AMERICAN COLONIAL EDUCATION AND ITS IMPACT ON THE STATUS OF FILIPINO WOMEN

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This article analyzes the effects of American colonial education on Filipino women. It discusses how the education policies and programs influenced the pattern of female participation in economic production during the nearly fifty years of American colonial rule, as well as female entry in non-domestic activities.

The system of public education introduced in the country by American colonialism had both positive and negative effects on Filipino women. On the positive side, it substantially increased their level of literacy and gave daughters of countless poor families the opportunity to break away from traditional gender-related roles. American colonial education also provided Filipino women, particularly those of middle-class background, the necessary skills, ability and confidence to fight for legal and political adulthood and assume responsible roles in public life. However, these developments must be seen within the framework of the overall thrust and objectives of American colonialism. This article argues that *the kind of education the Filipino women received during the American colonial period primarily prepared them to respond to the demands of the colonial bureaucracy and economy.* The public schools did not actively promote gender equality; on the contrary they peddled the same patriarchal ideas and systems of gender relations that Spain brought to the Philippines. Even if the level of female literacy increased, therefore, and more women gained access to new types of work and careers, these were not enough to bring them on equal footing with men.

American colonial education shaped the consciousness of the Filipino women in a manner that, ultimately, did not bring the country and herself much good. With the fear of the devil and the restrictive influence of the *convento* morality behind her, she metamorphosed into a "modern" woman, comfortable with all the trap-

pings of western life and ethos as well as with traditional patriarchal norms and practices. She more than willingly assumed her role in the production line even if doing so meant subordination to men. The female product of American colonial education learned to exercise her right to cast the ballot, but only to root for sexist male political candidates or endorse political programs discriminatory to her own interest. Finally, by being in the forefront of education as teachers of millions of school children, she played a most decisive role in carrying on the task left behind by the Thomasites, that of propagating and maintaining colonial consciousness in the country.

Spanish Legacy

Contrary to popular belief, the Americans were not the first to bring the concept of universal primary education to the Philippines. An education decree passed in 1863 mandated the establishment of a complete system of education in the country consisting of elementary, secondary and tertiary levels. Notable among the provisions of the decree were the call for compulsory education for children between the ages of seven and twelve and state support for elementary textbooks and basic school supplies. The decree also mandated the establishment of teacher training schools and training centers of arts and trades in Manila and Iloilo as well as a nautical school, also in Manila. Spanish was made the official medium of instruction in all levels.

Despite the well-meaning intentions of the aforementioned educational reform, it did not significantly improve the level of literacy in the country. Many aspects of the decree were not adequately enforced because of strong resistance from Catholic priests and lack of funds. Nevertheless, state-supported village schools were established which, by 1866, numbered 1474 (Mendoza-Guanzon, 1928:19). Forty-three percent of these schools were opened exclusively for girls. When the Americans occupied the Islands in 1898, the total number of primary schools reached 8,167 and the total student population was 200,000 (Isidro, 1952: 15-16). The first socio-economic census taken at the turn of the century estimated the female literacy rate at only ten percent in contrast to the male rate of nearly thirty percent (Reyes, 1951:2).

The curriculum at the primary level consisted of reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, Christian doctrine, Spanish grammar and

music. Boys were given basic training in agriculture and the girls, in needlework.

Mendoza-Guanzon (1928: 17-18) described that village classes generally consisted of two sessions a day, the first was from eight to eleven in the morning and the other, from two to five in the afternoon. Learning was essentially done by rote memory and pupils were heavily subjected to verbal and physical forms of discipline and punishment. Boys and girls alike were made to stand still for hours with arms raised forward; they were whipped with the use of wood, bamboo stick or leather strap. At other times, they were pinched or punished. These practices, she claimed, kept the schools almost deserted. Instead of attending classes, children often stayed home and helped with farm and household chores.

Before the education reform of 1863, elementary training was left entirely in the hands of priests or curates of the parish (Philippine Studies Program of the University of Chicago, 1956). There were few schools and practically all were for the children of the Spaniards, mestizos and rich natives. Fresnoza (1950:31) described the program of education undertaken by the Catholic church during the early part of Spanish colonial rule thus:

> The course of study consisted of reading by the alphabet and syllable method, the learning of sacred songs and music, a little arithmetic, and writing for the advanced students. The contents of the materials to be read were religious, such as the common prayers required for the sacraments of confession and communion and the cathechism of the Christian doctrines.
>
> Classes were ungraded and the children were required to attend the schools until they had learned to say the prayers required for the sacraments of confession and communion and memorized the **Doctrina Cristiana.** Instruction was given in the dialect of the community. Spanish was taught to the more brilliant students, especially to the sons of the **principalia** (upper class).

The education of the females was very minimal. In fact, it limited to daughters of well-to-do families and to the learning of rudimentary reading, writing, arithmetic, religion and needlecraft. Formal training beyond the primary grades were generally a male privilege. For the most part of the Spanish period, the majority of secondary and vocational schools as well as colleges were exclusively for males. There were a few institutions of higher learning for girls but they were meant only for daughters of Spaniards and other local elites. The earliest of such schools was the Colegio de Sta. Isabel which

was founded in 1632. The others were Colegio de Sta. Catalina (1696), Beaterio de San Ignacio (1699), Colegio de Sta. Rosa (1750), Escuela de Maestras (1864), Colegio de la Immaculada Concepcion (1868) and Colegio de San Jose de Jaro (1872). In 1893, two more schools for women were established: the Assumption Convent and Superior Normal School for Women.

The courses offered to girls were not as varied as those given to male students. Other than the basic subjects like reading, writing and arithmetic, the girls were given heavy loads of course work in needlework and other home crafts, religion and music. The Colegio de Sta. Isabel, recognized as one of the finest institutions of higher learning for women in those days, had the following course offerings (Foremen, 1890-1895):

Arithmetic	French	History of Spain
Drawing	Geometry	Music
Dressmaking	Geology	Needlework
	Physics	Reading Prose
	Spanish Grammar	Sacred History
	Geography	History of the Philippines
		Verse

Meanwhile, the boys had a wider choice of schools to attend and professions to pursue. The Colegio de San Ignatius, founded in 1595, and the Colegio Real de San Jose (1601) were the earliest schools for boys established in the country by the Jesuits. The others came years later, notable among them were the Colegio de Santo Tomas (1911), Colegio de San Juan de Letran (1640) and the Escuela Pia (later renamed Ateneo de Manila). The common courses of study in these institutions, beyond the basic grammar and arithmetic courses, included philosophy, Latin, Greek, physics, metaphysics, logic, ethics, cannon law, Roman law and others. These subjects were generally deemed unfit for women and did not become part of their curriculum.

The lack of emphasis on and support for the education of women was not an oversight. It sprang from what was then a very dominant belief that "a young woman did not need more than the rudiments of education because her sphere of action was within the three German K's *kirche, kuche und kinder* — that is, church, kitchen and children" (Mendoza-Guanzon, 1928: 19). Other than

being a mother and housewife, upper-class women of the Spanish period were limited, in their career choice, into becoming a teacher or a nun. Active pursuit of gainful employment was generally frowned upon but accepted for women of the working and peasant classes.

Spanish education laid great emphasis on Castillan values and norms of sexual behavior. Girls were taught to be obedient to elders and always subservient to males. They were admonished to remain chaste until married and to concentrate on developing skills that would turn them into excellent daughters, housewives, mothers and servants of God. The training that the middle and upper-class Filipino woman received in colleges turned her, in the words of Tiongson (1978: 1784) "into a harmless, wilting lily." He added:

> This education produced the type of mestiza who dragged her feet, according to Jagor, whose conversation was "tedious and awkward" and who did nothing but join **cofradias** and go to church, all veiled in black, or get dressed in gold and velvet and be laden with all the family jewels as she walked as **zagala** in a religious procession.

Since the women of lower social classes had limited access to Catholic education, they were not as much affected by patriarchal values and norms. They remained active in economic production as traders, farm workers and weavers, and in such community functions as folk healing and conflict mediation.

American Colonial Education

American military occupation of the Philippines in 1898 brought dramatic changes in the lives of many Filipinos. In an effort to facilitate the "pacification" of the islands and stave off unrest due to widespread resistance to American presence, U.S. military officials immediately established public schools in strategic locations around the country (Constantino, 1975: 309). Within the first three weeks of occupation, seven primary schools were opened under an army chaplain (Philippine Islands, Bureau of Education, 1913-17), while soldiers and officers were assigned to different provinces to serve as teachers and superintendents, respectively. General Arthur MacArthur, one of the key military officials who conceived of the program, requested large appropriation for school purposes while General Otis took upon himself the task of selecting the textbooks (Constantino, 1975-309).

But what was initially intended as a pragmatic solution to the "pestering" military problem of "native unrest" soon became the

primary instrument for continued control of the country. As supervision of the Philippines passed to civilian hands, colonial officials redefined the goals of public education. This time it was to prepare Filipinos for democratic "self-government" and develop in them a deep sense of patriotism and unity. To realize these objectives, it was deemed necessary to "wipe out illiteracy" and facilitate communication among linguistically diverse groups through the common use of English (Philippine Islands, Bureau of Education, 1913; Hayden, 1942-467).

When the Philippine Commission took over the administration of the country, additional steps were taken to expand the school program on a nationwide scale. Act 74 was passed on January 21, 1901 providing for free primary education and the establishment of a normal and trade school in Manila and an agricultural school in Negros. The normal school was established for the purpose of training Filipinos to become teachers and eventually take over the duties of American military and civilian teachers. The Act also provided for the partitioning of the Islands into ten school divisions, for the opening of primary schools in every municipality, optional religious instruction and use of English as medium of instruction. To make up for the lack of qualified teachers, American teachers were recruited and the first batch of eleven arrived in June 1901 on the *Lawton* and *Sheridan* followed by 765 more who came on board the U.S. army transport *Thomas* (Philippine Islands, Department of Public Instructions, 1904).

In the years that followed and until 1907 when the Philippine Assembly took over legislation, the Commission passed several more measures to expand the operations of the school system and create a more efficient organizational machinery. The number of school divisions was increased to correspond to the existing number of provinces and more administrative positions from the national to the municipal levels were created to improve coordination between central and regional offices. Decision-making and planning were highly centralized such that a uniform school program was implemented throughout the country. Then as more Filipinos became qualified teachers, the Thomasites were relieved from classroom teaching and given supervisory powers over the former.

Public Elementary and High School Programs

It was during the initial decade of colonial rule when the thrust of education began to take shape and respond further to the exi-

gencies of American interest. In August 1903, Doctor David Barrows was appointed General Superintendent of the Department of Public Instruction. During his six years in offices, he succeeded in increasing the budgetary outlay of public schools, a feat his predecessors failed to accomplish, and increased enrolment by more than one hundred percent. Dr. Barrows revised the school curriculum "making a sharp distinction between the primary and intermediate courses, prescribed industrial work for all ages below the high school level, differentiated the intermediate courses on the basis of occupations, and established uniform examination for all promotions above the third grade (Philippine Islands. Bureau of Education, 1913:19). As will be discussed in more detail in the latter part of this paper, these revisions were significant for they eventually defined the roles which Filipino men and women were to play later in the colonial economy and bureaucracy.

The curricular programs for the elementary and secondary levels underwent several changes upon recommendation of the groups organized by the legislative and executive bodies to assess the performance of the school system. These included the Monroe Educational Survey Committee of 1925, the Bureau of Education Economic Survey of 1928, the Posser Committee to Survey Vocational Education (1930), and the Quezon Educational Survey group of 1935. On the whole, however, the revisions did not depart from the original thrust of the school system. If at all, they were meant to strengthen the school system in order that its objectives could be fully achieved. The learning of basic literacy skills through English as well as practical training in various vocational and home industries remained paramount among the priorities of the school program throughout the American colonial period.

Elementary education consisted of seven grades. The course work for each level put heavy emphasis on English grammar, writing, reading and arithmetic. Between fifty to seventy percent of the total number of hours children spent daily in school were devoted to these courses. Other subjects like drawing, music, geography, hygiene and sanitation, history and biology were added as pupils moved up the grade levels. Boys and girls took the same courses except for the subject known as Industrial Work, which provided for separate training activities. The boys were trained in gardening, woodwork, basket and mat weaving and clay modeling, while the girls were taught lace-making, sewing, and various home-

related activities. As a single subject, Industrial Work took about twice as much time as all the other courses, pointing to the importance school officials gave to the training of Filipinos for gainful livelihood especially along areas of agriculture and manufacture of handicrafts and other exportable products.

In 1910, new curricular programs were introduced at the intermediate level to keep the school system more responsive to the needs of the colonial society. Special programs were designed so that students who did not desire to pursue higher education could be economically productive at once. These programs included special courses for those who wanted to go into primary school teaching, farming, trade, business or learn modern approaches to housekeeping and household arts.

Secondary education, established a few years later than the primary and intermediate schools, provided advanced academic and vocational training. It was a four-year program designed for students who wished to pursue college education or go into teaching and government service after graduation. The course work included subjects in literature, languages, history and sciences as well as practical arts. Special curricula were designed for those who desired an immediate career in teaching, commerce as well as in handicrafts business. The Philippine Normal School, Philippine School of Arts and Trade and selected provincial high schools handled these special programs. Their graduates were encouraged to return to their provinces where they could teach or start a business of their own.

Another program organized in 1912 by the Bureau of Education was the School of Household Industries. This was a training program designed to improve the women's skills in lace-making, embroidery and sewing, and in so doing, upgrade the quality of Philippine export products. As the Bureau of Education specifically pointed out:

> . . . the school will be instrumental in stimulating throughout the Philippnes Islands a widespread interest in and appreciation for hand industries and lead to their introduction into thousands of Filipino homes. The physical and mental adaptability of the Filipino women to work of this sort is universally recognized, hence Filipino embroideries and fine lace may in a few years have as great a commercial value as the best hand products of the skilled workers of the Orient and of the leading countries of Europe (Philippine Islands, Bureau of Education, 1918: 15).

The trainees were chosen from different provinces by provincial and other local officials. They underwent a twelve-month intensive training in needlecraft and other home industries. After the training, the women were expected to return to their respective provinces and organize work groups for the commercial production of embroidery items and other local handicrafts. To further ensure the success of the program, local governments were instructed to help market the products.

Although there was no official sex requirement to enter these special programs, the enrolment pattern showed marked segregation of the sexes. As was customary in those days, girls went into teaching and household arts while the boys specialized in agriculture, industrial arts and business. This trend continued in later years, causing a marked sexual imbalance in these lines of work and sexual stereotyping of various occupations.

Despite the great amount of attention already given to the vocational training of Filipino children, and the concern of the educators to address the economic needs of the colonial society, particularly export and agricultural production, the school system came under attack during the later years of the colonial period presumably for not producing enough skilled workers and farmers. By the early twenties, there was mounting criticism that the public school was turning away the young people from farming and other types of manual labor.

It must be noted that this period in the history of the country was marked by increasing economic difficulties brought about by the instability of the world market and internal economic problems of the United States. The need to increase export earnings on one hand, and maintain local requirements of subsistence products on the other, must have triggered the criticism against the school system. In response, changes in the curriculum were instituted by increasing the vocational load of pupils in the secondary level. Courses in vocational home economics were established in all rural high schools and all female students were now required to take them. School directives were issued to make home-making the basis of instruction in vocational home economics and wherever applicable, training in hat-making, weaving and other related industries were to be included. The recommendation of the Economic Survey Committee of the Department of Education in 1929 even specified that "the secondary schools should include instruction which would con-

tribute to the improvement of the articles made and to a better knowledge of the changing needs of the market" (Philippine Commonwealth, Department of Public Instruction, 1929: 60).

The concern about the decreasing interest of young Filipinos in agriculture directed the school officials' attention to women. The Economic Survey Report of 1929 noted the very low attendance of females in agricultural schools. It suggested a serious look into the matter with the end in view of encouraging more women to take courses in agriculture, not for them to be farmers really but to be good wives of farmers. As the Report stated:

> Girls so educated should make good wives for the agricultural boys Their (the girls') presence in the school creates a refining atmosphere. as they will feel and think in terms of farm conditions. Women who have had training for farm life have undoubtedly better understanding of farming and the farmer (Philippine Commonwealth, Department of Public Instruction, 1929: 26).

It is apparent from the foregoing discussions that the curricular program of the period carried the same gender ideologies that Spanish colonial education inculcated among Filipinos. These data easily afford us to belie the popular notion that American colonial education was, in most respects, promotive of women's welfare. In fact, there are clear indications that it did very little to dismantle the patriarchal structures which Spanish colonialism tried very hard to implant on Philippine soil. By popularizing among the masses what used to be a practice common only among the privileged classes, that of limiting the woman's sphere of involvement to household management and certain vocational activities, American colonial education nurtured the conditions which in later years, posed serious obstacles to the improvement of women's status. By strongly emphasizing domestic skills and moral teachings, the schools delimited the career opportunities of women to those compatible with their mothering and housekeeping roles.

Tertiary Education

The establishment of public institutions for higher learning came just as soon as the elementary and high schools were in full operation. Education officials saw the urgent need for a state-run university so that the most promising graduates of the public schools would have a place to continue their secular education and prepare for service in professional and technical fields (Philippine Islands, Board of Education Survey, 1925: 609).

On June 18, 1908 the Philippine Legislature enacted into law the creation of the University of the Philippines. The U.P. absorbed the Philippine Medical School which was established on December 1, 1905 to initiate training in medical and health services, and renamed it the College of Medicine. It first opened the Schools of Pharmacy, Dentistry and Fine Arts and in succeeding years, the Colleges of Agriculture (1909), Engineering (1910), Veterinary Medicine (1910) and Law (1911). The Conservatory of Music and School of Forestry were established in 1916 while the Junior College of Liberal Arts and College of Education came some two years later.

By 1924, the University of the Philippines had about 17 different schools and colleges offering a wide variety of degree programs for both men and women. Only the School of Nursing was initially opened to one sex (women) but it changed this policy in the early twenties to accommodate male students.

In addition to the U.P., about six other state colleges were established in the provinces to provide basic liberal education and advanced training in agriculture, fisheries and animal husbandry.

The absence of strict state control and restriction coupled by the continuous rise in demand for higher education enabled many religious schools to continue operating and wield influence among the children of well-to-do families. In fact, the growth of private tertiary education far outpaced the public school system to the extent that by 1947, there were about 500 private colleges and 128 special and technical schools all over the country (Philippine Republic, Bureau of Census and Statistics, 1960: 27). The majority shied away from the practice of coeducation, and remained as exclusive schools for boys or girls.

The Catholic schools for women that offered college degrees included the Manila-based Assumption College, St. Scholastica's College (founded in 1906), Holy Ghost (now Holy Spirit) College (1913) and St. Theresa's College. Those located outside Manila included the Malabon Normal School, St. Bridget's Academy in Batangas, St. Agnes' Academy in Albay, St. Louis School in Baguio and Rosary Academy in Vigan (De la Llana, 1936: 78).

A number of girl's schools were also organized by private individuals, mostly women who saw the need to provide more educational opportunities for their kind. Notable among these institu-

tions were the Instituto de Mujeres, established in 1900 by a group of women graduates from Assumption College, the Centro Escolar University, founded in 1907 by two pioneering female educators and the Philippine Women's University, organized in 1919 by the female members of the well-known Benitez family (Mendoza-Guanzon, 1928: 36-37). The first private colleges to become coeducational were the Liceo de Manila, National University, University of Manila and the Manila College of Pharmacy (Mendoza-Guanzon, 1928: 36-37).

Literacy and School Attendance Profile

There is no doubt that American efforts to increase the level of literacy in the country paid well. From a low ten percent for females and 30 percent for males in 1903, the literacy rate rose to 57 percent (female) and 60 percent (male) by 1948 (Philippine Republic, Bureau of Census and Statistics, 1960). School attendance also showed the same pattern of growth. From an initial figure of 6,900 in 1898, school enrolment in all grade levels, from primary to college, reached nearly two million in 1940 and four million in 1948 (Philippine Commonwealth, Bureau of Census and Statistics, 1940; 19; Philippine Republic, Bureau of Census and Statistics, 1960). This growth was possible only because the number of schools also increased and became accessible to the majority of Filipinos. By 1948, the total number of public elementary and secondary schools all over the country was 16,472 compared to the estimated 2,000 at the end of Spanish rule. Private education likewise flourished as the total number of sectarian schools, from elementary to college, reached 1,684 by 1948. School enrolment in private schools for the same period was estimated to be about a third of a million (Philippine Republic, Bureau of Census and Statistics, 1960). All in all, nearly one fourth of the population were already attending school by the time the Americans left the country.

It is important to underscore the difference in the number of student enrolment between the college and lower school levels. As mentioned earlier, very few Filipinos actually acquired college education and those who did came mostly from well-to-do families. The enrolment figures for 1940 bear out this claim. Of the nearly two million students, only 3,777 or 0.2 percent were in college. If one reflects on the kind of curriculum offered in the lower school levels and the very small number of Filipinos who managed to advance beyond that curriculum, it is easy to understand why industrializa-

tion and the development of science and technology became the country's most elusive dream after independence. American colonial education indeed reached out to many Filipinos. Unfortunately, it saw fit to tailor its program more to the requirements of colonial rule than to the long-term good of the nation.

Education affected Filipino men and women differently. Although both sexes increased their level of literacy to comparable extent, they differed in other measures of educational development. In general, female attendance in the elementary grades compared favorably with males but not in the secondary and tertiary levels. There were generally more males who entered high school and college (Table 1).

In 1924, an educational survey headed by Dr. Paul Monroe of the University of Columbia was conducted to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the educational system. Among the findings of the survey was the preponderance of males in high school. The Monroe Report (as the survey results were henceforth referred to) noted that "only one-third of the pupils in high school were girls" (Philippine Islands, Board of Educational survey, 1925: 329). The reason given in the Report for this was:

> Man participates in the more active occupation; woman keeps the house. The social and economic position of the man determines the status of the family. In such a society it is only natural that parents should be willing to make great sacrifices for the education of a son, but should be reluctant to make similar sacrifices to send a daughter to school. To them, since her condition in life will merely reflect the position of the man she weds the higher the education of the girl is a waste of time and money (Phlippine Islands, Board of Educational Survey, 1925: 329).

TABLE I

School Enrolment in 1948

	Total Number	*% Male*	*% Female*
All Elementary	7,420,638	51	49
Grade I	963,094	52	48
Grade II	1,455,548	51	49
Grade III	1,616,374	50	50
Grade IV	1,730,045	48	52
Grade V	900,817	51	49
Grade VI	754,759	53	47
All High School	1,158,402	57	43
First Year	447,118	56	44
Second Year	275,934	57	43
Third Year	182,515	56	44
Fourth Year	252,835	58	42
College			
Undergraduate	222,826	58	42
Graduate	54,203	57	43

Source: Philippines Republic, Bureau of Census and Statistics, *1948 Census of Population and Agriculture*, Vol. III. Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1954.

The Monroe Report also observed that the majority of the girls in secondary schools were in vocational courses. Very few were enroled in the general course, the program that prepared students for college work.

The turnout of female graduates during the first two decades of the American period was expectedly very low. From 1908 to 1920, for instance, the University of the Philippines produced only twelve female professionals, among them were a doctor, lawyer, dentist, two educators and three pharmacists. The following years saw a slight improvement in the number of female graduates. In 1927, the University awarded academic degrees to 231 women in the following fields: medicine, 12; dentistry, 7; pharmacy, 22; Bachelor of Science in Pharmacy, 4; Bachelor of Science, 7; Bachelor of Science in Education, 88; Bachelor of Science in Commerce, 5; Bachelor of Philosophy, 11; and Associate in Arts, 75 (Mendoza-Guanzon, 1928: 37).

By 1948, twenty nine percent of all licensed professionals were women, the majority being midwives, registered nurses and pharmacists. There were very few female dentists, optometrists and physicians and practically no architects and engineers (Table 11). Since there were fewer women than men who entered college in the first place, it is understandable why only a handful of the former became professionals.

TABLE II
Registered Professionals in 1948

	Total Number	*% Male*	*% Female*
Architects	108	99.0	1.0
Accountants	320	94.0	6.0
Dental Surgeons	1,041	83.0	17.0
Druggists	65	97.0	3.0
Engineers	1,062	99.9	0.1
Lawyers	1,894	96.0	4.0
Midwives & Nurses	1,331	10.0	90.0
Opticians and optometrists	109	77.0	23.0
Pharmacists	1,675	24.0	76.0
Physicians	2,497	88.0	12.0
Captains (steamship)	133	100.0	0.0
Veterinarians	117	98.0	2.0
Others	331	88.0	12.0
TOTAL	10,683	71.0	29.0

Source: Philippines Republic, Bureau of Census and Statistics. *Economic Census Report,* Vol. IV. Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1953, page 347.

Women's participation in the colonial economy

One of the reasons often cited for the colonization of the Philippines was the need of the United States to expand its overseas market for industrial products and seek new sources of raw materials. Filipino historians (e.g. Salamanca, 1968; Constantino, 1975, Agoncillo, 1977) in particular, claim that this was, in fact, the major factor for American imperialist expansion and it underlies most of the political, social and economic policies and programs the United States carried out in the Philippines and its other colonies.

Through the establishment of free trade policies and expansion of commercial agriculture as well as the extractive industries, the

United States succeeded in turning the Philippines into a leading supplier of raw materials and buyer of manufactured goods. The Philippines initially exported its sugar, coconut oil and copra, abaca and various native crafts. Towards the later part of the American period, it included among its exports minerals and lumber. In turn, the country bought from the United States iron and steel products, cotton goods, cigarettes, dairy and other agricultural products (Agoncillo, 1977:379).

Commercial relations between the two countries grew to the extent that in less than three decades, the total value of American trade with the Philippines increased by nearly 3,000 percent (Philippine Republic, 1927:19). Agoncillo (1977: 378-379) noted that Philippine imports from the United States increased ninety-one times, from $1,350,000 in 1899 to $92,600,000 in 1930. On the other hand, the total value of exports increased thirty-two times from $3,935,000 to $84,878,000 for the same year. By the time the country achieved political independence, its economy was almost totally tied to American markets, paving a new era of neocolonial relations with the United States.

The development of the export industry actually started during the latter part of the Spanish period. The Philippines was already supplying many western countries with its sugar, coconut oil, tobacco and other commercial products during the late 18th century. What the Americans did was to expand the industry to a point that it soon became the most important source of national revenue, and limit the Philippine market to very few trading partners. Commodity manufacturing likewise grew, but only to a level necessary to produce consumption items that the U.S. market could not supply. And because of extensive mining and quarrying as well as logging operations in the countryside, there were also significant improvements in the construction, transportation and communications as well as local commercial industries.

These economic changes had far-reaching effects on the status of Filipino women. Not only did these developments determine the kinds of productive activities the women could engage in, but also influenced their roles in the family and the community.

Although the Spaniards tried very hard to limit the public activities of women and consign them to family and household roles, they were hardly successful at it. Wives and daughters of peasant

and working class families remained economically active either as farmers or workers in tobacco and handicrafts factories. All over the islands, women were known for their outstanding skills in producing mats, baskets, slippers, embroidery items and native delicacies. Others stood out in their communities as successful traders, money lenders and managers of backyard industries. It was possibly because they were highly visible in public that foreigners believed they occupied a high status in society.

The cigar factories established as early as the mid-18th century relied heavily on female labor. De Jesus (1978) noted that some of these factories employed thousands of employees; the majority were young unmarried women. Foreigners who had the opportunity to observe the way the women worked were not lacking in praises for them. For instance· an American female writer who visited a cigaret factory in Manila gave the following observation:

> The little women who pack the cigarettes can pick up a number of them and tell in a twinkle by the feeling just how many they hold, and the cigar wrappers work with greatest rapidity and sureness and make a perfect product (Anderson, 1916:131).

Other foreign visitors marveled at the women's skill in transacting business; their tremendous capacity to bear hardships and crises as well as unfailing dedication to home duties and responsibilities (e.g. Leroy, 1905; Freer, 1906; Devins, 1906 and Wrights, 1913).

The situation of upper-class women was different. As direct beneficiaries of convent education and strict Catholic upbringing, they emerged as economic dependents of men, devoid of skills necessary for gainful employment. However, as opportunities for professional advancement became available during the American period, these women were the first to take advantage of them to become the first female lawyers, doctors, politicians, leaders of women's organizations and others. They were, in the final analysis, the direct beneficiaries of educational and political changes instituted by the Americans in the country. The lower-class women were likewise affected but in a different way. Very few among them achieved professional status and assumed leadership positions. The majority were drawn into the colonial economy as factory workers and producers of export crops.

Inasmuch as the export industry relied heavily on agricultural and natural raw materials there was substantial increase in the amount of human power input in agriculture. The majority of economically active women (44 percent in 1939) were into farming, fishing and hunting. The others remained active in trading (9 percent) and in domestic and personal service (19 percent).

The most important change in the pattern of employment is the increase of women in manufacturing, clerical work and professional as well as public service. Such increase was a direct result of women's access to public education and, as mentioned earlier, the emphasis of the schools on vocational and clerical skills development. By 1939, nearly one-fourth of all women in the labor force were in the manufacturing industry, while three percent and less than one percent were in the professional and clerical services, respectively (Table III).

A comparison between the number of males and females in various occupations (Table IV) in 1940 shows that the latter were generally outnumbered in all kinds of work except in domestic and personal service. The increase in the ratio of females in the professional (37 percent) and clerical (8 percent) services is somehow impressive even if they constituted less than one percent of all females in the country in those days.

Table III

Participation of Males and Females in Various Occupations, 1939

	Total Number	% Male	% Female
Agriculture, fishing, forestry & hunting	3,663,759	75.40	43.71
Domestic and personal service	332,321	2.90	18.96
Professional service	103,415	1.52	3.46
Public service	49,620	1.16	.02
Mining and quarrying	47,019	1.10	0.05
Manufacturing and mechanical industries	601,335	7.90	24.27
Transportation and communication	203,596	4.80	0.10
Clerical service	48,899	1.10	0.37
Trade	270,766	4.15	9.06
TOTAL	5,320,730	100.0	100.00

Source: Philippine Commonwealth, Bureau of Census and Statistics, **Yearbook of Philippine Statistics**, Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1940, p. 18.

Table IV

Comparison Between Male and Female Participation in Various Occupations, 1939

	% Male	% Female
Agriculture, fishing and hunting	87	13
Domestic and personal service	37	63
Professional service	63	37
Public service	99	1
Mining and quarrying	99	1
Manufacturing and mechanical industries	56	44
Transportation and communication	99	1
Clerical service	92	8
Trade	63	37

Source: Philippine Commonwealth, Bureau of Census and Statistics, **Yearbook of Philippine Statistics**, Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1940, p. 18.

Census figures taken after the Second World War provide a good picture of the kinds of professions women entered. Of the more than forty seven thousand of them in the professional field, almost 80 percent were elementary and high school teachers; 8 percent were nurses while 5 percent were pharmacists. The rest were thinly spread out in such fields as law, medicine, social work and others (1948 census quoted in Reyes, 1951:4). The concentration of women in teaching and in health-related occupations was the direct result of the emphasis given to these professions by the colonial government. The high incidence of illiteracy, diseases and malnutrition in the country when the Americans came focused the school's attention towards producing the necessary human resource to solve these problems. This development was initially beneficial to women. It gave them the chance to pursue careers without stiff competition from men. As it turned out later, however, these occupations became least economically profitable such that many of the brightest and most promising women of the period were eventually consigned to the lowest paying jobs.

The increase of female labor in commercial agriculture was equally substantial. When free trade between the United States and the Philippines began in 1909 local landowners intensified the production of sugarcane, abaca, coconut and tobacco. Subsistence crop farmers were recruited to work in plantations and haciendas. By the end of the American period, more than one-fifth of all farmers were directly producing export crops (Philippine Republic, 1951:22). They included 22 and 15 percent of all male and female farmers, respectively.

In an effort to promote Philippine products abroad and encourage local production and commerce, the American colonial administration held an annual trade fair which began in 1909 and lasted until the late twenties (Philippine Republic, 1926:15). Known as the Manila Carnival, the fair was the single most important event in the Philippines in those days. Regional farm products and handicrafts as well as outstanding projects in industrial work and home economics of school children were presented. Even men and women from various mountain groups were put in carnival booths, depicting the way they wove their fabrics or made baskets and wooden utensils (Philippine Observer 1912:19).

The Manila Carnival was so popular that it drew thousands of people from all over the country and abroad. The number of visitors

grew from 87,000 in 1909 to almost half a million in 1925 (Philippine Republic, 1925:15). One of the main attractions of the event was the crowning of the carnival queen and her consorts. In earlier years, these women were chosen from among the most beautiful daughters of rich families in Manila. As the carnival drew more participation from the provinces, however, nationwide selection of candidates was undertaken. Those chosen were crowned Miss Philippines and Misses Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao.

Gender Differences in Income and Work Privileges

The relative success of the educated women in entering what were once male-dominated professions did not come with the improvement of their income status. Most of the jobs they held gave salaries and other forms of remuneration that were not at par with those received by men. The figures for 1948 (Table V) for instance, showed that except for female Chinese pharmacists whose average annual income was twice as much as their male counterparts or the female physicians and optometrists who got comparable earnings, all other women professionals earned less than the men. Female professionals, in general, got less than one-third of the average annual income of their male counterparts.

Table V
Average Annual Income of Male and Female Professionals in 1948 (in pesos)

	Male	Female	Rate of Female over Male Income
Architects	7,139	3,400	48
Accountants	7,229	3,436	48
Dental Surgeons	4,864	1,341	26
Druggists (Chinese)	7,492	15,038	201
Civil Engineers	11,998	4,863	41
Lawyers	5,715	2,366	41
Midwives	9,866	248	2
Opticians and Optometrists	7,675	8,045	105
Pharmacists	7,527	2,302	31
Physicians	4,045	4,211	104
Veterinarians	3,829	2,940	77
TOTAL	6,100	1,701	28

Source: Philippine Republic, Bureau of Census and Statistics, Economic Census Report, Vol. IV. Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1953, p. 347.

In the absence of data that could explain the disparity in male and female incomes, one can only presume that the influence of patriarchal values and practices had much to do with it. There are indications that although the women were not outwardly restricted from pursuing non-traditional lines of work, they did so at the expense of getting lower salaries and fewer work privileges than men. In fact, it was only in postwar years and through continuous agitations from labor unions that the rights and welfare of working women were seriously addressed by the government.

The only significant legislations that sought to protect the welfare of working women were those that provided for maternity leave privileges for government (Act 647) and private sector employees (Act 3071). But these laws did not take effect immediately as they were declared unconstitutional and illegal by the Supreme Court. It took the 1935 Constitution, with its mandate for the State to provide protection to labor, especially to working women and minors, to have these laws implemented (Subido, 1955:57).

CONCLUSION

The foregoing discussions underscored the role of American colonial education in defining the nature and extent of Filipino women's participation in the economy. It showed how the thrusts and policies of the public school system responded to the exigencies of the colonial economy and in the process, changed the pattern of work between the sexes. Despite efforts to raise the level of female literacy and make women active participants in economic production, the American colonial government failed to promote gender parity partly because of the schools' advocacy of traditional patterns of sexual division of social roles. The vocational and communication skills that women received, at best, served only to facilitate their entrance into the world market system as producers of goods for developed countries, and enhance their participation in public endeavors.