	(47) ^{**} 38%	(47) [*] 34%	(47) [*] 31%	(46) [*] 28%	(47) 12%	(47) [*] 30%
	LOW	(43) 67%	(43) 55%	(44) 54%	(39) 51%	(44) 22%	(43) 49%
5. Not being able to do things as well as <i>others</i> :	HIGH	(47) 29%	(47) 25%	(47) 25%	(46) 26%	(47) 12%	(47) 23%
	LOW	(44) 40%	(44) 36%	(44) 25%	(40) 30%	(44) 13%	(43) 30%
MEAN	HIGH	(47) ^{**} 34%	(47) [*] 26%	(47) 28%	(46) [*] 26%	(47) 9%	
	LOW	(44) 61%	(44) 46%	(44) 41%	(40) 43%	(44) 16%	

¹Numbers in parentheses are absolute frequencies of replies. The following symbols represent results of tests of significance (chi-square): *significant at the 0.05 level; **at the 0.01 level; ***at the 0.001 level.

Table 2

Percentages of "Often" and "Sometimes" responses to the other-oriented interpersonal stress statements, classified by respondent's social class, crossclassified by status of people to whom statement referred (Sampaloc, Manila, 1967-68).

Statement	Social class	Family ¹	Relatives	Friends	Superiors	Strangers	MEAN
1. People not repaying obligations to me:	HIGH	(47) ^{***} 32%	(47) [*] 28%	(47) 34%	(45) 24%	(47) 23%	(47) 28%
	LOW	(44) 61%	(44) 43%	(44) 30%	(38) 26%	(44) 16%	(42) 36%
2. Not receiving the same chances as others:	HIGH	(46) 15%	(46) 13%	(46) 20%	(45) 23%	(46) 8%	(46) 15%
	LOW	(44) 27%	(44) 23%	(44) 23%	(40) 15%	(44) 9%	(43) 19%
3. People speaking against me:	HIGH	(47) ^{**} 36%	(47) 36%	(47) 36%	(45) 33%	(47) 17%	(47) 32%
	LOW	(44) 64%	(44) 50%	(43) 44%	(38) 37%	(43) 12%	(42) 43%
4. Not getting the attention, praise, or recognition deserved from others:	HIGH	(47) [*] 40%	(47) ^{**} 21%	(47) 23%	(46) 35%	(47) 9%	(47) 26%
	LOW	(44) 55%	(44) 43%	(44) 32%	(40) 35%	(44) 14%	(43) 35%
5. Not being understood by others:	HIGH	(47) 57%	(47) [*] 40%	(47) 40%	(45) 36%	(47) 15%	(47) 38%
	LOW	(44) 71%	(44) 55%	(44) 43%	(40) 38%	(44) 18%	(43) 47%
6. Not being able to show my anger, frustration, or dislike when I want to others:	HIGH	(47) 36%	(47) 32%	(47) 32%	(46) 25%	(47) 15%	(47) 28%
	LOW	(44) 46%	(44) 34%	(44) 30%	(40) 28%	(44) 9%	(43) 30%
7. Others getting things they don't deserve and acting haughty about it:	HIGH	(47) 38%	(47) 34%	(47) 30%	(46) 30%	(47) 17%	(47) 32%
	LOW	(43) 47%	(43) 28%	(43) 19%	(39) 21%	(43) 14%	(42) 27%
MEAN	HIGH	(47) [*] 36%	(47) 30%	(47) 32%	(46) 28%	(47) 15%	
	LOW	(44) 52%	(44) 39%	(44) 32%	(39) 28%	(44) 14%	

¹Numbers in parentheses are absolute frequencies of replies. The following symbols represent results of tests of significance (chi-square): *significant at the 0.10 level; **at the 0.05 level; ***at the 0.01 level.

- interpersonal stress was quite large, suggesting that interpersonal relations in the Philippines are indeed quite stressful.
2. A number of social class differences were found among the specific combinations of *situations-relationships* indicated in Tables 1 and 2. In almost all these cases, the lower class subjects reported the greater frequency of stress.
 3. With reference to the type of interpersonal *situation* found to be most stressful, lower class subjects reported a significantly greater frequency of being stressed than high-class subjects in regard to "not meeting obligations to others," and "saying and doing things you wish you would not have said to others."
 4. With reference to the interpersonal *relationships* found to be most stressful, lower class subjects reported a significantly greater frequency of being stressed than high class subjects by family, relatives, and superiors for the self-oriented stress statements. No differences were found for the other-oriented statements.
 5. Among the specific *situation-relationship combinations* investigated, "Not meeting obligations to family" was the most frequently reported *self-oriented stress* for low-class subjects while "Saying things you wish you would not have said to family" was the counterpart for high-class subjects.
 6. Among the specific situation-relationship combinations investigated, "Not being understood by family" was the most frequently reported *other-oriented stress* for subjects from both classes.
 7. Although the lower-class subjects generally reported a higher frequency of stress than the high-class subjects, there were some reversals in this pattern. For example, high-class subjects reported a greater, though statistically insignificant, frequency of stress for the following situation-relationship units: "Not being able to show my anger, frustration, or dislike to friends and strangers" and "Friends, relatives, superiors, and strangers getting things they don't deserve and acting haughty about it."
 8. Lastly, a rank-order correlation (.47) between rankings of the various interpersonal stress *situation* for the two groups suggested that differences existed among the specific *situations* found to be stressful. In general, lower-class subjects reported higher frequencies of stress for *self-oriented* statements while high-class subjects reported greater frequencies of stress for *other-oriented* statements.

Discussion

One of the more general findings of the present investigation was the extremely large proportion of subjects, regardless of social class, who reported high frequencies of interpersonal stress. Judging from the high percentage of subjects who reported interpersonal stress, (e.g., 71 per cent of lower class subjects indicating they are frequently not understood by family members), interpersonal relations in the Philippines may well be "more difficult" than in other parts of the world, as Sechrest claimed. Of course, it must be remembered that the present results were based on an urban male sample and it is quite possible that life in the rural areas may be more consistent with verbalized normative values.

As we expected, lower-class subjects reported a greater frequency of interpersonal stress than high-class subjects. This finding is consistent with other reports on social status differences and mental adjustment, such as Dohrenwend's (1961). One interpretation of this finding is that lower-class subjects are more limited in the material, social, and psychological resources which might potentially mediate interpersonal stress. They live in extremely dilapidated and crowded quarters, wondering in some cases where their next meal will come from; little money is available for them to meet their per-

sonal or family needs and their few interpersonal or social resources are often miles away in the provinces. Their own feelings of self-respect and adequacy are often tendered by the awareness that they are failing in their roles as husband, father, and relative.

Some investigators, it should be noted, have claimed that the interpersonal life of the poor actually provides many supports. For example, Laquian stated (1968:198): "They have a closely knit society characterized by face-to-face relationships which provide them with personal and psychological security amidst the bewildering complexity of the city Life in the slums is more warm. People know each other; they assist each other in many traditional ways It is obviously true that lower class people know each other, assist each other, and find some security and probably solace from each other; however, the present results suggest that interpersonal stress, whether a function of the individual's own felt limitations or the limitations of others, pervades the life of the lower-class male Filipino.

Although the differences are not statistically significant, lower-class subjects tend to report a greater frequency of stress for *self-oriented* statements, while high-class subjects tend to report a greater frequency of stress for *other-oriented* statements. This suggests that the latter see interpersonal stress as arising from the limitations of others, while the former see themselves as the locus of difficulty. These stylistic differences may have important implications for class differences in self-concepts and suggest variations in the psychological coping style of the different classes.

The emergence of the family (spouse, children, parents, siblings) as the most stressful interpersonal *relationships* was at first somewhat surprising; however, it is quite understandable since it is precisely at the family level where obligations are most demanding for the Filipino and a careless word or deed filled with the greatest implication for the future. It is in the family where the greatest tests of loyalty and masculine-role fulfillment occur and yet, para-

doxically, it would appear that it is in the family where others may be most prone to speak against one, not meet their obligations, nor give the understanding or personal rewards one seeks from them. The present results may well mirror the dilemma of the urban Filipino male caught between traditional family life and contemporary psychological demands.

Lastly, worthy of note are the few reversals in the trend of lower-class subjects reporting greater frequencies of interpersonal stress than high-class subjects. Whereas "Others getting things they don't deserve and acting haughty about it" was ranked 11th in frequency for the low-class subjects; it was third among the high-class subjects. This finding suggests that the latter group is more concerned with others outdoing them; "keeping up with the Ramos's" is more important for them. Or, it might well be that among the lower class, few people do get things they don't deserve and they do not act haughty about it when they do.

Thus, within the context of the present paper, it would appear that the discrepancy between idealized normative interpersonal values and actual behaviors is quite large and the parameters of interpersonal stress worthy of increased exploration.

Summary

As part of larger study of culture and mental disorders in the Philippines, efforts were made to assess the frequency of interpersonal stress across various interpersonal situations and relationships for different social classes. Previous research indicated a broad discrepancy existed between idealized normative interpersonal values held by Filipinos and their actual interpersonal behaviors. The present results revealed that reports of actual interpersonal relations in the Philippines are not consistent with idealized normative values which are espoused and that broad social class differences exist in the frequency of interpersonal stress which is experienced across various interpersonal situation-relationship combinations.

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ACCULTURATION IN THE PHILIPPINES

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