

Images of the Middle Classes in Metro Manila¹

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Based on a 1997 survey of 966 respondents, this essay provides an overview of the composition of the intermediate classes in Metro Manila. It portrays an upwardly mobile class for whom education and hard work are the most important factors in deciding class position. They are essentially consumers but with much lower levels of income and investments than their counterparts in the region or in advanced capitalist societies. Family-centered and conservative, the group tends to be ambivalent about political issues—a fact that makes their social mobilization for urgent and long-term concerted action a daunting challenge.

VISIBLE BUT ABSENT

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MIDDLE CLASSES IN PHILIPPINE post-war history is indisputable. Many of the manufacturers in the 1950s and 1960s originated from the class of salaried professionals, white-collar workers and state employees. By the 1960s, they had broadened the composition of the elite beyond traditional landed interests. At the height of the Marcos administration, the educated middle class managed the national economy and the state bureaucracy. Ironically, segments of this class also figured prominently in the revolutionary movement, fanning the protest against authoritarianism that climaxed in the EDSA uprising and ended more than 14 years of authoritarian rule. With the restoration of elite democracy in 1986, predominantly middle class communities of development workers have focused their energies on substantiating the democratization process by organizing and building the foundations of a strong civil society.

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Despite their visibility, however, the middle classes are absent in social science research. Except for a few recent articles (Pinches 1996; Karaos 1999; Turner 1992), the literature has generally focused on social classes at the lower and upper ends of the social spectrum. There are several reasons for this scholarly neglect. For one, the middle classes have constituted a small proportion of the population. National trends in the occupational distribution of employed persons reveal that persons in professional, administrative, technical and white-collar clerical positions have constituted only 10 percent to 12 percent of the working population in the last two decades.² The long-standing influence of a two-tiered model of Philippine society on social scientists in the country and Philippinists in other parts of the world could also have hindered the investigation of the classes in-between.³ Although the main conceptual challenge to such a model emanated from Marxist circles in the late 1960s and the 1970s (Guerrero 1971; Lallana 1987), the Left considered the middle classes irrelevant to its agenda because of their small size, vacillating position on revolutionary issues, and theoretical questions regarding their class status. Finally, the Philippine economy's boom and bust cycle and lackluster performance while its Asian neighbors posted remarkable growth rates dampened any impetus to analyze changes in class composition.

This essay aims to fill a gap in our information on Philippine urban middle classes. It provides an overview of the composition of the intermediate classes in Metro Manila and draws preliminary images of their origins, lifestyles, values and politics from a 1997 survey of 966 respondents,⁴ 800 of whom were selected from *barangays* classified as predominantly middle class (Tabunda and de Jesus 1995). Given the methodological limitations of a survey, most of the images are gross and hazy and would require more nuanced qualitative methods to improve their resolution. Nevertheless, they make for a good start in describing a neglected terrain that ought to be explored more fully to understand the urban sociology of Metro Manila and contemporary forces in Philippine politics.

TOO DIVERSE TO DEFINE

ALLUSIONS to the middle class in Philippine historical and social science literature have generally relied on occupation—that is, the num-

ber of professional and white-collar workers—in identifying the middle class. Although sociologists began working on occupational rankings in the 1960s to measure social inequality (Castillo 1961; Voth 1970), they stopped short of applying their findings to map out the country's social classes. Research along this line did not prosper because class was hardly problematized at the time. Moreover, classifying occupations in an economy with a vibrant informal sector was fraught with methodological difficulties, leading social scientists to adopt socio-economic status (SES) scales instead in the study of social stratification.

The current system of determining SES, developed by researchers to discriminate among market segments, has gone a long way since the pioneering sociological work on levels of living scales.⁵ Scoring schemes, which differ from one market research outfit to another, involve the use of indirect income, consumption and status indicators to categorize households into AB, C₁, C₂, D and E classes. The AB class combines the A and B upper classes, which are indistinguishable empirically. The upper C (C₁) and lower C (C₂) groups constitute the middle classes while the D and E categories make up the lower classes.

The classification rule used by organizations like the Marketing and Opinion Research Society of the Philippines, Inc. (MORIS) include variables such as the durability of the home, maintenance of the house, condition of the yard, type of neighborhood, educational attainment and occupation of the household head, and facilities found in the home. AB houses are made of heavy and high quality materials, are usually well maintained with sprawling lawns or gardens, have expensive furnishings, and are located in exclusive villages or stand out in mixed neighborhoods. C houses are made of a mixture of light and heavy materials, are well maintained, may or may not have a lawn or garden, have adequate furnishings, and are usually found in middle class subdivisions or mixed neighborhoods. D houses are made of light and cheap materials, are generally shabby in appearance, are located in crowded neighborhoods, and have scanty furnishings. Finally, those that fall under the E category are dilapidated, makeshift structures put up in cramped spaces or slum districts (Arroyo 1990).

The ABCDE scheme represents a gradational or hierarchical approach to class. It does not specify classes conceptually beforehand but

relies on clusters of attributes that reflect material reward or social standing to empirically identify them. Within this scheme, the middle classes are positioned midway between the upper and lower classes in a continuum. In contrast, a second approach recognizes gradational differences but considers more critical in defining class the location of individuals in a class structure that shapes patterns of advantage and disadvantage. This approach draws from different theoretical traditions but utilizes occupation and employment-related variables such as supervision over the labor of others and whether the individual is an employer or employee to cluster occupations corresponding to preconceived class positions. This approach differs from earlier sociological attempts to develop occupational prestige scoring systems because it does not assume that an occupation with a higher prestige ranking would necessarily constitute a different class from the ones below it. What matters in the second approach is the location of the occupation in the labor market or production unit.⁶

In an employment-based approach, the middle classes would consist of the following clusters of occupations:⁷

Service Class or New Middle Class

- Higher grade professionals, administrators and officials; managers in large industrial establishments
- Lower-grade professions, administrators and officials; higher-grade technicians, managers in small industrial establishments and supervisors of non-manual employees

Petty Bourgeoisie or Old Middle Class

- Small proprietors, artisans etc. with employees
- Small proprietors, artisans etc. without employees

Routine Non-manual Workers or Marginal Middle Class

- Routine non-manual employees, higher grade (administration and commerce)
- Routine non-manual employees, lower grade (sales and services)

These occupational categories correspond to the usual notion of middle class occupations found in Philippine historical and social science literature. Professional, managerial and technical workers fall under the service classes. Clerical and service white-collar workers corre-

respond to routine non-manual workers. Petty bourgeoisie occupations, which are identified through employment status rather than occupation, do not usually figure in allusions to the middle classes in the Philippines although in classical Marxist theory this class is the closest equivalent of the middle class.

In the theoretical literature, the term new middle class is used to refer to the service class while the old middle class is equated with the petty bourgeoisie. The use of marginal middle class in relation to routine white-collar workers reflects the position of this class between the new middle- and the proletarian classes. Depending on working conditions and economic outcomes, the boundary between routine non-manual workers and the working class and their trajectories may be difficult to delineate. The terms new middle class, old middle class and marginal middle class are used in this essay.

The adoption of employment-based categories to classify respondents and households in Metro Manila raises a number of methodological issues. For one, it assumes that occupational affiliation is a major determinant of socio-economic and psychological attributes. It also assumes that clusters of occupations (i.e., white-collar jobs) with slightly different chances in the market share a common class position. This assumption may be untenable for developing societies like the Philippines where distinctions among occupations and commonalities among workers with similar occupational groupings are not as clear as in more developed societies.

To illustrate, occupations associated with the middle class in the Philippines have grown with the expansion of the service sector and not as a consequence of industrial development. However, unlike the service sectors of Western economies or those of the high-performing Asian countries, which significantly provide producer services that utilize capital and knowledge-intensive technology, the service sector in the Philippines is dominated by final use services (Mehta 1997). Its largest sub-sector in terms of GDP (Gross Domestic Product) share is wholesale and retail trade, followed by private services that range from restaurants to education. These sectors employ little capital and use antiquated technology entailing hardly any investment in human capital. The nature of the predominant service sub-sectors and the informal

economy's substantial share of the non-agricultural sector contribute to declining gross value-added per worker.⁸

The dominance and organization of the service sector in Metro Manila's economy account for wage differentials across industries (Alba 1977), making it difficult to assume that people in the same occupational category (for example, professionals, technical workers and managers) share similar market situations and positions in a hierarchy of rewards and privileges. Similarly, the economic trajectories of routine white-collar workers depend on a host of variables, ranging from the sector of the economy (public versus private) in which a person is employed to years of experience, geographic location, and female density of an industry.⁹

Combining occupation with the nature of employment—that is, whether a person is an employer, self-employed, manager or employee—does not completely solve the problem. Entrepreneurial activities are just as heterogeneous, if not more diverse. Moreover, most of these are carried out in the informal sector.

Apart from wage differentials and variations in the life chances of people in the same work designation, employment-based class analysis in Metro Manila is bogged down by the problem of classifying those with multiple occupations, sources of income or employment statuses. The survey data, for instance, captured professionals or corporate managers in the country's central business district who are at the same time employers in their own family business ventures. These respondents are classified as higher-grade professionals although they devote considerable time to their enterprises as small employers. The survey also found routine non-manual workers in the government bureaucracy or small private enterprises moonlighting to augment their incomes. By definition, they are simultaneously white-collar workers and self-employed entrepreneurs. Interesting combinations of multiple occupations or employment statuses exist for at least 10 percent of the sample household heads. Estimated from marginal notes on the interview schedule regarding the multiple employment of the respondents or their spouses, the 10 percent figure is conservative considering that there was no formal question on primary and secondary occupations or sources of income.

Cases with multiple occupations were classified along their primary occupation, usually in the formal sector. However, in an overall context

of low wages and an active underground economy, a respondent or household head's formal work is not necessarily his or her main occupation in terms of time spent on the job and incomes earned. In such situations, privileging class, defined in terms of occupation and employment status, in explanations of observable differences especially in attitudes and perspectives would be misleading.

There are many other issues surrounding the use of employment-based categories for analyzing social classes in the Philippines. A more appropriate scheme, for instance, would have required theorizing and operationalizing the service sector and informal economy in Metro Manila and incorporating the refinements into a classification system adapted to the nuances of life in the metropolis. However, the more important objective for now is to begin the exploration of the middle classes. Under the circumstances, an employment-based class scheme, with all its limitations, serves as an initial exploratory tool to the extent that Metro Manila is integrated into the global economic environment and there are significant numbers clearly located within an employment-based class scheme. It helps that the scheme overlaps substantially with the ABCDE market research categories (Table 1).¹⁰ About 84 percent of middle class household heads fall within the C₁ and C₂ classes. The location of those outside the C classes is consistent with expectations. Professionals and managers (20 percent) are in the higher status and consumption class (AB), while the bulk of the marginal middle class outside the C category (14 percent) are in the D class. The remaining old middle class heads, 92 percent of whom are classified as belonging to C households, are either in the AB or the D classes. Eight old middle class and marginal middle class heads fall under the E class.

A final methodological point: the appropriate unit of analysis is a debatable issue in the use of employment-based categories. One side of the debate assumes individuals in concrete occupations, work situa-

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TABLE 1. Market Research Classification by Employment-based Class of Household Head (in percent)

Market Research Classification	Employment-based Class*			Total
	NMC	OMC	MMC	
AB	20.1	4.4	3.3	11.2
C1	59.5	35.3	29.6	44.9
C2	20.4	56.7	48.7	38.8
D		3.2	13.8	4.0
E		.4	4.6	1.1
%	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
(N)	(328)	(252)	(152)	(732)

*NMC = New Middle Class OMC = Old Middle Class MMC = Marginal Middle Class

tions or relations of production as the bearers of class, regardless of the circumstances of their households. However, in countries like the Philippines, where the household head's class position profoundly affects the life chances of household members and determines their socio-economic status, it is appropriate to consider the class position of the head as indicative of the current position of the working members as well as their class trajectory. The congruence of the class position of respondents and household heads justifies the shifts in units of analysis throughout the essay depending on the topic. For questions of perspective, for instance, the class position of the respondent is used.

TOO BIG TO IGNORE

FOR the Philippines as a whole, the image of a pyramid-shaped social structure with a small middle segment and a big base, popularized in the 1970s by student activists, still holds. However, for Metro Manila, the size of the middle class is not negligible. Going by available indicators, one out of four professionals, managers and white-collar clerical workers were middle class in 1997 (Table 2). The proportion would even be higher if some of the workers under sales and services in Table 2, performing routine non-manual functions, are included.

About one out of five urban households were classified as middle class or C in the 1980s and 1990s.¹¹ As expected, the estimates for Metro Manila (MM) are even higher. In 1983, 24 percent of MM households

were classified as C (Roberto 1987). A decade later, market surveys revealed that middle class households constituted between 32 percent and 40 percent of MM households¹² (Table 3). Table 3 also includes Tabunda

TABLE 2. Employed Persons by Major Occupation Group, Metropolitan Manila 1975-1995 (in percent)*

Occupation Group	1975	1985	1997
Professional and Technical Workers	9.5	10.8	9.2
Administrative, Executive and Managerial Workers	3.5	3.0	4.6
Clerical and Related Work	11.8	11.2	10.2
Sales	21.0	19.6	19.4
Services	19.3	18.7	23.1
Production, Transport, Equipment Operators and Laborers	33.4	35.1	32.5
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	100.0

*Excludes unclassified occupations

Sources: 1978 Statistical Yearbook; 1986 Statistical Yearbook; 1998 Statistical Yearbook. National Statistical Coordination Board.

TABLE 3. Estimates of Metro Manila Households by Socioeconomic Classification (in percent)

Socio-economic Classification	Estimate by the Asian Research Organization using the MORES classification rule (N=10,944)	Estimate by the Philippine Survey Research Center using MORES classification rule (N=1,199)	Estimate by the Unilever market research group using the MORES classification rule (N=500)	Estimate by Tabunda and de Jesus using a sequential socio-economic rule (N=1,569,167; 1990 census)
AB	3	7	3	3.5
C	40	37	32	33.5
D	35	29	51	32.3
E	22	27	14	30.7
TOTAL	100	100	100	100.0

Source: MORES Unified SEC Project Report, 1993 and Tabunda and de Jesus. A Sequential Classification Rule for MetroManila Barangays. In Philippine Statistical Association. *Socio-Economic Classification of Barangays in Metro Manila*. 1995.

and de Jesus's 33 percent estimate based on the application of a sequential socio-economic rule to the 1990 census data.¹³

In addition to the substantial share of C households in Metro Manila, other indicators point to the growing presence of these intermediate classes. The proliferation of non-government organizations in the past decade is one indicator.¹⁴ So is the high demand for cars in Metro Manila. Vehicle registration in the metropolis, for instance, grew at an average annual rate of 10.5 percent from 1985 to 1995 (Cariño 1997).

Who constitutes the middle classes? The distribution of the sample heads by employment-based class is as follows:

	%	N
<i>New Middle Class</i>	45.0	331
• Higher grade professionals, administrators and officials; managers in large industrial establishments	26.5	195
• Lower-grade professions, administrators and officials; higher grade technicians, managers in small industrial establishments and supervisors of non-manual employees	18.5	136
<i>Old Middle Class</i>	34.3	252
• Small proprietors, artisans etc. with employees	15.9	117
• Small proprietors, artisans etc. without employees	18.4	135
<i>Marginal Middle Class</i>	20.7	152
• Routine non-manual employees, higher grade (administration and Commerce)	10.9	80
• Routine non-manual employees, lower grade (sales and services)	9.8	72

The new middle class professionals and managers among the sample household heads work mostly in the private sector (83 percent). About 41 percent of them occupy managerial posts and more than 40 percent work for companies hiring 500 employees or more. Reflecting the country's economic structure, half of the companies the new middle class heads work for provide financial, social and individual services. Not all of them are corporate or government employees, however. One out of 10 employs less than 11 workers to perform functions in line with their professional business while five percent are self-employed. Inter-

estingly, at least eight percent of new middle class heads have sideline businesses that range from the provision of individual services to garments subcontracting.

By definition, the marginal middle class heads are all employees. Like the new middle class, most of them work for private firms. However, 29 percent or almost three out of 10 are civil servants. Six out of 10 companies employing this class are in the service industry or in wholesale and retail trade. Almost half of them hire more than 500 workers. At least 13 percent of the marginal middle class have a range of sideline businesses that include jeepney or tricycle operations, *sari-sari* stores, as well as selling garments and food in offices.

The old middle class household heads are a heterogeneous group. About 70 percent hire less than 11 workers; the rest are self-employed. They provide a wide range of small-scale services, from financing activities, pawnshops and real estate brokering to *carinderias*, advertising and recruitment of domestic helpers. About 38 percent of their businesses are in the service sector; 39 percent are in the merchandising and transportation sectors. In terms of ethnic composition, only three percent of the old middle class heads in the survey have parents who speak Chinese although only one percent of the respondents can speak the language.

The employment-based middle class categories used in this essay generally match the perceived class identification of respondents. About 88 percent of professionals and managers consider themselves middle-middle or upper middle class. While three out of four old middle- and marginal middle class respondents classify themselves as middle-middle class, about 20 percent think they are in the lower middle class.

LOWER MIDDLE CLASS ORIGINS BUT UPWARDLY MOBILE

ASKED to classify their families of orientation when they were 15 years old, half of the respondents claim to have grown up in middle-middle class families. However, a significant proportion—34 percent of new middle class professionals and managers, 44 percent of old middle class proprietors and 33 percent routine non-manual workers—say they moved up from lower class origins. Their subjective perceptions coincide with more objective indicators of upward mobility.

Most of the respondents (70 percent) are second-generation migrants. At least 85 percent of their parents moved to Manila from other provinces in the period between 1939 and 1960 when migration accounted for almost 50 percent of population growth in the country's primate city (Pernia 1977). This period of in-migration was marked by remarkable economic growth. From 1949 to 1962, the era of exchange controls and import substitution, industrialists located their offices and factories in Manila and its suburbs. Their demand for professionals and skilled technical workers led to a proliferation of private secondary schools, colleges and universities in the city. At the time, the respondents' parents directly experienced the high correlation between college degrees and well-paying jobs within their own families or vicariously among their friends and neighbors. Having grown up when the establishment of a free public elementary school system and the promise of jobs in the American colonial civil service for qualified personnel infused the value of formal schooling, they invested in their progeny's education as an avenue for social mobility.

It is not surprising then that Metro Manila's middle class respondents surpassed their parents' educational attainment. The proportion of children (respondents) who finished college is almost twice the proportion of fathers and mothers with similar educational achievement for each segment of the middle classes (Table 4). It is noteworthy that in terms of possession of college diplomas, the proportion of female

TABLE 4. College Graduates Among Respondents, their Spouses, Fathers and Mothers by Social Class

	New Middle Class	Old Middle Class	Marginal Middle Class
Respondent	87.0	56.6	58.3
R's Father	43.2	20.5	18.5
R's Mother	28.1	13.6	12.3
R's Spouse	75.9	56.5	58.3
Female R	87.3	56.2	67.2
Female R's Mother	29.9	11.6	12.3
TOTAL	265	258	117

respondents, who tended to have higher educational attainments than their male counterparts, is from three to six times higher than that of their mothers.

Through formal education, significant proportions of the middle classes succeeded in moving beyond their social origins. About 36 percent of them originated from families headed by workers or small farmers; 20 percent have agricultural roots. Although the proportion of Metro Manila respondents with farmers¹⁵ as fathers in the 1997 survey is much lower than the 40 percent obtained from the 1968 National Demographic Survey, the middle class respondents are no less occupationally mobile (Bacol-Montilla and Stinner 1975). Eighty-one percent moved to occupations that are higher or lower than that of their fathers: three out of four outranked their fathers as opposed to only one out of four ending up in lower occupational categories. Interestingly, analysis of mobility ratios (that is, the ratio of the observed frequency found in a category and the expected number if the father's occupation had no effect on the child's profession) reveal short-distance movements except for children of workers and farmers who filled up lower professional and routine non-manual occupations that are more than two ranks higher than their father's classification. Furthermore, respondents with professional fathers ended up as professionals as well, although children from lower occupational origins added to their ranks.

The high level of upward mobility (and lower proportion of respondents with agricultural origins in 1997 compared to 1968) is due to fundamental changes in the occupational structure, with the expansion of white-collar positions in the city in the 1950s and 1960s (Table 5). However, the observed mobility of sample respondents is not only a consequence of the changing composition of occupations resulting from the growth of industries and services; it may also indicate the relatively fluid occupational structure of Metro Manila. Respondents flowed into

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TABLE 5. Distribution of Middle Class Respondents and their Fathers by Occupation (in percent)

Occupation Category	Father's Occupation		Respondent's Occupation		Percentage Difference
	N	%	N	%	
Higher Professionals and Managers	77	12.6	153	25.0	12.4
Lower Professionals and Managers	69	11.3	115	18.8	7.5
Routine Nonmanuals, Higher Degree	68	11.1	74	12.1	1.0
Routine Nonmanuals, Lower Degree	46	7.5	30	4.9	-2.6
Proprietors	130	21.2	241	39.2	18.0
Workers and Farmers	226	36.3	0	0	-36.3
TOTAL	613	100.0	613	100.0	0

and out of their father's occupations easily, especially in the intermediate categories. In particular, the movement out of and recruitment into the proprietor and routine non-manual occupations is beyond statistical expectations, reflecting a dynamic occupational structure and vibrant informal market.

NUCLEAR HOUSEHOLDS PROPPED BY TWO EARNERS

Most of the middle class households (75 percent) are nuclear, consisting of parents and their children. A minor but nevertheless interesting variation in household structure is the relatively higher proportion of extended families among the marginal middle class (22 percent) compared to the new middle- and old middle classes (5.8 percent and 18.5 percent, respectively). A similar pattern prevails between the C₁ and C₂ market research classes, with 18 percent of the former and 23 percent of the latter living in extended households. These observations may either reflect an increasing preference among those in higher socio-economic classes to live privately with their families of procreation or the financial capacity of their extended kin to live in their own homes.

Unlike the middle classes in the West, however, live-in domestic helpers (DH) serve half of Metro Manila's middle classes (Table 6). Financial or status considerations account for variations in the proportion of middle class households with domestic helpers and in the pro-

TABLE 6. Household Composition by Employment-based Class of Household Head (in percent)

Variables Reflecting Household Composition	Middle Classes			Total
	NMC	OMC	MMC	
With children in grade school and high school (N)	64.4 (213)	63.9 (161)	66.4 (101)	64.6 (475)
With domestic helper/s (N)	61.0 (202)	55.6 (140)	44.1 (67)	56.4 (409)
With two or more domestic helpers				
% of those with domestic helpers only (N)	49.5 (100)	38.6 (54)	25.4 (17)	43.6 (177)
% of total (N)	31.0 (202)	21.1 (140)	11.2 (67)	22.3 (408)
With driver or houseboy (N)	6.6 (22)	.8 (2)	0	.6 (24)
With elderly members (65 years and over) (N)	20.8 (69)	21.0 (53)	15.8 (24)	20.1 (146)
With an overseas contract worker (N)	18.1 (60)	7.9 (20)	19.7 (30)	16.7 (110)
With at least two working members (N)	76.7 (254)	76.6 (193)	75.7 (115)	76.5 (562)

portion with more than one helper. Half of new middle class households have at least two helpers compared to only 38 percent of old middle class- and 25 percent of marginal middle class households. Of greater interest, however, is the significant proportion without domestic helpers (39 percent of new middle-, 45 percent of old middle- and 56 percent of marginal middle class households) as this runs counter to the common perception that most middle class homes in Metro Manila have maids. Apart from financial considerations, discussions with middle class professionals reveal that a growing number are now opting to run their homes without helpers or rely on part-time non-live-in help for various reasons: difficulty of competing with the overseas market for suitable helpers, greater need for privacy and the availability of work-saving devices.

Six out of 10 households have children in grade school or high school and 20 percent have elderly members living with them. On the average, the burden of reproducing the middle class status of these households falls on at least two working members. Regardless of middle class segment, three out of four households have at least two income earners.

The deployment of household labor overseas is commonly believed to propel households to middle class status. While overseas labor migration has indeed supported the economy and countless studies have documented improvements in the lives of those with members earning foreign currencies, the proportion of sample middle class households with a member working overseas is only 17 percent. Most of the overseas contract workers belong to new middle- and marginal middle class households.

CONSUMERS CONSTRAINED BY LOW INCOME LEVELS

SOME aspects of the lifestyles of Metro Manila's middle classes may be gleaned from the goods they possess and the way they spend their recreation time.

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The house is an outlet of conspicuous consumption in the Philippines. Filipinos spend hard-earned money on the appearance of their houses. This is eloquently illustrated in the literature on overseas migration, which documents the use of remittances to construct houses or renovate old ones in

styles close to the architecture of their work destinations, once debts incurred in the course of landing jobs abroad are paid.

Although townhouse and condominium living is becoming fashionable among the upper classes in Metro Manila, majority (66 percent) of the middle classes live in single detached homes while the rest occupy duplexes or multi-residential apartment buildings. The proportion of professionals and managers with detached houses is higher (72 percent compared to 59 percent of the old middle- and 63 percent of the new middle classes). Seven out of 10 respondents across class segments claim home ownership. However, the types of houses owned

differ. New middle class homes are more spacious with more than one toilet. They are twice more likely than old middle- or marginal middle class homes to have more than three rooms (apart from the kitchen/dining room, receiving room and toilets). Four out of 10 new middle class houses have houses with more than three rooms, with 14 respondents living in houses with more than 10 rooms. On the other hand, only two out of 10 old- and marginal middle class households enjoy the same space. Moreover, while 57 percent of new middle- and 38 percent of old middle class houses have more than one toilet, only five percent of the marginal middle class does.

The localities of the houses also differ. About half are located in heterogeneous neighborhoods with varying levels of congestion and commercialization. As expected, the proportion of professionals and managers living in exclusive residential subdivisions is higher than the rest—14 percent compared to five percent of the old middle- and marginal middle class respondents. Across the three groups, a third live in less exclusive neighborhoods but with houses of similar size. For instance, some of the households with marginal middle class heads are found in low-cost government housing projects.

Cars have become an essential part of the lifestyles of the middle classes in Metro Manila. More than half possess cars with the proportion of car ownership increasing progressively with each class segment (Table 7). Six out of 10 marginal middle class households, seven out of 10 old middle class households and eight out of 10 new middle class households own cars. The type of car also varies, with new middle class households owning more up-to-date and expensive models (for example, Honda Accord, Honda Civic, Mitsubishi Galant) compared to the older economy models (for example, Mitsubishi Lancer EL, Toyota Corolla XL) of the other middle class households. The new middle class households also outrank the others in the possession of two cars, with 39 percent having two cars, compared to 31 percent of the old middle- and 16 percent of the marginal middle class households.

An overwhelming majority of the middle classes possess a stereo component and video recorder, which affirms the overall value of music and movies to Filipinos. Interestingly, these are the items overseas migrant workers also spend on for their families. Because of lower

purchasing power, households with marginal middle class heads lag behind the rest in terms of ownership of these goods. They are four and 2.5 times less likely than the old marginal middle classes to own stereos and video recorders.

Majority of the new and old middle class households own air conditioners and cellular phones. Again, the lower income levels of marginal middle class-headed household, 18 percent of which are classified as D/E, explain why they lag behind in the ownership of these goods. However, the decline in prices since 1997 of items like the cellular phone would have narrowed the gap between marginal middle class and the rest.

Table 7 also shows that the proportion of middle class households with various forms of investments is quite low, compared to the level of possession of consumer durables. Although almost nine out of 10 new and old-middle class households and eight of 10 marginal middle class

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households have savings, less than a third of new middle class heads claim to have private insurance, stocks, real estate or foreign currency that would ensure the continuation of their lifestyles in the event of sickness or other family crisis. Much lower proportions of old- and marginal middle class heads claim to have similar investments. Although the information they disclosed to interviewers may be inaccurate for fear of future crimes on

their property, it may nevertheless reflect the fact that the steady incomes of Metro Manila's middle classes are sufficient to purchase consumer goods with cash or credit cards but they are not at a level that can be set aside for significant investments.

Income levels may also account for the simpler forms of leisure of the middle classes in the metropolis. Golf, the sport of the new and mobile middle class in the fast growing economies of the region, has not attracted more than 11 percent of new middle class heads who have the means to pay golf club membership fees. Sports, health and fitness clubs as well as social clubs attract more new middle and old middle class members than do golf clubs but the levels do not go beyond 17

percent. About one out of 10 have traveled to foreign lands. However, unlike the middle classes of advanced industrial societies who can afford overseas vacations, it is more likely for the small segment of Metro Manila's middle classes that has traveled to have sponsors (e.g., family members living abroad).

TABLE 7. Selected Material Possessions by Employment-Based Class of Household Head (excludes respondents with working class heads) in percent

Material Possessions of Respondent/Household	NMC	OMC	MMC
<i>Some Assets of Respondents</i>			
Savings	88.4	88.5	80.9
Private insurance	30.2	27.4	20.4
Stock, bond and mutual funds	24.1	17.1	10.5
Real estate	31.1	23.8	13.8
Foreign currency	13.1	4.8	9.9
Lottery tickets	11.3	13.5	8.6
Gold jewelry	14.6	13.5	13.2
Antiques, paintings, etc.	6.7	2.0	1.3
<i>Appliances and Amenities of Households</i>			
Car	81.6	67.1	50.7
• With two or more cars	38.8	31.4	15.8
Credit card	59.2	45.2	34.2
• Gold credit card	37.8	26.1	19.2
Stereo component	95.1	96.4	86.2
Video recorder	92.9	90.4	78.9
Video camera	36.9	36.0	27.0
Laser disc	40.0	33.6	25.7
Cellular phone	57.5	50.8	33.6
Personal computer	47.7	37.6	24.3
Cable TV	41.1	36.8	26.3
Air conditioner	64.2	63.6	36.2
TOTAL N	328	252	152

The forms of leisure of the middle classes include participation in community center and church activities, occasional eating out in restaurants and shopping in malls for one or two affordable consumer goods. The survey did not probe into leisure activities and reading habits but some data would suggest that the middle classes settle for home-based forms of recreation, reading newspapers, watching television shows and video movies, and listening to music. Public Affairs shows are the most watched, with an audience of seven out of 10 middle class respondents. Shows that feature personalities with varying positions on a wide range of burning political and social issues that hog the headlines engage or entertain the middle classes.

In an essay published by the *Free Press* magazine, anthropologist Raul Pertierra bewailed the absence of the middle class in high culture events in Manila. He cited the March 1994 Royal Shakespeare Company, which performed *Henry VI* in the Cultural Center of the Philippines to an empty house, save for the expected presence of expatriates and Manila's society. Indeed, only 20 percent respondents with new middle class household heads, 10 percent with old middle class heads and 7 percent with marginal middle class heads engage in cultural activities or watch cultural shows.

However, the relative indifference of the middle classes to high-brow cultural activities does not seem to be reflected in their musical tastes. More than half claim to like classical music although the meaning of classical may range from melodious orchestral tunes to the music of the masters (Table 8). Next to classical music, ballads and jazz appeal to three out of four respondents. It is noteworthy that contemporary Filipino music, which has struggled for equal radio space with Western music in the last two decades, has gone a long way since the 1970s, with 31 percent to 35 percent of the middle class respondents now listening to music composed by Filipinos. It used to be that listening to Filipino music was only for the masses or the '*bakya*' crowd from which segments of the new middle class would consciously distinguish itself. It is also interesting to note that while only less than 10 percent appreciate alternative Filipino music, which may range from indigenous music to protest songs, this kind of music has an audience in the C classes.

TABLE 8. Media Exposure and Preferred Music of Respondent by Social Class of Household Head (in percent)

Media Exposure and Preferred Music of Respondents	Employment-Based Class			Market Research Class Categories		
	NMC	OMC	MMC	AB	C1	C2
<i>Media Exposure: Parts of Newspaper Read</i>						
Headline and Front Page	90.2	92.5	89.5	91.5	89.8	91.8
Editorial/Opinion Section	55.5	45.6	44.7	47.2	54.6	47.7
Foreign News	33.5	27.4	27.6	32.1	29.7	29.1
Local News	38.1	43.3	53.9	45.3	43.3	43.6
Business Section	27.1	21.0	19.7	36.8	24.4	17.6
Sports Section	33.2	40.5	27.6	24.5	30.4	38.3
Comics Page	10.1	7.9	11.8	13.2	10.0	8.7
Features/Lifestyles Section	28.0	21.8	21.7	34.0	27.8	18.4
<i>Media Exposure: Type of Television Shows Watched</i>						
Public Affairs/Documentaries	74.4	70.6	72.4	71.7	72.2	75.8
Show Business Talk Shows	22.9	20.2	21.7	20.8	26.0	18.6
Filipino Situation Comedies	15.2	17.5	16.4	12.3	14.4	18.4
Variety Shows (e.g. noontime shows)	28.0	34.1	40.1	18.9	36.2	33.2
Game Shows	11.9	13.5	14.5	13.2	14.7	13.3
Soap Operas	22.0	17.9	27.0	17.0	26.5	27.9
Western Drama/Movies	28.7	26.6	24.3	30.2	29.1	26.5
Sports	36.9	38.9	32.9	30.2	32.3	41.8
MTV	5.5	1.2	5.9	6.6	4.2	3.6
<i>Preferred Music</i>						
Classical	65.2	62.7	50.7	80.2	64.0	58.7
Jazz	33.5	35.7	30.3	28.3	35.4	31.9
Rock (Hard Metallic)	6.7	4.8	12.5	4.7	6.3	8.2
Filipino Kundiman	18.3	24.3	25.0	19.8	20.5	27.3
Alternative Filipino Music	6.4	8.3	5.9	1.0	8.4	6.4
Filipino Contemporary Music	31.4	34.9	30.9	31.1	32.3	33.4
Pop Music	26.8	19.8	27.6	20.8	26.5	21.2
Ballads	43.0	43.7	44.0	40.6	45.9	40.1
Broadway Music	9.8	5.2	3.9	23.6	7.6	5.1
New Wave	3.0	1.2	2.6	1.0	2.9	1.8
N	325	250	152	106	381	392

FAMILY CENTERED AND CONSERVATIVE

As in the wider society, the value of the family is high among Metro Manila's middle classes. When asked what concerns them most, nine out of 10 respondents identify family matters, with 69 percent concerned with their children's education and 22 percent with harmonious relations in the home. Interestingly, the proportion of respondents who claim to consider other concerns such as self-fulfillment important is quite low (less than six percent) even among professionals and managers.

Concern over the education of children is translated to investments that enhance the future chances of the young. Of households with children in grade school or high school, about six out of 10 with new middle class heads (56.3 percent) send their children to private schools; five out of 10 old middle class heads (49.7 percent) and four out of 10 marginal middle class heads (40.6 percent) do so. In the face of deteriorating standards of public education in the country, middle class parents think that despite extremely uneven quality standards, private schools would give their children an edge in admission to reputable colleges and universities. It would seem that income level is an important determinant of the likelihood of private schooling for middle class children, as AB households are twice more likely than C1 households to send children to private schools and C2 households are eight times more likely than D households to do so. The odds that C1 and C2 households would seek private education for their children are not statistically different.

To complement curricular activities, more than three out of 10 new middle heads spend money for their children's art and music lessons as well as courses that improve their athletic and other personal skills. Old- and marginal middle class parents also spend for these extra curricular activities although only 17-26 percent do so. Investment in extra-curricular activities does not discriminate among the employment-based social classes although there are significant contrasts among the market research categories. Parents from AB households are twice more likely to make their children learn computer and other skills and are four and 2.5 times more likely to give their kids the opportunity to learn other languages and gymnastic or athletic skills. C1 parents, on the other hand, are twice more likely to pay for art and music lessons and three times more likely to fund foreign language lessons.

Children are not the only focal point of the respondents. Across classes, majority (64 percent) consider husband-wife relations as more important than parent-child relations. Agreement with the statement to this effect is highest among the old- and new middle class respondents. As to the relative power of husbands and wives, majority of the respondents (60 percent to 80 percent) claim that decisions are made jointly on expensive purchases or the education of children. However, less than half of the respondents think decisions on household finances are shared, since a third believe wives decide single-handedly on this matter.

The respondents seem to be conservative when it comes to relationships between spouses. Seven out of 10 across class segments disagree with the legislation of divorce in the country. And more than 63 percent disagree with living in without marriage. Surprisingly, the most vehement disagreement comes from new middle class respondents. Only 24 percent of the professionals and managers in this class are open to living in for adults who love each other.

Still related to the family, half of old middle- (52 percent) and marginal middle class respondents (51 percent) think it is the obligation of children to care for elderly parents while 43 percent of the new middle class think so. These proportions are lower than what is normally associated with traditional notions of care for aged parents. This finding would suggest that the middle classes are more centered on their families of procreation, which in turn explains the high value of education in their agenda. For instance, concern over the future of their progeny and the hope that children will find better career options abroad are expressed by the majority (64 percent) of hopeful emigrants among the middle class respondents (39.2 percent of respondents) to justify their intentions of leaving the country.

Socialization processes reinforce the family centeredness of Metro Manila's middle classes. In an article linking family values to a democratic agenda, Karaos observed that there is little in the socialization of

Seven out of 10 across class segments disagree with the legislation of divorce in the country. And more than 63 percent disagree with living in without marriage.

middle class children from selected neighborhoods in Quezon City that inculcates in them notions of belonging to a wider community (Karaos 1999). She notes that personal obligations to the family are emphasized in the process of rearing children and even the stress on academic performance is associated with family expectations rather than the service of a bigger community. But Karaos is also quick to point out that the involvement of families with adult members in voluntary, civic or religious organizations may gradually reorient their family-centered consciousness to a wider community.

Interestingly, it is their family centeredness that encourages particular segments of the middle classes to move beyond their homes and provide leadership to movements committed to the preservation of the family. The phenomenal growth of such movements is not surprising since 63 percent of the survey respondents consider the increase in broken families to be a serious social problem in the Philippines, with the proportions increasing as one moves up the middle class segments. While 57 percent of the marginal middle class are bothered by this problem, slightly higher proportions of old middle- and new middle class respondents (62 percent and 67 percent respectively) worry about its seriousness. These classes are the key organizers and constituencies of the Catholic Church-backed Couples for Christ, a family movement whose adherents also form the core of civic action groups. In recent years, neighborhood associations of middle class households with active members from the Couples for Christ have begun to form coalition networks with other communities to address common community problems. The joint effort of subdivisions in the Commonwealth district of Metro Manila to devise and implement strategies to ease traffic during rush hours is a case in point.

POLITICALLY AWARE BUT UNINVOLVED

There are indications that the middle classes of Metro Manila are aware of political developments beyond their communities. An overwhelming majority—nine out of 10—read the newspapers. About half read the editorial section where opinions on critical issues are expressed. As noted previously, seven out of 10 middle class respondents watch public affairs talk shows that dwell on burning political and social issues.

In addition, almost half of all middle class respondents discuss politics with friends, with 15 percent of the new middle class doing this quite often. The sensitivity to political issues of four out of 10 professionals and managers and almost one out of three old middle- and marginal middle class respondents may be a consequence of their involvement in or support for the student movement in the late 1960s and 1970s.

However, although politically aware, the middle classes in the sample are generally uninvolved in political activities. Although their voting turnout in 1995 was high (81 percent) considering that the 1995 election was not a presidential contest, other political activities and electoral practices of the respondents are not impressive. Less than 20 percent supported a political party, attended public rallies and passed flyers for candidates during the 1995 election and less than a third encouraged friends to vote for candidates. The low level of middle class participation in other election-related activities may be explained partly by their relatively more cynical view of elections, although this does not seem to have affected their decision to vote. Using the 1992 election data of the Social Weather Stations for Metro Manila, Karaos noted that the proportion of respondents who disagreed with the statements 'Election is a game of the wealthy' and 'All that citizens can hope for is the price of a vote' are lower among the C than the D and E classes (Karaos 1999).

Moreover, the lack of middle class support for political parties is to be expected because of the low level of institutionalization of political parties in the Philippines and the dominance of key personalities and political machines as the major instruments of political articulation and aggregation.

Rivera's analysis of the political data from the survey shows that less than 30 percent of the middle classes participate in or support social movements.¹⁶ The only exceptions are the environmental and human rights movements, which command the highest degree of involvement by middle class constituencies (47 percent and 40 percent, respectively). The new middle-

Rivera suggests the possibility of the environment becoming the focal point of a broad basis of political unity and action across all social classes.

and old middle class segments' level of support for the environmental movement are about the same, with half of them considering environmental issues worth their while. On the basis of this observation, Rivera suggests the possibility of the environment becoming the focal point of a broad basis of political unity and action across all social classes.

The proportion of middle class respondents who participate in or support the interest groups and social movements in Table 9, though low from the perspective of numbers, may not be as insignificant when situated within a broader historical context. Rivera's account of the development of middle class politics from the period of liberal democracy (1946-1972) to the struggle against Marcos authoritarian rule (1972-1986) down to the post-Marcos period reveals that throughout the post-war decades, middle class factions, while small in numbers, have provided leadership for all kinds of political projects, some of them with profound national consequences.¹⁷ Seen in this light, the observation that at least one out of four middle class respondents support urban consumer groups as well as thematic and sectoral movements, a probable legacy of previous organizing efforts, attests to the existence of relatively organized segments that could potentially be drawn into broader networks of civil society groups.

In her case studies of middle class families in Metro Manila, Karaos did not find similar evidence of engagement in organized activities of a political or quasi-political nature. Observing instead their involvement in civic, religious or professional organizations, she nevertheless con-

**TABLE 9. Participants and Supporters of Interest Groups and Social Movements
Employment-based Class of Respondents (in percent)**

Interest Groups and Social Movements	NMC	OMC	MMC	Total
Consumer Groups	26.9	28.8	25.7	27.4
Environmental Movement	50.6	49.6	33.4	47.4
Labor Movement	35.1	26.9	36.2	31.8
Women's Movement	32.5	29.6	24.1	29.8
Agrarian Reform Movement	26.1	22.8	17.3	23.2
Human Rights Movement	44.9	37.6	33.6	39.9
Total N	275	260	116	651

cludes that the membership of middle class individuals in voluntary organizations provides a stable organizational infrastructure that can support civil society initiatives and facilitate mobilization in moments of political or economic crisis (Karaos 1999).

AMBIVALENT AND CONTRADICTIONARY POLITICAL POSITIONS

WHILE the existence of voluntary and quasi-political organizations that draw participation and support from the middle classes is a starting point for social mobilization, what would galvanize the middle classes to act collectively toward community or national goals is a logical question. Unfortunately, it could not be addressed by the survey. What the data show, however, are respondents who mostly classify their political ideas as "definitely close to the center" and manifest ambivalent positions on specific issues that may be observed when larger political issues are at stake.

The position of middle class respondents on labor strikes illustrates this ambivalence. Rivera notes that middle class respondents show a higher degree of support for worker issues and demands against management in the context of strikes and labor disputes. When asked whether management should not dismiss workers during a strike, 64 percent agree while 18 percent disagree. Slightly more from the marginal middle class support the injunction that management not fire workers on strike. Qualifying their sympathies for workers, 64 percent would not prefer favorable outcomes for workers outright unless these are called for by prevailing conditions. Ambivalence also marks middle class perceptions of what white-collar workers should do during labor disputes. About 42 percent of those who responded say that white-collar workers ought to give moral support but a slightly higher proportion (48 percent) think they should remain neutral.

The relationship of the middle classes and democracy is far from unequivocal. Political thinkers are divided between those who write off the middle classes, specifically the new middle class, as the base for democracy and those who believe they are essential to the foundation of a democratic agenda. Those who dismiss the middle classes cite the technocratic and bureaucratic orientation of this class and its cooptation into bureaucratic organizational structures. On the other hand, the more

positive view of the middle classes as the constituency for democratic politics emanates from the belief that their university education makes them less dependent on systems of patronage and imbues them with a rational worldview to appreciate the rule of law.

The survey data reveal a democratic orientation among the middle classes on the one hand, and openness to forms of authoritarian intervention on the other. Rivera notes that eight out of 10 middle class respondents consider themselves the 'vanguard of democracy'. An overwhelming majority of the middle classes perceive the Philippines as a

The survey data reveal a democratic orientation among the middle classes on the one hand, and openness to forms of authoritarian intervention on the other.

democratic country and recognize that a democratic form of government is suitable for the development of Philippine society (Table 10). In the same breath, however, probe statements on what respondents are willing to allow government to do reveals openness to the authoritarian temptation. Three out of four respondents believe the form of govern-

ment does not matter as long as it does a good job in developing the country. In a similar vein, 68 percent feel that government need not bother about public opinion if it knows what is good for the nation. Interestingly, 52 percent of the middle class respondents is willing to allow government to ban political organizations that may jeopardize the country's interests while 37 percent are open to muzzling the media.

The position of new middle class respondents is noteworthy. Although they are as open as the rest of the middle classes to authoritarian intervention, professionals and managers in the new middle class are less open compared to the old middle and marginal middle class respondents. More of them think the form of government matters and that government ought to be sensitive to public opinion. They are also less trusting of government's capacity to know what is best for the people. Only three out of 10 new middle class respondents, compared to four out of 10 old middle and marginal middle class respondents are willing to allow government to curtail freedom of speech. However, the middle class respondents are more inclined to allow government to ban nonviolent political organizations although the proportion of profes-

**TABLE 10. Views on Democracy By Employment-based Social Class
(in percent agreement)**

Statement	NMC	OMC	MMC	Total
The Philippines is a democratic country.	87.6	88.4	84.6	87.4
A democratic form of government is suitable for the development of Philippine society.	83.8	82.6	86.3	83.8
It is not important for the government to be democratic or not. What matters is that it is doing a good job in the development of the country.	69.3	77.7	82.9	75.0
As long as government knows what is best for the nation, it should not be bothered by public opinion.	60.3	72.7	76.9	68.1
Government ought to ban media from publishing/broadcasting information or public opinion that will destroy the image of the country among potential investors and tourists.	31.4	40.4	41.9	36.8
Political organizations, which might jeopardize the country's interests, ought to be banned, even if they do not resort to violence.	47.7	55.0	56.9	52.2
Government knows what is best for the nation and the people.	55.9	68.9	65.0	62.6
Total N	282	260	117	659

sionals and managers who agree with the statement to this effect is lower than that of the other middle class segments.

Karaos's study highlights similar observations regarding the affinity of the middle classes to democratic ideas and simultaneous openness to authoritarian forms of intervention. She noted for instance a general satisfaction with the way democracy is working in the country although she cites dissatisfaction with the performance of government officials that led key respondents to propose benevolent authoritarianism (Karaos 1999).

The overall ambivalence of the middle classes to political issues, their family centeredness, concern with private professional or business pursuits, and low levels of involvement in political and quasi-political activities beyond casting their votes imply the absence of a stable and consistent middle class politics. This suggests that discussions of fac-

tors and processes that would spur Metro Manila's middle classes to act collectively for political ends when the need arises, in the way they rose to the occasion in 1986, would depend on specific conjunctures and circumstances.

CONCLUDING NOTES

THE survey of the middle classes in Metro Manila on which this essay is based was conducted in 1997, a few months before the outbreak of the Asian financial crisis. Although the crisis did not hit the Philippines as badly as it did its neighbors because of lower exposure to portfolio investments, the country was not spared from the damaging effects of the Asian turmoil. It is even more likely for the large capital outflows in 1997, exacerbated by drought, to have had a more insidious impact because the Philippines had lagged behind most of its Southeast Asian neighbors in terms of economic growth, per capita income and poverty incidence before July 1997.

What are the prospects for Metro Manila's middle classes in light of the economic crisis and its effects? This essay concludes by giving partial answers to this question on the basis of survey data.

The essay portrays an upwardly mobile class. Respondents occupy positions higher than that of their fathers because of their eligibility to fill the jobs opened by the establishment of new industries and services in the 1950s and the 1960s. Indeed, a significant majority of the sample (73.4 percent of the new middle class, 77.3 percent of the old middle class and 90 percent of the marginal middle class) agrees that education and industriousness are the most important factors in deciding a person's class background, with the level of agreement increasing as one moves to the lower segments of the middle classes. In contrast, only one out of 10 respondents pinpoint family background as a determinant of success, the proportion being highest for the new middle class, many of whom had parents in the same class (16 percent).

The relative fluidity of Metro Manila's occupational structure since the 1970s could not be ascertained from data on the current generation of middle class respondents. With population growth and the boom-and-bust cycle of the economy since the 1960s, there have been more constraints to the attainment of similar levels of mobility among the

respondents' children. At the time of the survey, more than half of the respondents from all middle class factions (from 62 percent to 68 percent) complained that it is not easy to move up the social ladder or it is getting to be more difficult at this time.

Perceptions of a more rigid social structure explain why some of the middle class respondents have sought new channels of social mobility for their progeny. Unfortunately, their sights are no longer set on career options within the country. Four out of 10 respondents across middle class segments have thought of emigrating elsewhere or hope that their children will leave the Philippines (Table 11). Considering the unusually good performance of the economy prior to the survey, the proportion of middle class respondents searching for greener pastures elsewhere is quite high.

In general, the urban middle classes may be distinguished from other groups by the material improvements and changes in their lifestyles, with the new middle class disseminating the status symbols to the rest of the lower classes. Indeed, the essay portrays an interesting picture of the middle classes in Metro Manila based on their material possessions and some aspects of their lifestyles. They are essentially consumers but with much lower levels of income and investments than their counterparts in the region or in advanced capitalist societies. Their income levels constrain their lifestyles and tastes. In a society without adequate social insurance, the low investments of the middle classes would render them vulnerable to family crises such as illnesses

TABLE 11. Emigration Plans by Employment-based Class of Household Head (in percent)

Have You Ever Thought of Emigrating?	Employment-based Class			Total
	NMC	OMC	MMC	
Yes, in the process of preparation	13.7	16.3	9.4	14.0
Yes, but not yet in the process of preparation	21.5	17.4	20.5	19.7
Not for myself but I hope children will	3.9	6.2	7.7	5.5
Neither for myself nor for my children	8.1	1.9	.9	4.4
Never thought of emigrating	52.8	58.1	61.5	56.4
%	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
(N)	284	258	117	659

even under normal conditions. But apart from unexpected family predicaments, any political development that affects the economy would put a toll on the lifestyles of the middle classes.

This essay also depicts the middle classes as politically and socially aware. From their perspective, the four most serious problems at the time of the survey were corruption, environmental pollution, public

...apart from unexpected family predicaments, any political development that affects the economy would put a toll on the lifestyles of the middle classes.

safety and crime and prostitution (Table 12). These problems captured the salient issues that hogged the papers at the time—the exposés of corruption in high government offices the year before the presidential elections, the high rates of kidnapping and other crimes, and the poor air quality and the pollution of Metro Manila’s rivers. The lower ranking

of economic issues may be due to the 5.8 percent GDP growth rate at the time of the survey. But the rankings of problems like lack of educational opportunities, insufficient welfare etc. may reflect not the relative unimportance of these problems but the privatization of such issues. Metro Manila’s population has lived with inadequate provisions

TABLE 12. Respondents’ Perception of the Seriousness of National Problems (in percent who consider the problem very serious)

Problem	NMC	OMC	MMC	Total
Public Safety and Crime	70.5	77.7	62.4	71.7
Environmental Pollution and Ecological Degradation	75.8	77.6	66.7	74.8
Lack of Educational Opportunity	30.9	39.2	29.9	34.4
Insufficient Social Welfare	40.4	45.7	36.8	41.4
High Housing Cost	56.7	70.3	66.7	63.2
Inflation and High Consumption Price	64.9	77.7	73.5	70.7
Income Inequality	47.4	38.8	44.8	44.1
Corruption	85.6	91.5	88.0	88.0
Obscenity and Prostitution	69.7	76.2	75.2	73.2
Unemployment	55.4	61.9	59.0	58.6
Total N*	284	259	117	736

of social services and the middle classes have adapted or done what they could for themselves. In the course of everyday life in Metro Manila, many have learned to demand less of government and society.

Fortunately, there are organized, albeit fragmented, constituencies among the middle classes that may be moved to help develop appropriate notions of citizenship and build institutions of civil society. Only by establishing institutional mechanisms for holding government and citizens accountable can they put an end to the sense of helplessness they have learned to accept and their tendency to privatize public issues. However, given the ambivalent politics of the middle classes, their social mobilization for urgent and long-term concerted action remains a daunting challenge.

NOTES

1. The essay is based on a comparative research on the middle classes in Southeast Asia conducted under the auspices of Academic Sinica, Taiwan as a sequel to a similar study in East Asia. The University of the Philippines (UP) Center for Integrative and Development Studies and the UP Foundation provided supplemental support to the project. The Philippine team consisted of the author, Temario Rivera of the UP Department of Political Science, Ana Maria Tabunda of the UP Statistical Institute and Joy Marie Arguillas of the UP Department of Sociology.

2. These estimates are quite conservative because some of the occupations under sales and services may be middle class. Nevertheless, they are consistent with previous market research approximations of the proportion of middle class households.

3. For a concise discussion of the model, its proponents among other social scientists, influence on the academic community and its constraining effect on the study of the middle classes, see M Turner's *Imagining the Middle Class in the Philippines*, a paper presented at the Fourth International Philippine Studies Conference, Australian National University, July 1-3, 1992.

4. The survey utilized a three-stage stratified sampling design with cities and municipalities serving as primary units, *barangays* as second-stage units, and households as third-stage units. The cities and municipalities were stratified by geographic location (north, south, east and west) and were drawn with probability proportional to 1990 census figures on number of households in the area. The overall sample size of 1,000 households, which was dictated primarily by cost considerations, was apportioned into sub-samples of 100 upper income households, 800 middle-income households, and 100 lower income

households in line with agreements of the cross-country teams. Because of the difficulty of penetrating upper income neighborhoods, however, the upper income households were eventually drawn from only one purposively selected upper-class subdivision.

5. Roberto's *Applied Marketing Research* published by the Ateneo de Manila University Press in 1987 illustrates the methodology of market research classifications. Among the pioneering works in SES scaling are the following studies: H Lava's Levels of Living in the Ilocos Region, Study No. 1. University of the Philippines College of Business Administration. Prepared for the Philippine Council, Institute of Pacific Relations, 1938; G Castillo, F Cordero and M Tanco's A Scale to Measure Family Level of Living in Four Barrios of Los Baños Laguna. *Philippine Sociological Review*. 15 (July-October) 1967; A Pal's The Resources, Levels of Living and Aspirations of Rural Households in Negros Oriental. Quezon City: Community Development Research Council, 1963; and Magdalena, Federico and Ricardo Zarco's A Comparison of the Objective and Reputational Approaches in the Study of Philippine Class Structure. *Philippine Sociological Review*. 18 (April).

6. The employment-based approach underlies Marxist and Weberian class schemes. For a discussion of the theoretical origins of the approaches in the context of contemporary debates in social stratification, see the methodological notes in *Exploring the Middle Classes in Metropolitan Manila: A Survey Report* submitted to Academia Sinica and the UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies.

7. The scheme utilized for the comparative Asian study is a modified version of Goldthorpe's class schema. See R Erikson and J Goldthorpe's *The Constant Flux: A Study of Class Mobility in Industrial Societies* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992) for a discussion of the basis for the classification. This scheme was modified to incorporate Marxist dimensions. In his earlier works, (e.g., *Classes* published by Verso in 1985), Erik Olin Wright developed a scheme that breaks down production relations into three dimensions: social relations of control over money capital, social relations of control over physical capital and social relations of authority or control over supervision and discipline within the labor process. The middle classes are placed in a contradictory location between capital and the proletariat on the basis of how much control they have over money capital, physical capital and labor. This original scheme, which Wright considered an account of domination, was later recast to take exploitation into account. The second scheme adds position within authority hierarchies and the possession of skills and expertise to capitalist property relations. In other words, managers or professionals in big companies who possess scarce skills obtain a skill rent that allows them to appropriate the social surplus. The new scheme distinguishes owners into capitalists, small employers and the petty bourgeoisie on the basis of the number of employees. Employees, in turn, are classified into nine groups depend-

ing on their relation to authority (managers, supervisors and nonmanagers) and relation to scarce skills (experts, skilled and nonskilled). See EO Wright's *Class Counts. Comparative Studies of Class Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. The Asian Project teams drew on the authority axis (or the domination feature) of Wright's early works.

8. It may not have changed significantly from the 83 percent figure in 1972. See Balisacan, Medalla and Pernia's *Spatial Development, Land Use and Urban-Rural Linkages in the Philippines*. National Economic Development Authority. Integrated Population and Development Planning Project, 1995.

9. Alba's study reveals that wage differentials are positively associated with experience (rather than educational attainment) and the extent of participation of the private sector; it is correlated negatively with female density and the proportion of firms in the National Capital Region.

10. An overlap is expected especially if occupation or employment status is included in the scoring scheme. In the case of the survey, occupation would merit a score of 5 points for the highest occupation out of a maximum of 75 points. It is also the case that occupation, educational attainment and income are highly correlated.

11. For the 1983 estimate, see Roberto *op. cit.*, p. 61. The 1997 estimate was obtained from Trends-MBL's 1997 survey for the Social Weather Stations.

12. Trends-MBL's estimates are more conservative at 24 percent.

13. Tabunda and de Jesus used the educational attainment of the household head, the type, construction material, state of repair, floor area and tenure status of the house and the presence of selected facilities as indicators to determine the SES of MM households.

14. Since 1989, NGO registrations in the Securities and Exchange Commission have risen consistently, averaging 7,651 per year between 1990 and 1993. Virginia Miralao and Cynthia Banzon Bautista's *The Growth and Changing Roles of NGOs and the Voluntary Sector. Philippine Sociological Review* 41(1-4). January-December 1993 pp. 19-36. Pinches (*op. cit.*, p. 123) alluded to the proliferation of NGOs as indicative of the presence of the middle class.

15. The farmers in this category are small and poor farmers. Educational attainment is used as a proxy variable for economic and social status to decide whether the respondents' fathers are to be classified as self-employed proprietors or workers.

16. See Bautista, Rivera, Tabunda and Arguillas's *Exploring the Middle Classes in Metropolitan Manila: A Survey Report* submitted to the Academia Sinica and the UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies, 2000. Rivera analyzed the political data and is responsible for Chapter 4 of the Report. The following sections draw

primarily from Rivera's findings and secondarily from the findings of Karaos *op. cit.*

17. For an overview of middle class politics in the post-war period, see T Rivera's Middle Class Politics: The Philippine Experience. *The Journal of Social Sciences* 45 (2000).

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