

The Elderly in Filipino Households: Current Status and Future Prospects

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WHEN I FIRST ARRIVED in the Philippines some twenty years ago, I had the pleasure of meeting my parents-in-law for the first time. I found Tatay to be a healthy and good-hearted man, an avid reader of the *Manila Bulletin*, and (miracle of miracles) a government administrator who still knew what it meant to regard one's office as a public trust. Nanay struck me at first as frail but it didn't take long for me to catch on that she was actually a strong-willed person, transparently honest, ever industrious and careful enough with the family purse so as to preserve their much-valued financial independence. Oh, and there was *one* more thing. Tatay beat me twenty games running at chess before I finally lucked out a victory and Nanay had a fifty-fifty chance of coming out the winner every time we sat down for a game of Scrabble. This for a son-in-law with a Ph.D. and the experience of learning English as his mother tongue.

With an experience like that to fall back on, is it any wonder that I have a difficult time viewing the Filipino elderly in basically problematic terms? Quite the contrary, in fact. For me, they are a national treasure, an asset in every sense of the word. With Peter Laslett (himself a

septuagenarian) I would argue therefore that

the belief that older people are incapable and unproductive, the used-up, fag-end of the population, is disastrous. It is disastrous not only for older persons themselves who suffer so much from the stigma which attaches to Old Age, but for the whole structure of the Society to which they belong (Laslett, 1993, p.9).

I am, of course, running well ahead of my data in all of this. A sample size of only two is a bit small, to say nothing of the need to carefully sort through all the sociological and anthropological observations on the Filipino elderly which have been collected to date. That, in fact, is the whole rationale for the present paper. But surely it will not be remiss for me at this early juncture to point out that such astute observers as Mita Pardo de Tavera and Mercedes Concepcion have agreed with my generally optimistic outlook on the *present* situation of the Filipino elderly.¹ For that matter, too, so have our best writers of fiction. We may sense the bittersweet

nostalgia of Bienvenido N. Santos' Fabia (in "Scent of Apples") or chuckle at Charlie Quinton, the self-proclaimed cynic of Jose Dalisay's "Oldtimer". But in either event these characters cannot but impress us with their ethic of hard work, integrity and generosity to friends and family. Most of all they are survivors, come what may.

Note, however, my emphasis on the word "present." For the world that we once knew is falling away, a world supported by small-scale agriculture, bolstered by a tradition of family solidarity and characterized by age-based patterns of respect and deference. The elderly fit easily within this sort of world but may have greater difficulties adjusting to the Philippines of the twenty-first century, characterized, as it may well be, by an increasingly urban landscape, possible NIC-hood and the ever-greater penetration of a media-based "world culture".

The main question, therefore, is one of social and cultural change, of recent trends and their most plausible projection forward to the next few decades. But here we come up a bit short. Demographers can tell us much about recent changes in fertility and mortality. Economists have elaborate models depicting trends over time in the balance of trade or the number of Filipinos living below the poverty line. Geographers have even chartered for us the shocking decline in the country's forest cover. And why not? These are all "problems" of great and immediate importance. But not so the elderly. And thus there is no neat little time series data on the aged, their lives, their most pressing concerns. To a great extent there is not even a comparable set of census tabulations on such basic variables as household structure or employment status.²

We are thrust back, therefore, onto simpler—and cruder—statistical tools. Marginal distributions from a few one-shot surveys, comparative figures from neighboring countries, simple correlations involving residence or levels of educational attainment. This is not the best of all analytical worlds, of course, but our choices are limited, particularly when it comes to quantifying the more subtle dimensions of the social life of aged people—familial interactions, economic exchanges, parental advice, filial concern. As Eileen Sarmiento (1990, p. 80) has argued, knowledge about the Filipino elderly

leaves much to be desired. It is widely recognized that... studies on the family, particularly on the Filipino aged in the context of...family structure, are relatively few..

Which is not to say that we are completely bereft on this score. An excellent review of anthropological observations about the aged in Philippine communities has already been prepared by Ma. Elena Lopez (1991). We also have two large-scale survey studies of the Filipino elderly which were recently carried out under the auspices of the World Health Organization and the Australian Government's ASEAN Population Program. These will be respectively referred to in this article as the "WHO" and "ASEAN" studies (cf. Andrews, et al., 1986; Domingo, Feranil and associates, 1990). There are other writings as well, although I very much doubt if a full bibliography on the topic would run to more than a score or two of pages.

There are, nonetheless, a number of very practical reasons as to why contemporary social scientists ought to be paying greater attention to the elderly in our midst. For one thing, demographic projections

indicate that this age category is due to expand by more than two million persons during the two-decade period 1980-2000. Subsequent increases will be even greater, so that by the year 2030 about 14 percent of all Filipinos will be 60 years of age or older, as compared to a mere five percent today (Concepcion, 1988, Tables 1 and 2). Indeed, a comparative analysis of the status of the older population in eighteen nations of Asia and the Pacific showed the Filipino elderly as being projected to grow at a faster rate during the period 1980-2000 than was expected for any of the other countries included in the survey (Martin, 1987, Table 1).

The fact that older people are also experiencing lower death rates today than has been true for any other period in history should also be kept in mind when assessing the developmental impact of this group upon the larger society. A little less than half of all Filipinos surviving to age 65 may now be expected to live another fifteen years (Flieger and Cabigon, 1994, pp. 12 and 13). Many will live on for another two decades or even longer. The economic implications of this emerging trend are, of course, considerable. Will these be years of continued productivity on the part of the elderly or will the members of this group be increasingly subject to all the infirmities of mind and body that are now so common among older people in the industrial societies of Europe, Japan, and North America?³ The former alternative is not only far preferable but also potentially attainable, given a modicum of foresight and socially responsible planning. But that, again, will require a greater concern for the elderly on the part of those of us in the social science community, a concern that would seem to be quite appropriate given the certainty that their state will be ours to share in just a few short years.

The Filipino Elderly: A Statistical Profile

The first matter of business must surely be to come up with a simple description of the Filipino elderly in these last few decades of the twentieth century. Who are these people, really? How and where do they live? What are their social and demographic characteristics? Once we have some answers to these questions it may prove possible to move on to the more complex social and economic problems touched on in my introduction.

To begin then, the 1990 census listed a total of 2,060,086 Filipinos aged 65 years and over. According to projections, the size of this group may be expected to grow to nearly three million by the turn of the century and 7.7 million by the year 2025 (Martin, 1988a, Table 1).

Filipino women enjoy a life expectancy which is about five years longer, on average, than that which has been noted for males (Flieger, Abenoja and Lim, 1981, Tables 6 and 6). As a result, women outnumber men among the aged in this country. As of 1990, 54 percent of the elderly population were female. Projections presented by Mercedes Concepcion (1988, Table 4) show this tendency as growing even stronger in the near future, with the percentage female eventually leveling off at about 56.5 percent by the year 2020.

About a third of the Filipino elderly are aged 75 years or older. Based on the experience of other countries we may expect that future growth rates for this group will be even more rapid than those found among the so-called "young-old" (ages 65-74) category (cf. Palabrica-Costello, 1980). It seems likely that this projected trend will eventually place

increasing strain on families, health care providers and various retirement benefit programs.

Somewhat conflicting results have been reported on the marital status distribution of the Filipino elderly (e.g., Concepcion, 1988; Martin, 1988a; Casterline, Domingo, Eu and Kabamalan, 1991). Differences in sampling methodologies or in the definition of the age boundary for the elderly population may account for this. The general pattern, in any event, would appear to show that roughly 60 percent of the elderly are currently married, with a little less than a third being widowed, six percent never married, and less than one percent divorced or separated. Males are much more likely to be currently married than females, more than half of whom are either widowed or unmarried. In comparison to women from thirteen other countries in southern and eastern Asia, elderly Filipinas rank unusually high (highest in fact) with regard to their representation in the never married category, at the same time ranking second lowest in terms of their probability of being widowed (Martin, 1988a, Table 4).⁴

Approximately two out of every three aged Filipinos live in a rural community. This pattern is stronger for males than for females and for the "young-old" rather than the "old-old" (Mercado, 1990, Table 2.2; Martin, 1988a, Table 5). The concentration of older folk in the Philippine countryside appears to be largely a function of selective out-migration from these areas, which is to say that it is a consequence of the large-scale exodus of adolescents and young adults from the rural milieu. In line with this observation is a general pattern whereby areas characterized by a long history of out-migration (e.g., the Ilocos,

Central Visayan and Eastern Visayan regions) also show evidence for a disproportionately large proportion of old folks (Domingo, 1990a, Tables 1-9).

Given the secular trend towards increased rates of educational attainment, it is not surprising to learn that the Filipino elderly have been to school for fewer years on average than is true for those from younger cohorts. The mean years of educational attainment for this group is generally found to lie between four and five years of schooling (e.g., Andrews et al., 1986; Casterline, Domingo, Eu and Kabamalan, 1991, Table 1). About a quarter have never gone to school at all (Mercado, 1990, Table 2-6). Literacy rates are also problematic, having only reached 53.6 percent as of the 1980 Census (Mercado, 1990, Tables 2-4). Both illiteracy and low levels of educational attainment are found more frequently for women than for men and among rural folk rather than for city dwellers.

Estimates of labor force participation rates are somewhat unstable, fluctuating from a low of 39 percent turned in by the ASEAN survey of the elderly (Feranil, 1990, Tables 3-13) to a high of 57 percent reported by Concepcion (1988, Table 6).⁵ A small-scale study conducted in Cebu province also shows evidence to support the contention that more than half of all the elderly in that locale are gainfully employed (Ulack and Lee, 1986). No doubt there are again some definitional problems involved in these comparisons. Even so, it appears likely that elderly Filipinos are more likely than their age-mates in the other ASEAN countries to be gainfully employed (Concepcion, 1988, Table 6). Most studies would also agree in depicting males, rural inhabitants and the less educated among the aged as being most likely to

be holding down some sort of job (e.g. Feranil, 1990; Concepcion, 1988; Casterline, Domingo, Eu and Kabamalan, 1991).

For those among the aged who are still working, there is strong tendency for them to be employed within the agricultural sector. Data from the 1990 Census, for example, show two out of every three workers aged 65 and above to be employed in farming or fishing, as compared to less than a third of all workers aged 15 to 34 (Costello, 1994, Table 9).

An initial—and simplistic—interpretation of the above findings might well be one which emphasizes the rather limited potential found among the Filipino elderly to contribute to the development process. Their advanced years would seem to imply a reduced capacity for work, just as their low levels of educational attainment and their heavy concentration in the farm sector do not bode well for the “high tech” society implicit in the vision of Philippines 2000. Again, however, I would argue for a more sanguine point of view. Small-scale agriculture may not be the most lucrative of economic pursuits but at least it is an improvement over complete financial dependency. Indeed, it is not at all uncommon for elderly agriculturalists to be making substantial contributions in kind to their city-based children (Trager, 1981). The chance to work a few hours each day may also bring with it other benefits, e.g., in terms of physical fitness or as a way of avoiding isolation and loneliness.

There is also some reason to believe that some of our most common statistical indicators may suffer from a certain crudeness when applied unthinkingly to the case of the elderly. On the educational front, for example, the argument

has been made that the increased *quantity* of schooling offered to younger cohorts may well be paralleled by a decline in overall *quality* (Herrin, 1988). The apparently low levels of labor force participation among the female elderly can also be misleading insofar as they tell us nothing about all of the household chores and child care activities carried out by these women.

In any event, these sort of observations raise a number of institutional questions concerning the quality of family life, the warp and woof of economic transactions, and the best and most practical means of protecting the health of our aged. The next few sections present some initial conclusions along these lines.

Patterns of Communal and Institutional Participation Among Filipino Elders

The Family. It is generally assumed, and probably for good reason, that older persons will benefit from being able to stay in close contact with their family.⁶ It is therefore important to determine the living arrangements and patterns of intra-familial interaction now being experienced by the Filipino elderly.

There can be little doubt, of course, that Philippine culture encourages great respect for and frequent interaction with the elderly (cf. Lopez, 1991). Children have a particularly strong responsibility here due to the “immeasurable and eternal” debt of gratitude (*utang na loob*) which they owe their parents (Hollnsteiner, 1973, p. 76). Beyond such immediate attachments, however, may also be found the close ties which bind older persons and their grandchildren (Brandewie, 1975) and, beyond that, social links with a wide

variety of younger kinsmen and godchildren. The respect due one's actual parents, therefore, may also serve as a model for various situations of intergenerational deference. In effect, the growing child has many parents and quasiparents or, as Yu and Liu (1980, p. 207) put it, "the status and obligations of parenthood are not vested solely in the married couple but are shared with a wide circle of adult and elderly relatives."

Filipino parents typically expect that they will be helped and supported by their children once they have reached old age. This finding has been confirmed not only by Bulatao's (1975) analysis of survey data from the *Philippine Value of Children* study but also by anthropological accounts of role expectations in the parent-child dyad (e.g. Yu and Liu, 1980; Morais, 1981). These findings imply a corresponding lack of probability that there will be many examples of older persons in the contemporary Philippines who will end up unassisted by their children, should their financial resources fail them. There also seems to be widespread agreement that widowed parents ought not to live by themselves, particularly in view of the negative evaluation generally assigned by Philippine culture to the condition of being alone, even for fairly short periods of time (Hollnsteiner, 1975, p. 444).

We thus have the idealized (over-idealized, no doubt) picture of the Filipino elderly as being universally respected and cared for as they close out the last chapter of their lives. And yet there are reasons for believing that this near-perfect state cannot long persist. We have already noted how the trend towards rapid urbanization brings with it the out-migration of rural youth, thereby leaving the "old folks" to remain behind, mired

in their stagnating villages. Birth rates have also started to decline, implying fewer potential care-givers among the younger generation. The spirit of familism, in which "the individual is willing to sacrifice for members of his family (and) to subordinate himself for the larger good of the family" (Sanders, 1977, pp. 60 and 62) is also on the wane. On the face of it these changes would appear to imply a turning away from extended family households and a new dearth of un-married daughters who would be willing to confine themselves to the rural backwaters, merely for the purpose of staying with their aged parents. Indeed, the increasing levels of female labor force participation noted during the past decade (Costello, 1993) will very likely bring with them a parallel decline in the number of caretakers who will be on call for the infirm elderly.

While the above processes suggest that modernization and economic development could serve to undermine the family relations of the elderly, it is also apparent that the economic reverses experienced by Filipinos during the 1980s have brought with them their own threats to the well-being of the aged. Older members of poor families may be regarded as a burden by their children (Mendez, et al., 1984, p.41) and are culturally expected to eat less food than the younger household members (Hurge, 1965). As long as there was land enough for all, older persons in the barrios could at least lay claim to some security but this is no longer true of the new and rapidly growing class of landless agricultural laborers. If the authority of parents from this rural poverty class is already suspect, even in early middle age (e.g. Fegan, 1983), it is highly probable that they will not be getting much in the way of tangible assistance from their children

once they have reached the threshold of old age.

Be that as it may, current statistics on the living arrangements of elderly Filipinos would appear to show a "favorable picture... (insofar as) it seems that they are getting the care they require" (Domingo, 1990b, p. 157). The WHO and ASEAN studies thus agree with one another in estimating that approximately 80 percent of the members of this group are living with at least one of their children. Both studies, too, find only three percent or less of the elderly to be living alone (Martin, 1988b, Table 1; Sarmiento, 1990, Table 4.6). Most of the remaining cases (about 15 percent) are made up of elderly persons who are living with their spouses, a residential arrangement which appears to be quite acceptable to most older Filipinos, particularly when one or another child lives nearby.

Findings on the differential living arrangements of the elderly give mixed signals as to the trends which are most likely to emerge in the near future. Among the ever married elderly, the major determinant appears to be the number of children ever born or, more specifically, the number of daughters ever born (Casterline, et al., 1991; Martin, 1988b). This suggests that current trends toward diminished fertility will bring with them greater numbers of older persons who are either not living with their children or, worse still, living alone. Never married and divorced/separated persons have also been found (as would be expected) to be over-represented among persons found to be living in single person households (Sarmiento, 1990). As marriage becomes less universal, therefore, the problem of the uncared-for elderly may well increase.

For their part, rural-urban comparisons present us with the unexpected finding that it is the barrio resident who is most likely to be living apart from his/her children or in a single person household (Casterline, et al., 1991; Martin, 1988b, Table 2). While this would appear to fly in the face of those theories which see urbanization as undermining familistic tendencies, there could well be a connection here via the migration factor. That is, even though cross-sectional comparisons between the urban and rural elderly would appear to show the latter group as being less likely to live in an extended household, it is nonetheless plausible that the urbanization process is the root cause of this pattern in the sense that it induces rural youth to leave their elders behind as they try their luck in the city. We thus find that rural communities which have been marked by particularly high levels of out-migration are also characterized by high proportions of older persons who live alone and fewer extended-type living arrangements. For their rural sample from an outlying area in Cebu province (a locale marked by historically high levels of out-migration), Ulack and Lee (1986) thus find only 59 percent of their elderly respondents to be living with their children, as compared to 83 percent in the Cebu City metropolitan area.⁷

Even so, there is also a modicum of evidence which runs contrary to the thesis that modernization will undermine the family support system of the Filipino elderly. For one thing, the rural-urban differential in living arrangements noted above may at least be taken as suggesting that there is nothing incompatible between city life and extended type households, despite the assumptions of this type implicit in the classic sociological

literature (e.g., Wirth, 1938). For another, the findings that extended-family arrangements are more often found in the case of widows (Martin, 1988b, Table 2) and the "old-old" (Casterline, Domingo, Eu and Kabamalan, 1991 Table 7) would seem to indicate a functional pattern whereby families are making a heightened response in the cases of precisely those among their elderly who stand most in need. So it also might be noted that the trend towards declining fertility mentioned earlier could also bring its own benefits for the elderly. This would occur, for example, if smaller family sizes were to result in increased savings for the couple (cf. Havanon, Knodel and Sittitrai, 1992 for evidence to this effect in the case of Thailand), thereby allowing many older couples to "purchase" a degree of independence and privacy which is not now available to them:

(Filipino) parents prefer to live in nuclear households, which allows them to retain their autonomy. Because close kinsmen tend to live near each other...parents are likely to be near their children. While nuclearity with proximity would seem to be the best arrangement, economic necessity often results in sharing residence with adult children...Parents with little savings or income become dependents... (Lopez, 1991, p. 15).

The study of intrafamily relations, of course, extends well beyond the simple question of where the old folks are going to live now that they are getting on in years. For one thing, we must consider the "wealth flows" (Caldwell, 1982) connecting parents and children, a topic

which will be taken up in the next section of this paper. There are also questions about social contact with relatives, about the persistence—or decline—of parental authority, and about the extent to which the elderly can still feel loved and respected by their younger kin.

Findings from the WHO-sponsored survey of older persons in four Western Pacific countries are of particular interest in this regard (cf. Andrews, et al., 1986). This study included various indicators of family relations involving the elderly, most of which seem to show the Philippine case in a favorable light. Compared to their cohorts in Fiji, Malaysia and South Korea, the Philippine respondents are thus found to be the least likely to admit to feeling "lonely", the most likely to be living with at least one child, the most likely to have experienced a visit with a relative in the past month, the most likely to say that they are consulted when it comes to family decisions, the most likely to say that they have someone to confide in, and the most likely (with a 100 percent level of affirmation) to say that they have someone who would help them should they fall ill. The Filipinos also rank second highest (after the Malaysians) in terms of being "content" with the amount of contact which they have with family and friends.

Rural-urban contrasts, on some of the dimensions considered above, again fail to show strong support for modernization as threat-to-the-elderly perspective. Data from the ASEAN study, for example, include a large number of items on the decision-making issue (Sarmiento, 1990, Tables 4-18 through 4-20). In general, these fail to show any clear difference between rural and urban respondents. As for intrafamily social relations, the ASEAN results show rural

folk as being more likely to visit with "other relatives", but it is the urbanites who fare best in terms of intersibling contacts while no significant differences are noted for the all-important case of parent-child interactions.

If there is a problem for the Filipino elderly here it may well be one which lies more in the psychological consequences which inevitably occur when one grows old in a rapidly changing social milieu. Lita Domingo's (1990b, p. 162) summary report on the ASEAN survey data thus points out that about half of the elderly persons included in this study feel that they get "too little respect from the younger generation" while nearly two out of three admit that they had a serious problem with "not feeling needed/wanted." No doubt these are feelings which have been experienced by the aged in other places and other times. But they are worthy of our interest and concern just the same. For one thing, they are most certainly all too real to the persons experiencing them. For another, they seem likely to become even more widespread in the coming age of global markets, high-tech workplaces and satellite television.

The Economy. Survey data on the economic situation of the Filipino elderly do not, in general, leave one with the impression that this group is suffering from severe poverty. Findings from the WHO study, for example, indicate that fewer than one out of every twenty older Filipinos is unable to enjoy regular access to water, cooking facilities, or a toilet. More than eighty percent own their dwelling (whether in full or in part) while a mere ten percent are willing to rate their housing facilities as "fair" or "poor" in quality (Andrews, et al., 1986; Martin 1988b, Table 1). These figures are uniformly bet-

ter than those reported for any of the three other countries included in the WHO survey even though each one of these ranks ahead of the Philippines on conventional indicators of economic development.

The ASEAN data show a similar pattern. Seventy-one percent of the respondents to this study say that they own their home, while 57 percent are in possession of a parcel of land. About a third have piped water while even higher percentages (86 and 89 percent, respectively) are using electric lights and a private toilet. Ownership of consumer goods is also found to be fairly high, with fifty percent or more of the elderly Filipinos interviewed in the ASEAN study claiming to own the following items: radio, electric fan, electric or gas stove, electric iron, sewing machine, and watch or clock.

It is important to note at this point that neither the WHO nor the ASEAN survey is based upon a truly representative sample of elderly persons. Both studies oversample respondents from Luzon in general and Metro Manila in particular. This means that they probably suffer from a bias towards middle and upper-strata households as regards living standards, than in, say, the Eastern Visayas or Mindanao (both of which are excluded from the WHO and ASEAN surveys) which are well below those in the Manila area (cf., for example, Madigan, 1988, for the case of Northern Mindanao).

Even so, I would argue that the findings reported above should not be jettisoned uncritically. While the sampling problem may have inflated the ownership profile slightly it is also true that the two surveys *did* carry out surveys in some

poorer areas of the country (e.g., Bohol and Ilocos Norte for the ASEAN study). There are also a few plausible rationales for the higher living standards found among older persons. For one thing, population pressure was less intense a generation ago than it is now. As such, it was easier for earlier rural cohorts (i.e., those who are now in the older age categories) to acquire a piece of land and, subsequent to that, their own dwelling. Most empirical studies of the rural landless class thus find this group to be markedly younger, on average, than are small-scale farmers, whether owners or tenants (e.g., Costello and Palabrica-Costello, 1993a). For another, a common characteristic of households headed by older persons is that they are nearing the end of the family life cycle. Insofar as various studies (e.g., Costello and Palabrica-Costello, 1985, p. 134) have shown that there is a positive relationship between stage of the family life cycle and the acquisition of consumer durables, this, too, would lead us to expect that it will be the older persons who rank higher in terms of the ownership factor. In essence, it takes time to acquire such possessions and it is therefore the elderly who have had the most opportunities to do so.

It will also be well to recall that many persons of nominally retirement age are still working. In some cases the privilege of job seniority or the acquired business assets and social contacts built up over the years can lead to surprisingly high earnings for these workers. Indeed, the Cebu study of Ulack and Lee (1986) finds only a negligible difference in earning levels between the employed elderly and younger workers.

Most of the correlates of household economic status found among the Filipino elderly would appear to operate in the expected direction. Both the WHO

and the ASEAN data show home ownership to be more common in rural areas than in urban. Living standards, however, appear to be higher in the cities, as shown by comparisons involving three different indicators—income, consumer goods ownership, and housing-related amenities (e.g., access to water or a toilet). Males and married respondents score above average on the same indicators, thereby pointing to the economic difficulties which are most probably faced by spinsters and widows. Better educated persons tend, on average, to enjoy higher living standards; so do the elderly who experienced a history of employment outside of agriculture. Being the parent of a large number of children seems to be positively correlated with home ownership but more or less irrelevant as far as income and ownership of consumer durables are concerned (Andrews, et al., 1986; Casterline, Domingo, Eu and Kabamalan, 1991, Tables 3 and 4).

Sustenance patterns among elderly Filipinos are fairly diverse and include financial support from other family members, employment, agricultural pursuits, pensions and savings. Survey data from both the WHO and the ASEAN studies indicate that the relative importance of these categories would appear to follow the order given above (Andrews et al., 1986, Table 53; Feranil, 1990, Table 3.1). In general, older Filipinos are probably somewhat more likely to be supporting themselves (whether fully or in part) through some sort of economic activity than is the case for the elderly in most of the other countries of the Asia-Pacific region.⁸ The extended family also plays an important role in this regard although it should be noted that significant economic flows are also being made from older Filipino parents to their children and grandchildren.⁹ The contribution of

pensions and social security to the economic support picture appears to be small, while that made by savings account is miniscule.

The function of extended family ties in sustaining the Philippine elderly has been noted, and rightly so, by many authors. Even so, this is very much a variant condition, tempered on the one hand by perceived needs and on the other by resource availability. We have already pointed to Lopez's (1991, p.6) contention that members of the country's growing landless class can expect little of this sort of help once they are too old to fend for themselves. "As parents," she notes, "their children are too poor to support them adequately or regularly, and neither do they have the alliance networks that can offer social security." Somewhat in line with this observation is the empirical finding that elderly folk in the city benefit more from economic exchanges with their children than is true for their rural counterparts. Not only are members of this latter group less likely to receive economic assistance from their children—they are also significantly more likely to be *giving* such aid to their offspring (Casterline, Domingo, Eu and Kabamalan, 1991, Table 9). No doubt, the children of the urban elderly are earning higher incomes on average than those born to rural folk. This may lead to larger cash flows toward their parents since more assistance will generally be expected from children who have been able to establish themselves in more prosperous circumstances (Lopez, 1991, p. 21). Higher levels of support from children are additionally associated with daughters rather than sons, and the unmarried rather than those who have established their own families (e.g., Palabrica-Costello and Costello, 1979).

Economic flows are also correlated with the characteristics of the elderly recipients. Older women, for example, are more likely to receive family-based assistance than males. So also do we find larger flows directed towards single/widowed persons, the less well-educated and persons who have experienced a larger than average number of children ever born (Casterline, Domingo, Eu and Kabamalan, 1991, Table 9). With the exception, then, of the residential factor (in which case we may assume that rural folk are less well off economically than is true for urbanites), these patterns would appear to indicate that the Philippine family system is providing greater assistance to precisely those cases among the elderly who stand most in need of some sort of help.

With two-thirds or more of the Filipino elderly still earning some or all of their household's income, it is clear that work-based sources of economic support are of considerable importance for this group.¹⁰ All studies agree that this pattern is more typically found for males and rural folk than is true for women or city dwellers (Andrews, et al., 1986; Feranil, 1990; Casterline, Domingo, Eu and Kabamalan, 1991; Ulack and Lee, 1986). There is something of an open question, though, as to whether these patterns occur because the persons in question *want* to work, because they have been *allowed* to work, or because they have been *forced* by circumstances to do so. Self-employed farmers, for example, will never have to concern themselves with rules about compulsory retirement at age 60 or 65. They are therefore "free" to work, the only proviso being, of course, that the decision not to do so may mean that they will also have to give up eating (because, after all, they have no pension, no savings and,

all too often, few prospects for meaningful help from their children).

Other than gender and residence, a number of other factors have also been linked empirically to gainful employment among the Filipino elderly (cf. Feranil, 1990; Casterline, Domingo, Eu and Kabamalan, 1991). These include age and health status (the infirm and the "old-old" are less likely to work), property ownership (nonowners work more), and the presence of economic support from children (labor force participation rates are higher where this is small or absent altogether). Education and sex have been found to strongly interact with one another in determining work status. Among women, higher levels of educational attainment increase the probability of being gainfully employed; for men, the opposite pattern prevails (Feranil, 1990, Tables 3-26).

Among older workers in the Philippines, the state of being "retired" is usually not a clearly delineated one which is entered into at a single and specific point in time. This is, of course, particularly true for agricultural and self-employed workers, although even formal sector employees may continue to render part-time work or to move into some form of petty trade once they have passed the mandatory retirement age. In any event, it is most certainly true that the typical older person in this country is not being supported by a pension or social security benefits. As of 1988, about 200,000 retirees were covered by either the Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) or the Social Security System (SSS) (Domingo, 1990c, p. 133), as compared to the approximately three million Filipinos who were 60 years of age or older at that data.

During the final years of the Aquino administration several bills were introduced in Congress with the intention of lowering the retirement age of government employees (cf. Domingo, 1992, pp. 16-17). More recently, President Ramos has also shown indications that he, too, is in favor of such a move (Lirio, 1994). Nonetheless, this approach remains somewhat controversial for at least two reasons. First, any move towards earlier retirement will necessarily put greater pressure on the present social security program insofar as this will necessarily diminish the period of time for paying into the system while at the same time extending the period during which benefits will be due to the retiree. As such, the long-run impact on the program will almost certainly be economically destabilizing. Secondly, attitudinal surveys generally show that few older workers are in favor of laws requiring compulsory retirement at an early age. Among respondents to the ASEAN survey, for example, only five percent answer "below 60" when asked about the ideal retirement age; in comparison, about half indicate that the best age would be after the 65th birthday. This same study also finds that more than half of all retirees aged 65-74 (and an even larger proportion among those aged 60-64) are hoping to go back to work some day (Feranil, 1990, Tables 3-33 and 3-39).

Arguments for bringing down the required age for retirement tend to stress that this is a way of benefiting older folks by giving them a chance to "rest" after a "lifetime of service", along with the more pragmatic notion that this will open up jobs for the millions of younger persons who are now un- or under-employed. While the survey data cited above would

tend to argue against the first of these two rationales, there may as yet be something in the second point, especially for a country hoping to upgrade its economy via technological and human resource inputs. As Karen O. Mason (1992, p. 14) points out, "if older cohorts are permitted to remain in key productive positions...indefinitely, the younger cohorts' mobility into these roles may be blocked, thereby creating serious problems for the long-term viability of the economy." It is also noteworthy that most of the nations of South, Southeast and East Asia already have compulsory retirement ages which are lower than that found in the Philippines. As such, the move towards bringing down the present ceiling might be interpreted as simply a matter of moving in line with the standard already adopted in most neighboring economies.¹¹

One way of responding to the needs of both older and younger workers might be to encourage earlier retirement from formal sector positions while at the same time making it easier for the resulting cohort of early retirees to set up their own small-scale enterprise. In order to facilitate this approach, a "lump sum" payment of retirement benefits would have to be made available, along with counseling/instructional programs on the prudent conservation and investment of this initial capital resource (cf. Domingo, 1990c, pp. 135-136 for a discussion of this latter point). Such a move need not be perceived as working strongly against the interests of older workers once we take into account the reasonably strong potential for economic improvement found among the better-off representatives of the urban informal sector (e.g., managers of small enterprises or family businesses). Studies have shown that earnings from such positions can compare quite favorably with

those associated with many formal sector positions (Costello, Leinbach and Ulack, 1987). Some additional support for this proposal may also be had when we consider that many of the prerequisites for succeeding in a small-scale business enterprise are already found among the Filipino elderly (e.g., asset ownership, including fairly widespread ownership of land and buildings; social skills; experience cum "wisdom"; and a wide network of social contacts).

Decisions about compulsory retirement will no doubt always carry with them a certain amount of controversy. Greater consensus, however, can no doubt be found for the proposition that existing programs of social security for the elderly should be extended to a greater and more representative number of Filipinos. At present, urban-based workers (particularly those from the National Capital Region), males, and the better educated are disproportionately represented among the beneficiaries of such efforts (Casteline, Domingo, Eu, and Kabamalan, 1991, Table 3; Domingo, 1992). While some might argue that the expansion of formal sector employment opportunities will eventually solve this problem, this process has been proceeding too slowly during the past decade to have much tangible impact (Costello, 1994). Worse yet, we may be involved in a race against time in this case, should there be any merit to the argument that traditional economic supports for the elderly are now being undermined. As Ismael Getubig (1992, p.6) argues,

Conventional social security services have not adequately reached the poor...This is exacerbated by the erosion of traditional social security practices as a result of increasing

urbanization and commercialization of the economy...

The need for a greater sense of urgency in attacking the problem of incomplete and unequal coverage rates under the present social security programs is therefore apparent.

Health Care Needs and Services. In a well-known passage from *As You Like It*, William Shakespeare depicts old age as the "last scene" of our life's drama, comprised of nothing more than "second childishness and mere oblivion, sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything." Grim words these, especially since they bring with them an air of cynical realism that whispers in our ear, "your turn, too, will come—and soon enough."

But then again there are the hopeful cases that we all have met. Older Filipinos like my parents-in-law—still a long way away from either senility or physical descriptude.

Which picture is the true one? What little empirical data we have on this question would appear to again point more to the optimistic side in this debate, although a few trouble spots may also be noted.

The four-country survey sponsored by the World Health Organization offers the most complete information on this topic (Andrews, et al., 1986, Chapters 5 and 6). It also provides a number of indicators that the health status of older Filipinos is at least as good as, and may well be better, than that found in many of the other countries of the Asia Pacific region.

1. More than nine out of ten Filipino respondents obtain a perfect score

on a ten-point "Activities of Daily Living" (ADL) index. Areas covered include the ability to eat by one's self, to get dressed, to go to the toilet, and the like. Average scores on the ADL index are higher for the Philippine respondents than in any of the three other countries (Fiji, Korea, Malaysia) included in the study.

2. Elderly Filipinos also score highest on a fourteen-item mental health index. Again, more than 90 percent obtain a high score on this measure.

3. Filipinos are generally the least likely group to report various symptoms of psychological disturbance (e.g., anxiety, apathy, forgetfulness). The proportion reporting such symptoms varies by sex and the particular problem under observation but in no case exceeds fifty percent for the Philippine respondents.

4. When asked if they felt healthy, 84 percent of the Filipinos reply in the affirmative, as compared to 72 percent of the Malaysians, 58 percent of the Fijians, and 50 percent of the Koreans.

Somewhat more problematic results are forthcoming when the WHO interviews administered a "simple sight test" to the persons being interviewed. In this case a full 81 percent of the Filipinos—more than for any other national group—are found to have a vision problem in at least one eye. In most of these cases (89 percent) the Philippine respondents are not aware of this problem and have asserted, in fact, that they do not need glasses. Other findings on the health care issue would also appear to point to visual problems as representing one of the more acute needs of older Filipinos.¹²

The ASEAN survey includes fewer—and differently worded—items on current health status (cf. Narvaez, 1990). In this

case only 35 percent of the Filipino elderly asserts that they are in "good" health. A larger proportion (54 percent) describe their health as being only "fair". In this study, too, more than a quarter (28 percent) of the respondents are rated by the interviewer as suffering from a "visible disability".¹³ As such, these results would appear to show the need for interpreting the WHO findings with some caution.

In general, the "young-old" (ages 60-74) rate higher on various indicators than is true for those in the oldest age category (Andrews, et al., 1986). Health problems are also reported more frequently on the part of women, non-married persons, rural folk and the poorly educated (Narvaez, 1990; Casterline, Domingo, Eu and Kabamalan, 1991). Note that these differentials generally point to the conclusion that the health status of our elderly cannot be fully provided for merely by tinkering with the present health care system—a transition towards a more egalitarian social order will also be needed as well. It is also interesting to note findings from the ASEAN survey (Narvaez, 1990, pp. 111-112) which would appear to indicate that retirement can prove stressful enough to cause an increase in self-reported health problems, at least on the part of the urban males. The need for providing meaningful economic activities for this group is therefore apparent, both for economic and health maintenance reasons.

The use of health care services on the part of older Filipinos is adequate, although there is still plenty of room for improvement. Philippine respondents to the WHO study are ranked high *vis a vis* the other national groups on questions about the use of medicine and visits to a

health care practitioner. The use of health aids, like dentures and eyeglasses, is fairly widespread and it seems that virtually no one would be left unassisted, should they fall ill.¹⁴

As might be expected, the better educated and urban-based elderly have generally been found to experience the highest levels of health care access (Narvaez, 1990; Casterline, Domingo, Eu and Kabamalan, 1991). A major reason for these differentials would appear to be variations in financial resources. The ASEAN survey finds that one in every eight of their respondents fail to consult a doctor during the preceding year even though they feel a need to do so. The reason cited most frequently for this is that the person concerned considered such visits to be "too expensive".

Both of the above findings and many of the differentials noted earlier would seem to indicate that trends toward economic development should operate to improve the health care situation of the Filipino elderly. At the same time, though, it is worth noting that the macro-level correlation from the WHO study would appear to operate in a direction opposite to this conclusion. It is thus the country with the lowest GNP per capita (the Philippines) that seems to have the healthiest senior citizens, whereas the Korean respondents (probably the richest on average) generally score at or near the bottom on the health variables. (Koreans rate lowest on the question about "feeling healthy", the ADL index and the mental health scale.) It is possible, of course, that these differences may be due only to perceptual factors or to cultural variations in beliefs about the appropriate way of answering survey questions.¹⁵ Another plausible explanation, though, is that the movement towards a more developed

economy can actually make it more difficult to maintain good health among the elderly. Richer diets, less exercise, more stress, fewer chances for meaningful economic roles, greater difficulties in obtaining help from extended kin—each of these factors could be at work in this case. It thus seems important to identify a set of development policies for the country that can preserve the best attributes of the established order, while also working to eliminate the many health care problems found among the poorer and more marginalized groups of any age, most certainly including those among the elderly.

Social and Communal Activities. Survey data do not show the typical older Filipino as living the life of a social recluse. The vast majority of this group reports themselves as having at least one friend and going out of their house on a regular basis.¹⁶ At the same time, however, these activities are heavily dominated by informal contacts with family and friends. Organizational membership is generally low and opportunities to participate in community affairs are infrequent. In the four-nation study of the aged sponsored by the World Health Organization, for example, only fourteen percent of the Filipino respondents believe that they are being “consulted on community problems” while a mere three percent list themselves as belonging to a “social organization” (Andrews, et al., 1986). Both of these statistics are substantially lower than those found for the other three countries in the study.¹⁷

The one type of formal organization that does hold salience for a large number of older Filipinos is the Church. More than 90 percent of the respondents to the ASEAN survey say that religion is “very important” in their lives (Mercado, 1990, p.33). Participation in

religious activities tends to increase with age and to decline somewhat with each additional year of educational attainment. It is also higher among women and, perhaps somewhat surprisingly, residents of urban areas. In this regard, religious activities present something of a contrast to participation in organizational and political activities, which are more typically entered into by males, the better educated, and rural folk (Casterline, Domingo, Eu and Kabamalan, 1991, Table 10).

As one component of its program for older Filipinos, the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) has been encouraging the elderly to join senior citizens’ associations or to volunteer in one or another community service program (cf. Domingo, 1990, pp. 128-131). The findings discussed above would appear to cast some doubts upon the workability of such an approach. For the most part, older Filipinos seem content to focus their social activities within the familiar circle of family and friends. Possible exceptions to this overall pattern would most likely be found either for the case of work-based projects that offer a chance to earn an individual financial return or for projects that coordinate closely with local church groups.

Reprise: Some Underlying Patterns

If the major question confronting this discussion concerns the impact of “modernization” (a term which is broad enough to encompass such possible developments as industrialization, urbanization and increased Western cultural influence) upon the Filipino elderly, we are immediately confronted with the difficulty of locating an appropriate data set. The problem, as stated earlier, calls for longitudinal

statistics on living arrangements, economic roles, health care patterns and social participation. But such are not now available; perhaps they never will be. We are thus thrown back upon cross-sectional substitutes—comparisons between rural and urban, rich and poor, old and young.

There is no getting around the fact that such estimates are intrinsically flawed. (Why? Because contemporary rural dwellers or poor folk cannot be equated with the “premodern” comparison group that we need for a longitudinal analysis. They, too, have been changed by the great historical transformations wrought during this century.)

Even so, these sorts of comparisons do tell us something. After all, the country is headed towards an increasingly urban future, one in which living standards and levels of educational attainment will hopefully be higher than they are right now.

This being the case, it is of more than passing interest to note that the urban-rural contrast is quite often working against the interests of barrio folk, even when the focus is on some of the more traditional social arrangements. It is thus the urban elderly who have been found to be most likely to live within an extended family household and least likely to be living on their own. They see their children more frequently and are also more likely to receive some form of economic support from them. Urbanites own more consumer items, live in better housing, have greater access to health services and appear, in fact, to be healthier than rural folk. They even go to church more often. If these be the consequences of increased modernization then, most of us, I dare say, would be

content to let this process continue unabated.

Much the same might be said for comparisons within the social class hierarchy. In general, it is the better educated and propertied elderly who are better able to retain some sort of parental authority over their children. They also enjoy superior health, improved medical services, better housing and clothing, greater access to pensions and increased participation in community and organization activities. Support from and contact with children is only marginally lower for this group as well, with most of the correlations for these factors being statistically insignificant. Lopez's (1991, p. 23) conclusion that “the problem lies not in changing cultural values that diminish support from family, kinsmen and social allies but in the poverty situation itself” thus appear to be an essentially correct one for contemporary Philippines.

Be this as it may, at least three areas for concern can as yet be briefly noted. The first of these deals with the nature of the coming development process, particularly with regard to its distributional aspects. Even assuming that the stage of economic take-off can be reached, there is obviously no guarantee as yet that the resulting benefits will be directed towards the country's large and expanding poverty class. Regional inequalities are already acute and likely to intensify further in the coming decade. Graduates of the country's better colleges appear situated to benefit from a trend towards increased foreign investment. Whether the drop-outs and public school products can do so, however, is far less certain. And yet it is the elderly who are overrepresented among the ill-educated, the small farmers and the inhabitants of the economically

backward regions. Of course, one can always hope that various social welfare programs will be of some help, but the public sector's record in that regard (e.g., for land reform or government-subsidized health care) has not been strong during recent years.

A second concern concentrates on the special case of elderly women in the Philippines. While the country's bilateral kinship system and the fairly high levels of education and labor force participation found among older Filipinas can be expected to prevent this group from experiencing the dismal future faced by, say, widowed women in Bangladesh (Cain, Khanan and Nahar, 1979), it would also be a mistake to treat the gender factor as an essentially unproblematic one in this country. Older women in the Philippines have fewer opportunities to earn money than do males; they are also considerably less likely to be receiving some form of retirement benefits. We have seen that the family system can be of some help in compensating for these disadvantages but one should not expect this response to be a perfect one. For one, elderly women in this country are much more likely to be living as a never married person or as a widow than are males. As a result, they are also overrepresented among that minority of Philippine elderly who are living alone. It will be important to see if this group grows disproportionately fast in the next few years.

The health status factor is also sending some apparently contradictory signals. On the one hand we find women living about five years longer than men, on average. And yet we find older women to also be reporting themselves as being less healthy than their male counterparts. But who, one wonders,

will attend to the ailments of this group once their husbands have died and their daughters are all busy with their own families, their own jobs?

A third area to watch concerns prospects for cultural change in the roles and status of the elderly. I have quoted with approval Lopez's contention that the country is not now experiencing a problem with "changing cultural values" that would "diminish support" for this group. While this is true enough for the year 1994, one does begin to wonder what the case will be a decade or two from now. We have already noted the general decline in familism, an ethos which will generally work to the disadvantage of the old and the infirm. It would also seem likely that the social and cultural changes now underway will bring about a diminished regard for the wisdom that comes only with age. One is certainly reminded at this point of the slight majority of respondents to the ASEAN survey who feel that they are getting "too little respect" from younger people. Complementary evidence has also been turned in by surveys of contemporary teenagers, e.g., the well-known findings from the McCann-Erickson report on this group which show their heightened susceptibility to influences from the media and peers, even as family connections have loosened noticeably (Tinio, 1991). Indeed, if teenagers of Metro Manila are scarcely listening to their own parents, it is hard to believe that they will reserve much of their time or attention for the needs of their grandparents or elderly aunts and uncles.

Cultural change, of course, is endemic enough that we can expect it to eventually exert its own influence upon the elderly conservative as they may be. And this pattern, too, can be a source of normative change. For if the groups which are ostensibly benefited by some

rule should decide to refrain from insisting on its full implementation of sanctioning those persons (in this case their children) who fail to observe it, the norm involved in this case will surely come to disappear, sooner or later, from any sort of real world application.

Participants in a series of focus group discussions (FGDs) about the elderly seem to be hinting that these considerations are becoming increasingly salient. One middle aged participant thus answers a question about economic support for his parents by saying that "for me, I consider it an obligation to repay my parents. But

what *I hear nowadays* it's as if the old people don't expect anything from their children..." (emphasis mine). For their part, too, at least some of the older FGD participants do in fact show a certain ambivalence about this same issue, saying either that "it's up to them" (i.e., the children) or by noting that they "feel ashamed" to ask for such help (Domingo, 1992, pp. 5-6). Are these the first signs of a healthy independence on the part of older Filipinos or the beginning of a long retreat from the values of reciprocity and family solidarity which have so long reigned supreme in Philippine society? Only time will tell.

Notes

- ¹ According to Pardo de Tavera (as cited in Pablo, Samson and Lapid, 1993, p. 8), "in spite of the influx of modern culture as well as industrialization, it is gratifying to realize that the Filipino elderly continue to enjoy the respect and care accorded to them by their family and community." For her part, Concepcion (1988, p.399) states flatly that, from a demographic perspective at least, "the ASEAN member-states do not yet have a problem of aging. Nor is the crisis imminent."
- ² Linda Martin's (1987) analysis of available census data on the elderly populations of countries in Asia and the Pacific presents evidence to show that the Philippines has one of the worst records in this regard. As of the 1980 census rounds the NSO had still not published tabulations for the elderly on such major factors as living arrangements, labor force participation, living standards, ethnicity and disabilities. Given the need for providing some
- sort of longitudinal perspective on the Filipino elderly, any attempt to retabulate the census data on older Filipinos starting with, say, the Census of 1960, would certainly be a welcome initiative.
- ³ Cf., for example, Naohero Ogawa's (1990) insightful discussion of the older population of Japan and of the growing numbers of Japanese elderly who are either bedridden or suffering from senile dementia.
- ⁴ The relatively small age gap which exists, on average, between husbands and wives in the Philippines is a likely explanation for the latter finding.
- ⁵ Dean Concepcion's essay does not, in point of fact, give an estimate for the total elderly population. Instead she shows a figure of 77.3 percent for males and 36.2 percent for females. For the sake of simplicity I have computed the average of these two figures. The estimates

presented by Concepcion are also, it should be noted, for a somewhat younger age group (all persons aged 55 and over) than are those discussed by other authors.

- ⁶ When asked if they "often" feel lonely, a mere seven percent of the Filipino respondents to the WHO-sponsored study of aging in the Western Pacific region answer in the affirmative. The loneliness problem is found to be more prevalent in the other three countries (Fiji, Korea and Malaysia) included in the study, possibly because the Philippine case is also characterized by much higher levels of informal visiting with friends and relatives.
- ⁷ Sarmiento (1990) also reports a similar finding for the ASEAN respondents from Ilocos Norte and Bohol areas which have long been characterized by high levels of net out-migration.
- ⁸ For the WHO study, Philippine respondents are more likely than those in Fiji, Korea and Malaysia, to list "work" as their main source of income (Andrews, et al., 1986, Table 55). Concepcion (1988, Table 6), too, provides evidence that elderly Filipinos have a higher level of labor force participation than is true for the ASEAN countries in general. Also see Ulack and Lee (1986, p.6) who find older Cebuanos to be "quite active economically."
- ⁹ Data from the ASEAN study show about 39 percent of all respondents asserting that they both receive and give financial support from/to their children. Another 18 percent give support to their offspring without receiving any in return. These figures combine to exceed the 35 percent who only receive

help and the roughly eight percent who neither give nor receive assistance (Feranil, 1990, Tables 3-4).

- ¹⁰ The ASEAN study data on income sources among the Filipino elderly find that "nearly two-thirds of all respondents...(were) relying on their own economic activities for support" (Feranil, 1990, p. 45). And this is for a study which may have undersampled respondents from remote rural areas, where continuation of economic activities into old age is even more common.
- ¹¹ "Given the importance of agriculture in Asian countries, retirement age limits are not well defined in most instances...For some employees of the government, the military, and large private firms in the cities, a specific retirement age is set. In those cases, retirement generally occurs between ages 55 and 60, with the exception of the Philippines, where age 65 is used" (Martin, 1988a, pp. S104-S105, emphasis mine).
- ¹² The WHO study finds evidence of cataract formation in 20 percent of their Filipino respondents. When asked if they needed some type of "health aid" the most frequent request along these lines is for eyeglasses, a finding which is intensified still more when we recall the large number of elderly who do not even realize that they have a vision problem (Andrews, et al., 1986). Also, see a recent study of health care needs among poverty-level households in rural Mindanao (Costello and Palabrica-Costello, 1993b) for confirmatory evidence on the widespread occurrence of visual problems among elderly members of this group.

¹³ Again, visual problems are the most commonly mentioned infirmity, particularly among the rural respondents (Narvaez, 1990, Tables 5-8).

¹⁴ Thirty-four percent of the respondents to the WHO survey have seen a doctor in the month preceding the survey, while 20 percent have visited a nurse. These figures rank third highest and highest, respectively, among the four countries under observation. Filipinos also rank highest in terms of use of prescribed medicines, glasses and dentures and second highest on an item about over-the-counter medicine. Not a single Philippine respondent answers "no" to a question which asked whether or not they have someone to help them during an illness (Andrews, et al., 1986, Chapter 7).

¹⁵ Cf. Martin (1988a, p. S102) who makes this specific argument with regard to the WHO data.

¹⁶ Ninety-seven percent of the Philippine respondents to the WHO survey aver both that they "regularly" go out of their home and that they know "someone to visit at their house" (Andrews, et al., 1986). These figures are the highest among the four countries included in the study. (Interestingly enough, the Koreans again score lowest on both of these measures.)

¹⁷ A report by the President of the Federation of Senior Citizens' Associations of the Philippines claims that there were 2,011 such organizations in the country as of 1988, with a combined membership of nearly 120,000 persons (cf. Domingo, 1990c, p. 130). In the light of the WHO estimates given above, these figures would appear to be somewhat exaggerated.

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