

An Analysis of Husband-Wife Roles Among Filipino Professional at U.P. Los Baños Campus

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Introduction

The past few decades have witnessed a most dramatic change in the status of women. The rapid changes in society brought about by industrialization, urbanization and technological advances have profoundly influenced masculine and feminine roles. Employment and educational opportunities for women accompanied these developments.

Traditionally confined to the home by virtue of their childbearing and child-rearing roles, women found these changes most exciting and exhilarating. In many parts of the world, feminist movements have been organized to demand equal rights with the men.

Today the "battle" is almost won. In both the Eastern and Western hemispheres, women have succeeded in finding for themselves an enviable place in the employment world. Statistics can attest to this. In the Philippines alone, the labor force shows about 6.5 million males and 3.7 million females employed.¹ This means that 36.4 per cent of all workers in the Philippines are females. The situation may

not be so different in South and South East Asian countries such as Thailand, Burma, Ceylon, Singapore, Malaya and India.²

This set-up where women perform in both traditional and career roles is not without its problems. As a famous economist has pointed out the progression of events is faster than the development of ideas, such that "while the world moves on, the conventional wisdom is always in danger of obsolescence."³ Discussions usually become heated when the issue of women's roles arises. Doubts have been expressed as to the propriety of women "competing" in a man's world. Studies have also dramatized the contributions and inconsistencies, the conflicts and frustrations of women in the face of these changing role concepts.

Statement of the Problem

This study is an analysis of husband-wife roles among Filipino professionals in the U.P. Los Baños Campus. It seeks to identify and describe the role of the working wife. Specifically, this study will attempt to analyze and examine:

1. Wife's conception of her role and husband's conception of wife's role;
2. Expectations husbands have of their working wives; wife's expectation

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¹The Philippine Statistical Survey of Households Bulletin Series No. 13, Labor Force and Disability Data. Bureau of Census and Statistics, Manila, October, 1962.

²Barbara E. Ward (Ed.), *Women In the New Asia*, Netherlands, UNESCO, 1963, p. 52.

³John K. Galbraith, *The Affluent Society*, Great Britain, Richard Clay and Co., Ltd., 1958, p. 22.

of her husband and wife's perception of her husband's expectations;

3. Husbands' and wives' attitudes towards wife's working;
4. Division of labor in the house;
5. Wife's motivation for working and her career aspirations.

Methodology

The respondents chosen for the study are husband-wife professionals working in the U.P. College of Agriculture and other units in the Los Baños Campus.⁴ Of the sixty-five couples chosen as respondents, a total of 52 or 80 per cent of the sample were interviewed. The other thirteen couples were not interviewed for such reasons as: wives going on maternity leave or wives refusing to be interviewed.

Husbands were interviewed separately from the wives. Two interview schedules were made—one for the husband and another for the wife. On the average, the interview lasted, about 45 minutes for the husband and an hour for the wife. The interviews were made by this writer and three other research assistants: a male interviewer, who was single; and two women interviewers, one married and the other single.

How They Reacted

The respondents' reaction to the study was generally favorable. The few who reacted quite unfavorably made such comments as:

"What's that study? Kinsey?"

"If we answer truthfully on the division of work at home, it may expose our husbands as doing work that is considered traditionally feminine."

⁴The other units are the following: International Rice Research Institute, Community Development Center, Agricultural Credit and Co-operative Institute and Forest Products Research Institute.

"What if it reveals that the maid does most of what the wife is supposed to do?"

These remarks are likely in a study such as this one which deals with the private lives of the couples.

Some Limitations

The major limitation of this study is in the homogeneity of the sample and the location of the community. This rather unique community grew as a result of the College located in the area and, consequently, the lives of people are interwoven in various academic pursuits. The findings in this study must therefore be viewed in the light of this peculiarity of the College campus.

The Findings

The Respondents

The husband-wife respondents in this study are all Filipino professionals. A large part of the sample are Tagalogs coming from the provinces of Laguna, Cavite and Batangas. Husbands are generally older than their wives and also get higher incomes. More husbands possess graduate degrees (M.S. and Ph.D.) than the wives. The husbands as a rule, married at a later age than the wives. The men, on the average, married when 27 years old, the women, when 25. For about two-thirds of the couples, the College Campus was the setting for love and courtship. Seventy-five per cent of the couples have been married for less than 6 years. The average couple has been married for about 5.17 years. The average number of children is 2.5; about one-fifth of the respondents are newly married and do not yet have children.

A little less than half of the couples have fathers who are also college graduates and occupy white-collar positions. More husbands than wives have fathers

with little education. Generally mothers of the couples have lower educational attainment than fathers. About two-thirds of their mothers were housewives or non-working.

Almost all of the couples described their parents' marriages as happy.

Reasons for Working

For almost half of the respondents, economic need was the most compelling reason given for working. Responses of both husbands and wives tend to concentrate on the "additional money" theme. One can't help raising a question at this point. Does the wife work to supplement the husband's earnings or are there luxuries and comforts that both want to have?

After the economic reason the desire to make use of one's education and training is most frequently mentioned. Both husbands and wives expressed concern over this. For instance, whether the wife should work after marriage or not was argued over by a couple even before their marriage. Some husbands and wives felt that a college education not utilized in a job is a waste of time, money and talent. For one thing, many men and women consider a college education to be a good investment. Perhaps, too, the orientation of the college-educated woman partly explains this.

A further question is, how many college courses are aimed at preparing women for homemaking? Many college-educated wives, for instance, described housekeeping as "boring, monotonous," one that makes them "irritated" or gives them an "unpleasant disposition." Some husbands remarked, too, that if their better halves don't work, they might end up as "nuisances at home" or may become gossipers."

Other wives said they work because they "enjoy their occupation." One member of the male population said that the

"desire for a fuller life" perhaps motivates the woman to work.

One interesting finding was the relationship between the wife's reason for working and her willingness to stop working if the husband asked her to. Those who work because they enjoy it are less likely to stop working than those who work for additional income.

Conception of Wife's Role

What is the proper role or roles for women? An inventory designed by Annabelle Motz was used to find out the conception of the wife's role.⁵ Although originally devised for women, the inventory was adapted for the husbands in this study. The inventory consisted of 24 statements regarding the role of women. One's role is then classified as either traditional or companionship.⁶

Findings show that about two-thirds of the husbands and only one third of the wives are traditional. On the other hand, 69 per cent of the wives and only 39 per cent of the husbands are companionship-oriented. Can this trend be explained by the fact that ours is a traditionally husband-dominated world?

One aspect, however, appears to stand out. Both husbands and wives seem confused about the role of the wife. Both were rather inconsistent on certain statements in the inventory — not quite traditional but not really companionship-oriented. For instance, although one hus-

⁵ Annabelle Motz, "A Role Conception Inventory: A Tool For Research," *American Sociological Review*, August 1952, pp. 465-471.

⁶ The following are the definitions, as adopted from Clifford Kirkpatrick: Traditional role refers to wife and mother role. This includes the obligations of bearing and rearing children, rendering domestic service and a loyal subordination of the self to husband. Companionship or partner role is not limited to activities associated with domesticity. An important aspect of the companionship patterns for women is the sharing of decisions and responsibilities associated with married life.

band felt the wife belongs in the home, he wouldn't want his wife either to merely "talk about children, recipes and things like that." Some husbands even expressed pride in their wives' academic accomplishments.

As to the relationship between age and one's conception of wife's role, there is a tendency for the older husbands to be traditional and for younger wives to be companionship-oriented. If husbands had a choice about wife's working, the traditional husbands would prefer that their wives stop working. The companionship-oriented husbands are equally divided on this matter.

Attitude Towards Wife's Working

Do husbands like the present arrangement where the wife also works? Yes, answered the majority. Asked why they approved, they came up with statements such as:

"Financially speaking, we are better off."

"It might bore her if she stays home. She loves her work."

The wives also felt the same way. They gave both economic and personal reasons.

If husbands had a choice, would they want their wives to stop working? Two out of every three husbands replied "yes," by all means. To a similar question asked of the wives, only one-third said "yes." A little less than half answered with a categorical "no." Of the husbands who said "yes," more than ninety per cent reasoned out with the traditional wife-is-for-the-home statement. ("I want her to look after our children," or "I feel contented if she cooks the food I eat"). Those who didn't want their wives to stop working felt that their wives would simply be unhappy if they did stop working.

The wives, on the other hand, emphasized personal reasons such as: they'll find housework boring, they enjoy their work and they want to utilize their education.

Circumstances sufficient enough to make the wife stop working according to the husband are: if he earns enough, if the wife is needed by home and children, or if wife's health so warrants. The wives, however, emphasized they would stop if they are needed by "the home and family."

It is perhaps safe to say that where the college-educated woman could successfully reconcile both roles, she would be in a much happier state. For as Kirkpatrick observed, personality conflicts in the married woman could arise from either her difficulty in choosing roles or from frustration in one who "performs a role out of duty and habit while longing for a different one."⁷

Expectations of the Working Wife

Kirkpatrick in a study of inconsistency in marital roles hypothesized that husbands would indorse "a double dose of obligations" for the wives. The wives, on the other hand, would indorse a "double dose of privilege."⁸

This theory seems to be supported by the results of the study. Evidently, an outside job does not necessarily put the woman on equal footing with the husband. To the husbands, wives have to hurry home after office hours to assume their other role—that of wife and mother. The traditional picture where the man arrives home "at the end of a weary day" and expects to be greeted by the

⁷ Clifford Kirkpatrick, "Inconsistency in Marriage Role and Marriage Conflict," in Judson T. Landis, and Mary G. Landis (Ed.), *Readings in Marriage and the Family*, (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, Prentice Hall, Inc., 1952), pp. 387-388.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 389-390.

wife is predominant even in this growing equalitarian situation. As one husband puts it, "I guess it's just a natural expectation."

As the wives themselves reported, husbands get upset and disappointed if their wives come home late. Others, though, claimed that their husbands are understanding and don't mind.

When the wife holds an 8-hour job just like her husband, to what extent is she expected to perform the traditional chores particularly those which concern food? Girls in our society grow up with the knowledge handed down from grandma that "the way to a man's heart is through his palate." As indicated in the next section, more and more of the maids do the cooking. Suppose something goes wrong such as meals not being served on time or he doesn't like the food served, what does the husband do?

Although about one-third of the wives said their husbands don't mind, there were significantly many who said their husbands complain ("Isn't there anything else?") or show disappointment ("He gets up, walks around and asks me to make a sandwich").

It is quite interesting to point out that responses of wives about husbands' reaction showed an apologetic and defensive tone ("He reminds me of my obligations but doesn't blame me," or "He eats the food served. Anyway, it's his mother who does the cooking").

When queried as to what she feels when this happens, the wives confessed they felt sorry and guilty. ("I feel that I have failed him." "Embarrassed and slighted"). Some wives pass on the blame to the maids or to whoever does the cooking. ("It's not my fault, since I'm working and we only have one maid").

Division of Labor

To what extent have "changing concepts" affected traditional expectations of the wife? Does the traditional pattern of "husbands doing man's work" and "wives doing women's work" still operate?

For this study a long list of tasks at home was presented to the respondents who were then asked three questions: *who* actually does this task most of the time? Who do you think should do it? Whom does your husband expect to do it?

Results show that husband's duties at home are minimal. He does only the things that require physical strength such as repairs and those that are connected with his breadwinner role--that of filling up income tax forms and filing them. In many cases, he is attended to by the wife in terms of putting out clothes when he goes to the bathroom.

The wife, as expected, is still the queen of the household. She handles the purse strings and keeps track of the money and expenses. She has many other duties and responsibilities at home which not even the fact that she is working full time can diminish. She does most of the marketing, and shopping, since these tasks involve money. She attends to the husband by arranging his clothes or sewing missing buttons or his shirts and darning his socks. Her other duties are part of the package that goes with her role as mother. Since it is the wife who is the childbearer, waking up at night, changing diapers, etc. are her duties. It is interesting to note, however, that more and more husbands share in these tasks. Disciplining and tutoring the children, bringing them to school, etc. are shared by husband and wife.

The domestic load of the housewife is eased to a large extent by the presence of helpers. They are the working wives' crutches. They do the many heavy and

"dirty" tasks at home such as cleaning, washing the dishes, laundry, etc. All the couples with children have helpers. Only seven couples have no helpers and they are the ones that don't have any children yet.

On the whole, the arrangement is acceptable to everyone concerned. There are, however, wives who complain about the lack of time for their homes and families because of their jobs. About one-half think an ideal arrangement would be part-time employment. The other half, however, think it is perfectly all right and much better to work full-time.

Career Aspirations

It cannot be ascertained whether marriage or career is uppermost in a woman's mind when she goes to college. Although the majority revealed having entertained definite plans of furthering a professional career, marriage was not totally out of the question. For most wives there was a desire to succeed in both marriage and career. Others indicated that they would "work as long as they were able to" or "until the family is big enough" to warrant their staying home.

Even when the woman had romantic plans of having a big family and being plain "wife and mother" after she met the "right man," there was still a tendency for women who have worked before marriage to continue doing so even "after the children have come." Perhaps the exposure to the same academic atmosphere as the men imbues the wives with the same enthusiasm to pursue and succeed in a career. For the 13 wives in this study who have M.S. and Ph.D. degrees, the majority obtained them after marriage. One, for instance, revealed that she "still plans to have a Ph.D. abroad" in spite of her being a wife and mother.

In this desire of most wives to pursue a professional career, the role of parents can not be overlooked. ("My father was most interested in my going on for a Ph.D." "My father pushed me into pursuing graduate studies. He was most disappointed when I married without first obtaining a graduate degree").

It is interesting to note that to about one-half of the wives, marriage did not affect career plans considerably. ("Husband convinced me to pursue graduate studies." Or "marriage helped me decide to pursue graduate work.") However, about one-half, too, felt that marriage hindered career plans. ("I have children to care for" or "There is the family to think about"). To the majority of husbands marriage did not affect career. The sex differences may be partly attributed to the values we have. To the man, success in a career is a must; to the woman, career takes a back seat.

If given a chance to pursue graduate studies abroad, more husbands than wives are just too willing. However, almost half of the wives also said "yes" especially if the family can go with them. The desire to "have one's cake and eat it, too" was best expressed by one wife-respondent. "It was an M.S. versus marriage. I got married first and got an M.S. later." As has been mentioned elsewhere, the professional woman would perhaps be much happier if she could combine marriage and career.

Implications

In the past, the Filipino woman's world revolved around her husband and children. Her personal happiness depended upon her family's happiness. Her success was measured largely in terms of faithful compliance to her traditional role as wife and mother.

With the "emancipation" of the Filipino woman, however, came various changes. An increasing number are working outside the home, pursuing careers and achieving success in endeavors outside the confines of the home. The professional recognition she has earned in the world outside has somehow added to her sense of personal happiness.

It can be said that the modern Filipino woman, though not entirely subordinating her traditional wife-mother role to that of her career, has nonetheless expressed growing concern for her personal happiness. Evidence of this can be found in her reasons for working, her career aspirations and her reluctance to give up her job.

The future may witness a growing "modernization" of these roles. One may well ask at this juncture: How much of a woman's personal happiness as derived from her professional achievement will she compromise with her family's happiness in terms of decisions that she will make about her future? What other changes in the family and society may

result from the increasing demands on women to achieve professional recognition in the modern world?

Another implication concerns household help. The necessity of helpers for working mothers has already been discussed. The manner in which the Filipino professional woman manages both her home and her work may be attributed largely to the availability of household help at relatively inexpensive rates. How long, one may ask, will this condition last? Already there are complaints from both working and non-working wives of the increasing difficulty in securing household help. There are also complaints about their demands in terms of salary and the work they will do. The experience of the western world could serve as an example to the Philippines. In the next few decades, will it be as easy and inexpensive to have these helpers as it is now? And when it happens that household helpers become expensive and difficult to secure, how then will the Filipino working mother adjust? Also, how will this condition affect her conception of her role?

Interlocking Relationships In A Cebuano Mountain Sitio And Their Implication For Child-Rearing

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Anthropologists generally consider the prime function of the stabilized marriage union to be to provide a secure setting in which children can be socially identified, nurtured, and brought to mature status. This ordinarily involves responsi-

ble participation by two parents.¹ Involvement in child care, however, is subject to variations of family structure

¹ Felix M. Keesing, *Cultural Anthropology* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964), p. 256.