NEGOTIATING COLONIAL MODERNITY:
FILIPINAS AS CONSUMERS AND CITIZENS IN THE
AMERICAN COLONIAL PHILIPPINES, 1901-1937

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<tr>
<td>NFWC</td>
<td>National Federation of Women’s Clubs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OFW</td>
<td>Overseas Filipino Workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAUW</td>
<td>Philippine Association of University Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAW</td>
<td>Society for the Advancement of Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UP</td>
<td>University of the Philippines</td>
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NOTE ON BIOGRAPHIES AND TRANSLATIONS

The story of Paz Marquez Benitez is fortunate enough to have been preserved. Paz left behind many letters and journal entries that have been compiled and published by her daughter, thus keeping alive the soul of a beautiful and vibrant Filipino woman. The story of Ofelia Hidalgo Dacanay, however, has not been written down for posterity, and few formal records about her life remain in existence. Therefore the names, places, and events in the story of my paternal grandmother’s life are all family memories, retold to me through the eyes of her children—my aunts and father. The biographies of these two women have been juxtaposed throughout the course of this thesis in order to shed light on the progress made by Paz’s vanguard generation of “modern” Filipino women. Later generations of Filipino women, including migrant generations such as Ofelia’s, followed in the footsteps of their elite Filipina forebears, riding on the heels of increased female empowerment that resulted from the struggle for citizenship.

For the translations of articles, advertisements, and other content from Liwayway magazine in Chapter 3, I have attempted to translate the original Tagalog to the best of my ability with help from my Filipino language professor, Dr. Leticia Pagkalinawan.
CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Filipinas at a Colonial Crossroads

This study revolves around the story of two women. Like many stories, it is a tale of two people who, at first glance, would seem to be opposites. One was thirty years older, born a generation ahead of the other. One was wealthy, and one was a commoner. One was a society girl; the other, a barrio girl. One enjoyed a lifestyle of wealth and endless opportunity; the other had to work hard to achieve a middle-class standard of living for her and her family. One lived in the Philippines her entire life; the other eventually gave into the tantalizing promise of life in the United States.

Still, as in any story of opposites, there exist circumstances that connected the lives of these two women. No, they never met, but they did share similar life experiences. They were both teachers who were deeply committed to the education of young Filipinos. They were both family women, devoted to their husbands and children. And at the root of it all, they were both products of the world in which they grew up. This world was the American colonial Philippines, and Paz Marquez Benitez and Ofelia Hidalgo Dacanay were two women who became part of the bigger story of the evolution of “modern Filipino womanhood” during the first few decades of the twentieth century.

Born in 1894 into the prominent Marquez family of Quezon province, Paz Marquez Benitez was a well-known Filipina educator, short-story writer, and founder of the Philippine magazine Woman’s Home Journal. She was among the first generation of Filipinos who were the recipients of American public education in the islands, and attended the University of the Philippines, graduating in 1912 with a degree in English. In 1914 she married her college sweetheart, Francisco Benitez, who had been a pensionado
at Teacher’s College, Columbia University in New York. Two years later, in 1916, Paz accepted a position as an English professor at her alma mater, and became one of UP’s most beloved and well-respected teachers. Continuing her commitment to education, particularly for young Filipino women, she and six other female educators founded Philippine Women’s College, now Philippine Women’s University, in 1919.¹

Still, these educational activities—in addition to being a wife and mother of four children—were not enough to keep Paz satisfied in life. Also in 1919, she founded the *Woman’s Home Journal*, a magazine for Filipinas that took after American women’s magazines such as *Ladies’ Home Journal* and promoted ideas of wife-and-motherhood. Although serving as editor-in-chief of the magazine kept her quite busy, her first love was literature and writing. She continued to write, and her stories regularly appeared in magazines and newspapers. Among them was the short story “Dead Stars,” published in 1925, which is considered to be the first Filipino short story written in English.² Today, it remains a classic in Filipino literature and is widely read in Philippine schools. Paz continued to teach until 1951, when she retired but remained active in academia as editor of the *Philippine Journal of Education*. Throughout her entire life, she advocated the education of women and advancement of Filipino women writers.

¹ The seven “founding mothers” of the Philippine Women’s College were Clara Aragon, Concepcion Aragon, Francisca Tirona Benitez (Paz’s sister-in-law), Paz Marquez Benitez, Carolina Ocampo Palma, Mercedes Rivera, and Socorro Marquez Zaballero (Paz’s sister). It gained university recognition in 1932 under the American colonial government.

² Rachel C. Lee, “Journalistic Representations of Asian Americans and Literary Responses, 1910-1920,” in *An Interethnic Companion to Asian-American Literature*, ed. King-Kok Cheung (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 264. In “Dead Stars,” Benitez is critical of the American administration’s “hurried development of the islands.” The story’s characters—Alfredo, Julia, and Esperanza—represent the conflict between tradition and progress in the form of a love triangle. Alfredo’s hasty decision to break off his engagement with the traditional and virtuous Esperanza to give into the temptation of the modern, free-spirited Julia ends in an ultimately unhappy match. The setting evokes a pre-colonial, pastoral nostalgia for the Philippine past. Overall, the story is a warning to Filipinos to be wary of the American colonial regime and not embrace “modernity” too openly.
Figure 1.1: A young Paz Marquez Benitez in formal *mestiza* dress. Cover of *Paz Marquez Benitez: One Woman’s Life, Letters, and Writings* by Virginia Benitez Licuanan (Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1995).

A generation later, hundreds of miles away, Ofelia Hidalgo was born in 1924 in Bacolod City, Negros Occidental. When she was about 3 months old, her parents died. One of her aunts, a schoolteacher and Protestant minister who lived in Zamboanga, offered to take her in, and brought little Ofelia south to live with her. In 1940, at the age of 16, Ofelia left Zamboanga to study at the Philippine Normal School in Manila.\(^3\) She finished after two years and became an elementary-school teacher, just as the Pacific War was beginning. During the Japanese Occupation, she married her sweetheart, Pablo Dacanay, with whom she had six children over the course of fourteen years.\(^4\) In 1970, the couple immigrated with their two youngest children, then thirteen and nine, to the United

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\(^3\) Corazon Dacanay Lopez, e-mail message to author, March 9, 2014.

\(^4\) Lopez, e-mail message to author, April 4, 2014. The aunt in Zamboanga who took Ofelia in after she was orphaned was a very active Protestant pastor, and therefore Ofelia was raised Protestant. However, as the Dacanay family were devout Catholics, she converted to Catholicism upon her marriage to Pablo.
States, settling in the Washington, D.C. area near members of their extended family. Pablo and Ofelia worked hard over the next two and a half decades to earn a modest living and a secure future for their children. Upon their retirement in the United States, they returned home to the Philippines in 1994.5

What did Ofelia, a middle-class Filipina and grade school teacher, have in common with Paz, an elite Filipina “Renaissance woman” who, in addition to her illustrious writing and teaching career, played basketball, rode a tractor, owned a

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5 Allan H. Dacanay, conversation with the author, April 6, 2014.
beautiful home and garden, and rubbed elbows with the most prominent politicians of the era? The answer seems simple—both women exhibited tendencies of “modern Filipino womanhood” in multiple ways. For one, both women attended public school through the college or university level, and went on to have careers as teachers. Second, in terms of their daily life, actions, behavior, and dress, both women closely resembled the archetype of the “modern woman” that had begun to emerge as a result of the increased educational and economic opportunities during the American colonial period. According to the discourses promoted by American colonial officials (which were subsequently adopted by elite Filipino collaborators), the modern woman was middle-to-upper-class and educated, simultaneously domestic and political. Although Paz was probably an outstanding exception to the masses of Filipino women rather than a typical example, her colorful lifestyle and enthusiasm for various interests and projects demonstrated a break with the old, traditional ways of the Spanish colonial Philippines and the country’s entry into a new age—one of encroaching modernity, formative nationhood, and pending independence. Despite their socioeconomic differences, Paz’s upper-class example is complemented by Ofelia’s middle-class example of Filipino womanhood. Ofelia’s life as a schoolteacher and her subsequent emigration to the United States is also indicative of the impact of the American colonial legacy on Filipino women. Her life experiences point to the gains made by Paz’s generation, gains which brought women increasingly out of the domestic sphere and encouraged them to participate more actively in the economic, social, and political affairs of the Philippines (and later on, in the United States, as a result of increased migration and diaspora).

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The American colonial period brought new developments such as the extension of higher levels of education to women, new forms of fashion, entertainment, and consumerism, and an increase in public-sphere opportunities. More importantly, by the 1910s and 1920s, these were all prerequisites (in accordance with the American paradigm of modern womanhood) for female citizenship. The fact that middle and upper-class Filipinas successfully acculturated to these standards would increasingly lead them to seek equal status with men as Philippine citizens. It was at once a turbulent and exciting time to be a Filipino woman.

This study will examine the making of the concepts of “modern womanhood” and “female citizenship” in the American colonial Philippines from approximately 1901, when the Philippine-American War was officially drawing to a close and the colonial administration was setting up its regime, to 1937, when Filipino women gained suffrage under the new constitution as the Philippines prepared for independence. I argue that during this time, elite Filipino women negotiated, appropriated and blended American notions of modern femininity with indigenous and Spanish colonial constructs of womanhood, ultimately adapting to the changes of colonial society and negotiating their stake in the emerging nation as voters. I therefore examine two aspects of American colonialism specifically relevant to women—female public education and representations of women in the popular press, neither of which have been the subjects of much previous study—in order to highlight the effects of American cultural imperialism on Filipino women, as well as to underscore their role in the women’s suffrage movement of the late 1920s and 1930s. New prescriptions for “modern womanhood” taught in American public schools were reinforced by articles, images, and consumer advertisements.
depicting “modern women” in Philippine magazines. Together, colonial education and the popular press combined forces to create an omnipresent, pervasive socioeconomic and cultural influence that weighed heavy with imperial motives, as the United States sought to remake Filipinas in the image of “modern” American women. At the same time, the American attempt at imposing a certain model of femininity on Filipinas often clashed with the older Spanish colonial model (although there were some instances of continuity between American and Spanish attitudes toward Filipino women) as well as pre-colonial ideas concerning women’s roles in public society. These tensions would provide the basis for the debates on woman suffrage in the late 1920s and 1930s as Filipino women took an increasingly active role in defining their participation in the affairs of the emerging Philippine nation.

The Colonial Setting: Betrayal and “Benevolence”

The story of the American colonial period in the Philippines began during the waning years of Spanish rule in the islands. The American government had been debating whether or not to involve themselves in the affairs of the fledgling Spanish empire as part of a larger debate over the future of the United States as an empire itself. The nation was in dire need of alternate avenues to boost its economy in the wake of a severe economic crisis in 1893, caused by a run on the national gold supply due to the overbuilding of railroads. Industrialists and big businessmen saw the takeover of Spanish possessions in the Caribbean, namely Cuba, as a way to expand American industries and markets overseas, thereby building up an empire. They had also long been interested in Cuba’s

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strategic location for control of shipping between New Orleans and the rest of the world. These proponents of intervention in the affairs of the Spanish empire became known in the government as imperialists; their opponents, anti-imperialists. The mysterious sinking of the U.S. battleship *Maine* in Havana Harbor on February 15, 1898 gave the imperialists just the excuse they needed to declare war. Two months later, on April 25, 1898, President William McKinley declared war against Spain. American troops were sent to Cuba, where they intervened in the Cuban war for independence from Spain.

At the other end of the Spanish Empire, Commander George Dewey of the U.S. Asiatic Squadron was sent to the Philippines, where he engaged in battle with Admiral Patricio Montojo of the Spanish Navy on May 1, 1898. The battle was short and swift, and within hours, the Spanish fleet was sunk. The Spanish-American War itself lasted less than three months. Spain surrendered on July 17, and the Treaty of Paris was signed on December 10, 1898. The two powers agreed that Spain would cede temporary control of Cuba to the United States, who promised it would grant eventual independence for the island. The United States acknowledged Cuban independence in 1898 and 1901 in the Teller and Platt Amendments; however, the U.S. military presence was allowed to remain in order to “guarantee and protect Cuban sovereignty.” In the Caribbean, Spain handed over Puerto Rico and parts of the Spanish West Indies to the United States in addition to control of Cuba; in the Pacific, they ceded Guam and the Philippines.

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The spoils of war allocated by the Treaty of Paris led to new questions in the U.S. government regarding what to do with the Philippines. The imperialists in Congress argued that the United States was a newcomer to the global imperial game, and control of the Philippines would have enormous economic implications for the United States. Since the United States was in dire need of new markets, the Philippines’ location in the western Pacific Ocean made it the ideal stepping-stone to the burgeoning China market (not to mention a strategic military base). The islands themselves could also be used as an export market for mass-produced American consumer goods. McKinley and Congress decided to annex the Philippines for these very reasons; however, the Filipinos as not going to go down without a fight.

During the joint campaign against the Spanish, there had been collaboration between American advisors (Dewey, General Leonard Wood, and U.S. Consul E. Spencer Pratt, among others) and Emilio Aguinaldo, leader of the Philippine nationalist forces. Dewey had promised to aid the rebels with additional arms, and Wood had assured Aguinaldo that the United States would leave after the defeat of the Spanish and had no intentions of remaining in the islands. However, in early 1898, after the conclusion of the Spanish-American War, McKinley immediately sent troops to pacify the Philippines. By late July 1898, nearly 11,000 American soldiers were stationed in the islands. Aguinaldo and the Filipino rebels felt betrayed by the Americans for erasing the struggle they had been waging since the 1880s. The end of the Spanish colonial period in the Philippines was supposed to mark the real beginning of the First Republic, free from

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12 Kramer, 93.
imperial control of any kind. The Treaty of Paris had dashed these hopes with Spain signing over control of the Philippines to the United States. Having been ruled by one colonial power for over three hundred years, Filipinos were so close to independence only to suddenly find themselves under the control of a new imperial master.

In response to the betrayal of the Filipinos at the hands of the Americans, Aguinaldo and his revolutionary forces began to retaliate against the foreign presence in their country. The Philippine-American War was officially fought from 1899 to 1902, but over a decade of guerrilla fighting continued in rural areas after the formal truce. Brutal and bloody, the war claimed the lives of many Philippine soldiers and civilians: in the three years between 1899 and 1902, over 20,000 Filipino soldiers were killed in action, while fighting and disease claimed the lives of 200,000 civilians. By comparison, only 4,390 Americans were killed during the course of the war.\(^{13}\) Though it was an ugly start to the establishment of the American overseas empire, expansionists at home deemed it necessary in order to secure the islands for their imperial goals.\(^{14}\) Many Americans referred to the war as an “insurrection,” rather than to “acknowledge the Filipinos’ contention that they were fighting to ward off a foreign invader,” clearly exhibiting ignorant and imperialist attitudes.\(^ {15}\)

In contrast to the violent, destructive nature of the Philippine-American War, the U.S. government vowed to take a different approach in their imperial management of the

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islands: one of “benevolent assimilation,” or goodwill towards the Filipino people with the intent of remaking them in the image of American citizens. In 1899, President McKinley appointed the First Philippine Commission to go to the islands and gather information about the environment, resources, society, and people of the archipelago. The president needed to understand the nature of the islands in order to create policies and establish the colonial administration. The findings of the First Philippine Commission greatly shaped early American colonial policies in the Philippines. The Second Philippine Commission, organized in 1900 and headed by William Howard Taft, served as the provisional American government in the colonial Philippines. McKinley had granted the “Taft Commission” legislative as well as limited executive powers, which they used to set up a bicameral legislature, pass a legal code, and create a civil service staffed by elite, educated Filipino collaborators who would become the country’s future politicians.

The crowning achievement toward which the Americans strived was the reproduction of American democracy in the Philippines. In order to meet this goal, they had to transform all aspects of Philippine society, from the modernization of the economy, to the institution of public health, to the expansion of education and the Americanization of the media and popular press. During the course of the grand social “experiment” that was American colonialism in the Philippines, the colonizers aimed to

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remake the Filipino people in their image through civilizational uplift.\textsuperscript{18} Included in this uplift were Filipino women, whom the United States intended to transform into model female citizens. The transformation of Filipinas into “modern” women occurred through education in female-oriented subjects (home economics, teaching, and nursing) and by imposing upon them, through the popular press, a new cultural construction of femininity that was heavily based on consumerism, in accordance with the political and economic goals of the United States.

Filipinos responded ambiguously to the rapid institution of American colonial policies. The elites, who tended to willingly collaborate with whichever regime was in power, were quite amenable to American rule. Filipino revolutionaries, many of whom were lower-class, actively fought back into the mid-1910s, but eventually the militant resistance died out and ushered in a period of peaceful acculturation.\textsuperscript{19} However, scholars often fail to acknowledge that Filipino men were not the only ones to participate in, collaborate with, and resist the colonial project. By the end of the colonial period, a small


\textsuperscript{19} For the rest of the colonial period and during World War II, many Filipinos had fond memories of the American regime. Filipinos, whose emotions were still running high after the Occupation, were quick to oppose the Japanese in favor of MacArthur’s liberation of the Philippines and the educational and cultural contributions that the Americans had made to the islands during the first half of the century (for an example, see Toribio C. Castillo, “The Changing Social Status of the Filipino Women during the American Administration,” Master’s thesis, University of Southern California, 1942). In the 1950s and 1960s, nationalist historians took a different, more critical view of the American empire, claiming that their former colonizer was not as “benevolent” as it had tried to make itself out to be. Renato Constantino’s \textit{The Miseducation of the Filipino} (Quezon City: Malaya Books, 1966) was one of the first nationalist works to blast the American colonial regime, pointing out that American education and culture turned the Filipinos into brainwashed “little Americans” who lacked nationalist pride. In recent decades, other Philippine historians have debunked the myth that the United States was ever “exceptional” or “benevolent,” uncovering the true imperial motives behind American colonial policies and showing that they were actually quite similar to the Dutch, the British, and other European powers in the age of high imperialism. See Julian Go and Anne L. Foster, \textit{The American Colonial State in the Philippines: Global Perspectives} (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003); Paul A. Kramer, \textit{The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States, and the Philippines} (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); May, \textit{Social Engineering in the Philippines}. 

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group of influential elite clubwomen-turned-suffragettes, educated in the American
tradition and possessing the necessary social and financial resources to be considered
“modern,” were able to navigate and challenge the complex parameters of “modern
womanhood” through the female suffrage movement in the Philippines during the 1920s
and 1930s. The debate surrounding woman suffrage is perhaps the best lens through
which the evolution and negotiation of modern Filipino womanhood can be analyzed.
Moreover, it was a movement that would not have happened if the modern Filipino
woman had not occupied such a precarious, difficult-to-define position in early twentieth-
century Philippine society. What did she look like? What did she act like? What role
would she play not just in society, but in the political arena of the new nation?

**Deconstructing “Modern Filipino Womanhood:” Cross-Colonial Connections and
Multicultural “Hybridities”**

This thesis seeks to highlight the centrality of women in the formation and
execution of colonial policies in the American-occupied Philippines. In recent decades,
scholars have successfully shown how women have affected policymaking in other
colonies across the world. Ann Laura Stoler, for example, has examined how structures
of power are embedded in gender relations and colonial hierarchies in the Netherlands
Indies (specifically the island of Java) during the late nineteenth and early twentieth
centuries.20 Additionally, Laura Briggs has shown how the formation of U.S.
development policy in Puerto Rico during the mid-twentieth century arose out of

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concerns about native women’s sexuality and reproductive capacity. Stoler and Briggs are just two of many historians in recent years who have begun to place issues of sexuality, reproduction, and motherhood at the center of empire rather than at the periphery.

In the Philippines, the importance of women in colonial policymaking did not primarily lie in controlling their reproductive systems, but, as the literature suggests, in three other important areas: their desire to be educated, their ability to constitute a ready consumer market for American exports, and their capacity to be molded into productive citizens. Fulfilling these goals, first and foremost, relied heavily on the expansion of colonial education for Filipino women. Education can be considered here as a “top-down” approach for examining the cultural effects of colonialism, as evidenced by the various American colonial records used in its analysis. The public education system reflected colonial policies with regard to the management of natives (with special attention paid to gender differences), and Filipinos themselves had very little, if any, input into the curriculum. Carolyn Israel Sobritchea’s essay “American Colonial Education and its Impact on the Status of Filipino Women” shows how sweeping changes to the Philippine public education system at once expanded and limited opportunities for Filipinas in the public sphere. The vast expansion of public education at the primary level, which made it compulsory for all boys and girls to attend school through grade 7, formally included women in the system for the first time. Attending school through the

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22 For more on the centrality of gender to empire, see also Frances Gouda, *Dutch Culture Overseas: Colonial Practice in the Netherlands Indies, 1900-1942* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1995); Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Conquest* (New York: Routledge, 1995); and Clare Midgley, *Gender and Imperialism* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1998).
primary level subsequently gave many women the opportunity to further their education at the secondary and college levels. At these higher levels, the curriculum became much more rigidly gendered. Boys could enter into practically any field, but for girls, the fields of study and subsequent career options proved to be quite limited. Home economics constituted the foundation of the curriculum no matter which field a girl chose. As a result, teaching and nursing, known for their “caregiving” and “womanly” qualities, became the most popular career choices for Filipino women in the first half of the twentieth century. These notions of education and careers that were deemed appropriate for women directly reflected feminist developments (and their limitations) in the United States at the time. When translated over to the colonial setting, female education and female-designated careers greatly aided the colonial administrators and elite Filipino collaborators in allocating a tightly controlled area of public space for women.

Reinforcing these gendered forms of public education were, as Matthew Frye Jacobson has suggested, the hordes of advertisements selling beauty products, clothes, and home goods in the press that were directed at Filipino women. Increased consumerism supported the motives of the American colonial regime in creating a relationship with the Philippines based on social, economic, and subsequently political dependence. Paging through issues of Liwayway magazine, a popular Tagalog-language general-interest magazine founded in 1922, it is clear that the press played a large role in promoting the “ideal” aspects of modern Filipino womanhood according to the colonizers’ standards. Not surprisingly, many of Liwayway’s articles, illustrations, photos, and advertisements were aimed at a female audience. Much of the content is

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similar in message and format to contemporary American women’s magazines of the time, such as *Ladies’ Home Journal*. As opposed to formal colonial education, the influence of the popular press is considered to be a more of a “bottom-up” influence, particularly with regard to women, due to its democratizing capability and the active role that Filipino male and female editors and contributors were able to play in writing, editing, and publishing.\(^{24}\) The ways in which women were represented in articles, illustrations, photos, and advertisements demonstrate shifts over time as editors and readers alike grappled with conflicting ideas over which colonial construction, if any, Filipinas should emulate in terms of beauty, fashion, motherhood, and consumerism.

The contradictory images of the “modern woman” created by colonial education and women’s magazines did much to shape the Filipina citizenship debates in the 1920s and 1930s. These debates were an integral part of the female suffrage movement as the Philippines worked to gain independence from the United States. Still, it is important to note that the debates were not simply over suffrage, but were representative over the larger question of the role of the “modern woman” in Philippine society.\(^{25}\) As the Philippines had already been colonized once before, Filipinas had not two cultural

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\(^{24}\) Georgina Reyes Encanto, *Constructing the Filipina: A History of Women’s Magazines (1891-2002)* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 2004), 4. The popular media and the press was not a complete “top-down” influence, and exhibited many “bottom-up” tendencies. It was “top-down” in that it did reflect colonial goals to create a foreign export market for American goods; however, magazines were also appropriated by Filipino women as a tool to negotiate and shape their changing identity in colonial society.

\(^{25}\) It should be noted that negotiating colonial modernity was not a challenge unique to Filipinas; women across Asia had to navigate between tradition and modernity during the age of high imperialism and growing nationalism. For examples in Burma, see Chie Ikeya, *Refiguring Colonialism, Women, and Modernity in Burma* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2011); for examples in China, see Joan Judge, “Citizens or Mothers of Citizens? Gender and Meaning of Modern Chinese Citizenship,” in *Changing Meanings of Citizenship in Modern China*, ed. Merle Goldman and Elizabeth J. Perry, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 23-43; and Sarah E. Stevens, “Figuring Modernity: The New Woman and the Modern Girl in Republican China,” in “Gender and Modernism between the Wars, 1918-1939,” special issue, *NWSA Journal* 15, no. 3 (Autumn 2003): 82-103.
constructions that they had to reconcile, but three: indigenous, in which women exercised economic independence and decision-making abilities in the household; Spanish, in which women were instructed to be pious and virtuous “queens of the home” with caring for their husbands and children as the first priority; and American, in which women were encouraged to seek educational and career opportunities outside of the home while maintaining their roles as housewives and mothers. In order to gain suffrage, elite Filipina suffragettes formed their own model of modern womanhood based on their ability to conform to Western ideas of “cultural citizenship,” a term coined by Jane Chapman in her study of female representation in the British and colonial Indian presses between 1860 and 1930. Chapman sheds light on “how women were perceived as a readership and as consumers by newspapers,” and subsequently how their actions in the public sphere proved that they were eligible for full inclusion in the political sphere.26 Her concept of female “cultural citizenship” describes how women used their public-sphere activities—education, careers, social work, and consumerism—for social and political ends, thereby “satisfying demands for full social inclusion.”27 In the case of the Philippines, elite women’s education and representations in the popular press demonstrated their acculturation to American values of modernity, and their fulfillment of the cultural requirements set by the colonizer for inclusion as citizens.

In addition to examining the centrality of Filipino women to colonial policymaking and imperial goals, a second contribution that this thesis intends to make is a culture-based analysis of empire, gender, and citizenship. Culture has been notably

27 Ibid., 9.
absent from the traditional diplomatic approach to history—the approach which has most often been utilized by historians of the American colonial Philippines. In recent decades, Amy Kaplan has been one of the foremost scholars in calling for the need to study cultural influences and exchanges as integral parts of empire. In her influential essay “Left Alone with America: The Absence of Empire in the Study of American Culture,” she argues that in the imperial realm, culture and the social relations of gender, race, and ethnicity cannot be separated from the more traditionally studied aspects of empire like economics and government. “To understand the multiple ways in which empire becomes a way of life,” explains Kaplan, “means to focus on those areas of culture traditionally ignored as long as imperialism was treated as a matter of foreign policy conducted by diplomatic elites or as a matter of economic necessity driven by market forces. Not only about foreign diplomacy or international relations, imperialism is also about consolidating domestic cultures and negotiating international relations.” This call to examine the cultural ramifications of empire simultaneously opens the door to studies of the intersections of empire and gender. Women—particularly native and colonized women—throughout history have been largely excluded from scholarship on formal arenas of colonial society. Historians cannot begin to examine issues of gender and colonialism without an in-depth look at how the intricacies of culture (or, in the case of the Philippines, multiple competing cultures) affect them. This approach, then, provides a “bottom-up” rather than “top-down” look at how informal structures of power (fashion,}

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consumerism, and housewifery, to name a few) constitute an ever-present, permeating influence on colonized women.

In recent years, new and innovative analyses of “modern womanhood” in colonial Asia have been developed in response to Kaplan’s call for a more culture-based approach to the study of empire. These works have also followed Stoler’s lead in emphasizing the centrality of gender and sexuality to issues of empire. As the study of colonial and postcolonial women’s history has become more established over the past few decades, new studies have emerged which detail the modernization process in colonies across Asia during the early twentieth century. Chie Ikeya’s *Refiguring Women, Colonialism, and Modernity in Burma* provides an excellent model for an examination of the social, cultural, and political transformation of Burmese women during the early-to-mid-twentieth century. This gender-based narrative of Burmese colonialism describes how colonial subjects viewed, addressed, and appropriated British notions of the “new woman” or the “modern woman” (*khit kala*) presented by the popular press. “The woman of the *khit kala* was notable for her multivalence and her cosmopolitanism,” writes Ikeya. “She functioned as a cultural intermediary between the local and the global, occupying the liminal space conjoining the indigenous and the imperial, the national and the international, and continually [incorporating] elements drawn from elsewhere. She brought into association old and new and familiar and foreign ideas, practices, and institutions.” In focusing on the experiences of native women, Ikeya challenges older historiography that presents colonialism as a singular, destructive force, rather than a force to be confronted and negotiated with, as well as scholarship that presents colonial
subjects as passive subjects rather than active agents of transition and social change. Her work also reflects the contemporary trend in Southeast Asian, post-colonial and women’s studies to highlight instances in which women did exhibit power, agency, and control in their societies, rather than focusing on the lack of opportunities they had. Ikeya’s approach is useful in shedding light on how cross-cultural processes of acculturation and accommodation constitute the modernization process of native colonial subjects, particularly women, in Anglo-American empires.

Similar analyses of the “modern woman” have also been conducted for the colonial Philippines. In *Transpacific Femininities: The Making of the Modern Filipina*, Denise Cruz emphasizes the primacy of transnational connections—political, economic, and cultural—in the making of the “modern Filipina.” Cruz uses the term “transpacific femininities” to describe the collective ethnic and gender consciousness that Filipino women developed over the course of the twentieth century by blending aspects of Spanish, American, Japanese, and Chinese cultures with their own indigenous conceptions of womanhood. Analyzing mostly print culture and literary sources, she tracks the development of Filipina culture from the early to the mid-twentieth century: “The creation of a national literary tradition was seriously entwined with elites’ attempts to define the Filipina,” she writes, “as a writer and reader of English, as a representative model for other women, and as a citizen whose actions and behaviors determined the future of the Philippine republic and the Filipino community in the United States.”

Still, throughout the twentieth century, representations of the Filipino woman as “modern”

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29 Ikeya, 7.
were extremely divergent and contradictory. Thus, Cruz details how the “transpacific” Filipina became the object of fascination and scrutiny in twentieth-century literary culture in the Philippines, as women played an increasingly prominent role both within Philippine society and abroad. Cruz’s analysis is important because it argues that the modern Filipina is not simply a product of one or two colonial influences; rather, she has emerged as a result of constant, pervasive interaction and cross-colonial cultural exchanges in the Philippines with Spain and the United States.  

By the 1920s, an important aspect of both American and Filipino modern womanhood was civic participation. The influence of American political culture (particularly the fact that American women secured suffrage in 1919) on elite Filipino women led them to become increasingly politicized in the 1920s and early 1930s. Perhaps the most relevant scholarship to the politicization of Filipino women is Mina Roces’s work on the female suffrage movement in the American colonial Philippines, a movement which is often regarded as the culmination of the female citizenship debates. Roces’s essays “Women, Citizenship, and the Politics of Dress in Twentieth-Century Philippines” and “Is the Suffragist an American Colonial Construct? Defining ‘the Filipino Woman’ in the Colonial Philippines” contend that Filipina suffragettes embraced the American model of modern womanhood, as evidenced by their desire to secure a more prominent public and political role in civil society. However, Roces also points out that the suffragettes were unable to openly challenge the traditional, Spanish, “Maria Clara” model of femininity that had been the dominant ideal during the Spanish colonial

31 Transpacific Femininities takes the analysis of foreign cultures on Filipino women a step further than this thesis by also incorporating the influence of the Japanese Occupation (1942-1945) on Filipino womanhood.
period half a century earlier, lest they endanger their whole cause as the men in the Philippine legislature were unwilling to let go of this image.\footnote{Mina Roces, “Women, Citizenship, and the Politics of Dress in Twentieth-Century Philippines,” in \textit{Gender Politics in Asia: Women Manoeuvering within Dominant Gender Orders}, ed. Wil Burghoorn, Kazuki Iwanaga, Cecilia Milwertz, and Qi Wang (Malaysia: NIAS Press, 2008): 11-42.} Therefore, their strategies in arguing for suffrage were more conciliatory in nature. This was clear in their decision not to challenge “the cultural construction of the woman as ‘wife and mother,’ as beauty queen and civic worker,” as well as their choice to present themselves in traditional \textit{mestiza} dress in order to make them seem less threatening to the dominant social order.\footnote{Mina Roces, “Is the Suffragist an American Colonial Construct? Defining ‘the Filipino Woman’ in the Colonial Philippines,” in \textit{Women’s Suffrage in Asia: Gender, Nationalism, and Democracy}, ed. Louise Edwards and Mina Roces (New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), 48.}

Therefore, their strategies in arguing for suffrage were more conciliatory in nature. This was clear in their decision not to challenge “the cultural construction of the woman as ‘wife and mother,’ as beauty queen and civic worker,” as well as their choice to present themselves in traditional \textit{mestiza} dress in order to make them seem less threatening to the dominant social order. Though her main argument is useful in attempting to understand the evolution of modern Filipino womanhood, one cannot help but read Roces’s work and wonder exactly how women came to adopt select aspects of this cultural construction of the modern American woman, particularly how the seemingly “modern” model fit in with the existing Spanish colonial model that had already been imposed on them. Thus, I further argue that the Filipina suffragettes strategically took a conciliatory approach, embracing what they saw as the best elements of three cultural constructions of modern womanhood: American, Spanish, and pre-colonial Filipino.

The term “hybridity” is useful here in describing the model of Filipino womanhood that emerged from the suffrage movement. In their analysis of the “new woman” that was emerging around the world in the early the twentieth century, Heilmann and Beetham use the term “hybridities” to describe the national and ethnic multiplicity of the “modern woman.” This was due to factors such as colonization, migration, and diaspora, which caused women across the globe to interpret the Western concept of the
modern woman in different and unique ways.\textsuperscript{34} Their appropriation and internalization of modernity produced unique ideals of femininity that reflected both indigenous and Western elements, as Ikeya, Cruz, and Roces have all shown. Overall, the Filipina suffragettes tried to bring together “the best of the national [Philippine] character with the modern in a new and hybrid identity” during what Roces calls the “first wave” of Philippine feminism in the 1930s.\textsuperscript{35}

In hindsight, this “first wave” was much less radical than contemporary definitions of the term “feminism.” For the purposes of this thesis, feminism is defined here as a movement advocating full political, economic, and social rights for women. Heilmann and Beetham offer a helpful definition of “conservative feminism” that more or less characterizes the American and Filipina suffrage movements of the early twentieth century. Although they aggressively demanded the vote, Filipina suffragettes can be considered “conservative feminists,” as they simultaneously maintained that above all else, a woman’s primary role was to be wife and mother.\textsuperscript{36} Similar to many American feminists of the early twentieth century, Filipino feminists saw suffrage as just one step in the long-term battle for full economic independence and civic participation.\textsuperscript{37}

Aside from the valuable contributions of Cruz and Roces, little scholarly attention has been paid overall to the American cultural influence on the “hybridizing” process of creating Filipina citizenship during the colonial period. A comprehensive study of the making of the modern Filipina—one that incorporates culture-based elements such as

\textsuperscript{35} Roces, “Is the Suffragist an American Colonial Construct?” 49.
\textsuperscript{36} Heilmann and Beetham, 3-4.
education and popular culture—has yet to be produced. By looking at how the creation of multiple cultural constructions of femininity led to the politicization of women, I argue that the answer to the question of how Filipinas came to define the modern Filipino woman the way they did lies in the intersections of imperial politics, gender, education, consumerism, and culture.

**Structure of the Thesis**

“If we expect them to adopt our customs, our ideals, and our country,” wrote California home economics instructor Pearl Idelia Ellis in 1929, “let us set them a most worthy example.”38 While Ellis was writing about Mexican immigrant women in California, her attitude also reflects the American colonizing spirit in the Philippines, characterized by good intentions and benevolent tutelage. The American influence played a major role in the creation of the “modern Filipino woman” in the four decades between 1900 and 1940. Throughout the colonial period, a small number of American women traveled to the Philippines as wives of colonial officials, teachers, nurses, and social workers. Their influence was directly felt through their immediate contact and relationships with the Filipino people. The majority of American women, however, remained half a world away. Unbeknownst to them, they were still able to impose their conceptions of modern womanhood on Filipinas through example. With regard to female education, American colonial officials modeled educational practices for Filipino girls on those that existed for American girls. So too did the Philippine popular press come to emulate the American press, particularly in publications for women that disseminated

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certain ideas of modernity and ideal femininity. As two institutions that facilitated the spread of American cultural values with regard to modern womanhood, American schools and the popular press led to the creation and promotion of conflicting images of the “modern Filipino woman” in the 1920s and 1930s.

The second chapter of this thesis describes the educational changes brought about by the American colonial regime with a detailed look at how they affected Filipino girls and young women, and how these changes simultaneously expanded and limited opportunities for Filipinas in society and the economy. Female education promoted certain ideas of femininity, both in the public and private spheres, which were reinforced by consumer culture. Furthermore, the roles for women prescribed by colonial education greatly influenced the debates over female citizenship and the suffrage movement later on, as the nation had to decide how much political involvement to give to the new generation of highly educated, publicly active women.

The third chapter takes a detailed look at the representations of women in the popular press—specifically, general-interest and women’s magazines—during the mid-to-late American colonial period. Adopting Ikeya’s usefully termed “fashionista” and “housewife-and-mother” categories of analysis, this chapter contends that Liwayway was generally complicit in promoting the American model of modern womanhood, but not without challenging and questioning it. By continuing to circulate images of Filipinas dressed in traditional mestiza dress alongside women in modern Western dress, as well as steadfastly adhering to domestic roles in the private sphere, Filipino magazines demonstrated just how complicated defining modern womanhood had become by the mid-1930s.
Consequently, American education and popular culture informed Filipinas of the notion that they were charged with raising the new generation of Filipino citizens, leading to the political awakening of elite women.\(^{39}\) The fourth chapter describes how these two facets of American cultural imperialism combined to form the basis of the debates over woman suffrage in the late 1920s and 1930s, and contends that the struggle to define the Filipina citizen—a struggle that was shaped by the arguments, strategies, and compromises employed by elite woman suffragists—culminated with the Philippine legislature’s granting of suffrage to Filipino women in 1937. The “modern Filipino woman” who emerged victorious at the conclusion of the suffrage movement served as the paradigm of femininity in post-1937 Philippine society.

The brief epilogue and conclusion, in addition to summing up the evolution of modern Filipino womanhood examined in this thesis, looks at the ramifications of this model and the impact that it had on Filipino women throughout the remainder of the twentieth century. As Cruz has shown, characteristics of modern womanhood changed again after the Japanese Occupation and Pacific War. And, as Catherine Ceniza Choy has shown, they were altered once again with the increase of female overseas workers and emigrants who went abroad beginning in the mid-twentieth century.\(^{40}\) Roces further argues that a “second-wave” feminist movement occurred during 1970s and 1980s, in the years leading up to the People Power Revolution of 1986.\(^{41}\) This “first wave” of the Philippine feminist movement, which ended with the securing of female suffrage in 1937,

\(^{39}\) This in fact was not a wholly American idea; the role of woman-as-mother had already been used as a symbol to invoke morality and patriotism in the Philippines, notably in Rizal’s *Letter to the Women of Malolos* (1888).


set a strong foundation upon which all future waves of the feminist movement were measured. The epilogue underscores the centrality of multiple cross-cultural influences that have done much to shape Filipino womanhood in the past, as the Filipina tends to embrace the best of what each culture as to offer. If the vibrant life experiences of Paz Marquez Benitez and Ofelia Hidalgo Dacanay (as well as the ever-expanding patterns of globalization) are any indication of the future, the Filipina is likely to continue to evolve into the twenty-first century as the product of a multi-cultural, trans-Pacific, international crossroads.

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42 Roces, “Is the Suffragist an American Colonial Construct?” 49.
CHAPTER 2

Expanding Opportunities, Limiting Options:
The American Colonial Education of Filipino Girls, 1901-1937

March 10, 1938, University of the Philippines, Ermita, Manila. Paz finished copying the essay question onto the board and laid the piece of chalk down. She turned and smiled gently at her English class. “Handa na ba kayo?” she asked enthusiastically.

“Opo, Propesora,” responded the class, much less enthusiastically. They were all squirming in their seats. Paz couldn’t tell if it was in anticipation or dread, now that they could see the essay question she had written on the board.

“O, sige. I know you all have studied hard, and I believe you will do well. Puwede kayong magsimula ngayon. You may begin. Good luck!”

Paz’s sunny disposition and confidence, as was her usual behavior, seemed to put the students at ease. They picked up their pencils and began writing furiously in their examination booklets. The room released a collective sigh as the class lost themselves in their writing.

Having taught English, literature, and short-story writing at the University of the Philippines for the past twenty-two years, Paz was one of the university’s most popular professors. Young Filipinos and Filipinas inspired by her work (her short story Dead Stars, published in 1925, had gained national and international prominence) flocked to UP’s English Department to take her classes. Her classes were known to be demanding in
terms of the workload, but worthwhile because she was considered by her students and peers alike to be an exceptional teacher and an exceptional woman.\(^1\)

Paz sat down at her desk and took out a piece of paper to write a short letter to her daughter Jeanie, who was studying abroad in the United States. She rested her chin in her hand and smiled dreamily to herself. Surrounded by her eager-to-please students—and thinking of her own daughter working toward a degree at Teacher’s College in the United States—she fondly recalled her own days as a fresh-faced college student three decades earlier. The University of the Philippines had given her some of the best years of her life. She had been captain of the girls’ basketball team, met her husband Francisco at a dance, and, most importantly, developed the intense love of reading and writing that she just couldn’t help but share with her students.\(^2\) She had always known she wanted to make a difference in the lives of young Filipinos. What better way to make a living than to combine one’s passions into a dream job?

Paz began the letter to her daughter as she usually did, with a simple update on the goings-on of daily life in the Philippines. “Just now I am watching an English examination and since they are sitting far apart I don’t need to keep my eye on them all the time,” she wrote. She then proceeded to voice her displeasure at the purported university-wide cheating problem that school officials were up in arms about. Later on in the letter, though, she was quick to hint to Jeanie the wonderfully important nature of their career choice: “Still . . . I find my work more and more interesting as I grow older,

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1 “Paz Marquez Benitez,” The Major Collections: Filipino Writers in English, Ateneo Library of Women’s Writings, http://rizal.lib.admu.edu.ph/aliww/english_pmbenitez.html (accessed March 10, 2014). Throughout her celebrated teaching career at UP, which lasted from 1916 to 1951, Paz’s students included influential Filipino writers such as Loreto Paras Sulit, Paz Latorena, Bienvenido Santos, Manuel Arguilla, S.P. Lopez and National Artist Francisco Arcellana, who considered Paz to be “the mother of us all.”
2 Virginia Benitez Licuanan, Paz Marquez Benitez: One Woman’s Life, Letters, and Writings (Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1995), 27.
for which I am grateful.”3 Paz hoped that there would continue to be others like her and her daughter who would commit their lives to educating future generations of Filipinos.

June 10, 1940, Ermita, Manila. Sixteen-year-old Ofelia Hidalgo heard roosters faintly crowing outside her window. She yawned lazily and rolled over, pulling the pillow over her face to block the sunlight that was streaming in through the window. The rooster crowed again, and suddenly she awoke with a start. She had almost forgotten what day it was—her first day of classes at the Philippine Normal School!

As she rose from her bed, she felt butterflies in her stomach. She was feeling quite nervous, as she had only arrived at her aunt’s house in Manila from Zamboanga a few days earlier. She would stay with her aunt for the duration of the two-year teaching program at the Philippine Normal School.4 Wow, she thought to herself. Two years. Would she make friends? Was she smart enough to be here? Was this the right career path for her? Ofelia washed her face, brushed her teeth, and combed her hair. She slipped her dress on over her head and fastened her shoes, feeling more and more nervous as the minutes went on.

Finally, it was time to leave. She turned to check herself in the mirror one last time. Taking a deep breath to calm herself, she smoothed out her dress, an olive green cotton frock with a wide, white collar and buttons down the middle. I look like a teacher, she told herself. She smiled. She had dreamed of becoming a schoolteacher ever since she was a small girl. Her teachers in the American public school in Zamboanga City had always been so intelligent, positive and encouraging, and she wanted to be just like them. Remembering those feelings of enthusiasm and confidence a few years back, and with

3 Licuanan, 105.
4 Corazon Dacanay Lopez, e-mail message to author, April 4, 2014.
her books and class schedule in hand, she felt more determined than ever to succeed. Who knows where teaching might take her?

By the late American colonial period, Paz was already an established college professor and Ofelia was well on her way to becoming a grade school teacher. The path chosen by these two women was not uncommon in the early to mid-twentieth century Philippines. Teaching was considered as a respectable job for Filipinas and thus became the most popular career choice. Also popular were nursing, pharmacy, and social work. The American colonial period marked a significant increase in the number of educated women and female professionals—by 1931, over 3,000 Filipinas held college degrees and were active in many different areas of the Philippine workforce. Only three or four decades before, very few girls attended school through the primary level, many women were illiterate, and female professionals were virtually unheard of. How did this educational transformation for Filipino women come about?

This chapter will focus on the evolution of female education during the first three decades of the American colonial rule in the Philippines, as curricula conformed to American intentions to mold Filipino women in the image of their more “modern” colonizers through schooling in literacy, homemaking, “female” careers, and citizenship. I consider education to be a top-down influence on Filipino women because education for girls was included in formal colonial policy. Therefore, educational curriculum encouraged specific roles for Filipino women as dictated by the motives of the U.S.

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The greater inclusion of girls in public education was a radical departure from their exclusion during the Spanish colonial period. While girls were gaining high school and college degrees in unprecedented numbers, their restriction to female-oriented programs like home economics, teaching, and nursing reinforced old Spanish stereotypes of domesticity and reflected the limitations of American prescriptions for female behavior. Yet at the same time, female education also opened up opportunities for Filipino women to become involved in the public sector of society, which would later contribute to elite Filipinas’ diligent efforts to gain suffrage.

The first section of this chapter briefly describes education in the pre-colonial Philippines and under Spanish colonial rule in order to establish an understanding of the educational system at the time of the U.S. acquisition of the Philippines. It is necessary to show the starting point in this evolutionary journey, especially to illustrate the traditional forms of female education and the limited roles of women in Spanish Philippine society. The second section outlines the sweeping reforms enacted by the American colonial government beginning in 1901, which opened public education to Filipino girls and women. These changes subsequently altered the roles they were able to play in colonial society. The third section looks at two professions—teaching and nursing—that grew in popularity during the American period. Both occupations for women played important roles in the colonial project as they helped to achieve the government’s goals to eradicate illiteracy and hygiene; at the same time, they did not mark a big departure from Spanish

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6 It is important to note that many girls did not move on past the primary level unless their families were in a good enough socioeconomic position to support their daughters’ education. Therefore, the female roles formally supported by U.S. colonial education were not necessarily attainable for all Filipinas, since education remained somewhat exclusive. The gendered aspects of secondary and tertiary education that influenced ideas of womanhood affected mainly upper-class and upper-middle class girls whose families supported and invested in their education past the primary level.
colonial education in that they intended to keep Filipino women in domestic, home economics-based work that was deemed appropriate for their sex. Ultimately, through education, ideas of modern Filipino womanhood were heavily influenced by American educational practices and values regarding a woman’s duty to both her family and her society.

“That’s All I Learned in Convent School:” Pre-Colonial and Spanish Education for Filipinas

Before the Spanish arrival, education existed in limited forms in Philippine barangays. As there was no organized public education system, the bulk of learning was informal in nature. Some children were instructed in basic literacy and mathematics by “tribal tutors,” but most were taught laboring and domestic skills by their parents. Boys were educated by their fathers in their father’s trade or occupation, which more often than not was agriculture. Girls were educated by their mothers to perform chores and everyday tasks both inside and outside of the home, such as pottery, weaving, and cooking. For the select few number of women called to be babaylans (a shaman or spiritual healer), education assumed a religious nature. According to Castillo, women were more likely than men to be contacted by spirits in dreams and visions. A young woman called to be a babaylan would receive several months’ training in the uses of medicinal herbs, rituals associated with ceremonies, and midwifery.

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Upon the arrival of the Spanish to the Philippines in 1521 and the establishment of the colonial government in 1535, a large number of friars set up primary schools in their parishes. In 1582, the Spanish archbishop of the Philippines called for two schools to be built in each parish, one for boys and one for girls. The spread of formal schools across the archipelago made slow and halting progress, since the natives had to pay for the schools entirely from taxes. By 1700, there existed about 1,000 parish primary schools in the Philippines. Primary education was rudimentary and basic. The schools were jointly controlled by both government administrators and missionaries and reflected the needs of the Spanish empire. Since one of the main goals of the Spanish was to spread Catholicism to their colonies, the colonial school curriculum was heavily rooted in religion, but also included arithmetic, reading and writing in the local dialect. The Spanish language was rarely taught. Native Filipino instructors worked under close supervision of the friars, though in many cases, the friars themselves served as teachers in the primary schools.

Spanish was, however, the language of instruction in the secondary schools and universities run by Catholic friars. Secondary and higher education was religion-oriented and typically only accessible to the elite. The first secondary school (open to Spanish
males only) was the Colegio de Manila established by Jesuits in 1589 and later renamed the Colegio de San Ignacio. Twenty-two years later, the Colegio de Santo Tomas (now the University of Santo Tomas), was founded by Dominican friars in Manila in 1611, followed by the Colegio de San Juan de Letran, founded in 1620. Both the original campuses of Santo Tomas and San Juan de Letran were located in the walled-off Intramuros section of Manila, reflecting the Spanish friars’ intention to accommodate only the children of Spaniards and elite Filipinos. Outside of Manila, provincial seminary schools existed in Cebu, Naga, Jaro, and Vigan. Students in the secondary schools and universities worked toward degrees that would prepare them for the priesthood, medical professions, or lower-level civil service positions in the colonial government.

During the Spanish period, female access to formal education was not uniform across the archipelago; it depended upon a girl’s social class as well as where she lived. Though primary schools were co-ed, very few, if any, middle and lower-class girls attended. Especially in rural areas, where schools were few and far between, girls were expected to stay home and help their mothers with chores, housework, and taking care of younger siblings. A large majority remained illiterate, although some were able to learn to read and write. The education that rural and poor girls received was mostly informal vocational training from parents and relatives within the home, in the fields, or at the market. Across most of the Philippines, the agricultural, cash-crop, hacienda economy

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Manzon, 279. It is disputed when native Filipinos, or indios, were allowed access to secondary schools in the Philippines. According to Schumacher, higher education had been available to peninsulares and mestizos since the 17th century and Halili states that indios were finally allowed access in the 18th century. However, Torralba, Dumol, and Manzon state that some Pampangan and Tagalog children of the native aristocracy were attending colleges as early as the mid-17th century.

13 Schumacher, 10-13.
14 Infante, 27-30.
was based on manual labor, at least for the Filipinos. Rural economies were therefore largely incompatible with, and typically did not require, formal education.

Upper-class Filipinas fared somewhat better than their lower-class counterparts, as they had access (albeit limited access) to formal education during the Spanish period. Just as elite Filipino boys attended private schools run by friars, elite Filipinas enrolled in convent schools established by nuns. There were two types of colleges for women: regular schools called *colegios*, and nunery schools called *beaterios*. Among the first *colegios* were the Colegio de Santa Potencia (1594) and the Colegio de Santa Isabel (1632), while two of the first notable *beaterios* were the Beaterio de la Compania de Jesus (1684) and the Beaterio Colegio de Santa Catalina (1696). The differences between these two types of schools lay in who could attend: for a long time the *colegios* were exclusively for daughters of Spaniards, while the *beaterios* were among the first to include native Filipinas.\(^\text{15}\) The curriculum in both types of convent schools resembled and reflected the education of elite European girls during this time. Girls learned “academic” subjects such as reading and writing in both Spanish and their native language, as well as religion, arithmetic, geometry, geography, and Spanish history. They were further trained in “finishing” subjects like music, painting, needlework, and dressmaking.\(^\text{16}\) Although she graduated from the public Tayabas High School in 1908, Paz Marquez Benitez had a short stint at the La Concordia convent school during her teenage years. Even though she only spent a few months at the convent school, her time there had a significant impact. To Paz, it signified a break with modernity and a return to elitist, impractical education.

\(^\text{15}\) Halili, 88; Torralba, Dumol, and Manzon, 279.
Years later, when she presented her first grandchild with a beautiful baby layette embroidered by hand, she said with a laugh, “I learned it from the nuns—that’s all I learned in convent school! . . . that and how to handle the Spanish subjunctive!” The impractical and highly formal curriculum of convent schools, fashioned to reflect the lifestyle of the elite, reinforced the fact that secondary and higher education remained an opportunity reserved for the upper classes until after the turn of the twentieth century.

It was extremely difficult for lower-class Filipinos to obtain higher education because the primary schools did not provide them with much formal training in Spanish, and Spanish was the language of instruction in the secondary schools and universities. In the middle of the nineteenth century, Filipinos began to grow resentful of Spanish rule. Among their grievances was their lack of educational opportunity: the upper classes, who were educated, believed it made them deserving of a place in Spanish society, while the lower classes began to view education as a tool for upward social mobility. By the mid-1800s, “native Filipinos other than Pampangos and Tagalogs sought admission to the Spanish secondary schools and the University of Santo Tomas in ever-increasing numbers.”

On December 20, 1863, in response to growing unrest and calls for reform, Queen Isabella II passed the Education Decree of 1863, which essentially secularized primary

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17 Licuanan, 25. This “short stint” in convent school for Paz Marquez and her sister came about when their mother caught them with a copy of Women’s Home Companion magazine that featured “two young lovers kissing” on the cover. Furious, their mother pulled them out of high school and sent them to La Concordia in Manila, which according to Paz was like a trip “back into the nineteenth century.”
18 Jose Rizal, El Filiusterismo, trans. Leon Ma. Guerrero (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1962), 156. The cost of tuition was another obvious problem; however, some lower-class families worked hard to be able to send their brightest child to school. Such was the case in Rizal’s El Filiusterismo, where Cabesang Andang sacrificed her livelihood to send her son Placido Penitente to study law at the University of Santo Tomas.
19 Torralba, Dumol, and Manzon, 279.
education and established the first public school system in the Philippines by requiring one primary school to be built in each town.\textsuperscript{20} Primary education was now a function of the colonial government, and the teaching of Spanish was to be compulsory. Since the expansion of the school system would require more teachers as well a thorough knowledge of Spanish, the decree also called for the establishment of a normal school for male teachers. The first normal school, Escuela Normal de Maestros de Instrucción Primaria de Manila (known simply as the Escuela Normal) opened in 1865 under the supervision of the Jesuits.\textsuperscript{21} Religion was not part of the curriculum in the normal schools; rather, prospective teachers studied “theory and practice of good citizenship, moral life, and methods of teaching” in addition to the Spanish language.\textsuperscript{22}

For Filipinas, the 1863 decree opened up opportunities in higher education that would, for the first time, allow upper-class girls to enter the workforce as teachers. Previously, girls from the peasant classes had been active in the public sphere, but their occupations (farm laborers, tobacco factory workers, vendors, store owners, weavers, and seamstresses) did not require much, if any, formal schooling.\textsuperscript{23} The 1863 decree now offered upper-class girls the opportunity to become teachers. A year later in 1864, the Municipal School for Girls in Manila (Escuela Municipal de Niñas) was established. Though it was intended as a general secondary school and not a normal school, the Municipal School offered its female pupils the opportunity to take an exam to obtain their teaching certificate, and was the only institution in Manila to do so at the time.\textsuperscript{24}

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\textsuperscript{20} Maria Luisa Camagay, \textit{Working Women of Manila in the 19th Century} (Manila: University Center for Women’s Studies, University of the Philippines Press, 1995), 60.
\textsuperscript{21} Torralba, Dumol, and Manzon, 277.
\textsuperscript{22} San Mateo and Tangco, 120.
\textsuperscript{23} Camagay, 1; Sobritchea, 83-84.
\end{flushright}
of Manila, a normal school for women opened in Nueva Caceres in 1875. It had originally been a primary school for girls, but now offered secondary education in teacher training. By 1877, the Nueva Caceres school had produced 177 female teachers. 25 A second normal school for women, La Asunción, was founded in 1892. The number of female teachers in the Philippines increased, but they were still outnumbered by male teachers during the Spanish period.

Despite the opportunities for higher education that the Education Decree of 1863 created for both male and female Filipinos, the effects were not as far-reaching as the law intended. In reality, the waning power of the Spanish colonial government could not penetrate the buildup of rogue friar power across the archipelago that had resulted from almost three hundred years of the Patronato Real. 26 Only primary education was totally secularized; since many secondary schools and universities were privately run, higher education remained largely in the hands of the religious orders. Even the Municipal School in Manila, though supported by public funds, was taught by nuns (the Sisters of Charity) due to a continuing shortage of qualified native teachers. 27 The friars were, for the most part, unwilling to yield any power, and “the principal site of social conflict [between church and state] was higher education, where the orders clung to reactionary curricula and resisted making the Spanish language intrinsic to Philippine learning.” 28

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25 United States Bureau of the Census, 616.
26 The Spanish colonial period was characterized by a power struggle between the small, understaffed Spanish colonial government and the widespread Catholic orders. Under the system of the Patronato Real, the government relied heavily on the friars to manage the day-to-day workings of each town. As a result, many friars became the most respected, feared, and powerful officials in their parishes, leading to widespread corruption.
27 United States Bureau of the Census, 615.
This led to the second shortfall of the decree: its enforcement. Many schools across the archipelago continued to teach in the vernacular rather than in Spanish, and much of the population continued to speak in their own dialects for practical reasons. A mere five percent of the population spoke Spanish, mostly elites and members of the clergy.²⁹ Although it failed to produce a Spanish-speaking population, the widened base of primary education and increase in number of schools under the 1863 Decree did result in more children attending primary school, especially girls.

A famous case in which exceptional women voiced their dissatisfaction with Spanish education occurred in Malolos, a city in Bulacan, in 1888. In an act of defiance against the town’s friar, who denied them a request to establish a night school for Spanish language classes, a group of upper-class mestiza Filipinas—referred to as the “Women of Malolos” after the incident—had petitioned the Spanish governor-general Valeriano Weyler to allow them to continue to set up the school. However, Weyler swiftly denied their request. Word about the incident spread quickly. When Jose Rizal heard of the women’s struggle, he penned his famous “Letter to the Women of Malolos,” encouraging them not to give up. Using nationalist appeal that bridges the gender divide, Rizal praises their desire for education. He tells them that by educating themselves, they will in turn benefit the Philippines in its transition from colony to independent nation:

The duties that woman has to perform in order to deliver the people from suffering are of no little importance, but be as they may, they will not be beyond the strength and stamina of the Filipino people. The power and good judgment of the women of the Philippines are well known . . . The cause of the backwardness of Asia lies in the fact that there the women are ignorant, are slaves; while Europe and America are powerful because there the

²⁹ Schumacher, 15.
women are free and well-educated and endowed with lucid intellect and a strong will.\textsuperscript{30}

Rizal’s support for the Women of Malolos shows that the forward-thinking ilustrados and upper-class, educated revolutionaries were in support of female education, and is further evidence of the lack of educational opportunities given to women during the Spanish colonial period.

Schooling for both genders during the Spanish period overall was “inadequate, suppressed, and controlled.”\textsuperscript{31} Primary school attendance for both boys and girls remained relatively low, but girls’ attendance rates were lower than those for boys. Schooling options for girls beyond primary school were limited to colegios and beaterios, to which only daughters of the upper classes had access. Girls from the lower classes had much less access to education than their wealthy counterparts, and therefore continued to work as store owners, seamstresses, or in tobacco factories.

The Spanish philosophy of education for girls was one of extreme limitation. Only the children of the wealthy were able to learn Spanish and go on to higher levels of education. Even then, in the secondary schools and universities, women were groomed in the ideal upper-class “Iberian” image of womanhood—educated in finishing subjects, manners, and Catholic mores. The only real career opportunities, created by the Education Decree of 1863, lay in teaching, and once again this was only accessible to

\textsuperscript{30} Jose Rizal, “Letter to the Women of Malolos,” Tagalog-English special edition (1889). As a result of Rizal’s letter, in 1889 the women of Malolos got permission to open the school in one of the women’s homes. However, it was closed down within a few months because of rumors of “immoral” and “subversive” activities.

\textsuperscript{31} Department of Education; Mary Grace Ampil Tirona, “Pañuelo Activism,” in \textit{Women’s Role in Philippine History: Selected Essays}, 2nd ed. (Quezon City: University Center for Women’s Studies, University of the Philippines, 1996), 113. Some scholars, such as Tirona, even go so far as to assert that the marginalization of women dates back to the implementation of the sexist Western education system by the Spanish.
elite Filipinas. It would not be until 1901, after the Philippine-American War and the changeover to American colonial rule, that Filipinas would be able to gain increased access to education, and an expanded system of education at that. This contributed greatly to certain aspects of modern Filipino womanhood that were influenced by American imperialism during the first few decades of the twentieth century.

Learning the Arts of Modernity: The American Colonial Educational System in the Philippines

Historians have long been aware of the United States’ reasons to enact sweeping educational reforms in the Philippines. In the wake of the Philippine-American War, the Americans believed that the savage, belligerent Filipinos had to be pacified, and their nationalist sentiment (still running high from the days of the short-lived First Republic) crushed. In addition to maintaining a firm hold on the higher ranks of the military, the other first step to securing control over the Philippines was to expand public primary education on a massive scale. In his famous 1959 treatise “The Miseducation of the Filipino,” nationalist historian Renato Constantino concludes that the establishment of the American school system was a result of “the conviction of the military leaders that no measure could so quickly promote the pacification of the islands as education.”  

To begin this process of pacification, President McKinley appointed a commission in 1899 to gather detailed information about the environment, resources, society, and people of the archipelago in order to better assist the U.S. government in creating colonial policies. The six officials of the First Philippine Commission believed

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that they had quite a difficult task ahead of them, as they would have to undo much of what the Spanish did during their 300-year reign.\textsuperscript{33} Their findings greatly shaped early American legislative actions in the Philippines, among them the creation of governmental, economic, and educational policies.\textsuperscript{34} The Second Philippine Commission, organized in 1900 and headed by William Howard Taft, served as the first American colonial government in the Philippines. McKinley had given the “Taft Commission” legislative as well as limited executive powers, which they exercised by setting up a bicameral legislature, passing a legal code, and creating a civil service in the Philippines.

With the establishment of the American colonial administration, education in the Philippines underwent significant changes. American rule was somewhat different than Spanish rule—at least, on the surface. As the works of Go, Kramer, May, and others suggest, it was under the pretense of “benevolent assimilation” and the betterment of Philippine society that self-serving American interests dictated and shaped colonial policies. While the real motives of the U.S. government were economic (to open up trade with China) and military-related (to maintain active bases in the Pacific), U.S. officials masked these intentions by arguing their duty as a democratic nation to prepare their colonial subjects for self-government. They wanted to create a “showcase [of] Asian democracy” not only to convince the Filipinos of American goodwill for purposes of pacification, but also to convince the rest of the world of the legitimacy of the United States as an imperial power.\textsuperscript{35}

\textsuperscript{33} The six members of the first Philippine Commission were Jacob Gould Schurmann, George Dewey, Elwell Otis, Charles Denby, Dean Worcester, and John MacArthur.
Taft noted with disdain that “the character of the people contains many discouraging defects which can only be cured by careful tutelage and widespread education.”\textsuperscript{36} His Commission’s report agreed that “the lack of education among the [Filipino] children is most unfortunate, nevertheless they go to school . . . and learn to read a little and write passably.”\textsuperscript{37} In order to spread democracy in the Philippines, it became clear to the colonial officials that they needed to create an educated, literate citizenry.

According to May, officials “chose the means which, according to their understanding of the American past, had contributed the most to the maturation of the United States: experience in self-government, mass education, and economic development . . . To educate the Filipino masses made sense to citizens of a nation which, since its inception, had placed inordinate faith in the powers of education.”\textsuperscript{38} It was believed that education would in itself instill concepts of democracy, fairness, and equality in its young pupils; one Filipino collaborator boldly stated that “the American teacher is the best salesman of democracy in the Philippines. Through his precepts, his classroom practices, his dealings with the people, his personal, social and official relationships, his covert and overt behavior, the Filipinos formed their concept of democracy.”\textsuperscript{39} Convinced of the unlimited benefits of such benevolent tutelage, colonial officials wasted little time in setting up their education system.

\textsuperscript{38} May, 17.
As the colonial project in the Philippines was a grand “experiment” in the self-duplication of American structures, values, and culture, the cornerstone of the experiment was the sweeping expansion of the Philippine education system at three distinct levels—primary, secondary, and university—beginning in 1901. Changes at all three of these levels had profound effects on the educational opportunities and subsequent public involvement of young Filipino women. Incorporating women into the educational structure was a strategic move for American colonial officials, who had specific economic and social roles in mind for Filipinas that would become quite manifest as they embarked on a new educational journey, climbing the educational ladder from primary school to secondary school to university in increasing numbers.

*Primary Education*

In 1901, the American colonial government passed Act No. 74, to be effective immediately across the entire archipelago. Also known as the Education Act, the law established a free, compulsory primary school system for all Filipino children in grades 1-7, with English as the official language of instruction. The number of school divisions was to match the number of existing provinces, each with its own superintendent, thus reflecting the style of administration in the American public school system. By 1904, about 50,000 Filipino children were enrolled in primary school, and 23,000 were unable to attend because of overcrowding. In response, the American colonial government authorized more schools to be built, so that by 1911 over 350,000 children were enrolled.\(^{40}\)

To staff the thousands of new primary schools that were created, teachers were brought from the United States mainland to the Philippines by boat. So began the transition from U.S. Army soldier-teachers to civilian American and native Filipino teachers. In June 1901, eleven teachers arrived on the ships Lawton and Sheridan, while the more well-known ship Thomas brought in 765 American teachers. A few hundred more teachers arrived a year later, in 1902. These American imports, dubbed the “Thomasites,” were given teaching assignments all over the archipelago, educating Filipino children in primary schools as well as mentoring male and female prospective teachers. The Thomasites saw themselves as pioneering educators who were charged with the task of bringing civilization and democracy to an underserved and underdeveloped people. Though they did their best to appear noble in professing their desires to educate the Filipino masses, the Thomasite teachers often exhibited imperialist attitudes, showed impatience, and used abusive language toward their new neighbors and students. Some commented in their memoirs on the “stupidity” and “incompetence” of the native students and teachers. Other teachers laughed at, and were sometimes irritated by, Filipinos’ misuse and misunderstanding of the English language. A common complaint of the early American teachers was the unsanitary conditions in the barrios, especially in rural provinces outside of Manila. Still, many Thomasites, especially the female teachers, commented on the diligence, manners, and beauty of the Filipinos despite their want of prior education, and spoke affectionately of their students and neighbors. While these teachers played an important part in the imperial project, Racelis states that overall, they

were remembered fondly by the Filipinos whom they taught, and negative memories of them are somewhat rare.\textsuperscript{42}

This massive expansion of primary education had significant implications for young Filipino women. For the first time, girls were included and required to participate in primary education. They were educated together with boys according to a gender-neutral curriculum; subjects for both male and female students included basic reading, writing, grammar, and arithmetic, in addition to social studies, music, physical education, and hygiene.\textsuperscript{43} From their own experience as a nation born out of a former colony, Americans believed that a basic but well-rounded education for both sexes was the key to forming a strong citizenry; thus, girls too should be afforded at least a basic education. American educators at universities across the country have long pointed to what they see as the relatively liberal attitude toward the education of women in American society, based on Enlightenment ideals. In the 1890s Richard Gross, a professor of education at Stanford University, patriotically (and pompously) stated that “In observing American women as students, scholars, professionals, wives and helpmates, and in their other multiple roles, foreigners cannot but be awakened to the tragic loss of talent in their societies when women are deprived of the opportunity to have a more complete life and of thereby contributing directly and indirectly to the progress of their civilization.”\textsuperscript{44} The inclusion of girls in primary education produced staggering results in terms of female


\textsuperscript{43} Benigno Aldana, \textit{The Educational System of the Philippines} (Manila: University Publishing Co., 1949), 150.

school attendance. In 1918, the first “Statistical Bulletin” released by the American colonial administration’s Bureau of Commerce and Industry reported the following:

One encouraging feature of attendance figures is that the proportion of girls to boys in the public schools, especially in the higher grades, is increasing. Gradually the Oriental attitude toward education of women is being overcome and at present nearly 40 percent of the total number of pupils in school are girls . . . Comparison of figures of attendance of boys and girls in intermediate grades for the school years 1910-1911 and 1916-1917, shows that the increase in attendance of boys was 82 percent while that of girls was 222 percent.45

It is important to note that the so-called “Oriental attitude” that women should be excluded from education was not a value held by the Filipinos themselves; rather, it was associated with other Asian societies whose religions and social structures excluded women from education. Many saw popular education as the first “springboard” to achieving greater rights and privileges for women under the American colonial administration.46 Since girls simply had fewer opportunities for schooling under the Spanish regime, many Filipino parents supported American ideas about female education and were eager to send their daughters to school, leading to school enrollment bursting beyond capacity.47 Primary school data from the Philippine Commission’s Statistical Bulletins have been broken down to show male and female enrollment rates in Figure 2.1.

American colonial officials, in keeping with the imperial tendency to put the economic interests of the metropole at the heart of colonial educational policy, planned to educate Filipino girls beyond the primary level, but with an ulterior motive. In the report

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45 Government of the Philippine Islands, Department of Commerce and Communications, Bureau of Commerce and Industry, Statistical Bulletin No. 1 (Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1918), 92.


47 Castillo, 78; Racelis and Ick, 5. According to Racelis, during the Spanish period, “some children had to be dragged to school by parents or municipal police,” but within the first five years of the American period, the attitude of Filipinos toward education was completely the opposite: “50,000 children were in school, with another 23,000 turned away for lack of space.”
of the First Commission, the colonial officials showed great admiration toward the industriousness of Filipino girls: “As they grow older they become a great help to their poor parents, whom they usually respect and obey. The girls, from their early years, show great shrewdness and good judgment. They go to the market to buy or sell their wares, and the smallest of them go around selling refreshments prepared by their mothers.”

With this impression in mind, the U.S. colonial government thus expanded the one subject in primary education in which boys and girls were educated separately: “industrial work.” Industrial work became increasingly gendered throughout the rest of the colonial period as the hardworking spirit of young Filipinas was further harnessed in the vocational programs of secondary schools, where the curriculum was specialized into male and female-oriented subjects.

Figure 2.1: Philippine Public School Enrollment, 1918-1923: Primary Level

Data from Government of the Philippine Islands, Department of Commerce and Communications, Bureau of Commerce and Industry, *Statistical Bulletin No. 6* (Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1923), 7.

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48 United States Commission to the Philippine Islands, 382.
49 Sobritchea, 85-7. Boys “industrial work” lessons included gardening, woodwork, basket and mat weaving, and clay modeling, while girls were instructed in lace-making, sewing, cooking, and “other various home-related activities.”
Secondary Education

In the years between 1901 and 1907, the Americans continued to expand the school system beyond primary education. They opened a multitude of public secondary schools, of which there had been very few during the Spanish period. Filipino families who were well-off enough to keep their children in school past the primary level (typically, members of the middle and upper middle-classes) sent them to the new provincial high schools that were modeled after American high schools. Each province had at least one high school, usually located in a town central to the province.

Secondary school curricula grew to be quite diverse under American administration. General secondary coursework for both boys and girls covered a broad range of subjects: literature, history, science, mathematics (algebra and geometry), foreign language (Spanish or Latin was most often recommended), and basic economics (specifically relating principles to the Philippine economy). However, the secondary education curriculum overall was more gendered than primary education, beginning with the entrance requirements. In addition to a passing score of 75 percent on an examination that covered the basic primary subjects, boys had to demonstrate mastery of “music, freehand and mechanical drawing” while girls needed to show mastery of “domestic science.” These skills would continue to be developed throughout the duration of the secondary education program.

Aldana, 123-4. Since education ceased to be compulsory after the primary level, some forms of secondary education were not free. Despite the fact that some types of secondary schools—provincial trade schools, normal schools, and agricultural schools—were financed by the provincial governments, most provincial high schools charged tuition. As a result, many families could not afford to send their children to school past the primary level, accounting for the steep drop-off in attendance after grade 7 throughout the American colonial period. For enrollment figures, see Government of the Philippine Islands, Statistical Bulletin No. 1, 92.

Although they were modeled after American public high schools, Philippine high schools began to veer away from the “traditional” American high schools, and instead became more specialized to define “the roles which Filipino men and women were to play later in the colonial economy and bureaucracy.” The entire schools began to specialize as well; for example, in addition to provincial high schools, the American period saw the establishment of the Philippine Normal School (where Ofelia Hidalgo attended college), the Philippine School of Arts and Trades, the Philippine School of Commerce, the Philippine Nautical School, and the Central Luzon Agricultural School. All of these schools offered special courses geared toward a specific profession.

American imperial motives were strongly at work here. The *First Annual Report of the Secretary of Public Instruction to the Philippine Commission*, released in 1902, stated that “Spain has impressed upon the Filipinos her lack of appreciation of honest work and that higher form of skill which comes from systematic education.” In other words, because of the lack of vocational courses in Spanish schools, the Americans accused Filipinos of believing that education was only good for a life free from hard labor. Colonial officials sought to change this attitude by instituting more accessible secondary education programs, many of which were vocationally based.

As a form of specialized secondary education, vocational courses were relatively new to the Philippines and to colonial education in general. During the mid-1800s, as a result of the Industrial Revolution, some American educators voiced a need for more practical forms of education that would benefit the working classes, immigrants, and

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52 Sobritchea, 85.
urban poor. In 1862, the Morrill Act (also known as the Land Grant College Act) set aside federal funding for the establishment of agricultural and engineering colleges across the United States. Industrial and vocational programs formed an integral part of these new schools. Arguments in favor of these programs claimed that “skills for the workshop or farm or home, suitable kinds of recreation, and particularly appropriate schooling would reform poor urban children and provide them with the kind of character and skills necessary to become members of the larger American culture.” In other words, labor training paired with religious and moral instruction would help to create an educated and obedient citizenry out of the America’s paupers, orphans, and immigrants.

Such faith in the merits of labor training were adopted by American colonial officials in the Philippines. In 1909, the Department of Education added industrial and vocational training to the intermediate and secondary curricula. These programs included teaching, trade, farming, business, engineering, and home economics courses, all of which supported the “American ideals” which “dignified manual labor.” At the same time, the curriculum change underscored the colonial government’s intentions to boost human resources and, therefore, the Philippine export economy. Secondary curriculum was quickly becoming less academic; instead, it increasingly aided the government’s economic goals of establishing a convenient market for American exported goods as well as creating a source of investment capital.

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55 H. Warren Button and Eugene F. Provenzo, Jr., *History of Education and Culture in America* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1983), 156. Button and Provenzo state that industrial education and vocational education were not the same. Industrial was general in nature and developed skills and knowledge needed for a wide range of labor-based occupations, while vocational focused on developing skills for one particular trade.
56 Ibid., 166-7.
57 Aldana, 151.
58 Foley, 78; Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues: The United States Encounters Foreign Peoples at Home and Abroad, 1876-1917* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000), 14; Daniel B. Schirmer and Stephen
However, in much the same way that the rationale for establishing primary schools was promoted by colonial officials as one of enlightenment and democracy rather than imperial control, the argument for increased secondary, industrial and vocational schooling was that it would directly benefit and “uplift” the Filipino people. The Americans cited the need to create qualified civil servants and soldiers to staff the Philippine Commission and Constabulary. They further argued that secondary education reflected ideas of democracy and equal opportunity, as it would provide social mobility and independence to the lower classes so that they might “rise out of their condition of indebtedness” by obtaining meaningful jobs in up-and-coming colonial industries.  

For instance, agricultural education would create self-sustaining farmers whose surplus would in turn benefit the colonial economy. Technology and industrial education was necessary to develop government-run industries in the colonies such as railroads, coal, iron, cement, and electrical power. Education in commerce and trade would not only develop the banks of the Philippines, but also enable Filipinos to run their own businesses, as a 1906 educational report states that there is “a large demand for trustworthy young men to act for commercial houses as local and general agents . . . young men who are able to command small amounts of capital.” This marked a clear divergence from Spanish colonial policy, which excluded the vast majority of Filipinos from the bureaucracy and did little to develop industrial sectors of the Philippine economy. American educational policy was further touted as the key to real social opportunity, appearing to serve the best


Foley, 75.

interests of all Filipinos, but in reality, it was firmly grounded in colonial economic interests.\textsuperscript{61}

An example of these imperial intentions put into practice, and one that had a specific impact on women, was the short-lived household industry program. One of the goals of American colonial policy was to create model wives and mothers for the new Philippine democracy (to be described later in this chapter). Therefore, colonial officials decided that an appropriate education must be given to Filipinas in domestic and household arts. In the high schools, the domestic studies program was based on American “home economics” and was targeted almost exclusively toward women. Subjects included cooking, sewing, physiology, and hygiene.\textsuperscript{62} The Americans began to see not only domestic value in this program, but also commercial value. Capitalizing on the industriousness of Filipino girls, the Bureau of Education established the School of Household Industries in 1912. This program afforded limited economic participation to women, but kept them confined to their homes, creating handmade products to be sold in foreign markets. The goal of the household industry program was to advance Filipinas’ skills in handicrafts—lace, hat, and basket-making, sewing, embroidery, and weaving—therefore improving the quality of Philippine export products. In a way, the program combined teaching education and domestic studies. In a highly competitive process, local officials in each province would select a number of women to be trained in the creation of handcrafted export products. Upon graduation, these women would return to their home provinces, where in turn they would teach their fellow women to create the products and

oversee the production process. As role models who were living proof of how Americans were able to “teach the dignity of labor, support students’ study, teach them an occupation, and improve the local economy,” these Filipina “supervisors” were to be viewed as teachers and leaders by their fellow countrywomen in the barrios.

The household industry program proved to be short-lived. Within a few years, industrial education for the purposes of occupational training and a profit (including woodworking and furniture-building, the male counterparts to the household industry program) was not bringing in the revenue for which the American officials had hoped. The handicrafts that the women produced faced a competitive international market. There was also a significant backlash from the Filipino community as well, as parents disliked seeing their daughters pushed into manual labor under the guise of education. Deemed “wasteful, mechanical, and economically unsound” by the American colonial administration, the household industry program was scrapped in the mid-1920s. Women were encouraged to return to the provincial high schools or normal schools, and by the late 1920s, secondary education had returned to a mostly academic curriculum with emphasis on domestic studies. Home economics, teaching, and pre-nursing once again comprised the extent of female secondary education. These subjects also served as pathways to women’s opportunities in higher education and shaped their career opportunities upon graduation.

Although secondary education was not compulsory, female participation at the secondary level greatly increased throughout the American period (see Fig. 2.2).

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63 Sobritchea, 88.
64 Foley, 81.
65 Ibid., 82.
66 Sobritchea, 89.
According to the 1918 *Statistical Bulletin*, “in the high schools the [increase in attendance] figure for boys was 250 percent and for girls, 267 percent. These data indicate that an increasing number of girls are no longer content with a primary education.”

Accordingly, the opportunities for women to attend high school were greater than ever before, as public secondary institutions set up during the American period were co-educational from the outset. Tuition fees and specialized courses of study unfortunately weeded out many Filipino students who were unable to afford it or whose families deemed it incompatible with their way of life. Still, the American period saw a great expansion in secondary education in the Philippines and a significant rise in female enrollment that would only continue to grow after the Americans left.

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67 Government of the Philippine Islands, *Statistical Bulletin No. 1*, 92. Note in Fig. 2.2 that there was a steep drop-off in enrollment between primary and secondary education. Many fewer students enrolled in secondary schools because education ceased to be compulsory after grade 7.
Throughout the period of American colonial rule, secondary schools strongly reflected the political and economic interests of the United States—namely, to create an educated male civil service and promote the education (albeit, in limited subjects) of women. While the reasons for educating boys were concerned with training Constabulary officers and civil servants, the reasons behind educating girls were twofold: first, to establish “female-appropriate” professions, dictating the career opportunities and public roles that Filipinas could have; and second, to model future Filipina wives and mothers after the American housewife, economically productive in household crafts and domestic duties (while also attempting to make a profit for the colony). In spite of their increased access to secondary education, the gender stereotypes and restrictions that Filipinas faced were even more acutely reinforced for those who went on to higher education.

Higher Education

Just as primary and secondary education expanded under the American period, so too did higher education. The University of the Philippines (UP), the archipelago’s first public university, was established in Manila in 1908 as a provision of Act No. 1870 of the Philippine Commission. For the first time, an institution of higher learning was open to both men and women, regardless of “age, sex, nationality, religious belief and political affiliation.” UP offered degrees in liberal arts, fine arts, agriculture, engineering, medicine, law, and other subjects. Still, the curriculum in Philippine colleges and universities remained gender-based throughout the entire American period. Filipinas who

68 Sobritchea, 83.
were able to pursue higher education were quite limited in their courses of study by the career options that were available to them upon graduation.\textsuperscript{70}

As a result of UP’s establishment, there was a significant increase in the number of Filipino women who were now pursuing higher education. Among the members of the university’s first graduating class in 1912 was Paz Marquez, and in subsequent years, her six younger sisters followed her example (Figure 2.3). By 1931 approximately 3,064 Filipinas held academic degrees.\textsuperscript{71} This trend in higher education can be directly connected to feminist developments in American education around the same time. Jeynes points out that at the turn of the century, nursing and teaching were on the rise as predominantly female occupations. Since these careers required higher education, American women began to make huge advances at the college level in the decades since

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure2.3.png}
\caption{The seven Marquez girls, all UP graduates over the course of the years, dressed in their caps and gowns. From left to right: Isabel, Carolina, Socorro, Concepcion, Natividad, Dolores, and Paz. Reprinted from Licuanan, 151.}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{70} For example, the most popular courses of study at the Philippine Women’s College included Home Economics, Child Development, and Social Civic training (Social Work).

\textsuperscript{71} Alzona, 59.
they were first included in the 1830s. In fact, “by 1898, 53% of the University of Michigan’s undergraduates were women . . . the momentum that women’s education enjoyed in the late 1800s continued into the early 1900s. By 1910, nearly as high a percentage of colleges admitted women as men . . . From 1900 to 1930, American college enrollment surged, especially among women.”

It is no wonder, then, that American colonial officials recommended that UP should be designated a co-educational institution, due to the overwhelming success of higher education with American women.

Collaboration between the United States and the Philippines also resulted in study abroad opportunities for a select few Filipino students, including women who were allowed to obtain teaching and medical degrees. The program was established in 1903, and these students were known as *pensionados*. In 1904, five girls were selected, forming the first group of Filipina *pensionadas*. By 1907, there were 123 *pensionados*, male and female, total; seventeen were enrolled in teaching programs, with the report listing attendees at state normal schools in Illinois and New Jersey. Additionally, two female students were placed at the Women’s Medical College in Philadelphia, which shows that by this time the United States had already designated health-related fields as appropriate for women. Honoria Acosta-Sison was the first Filipina to ever receive a medical degree. Subido writes of this young woman’s pioneering efforts in establishing an international reputation for Filipinas as hardworking and successful:

> From 1905, when our first government *pensionada* to the United States, Miss Honoria Acosta, won a prize at the Women’s Medical College of Pennsylvania, over all her classmates in Anatomy, consisting of cash and books, our Filipino women abroad have built a reputation for intelligence,

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73 Subido, 7.
dependability, and gracious adaptability, and have earned good will and esteem for their country wherever they are sent.\textsuperscript{74}

The \textit{pensionado} programs were deemed a success by both the U.S. and Philippine governments. The practice continued throughout the later American colonial period and after the Second World War.\textsuperscript{75} According to Ceniza Choy, an important provision of the 1948 U.S. Information and Education Act was the Exchange Visitor Program (EVP), which allowed Filipina nurses to receive their training in American hospitals.\textsuperscript{76} Thus, the American colonial government (and later on, the American government itself) was responsible for providing educational opportunities abroad that would continue to shape the careers of Filipinas throughout the course of the twentieth century.

Despite the greater inclusion of women in the higher education system during the American colonial period, they still had lower attendance rates than men. A 1936 report on education in \textit{The Commonwealth Handbook} by former senator and UP president Rafael Palma suggests that three decades after the opening of the university, there were still relatively few female students enrolled in college.\textsuperscript{77} While female enrollment in primary school was comparable to that of males, their enrollment in secondary and higher education lagged behind males by roughly ten to twenty percent. This was partly due to the limited number of college preparatory programs accessible to Filipinas in high school,

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{74} Subido, 73.
\textsuperscript{75} The exchange program expanded to produce not just teachers, nurses and doctors, but also female scholar-professors such as Encarnacion Alzona. Upon graduating from Columbia University in 1923, Alzona became the first Filipino woman to receive her Ph.D. Interestingly, Alzona’s Ph.D. was in history. In 1934, her research was published as a book, \textit{The Filipino Woman: Her Social, Economic, and Political Status, 1565-1933}. She returned to the Philippines after graduating from Columbia and became chair of the history department at UP.
\textsuperscript{76} Catherine Ceniza Choy, \textit{Empire of Care: Nursing and Migration in Filipino-American History} (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), Kindle Electronic Edition: Chapter 3, Location 784.
\end{flushright}
and subsequently the limited options for careers if they sought college degrees. Figure 2.4 shows the enrollment in the University of the Philippines according to program, therefore providing an idea of male-female enrollment based on the predominance of Filipinas in the education, nursing, and pharmacy programs. By 1948, the majority of female licensed professionals were midwives, nurses, and pharmacists, along with a small number of doctors.\(^{78}\) Other careers for women included those in education, social work, and the liberal arts. Only a select few women rose to prominence in traditionally male-dominated areas like agriculture, industry, business, and law.\(^{79}\)

Another factor contributing to the low female attendance rates in the universities is that these institutions were accessible only to the upper classes. Although UP was the first co-educational public university in the Philippines, it remained an anomaly among the many private colleges that remained completely segregated in terms of gender. Private Catholic colleges for women still abounded, carrying on the traditional education of the elite that still existed from the Spanish period. In Manila, Assumption College, St. Scholastica’s College, Holy Ghost (now Holy Spirit) College, and St. Theresa’s College were four schools that opened in the early twentieth century; outside of Manila, St. Bridget’s Academy in Batangas, St. Agnes’ Academy in Albay, and the Rosary Academy Vigan offered a traditional Catholic college education to young elite Filipinas.\(^{80}\) These women were educated not in nursing and medical fields as at UP, but rather in public service, religion, or teaching. Some American officials in the Philippines, despite official colonial policy which recommended that women be included in public universities,

\(^{78}\) Sobritchea, 94.
\(^{79}\) Subido, 61.
Data from Government of the Philippine Islands, Department of Commerce and Communications, Bureau of Commerce and Industry, *Statistical Bulletin No. 6* (Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1923), 8.

Note: Unlike the data for the primary and secondary levels, this report does not contain data that shows a distinction between male and female enrollment at the university level; rather, it divides enrollment according to program. The three most popular programs for women (education, nursing, and pharmacy) have been separated in order to get at least a slightly better idea of the number of males and females attending UP within the first 10-15 years of the university’s establishment.

expressed approval of the convent school education. They held fast to their sexist attitudes toward Filipinas, thereby discouraging the entry of women into other professions. The 1925 Monroe Educational Survey states that “since [a Filipino girl’s] 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.”

Sadly, this assumption persisted in the minds of many upper-class Filipinos until well into the twentieth century. Many Filipino women educated in private colleges remained “direct beneficiaries of convent

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education and strict Catholic upbringing [who became] economic dependents of men, devoid of skills necessary for gainful employment.”

The expansion of higher education during the American colonial period, in one sense, marked a progressive step in improving the educational situation of Filipinas. Women were finally able to strive for social and economic advancement by obtaining degrees that would give them a place in the workforce alongside men. Some elite Filipinas hoped that increased higher education for women would erase some of the glaring social inequalities between the sexes. Maria Paz Mendoza-Guazon, a female medical doctor and professor at the University of the Philippines College of Medicine, clearly stated her beliefs on the importance of increased higher education for women to Philippine society: “Higher education teaches man that woman is his equal and not his serf; it develops his sense of justice and true manhood; it compels him to help woman rise to his level and standard, for this is the only way to make her keep pace with him. Higher education erases the difference of interests, aims, and views of men and women, and demands the recognition of equal rights for both.”

Unfortunately, women such as Mendoza-Guazon remained an elite minority among Filipinos. The realities of colonial society continued to oppress Filipino women in many ways. For the most part, a college education was only accessible to the upper classes. Majors and programs were rigidly gendered, and women were relegated to certain professions upon graduation. The following section examines three major courses of study (present at both the secondary and tertiary levels) undertaken by Filipina

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82 Sobritchea, 97-8.
83 Mendoza-Guazon, 62-3.
students, specifically with regard to how they reflected Western ideas of femininity and modern womanhood.

“Fulfilling Their Social Roles:” American Education and Filipino Womanhood

Two courses of study geared toward Filipino women were particularly important in American colonial public schools: home economics programs, introduced in primary school but expanded upon in secondary schools, instructed Filipinas that their place should remain in the home; and secondary and tertiary teaching and nursing programs, which limited women to specific careers that had feminine, “caregiving” qualities. Both programs of study reflected educational developments for women around the turn of the twentieth century in the United States, as American women were making a push for increased education on their path to modernization and suffrage. Subsequently, home economics, teaching, and nursing programs revealed certain notions of what an ideal, modern Filipino woman’s role in society should be, as dictated by the American colonial government. These notions were based on ideals of white womanhood from the United States; yet, imperial and racial discourses kept them firmly at arm’s length as “second-rate” female colonial subjects. According to the workings of imperialism, Filipinas were to be remade in the image of American women, but could never rise up to be their equals. Instead, they were encouraged to raise themselves, through education, to the standard of second-rate women in order to help better their own, second-rate colonial society. This logic was strongly evident in the use of home economics in secondary

84 Jacobson, 237.
schools to “Americanize” Filipinas through proper, modern, and scientific homemaking techniques.

Home Economics: “Americanizing” Philippine Society, One Girl at a Time

Owing to proper training, the young matron should have a better perspective of life and a clearer vision . . . as the years pass, she reads the story of her success as a mother and homemaker in the lives of her children as they go forth to meet the economic world and further spread the influence of her teachings on their fellowmen.85

– Pearl Idelia Ellis, 1929

One subject constituted the core foundation of a Filipino girl’s education.

Whether it was called domestic studies, domestic arts, household arts, or home economics, courses in this domain taught a young woman the basic skills needed to fulfill the future roles prescribed for her: wife and mother. Home economics was not new to secondary schools and universities in the Philippines; it existed in convent schools and, later, municipal schools during the Spanish period. The difference now lay in the fact that it was an official part of American curriculum. Home economics played a dominant role in a Filipino girl’s education for two reasons: first, it reflected specific, Western ideas of womanhood in an attempt to “Americanize” Filipino women, and second, it emphasized a woman’s role as a wife and mother, particularly the positive impact that a skilled, capable, and modern housewife would have on her family, and subsequently Philippine society as a whole.

American home economics was grounded in the mindset that a harmonious society and strong nation derived its power from individual families and homes. A

properly trained wife and mother, as the core family figure, possessed the power to transform society for the better. These assumptions were carried over into the colonial home economics curriculum, which intended to rid Filipinos of their “savage” tendencies and “uncivilized” manners that were often viewed as poor imitations of Iberian culture. Home economics courses covered aspects of modern science-based housekeeping, such as food preparation and selection, sewing and clothes-making, furnishing and decoration of the home, budgeting, household management, and childcare. Because of its practicality and wide acceptance as a useful form of education for girls, home economics grew immensely popular for girls in the United States and subsequently the Philippines. According to the 1918 Statistical Bulletin, by 1917 the number of secondary students enrolled in “Housekeeping and Household Arts” programs had outnumbered those enrolled in farming, trades, and even teaching.

There are few sources that describe firsthand the details of home economics in Philippine schools, especially from the viewpoint of the Filipina students who enrolled in these courses. Home economics is typically only mentioned in passing in colonial government documents and various accounts of the American public school system. The Philippine Bureau of Education’s Bulletin No. 26: High Schools and Secondary Courses of Instruction, and Bulletin No. 27: Philippine Normal School: Courses of Study and Secondary Studies are two government documents which describe the mandated subjects that constitute the curricula for home economics courses. As for the American teachers

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86 Agnes K. Hanna, Home Economics in the Elementary and Secondary Schools (Boston: Whitcomb & Barrows, 1922), v. The concept of “scientific” housewifery and motherhood will be described in detail in the next chapter.
87 Government of the Philippine Islands, Statistical Bulletin No. 1, 96; Subido, 4. It should be noted that secondary schools were not the only institutions that taught home economics; in 1928, the Philippine Women’s University (founded by Paz Marquez Benitez) became the first institution of higher learning to establish a College of Home Economics.
themselves, many Thomasite memoirs in Racelis and Ick’s *Bearers of Benevolence* mention young Filipinas’ eagerness to learn and diligent work ethic in domestic arts courses, yet does not include any accounts from these students themselves. Despite their inadequacies, primary sources reveal that the impact of home economics in colonial schools was indisputably great because of its widespread acceptance and capacity for the assimilation of American cultural mores regarding housewifery and motherhood.

As Sobritchea has noted, the goals of American education for Filipinos were not limited to the learning of English and democratic principles for eventual self-government. Educating women was also necessary, because the Americans believed that the transformation of Philippine society must take place from the bottom up. It had to begin in the home, with the wife and mother acting as the agent of change. Home economics programs were seen as an effective way to instill American habits and values in Filipino girls and, in time, their future husbands and children. The presence of Western-style manners, cooking, household products, laundering and sewing practices, and child-rearing techniques in Filipino homes extended the acculturation process out of the school and into the home, where its constant presence would do more to civilize Filipinos than the public schools could ever accomplish.

An interesting example of pacifying the foreign presence through schooling, and one that can be applied to homemaking education in the Philippines, can be found in Pearl Idelia Ellis’s *Americanization Through Homemaking*, a 1929 home economics primer written for Mexican immigrant women in California. The primer illustrates the desire of educators like Ellis to Americanize the immigrant women, eradicate their Mexican mannerisms, and help them fit into the mainstream culture. Such motives reflect
the greater goals of immigrant education in the United States, as well as colonial education abroad, to Americanize foreigners. School and government officials alike believed that the cultural assimilation process began in the home. According to Ellis, the “main hope” for immigrant communities “lies in the rising generation, and the public school is the greatest factor in its development. . . . Since the girls are potential mothers and homemakers, they will control, in a large measure, the destinies of their future families.”

One section of Americanization Through Homemaking, describes the broader effects that a generation of young Mexican women trained in home economics can have on Mexican-American society as a whole. Ellis writes:

The surest solution of the Americanization problem lies in the proper training of the parents of a future citizenry. To secure results, instill in the minds of the girls of this generation an appreciative understanding of life and its complexities and a sincere respect for the ideals of Democracy.

As the mother furnishes the stream of life to the babe at her breast, so will she shower dewdrops of knowledge on the plastic mind of her young child. Her ideals and aspirations will be breathed into its spirit, molding its character for all time. The child, in turn, will pass these rarer characteristics on to its descendants, thus developing the intellectual, physical, and spiritual qualities of the individual, which in mass, are contributions to civilization.

Noble and patriotic arguments such as these for the domestic education of women were used in the Philippines to support home economics, and thereby designate a particular role for adult women in the home. They seem to echo the nationalist sentiments that Jose Rizal shared with his countrywomen in his famous “Letter to the Women of Malolos.”

Rizal believed that Filipino society should strive for the “American” example of

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88 Ellis, preface.
89 Ibid., 65.
90 Rizal, “Letter to the Women of Malolos.”
educating their women rather than the “Asian” example of refusing to educate their women.\textsuperscript{91} Through home economics education, Filipinas actively practiced emulating American women. Their participation in this aspect of education meant that they dutifully accepted the arguments from Americans and their fellow Filipinos that by cultivating morality, developing homemaking skills, and modernizing their lifestyles, they would in effect uplift their neighbors, husbands, and children. Home economics education gave women a goal to strive for in their educational endeavors, and an important nationalistic goal at that.

The conception of Filipino womanhood encouraged by home economics in the schools was, in many ways, not a new phenomenon. Not only did it reflect certain ideas of what a woman’s place should be, but also what a colonized woman’s place should be in relation to white Western women—one of learning and subordination. Home economics also appeared to echo traditional ideas in both the U.S. and Philippines about the proper place for women; namely, that they should remain in the home. However, historians in the past few decades have begun to see home economics and its implications differently, as a way to promote female professionalism and open up career opportunities for women. As this trend worked its way into secondary schools and universities across the United States, so too did it spread to the educational system of the Philippines.

\textsuperscript{91} An example of one of these “Asian” societies, as Rizal called them, would have been the Dutch East Indies. Women living on the most populated island of Java, where the Dutch colonial capital was located, were generally refused education past the primary level (if they attended primary school at all). The inability of most Javanese girls to obtain an education in the late nineteenth and throughout the twentieth century was a result of oppressive Dutch rule, which offered many more schooling opportunities for the children of white Dutch colonists, and the collaboration of the patriarchal and sexist Javanese elite, which placed the education of boys above girls according to traditional Javanese gender roles.
Teaching and Nursing: “Women’s” Professions in a “Men’s” World

I remember how puzzled I was at the predominance of male pupils over female when I saw my first Filipino classroom. I later came to know that it was because there had been an impression left over from long years of Spanish occupation, 400 to be exact, that ladies did not work for pay, careers were not for them. The men worked and the women stayed at home and had children. Gradually this attitude changed: girls studied to be nurses, were accepted in the hospitals and towns, girls became teachers in the schools. Later they married and fulfilled their social roles in the scheme of things by producing families.92

– Helen Dwyer Dawson, 1907

It was assumed, as Dawson pointed out from her own experience as a young female American teacher in Ilocos Norte, that a Filipino woman would eventually settle down to become a wife and mother, “fulfilling her social role” in society. At the same time, based on the example of her American sisters, she was still allowed to have a career. Therefore, home economics training was deemed mandatory for Filipinas for two reasons: first, to prepare her for her future role as wife and mother, and second, to groom her for a career deemed suitable for women. Sarah Stage and Virginia Vincenti’s book Rethinking Home Economics: Women and the History of a Profession looks at the changing face of home economics in the twentieth-century United States, re-evaluating its intents, purposes, and effects at a time when many feminists were denouncing it as a ploy to keep women relegated to the private sphere. According to Stage and Vincenti, home economics was not a one-sided discipline. More than simply “glorified housekeeping,” these authors assert that “home economics as it was practiced at the turn of the century focused more on careers for women than on domesticity and sheds light on

the intersection of gender and professionalism."\(^{93}\) The skills acquired through home economics courses were applicable to nearly every profession available to women at the time, most notably, teaching and nursing, two of the most popular occupations for American and Filipino women in the early twentieth century.

The arrival of the Americans and expansion of the public school system created a pressing need for more teachers. The 1,074 Thomasites that had arrived in 1901 were not enough to teach the tens of thousands of Filipino children who flocked to the new public schools. Rather, they were more often responsible for organizing and supervising schools, and were often too busy to devote much time to the students. They relied heavily on prospective native Filipino teachers, who worked alongside them, to do the bulk of the teaching in the schools. In much the same way as the United States was preparing the Philippines for eventual self-rule, so too did the Thomasite teachers prepare Filipino teachers for eventual autonomous control over their schools. This first generation of Filipino teachers during the American colonial period learned the profession from Thomasites in normal schools or other teacher-training programs. Although normal schools had been around since the days of Spanish rule (there were at least ten institutions designated as teacher-training centers by the end of the nineteenth century), it was during the American period that teaching education became more standardized and regulated under supervision of the colonial government.\(^{94}\)

The normal school was originally a French invention, the first one being established by John Baptiste de La Salle in 1685 in Reims, France. The institution made


\(^{94}\) Tirona, 115.
its way to the United States in the 1820s in New England. Initially, the concept of the normal school was not very popular in the United States. Although there were over 300 normal schools in the country by the end of the 19th century, few teachers actually matriculated as it was often possible to obtain a teaching job immediately after graduating from high school, without further schooling. However, the American public gradually began to realize the importance of having qualified and certified educators in schools. Colonial administrators, too, recognized that normal schools must be established in the Philippines in order to create a corps of new teachers to staff the public primary school system.

As a provision of Act No. 74, the first normal school established under the Americans was the Philippine Normal School. It opened in Manila in 1901, accepting both male and female prospective teachers. Initially, there were only a small number of female students, but this quickly changed. In 1901, the Normal School had “310 pupils enrolled, of whom 292 were young men and 18 were young women.” Eight months later, at the end of August of the following year, the school had 270 students, 70 of whom were women. Attendance continued to increase at the Normal School throughout the next two decades; the 1918 Statistical Bulletin describes the changeover of American teachers to native Filipino teachers as rather dramatic: “the number of American teachers has decreased nearly 100, the number of Insular teachers has increased 110, and the number of municipal teachers has increased at the rate of more than 1,000 a year.”

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95 The situation was the same in the Spanish Philippines, in which oftentimes, only a secondary education was required to become a teacher. Normal schools and teacher-training academies were typically only accessible to members of the upper classes.
96 The Philippine Normal School became Philippine Normal College in 1949; in 1991, it became Philippine Normal University.
97 Philippine Department of Public Instruction, 13-15.
98 Government of the Philippine Islands, Statistical Bulletin No.1, 95.
1915 and 1920, the number of Filipino teachers (and total teachers) nearly doubled from 9,000 to 17,000, and ten years later there were about 25,000 teachers in the islands, most of them native Filipinos. Colonial officials were pleased with the results, attributing the increase in native Filipino teachers to “better facilities for training teachers, and closer and more effective supervision” under American colonial rule (see Table 2.1).\(^99\)

Normal schools were not the only places that Filipinos could receive a teaching education. Five of the provincial high schools began to offer a four-year normal course in 1916. The addition of teaching courses in the high schools was deemed necessary to “keep the [public] school system more responsive to the needs of the colonial society.”\(^100\) At the same time, normal schools began to gradually devolve to more closely resemble provincial high schools. By the 1920s, quite a few normal schools now offered

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Five-Year Intervals</th>
<th>American Teachers</th>
<th>Filipino Teachers</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>889</td>
<td>2,167</td>
<td>3,056</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905*</td>
<td>826</td>
<td>3,414</td>
<td>4,240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>773</td>
<td>8,275</td>
<td>9,048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915</td>
<td>589</td>
<td>9,308</td>
<td>9,897</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>385</td>
<td>17,244</td>
<td>17,639</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>353</td>
<td>25,241</td>
<td>25,594</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>307</td>
<td>25,279</td>
<td>25,586</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>27,755</td>
<td>27,915</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>43,682</td>
<td>43,779</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*There were 1074 American teachers in 1902, due to the influx of Thomasites.


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a traditional academic curriculum, similar to those found in the provincial high schools. This trend in the Philippines mirrored the declining influence of normal schools in the United States, as they were increasingly replaced by teaching programs in American colleges and universities. The Teachers College of Columbia University, established in 1887, served as the model for the University of the Philippines College of Education, which officially branched out from the College of Liberal Arts in 1918.101

Regardless of where teacher training education took place, all programs required prospective Filipino teachers to work under a licensed teacher (in the early years, usually a Thomasite). After gaining enough practical experience in the classroom, they would then take the examination to become teachers themselves. Thomasite memoirs recall Filipino student-teachers as eager learners and diligent workers, whose “devotion and loyalty [to the American teacher] is a child-like faith which is blind to all other interests.”102 The fondness was often reciprocated by the American teacher. One such relationship is illustrated by a Thomasite named Mrs. Meade, who described her Filipina student teacher, Josefa, as

. . . a charming young woman, slightly larger than average, with luxuriant black tresses and large, dark eyes, tender and sympathetic . . . She was attentive to her school duties’ always punctual and faithful, a plodding student, and good to the children, having an especial care for the little ones; one of the kind, in short, that we describe by the phrase “thoroughly good”

101 Gross, 414-5; “The Story of the UP College of Education,” College of Education – University of the Philippines, http://www.rfhost5.com/upedu/pages/profile/history.php (accessed December 9, 2013). The Columbia University Teachers College was heavily involved in colonial educational affairs in the Philippines. For example, the first director of UP’s College of Education was Francisco Benitez (Paz Marquez Benitez’s husband), a graduate of Teachers College. Additionally, Paul Monroe, the former Director of the International Institute of Teachers College, headed the Monroe Commission on Philippine Education in 1925. The Monroe Commission sought to evaluate the progress of colonial education during the first two decades of American rule and offer suggestions for its improvement. A third example of collaboration was that Teachers College was one of the most popular destinations of study for Filipino participants in the pensionado program throughout the duration of colonial rule.

. . . Josefa was a good student [who] worked diligently at the lesson assigned in the teachers’ daily class. She had a good mind; while not very quick, she learned thoroughly and remembered well. I was ambitious for her to take the examination required for appointment to the position of insular teacher, for she would then receive at least forty pesos a month; and she thoroughly deserved it. I urged this upon her for some time before she consented . . . and from that time applied herself with even greater earnestness than before. Fearing that she might grow weary of difficult study, I encouraged her from time to time, reminding her of the increased pay if successful, and the additional prestige attaching to the position of insular teacher . . . I was ambitious for her to receive good ratings and did not cease to spur her to great effort, and assisted her all that was possible.¹⁰³

Not only did teaching give Filipinas the chance to educate future generations of citizens, as home economics nobly sought to do, but it was deemed particularly suited to women because of their “patience, their capacity for attention to details, and their sympathetic attitudes. These seem to be so true for the Filipino women that teach as a profession . . . they find a marked value for the qualities of sympathy and patience which they possess with children.”¹⁰⁴ Because of these supposedly inherent qualities that women possess, some scholars have come to argue that teaching became “feminized” in the late nineteenth century. Madeleine Grumet and Nancy Hoffman have both written on the history of teaching as a female profession in the United States. In Bitter Milk, Grumet argues that biological arguments of women as nurturers, combined with traditional gender roles in the family, have led to the conception of teaching as an ideal career for women. The teaching profession in the United States, once dominated by men, became increasingly female after the Industrial Revolution. By 1888, the Association for the

¹⁰³ Freer, 105-6.
¹⁰⁴ Castillo, 72-3.
Advancement of Women declared that 67 percent of American teachers were women.\(^{105}\)

By 1920, the number had risen to 88 percent.\(^{106}\)

American colonial officials and teachers in the Philippines quickly designated teaching as a fitting occupation for Filipino women, who were often described as gracious and hardworking, exhibiting the best and most desirable qualities for teaching. The Census of the Philippine Islands is one of many colonial documents that comments on Filipinas’ natural inclination to teach.\(^{107}\) Despite the fact that many Filipinas followed in the footsteps of their American counterparts and became teachers, there was not quite a mass feminization of teaching in the Philippines as there was in the United States. Throughout much of the American colonial period, the majority of Filipino teachers were still male, probably because school enrollment rates for Filipino women only increased gradually. It was not until later on in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries that female teachers began to outnumber male teachers.\(^{108}\)

Nursing, on the other hand, experienced an overwhelming feminization process during the American colonial period due to “gendered notions of nursing as women’s work.”\(^ {109}\) While the medical professions were largely inaccessible to Filipino women during the Spanish period, nursing became a popular career option for women, as a major


\(^{107}\) United States Bureau of the Census, 651.

\(^{108}\) Philippine Commission on Women, “Statistics on Filipino women and men’s education,” Philippine Commission on Women: National Machinery for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment, http://pcw.gov.ph/statistics/201210/statistics-filipino-women-and-mens-education (accessed December 5, 2012). According to these statistics, in the school year 2008-2009, 89.58 percent of Philippine public elementary school teachers were female, while only 10.42 percent were male. In the public secondary schools, 77.06 percent were female, and only 22.94 percent were male. Also by this time, teaching accounted for one of the most popular careers for Filippinas. Of all licensed female professionals in 2010, 44 percent were teachers.

\(^{109}\) Ceniza Choy, Chapter 2, Location 563.
goal of American colonialism was to introduce sanitation and hygiene to Filipino communities.\textsuperscript{110} As public health workers, they played a large part in spreading and practicing American standards for a modern, healthy Philippines. In \emph{Empire of Care}, Ceniza Choy describes the highly Americanized nature of the nursing program’s structure and curriculum, reflecting both the public health goals of the colonial administration and American preferences for female social service workers.\textsuperscript{111}

As most American nurses were women, so too were the majority of Filipino nurses women. Nursing was similar to teaching in that it was designated a “womanly” occupation, and perhaps even more so, as caretaking “came naturally” to women. Nurses were able to combine their medical training with her knowledge of hygiene, housekeeping, and childcare to nurse their patients back to health and instruct people in preventative health measures. In addition to the option of working in public or private hospitals, nurses were often employed by the government to serve rural areas, making house calls and

. . . teaching the mothers the modern methods of child care and training. This program of health has reduced considerably the infant mortality and has awakened a new interest in many progressive projects as those for better homemaking, better children, and better health. Superstitious beliefs are disappearing through this systematic and intensive health education program conducted by the government and other private social agencies composed mostly of women.\textsuperscript{112}

Initially, Philippine nursing programs were almost exclusively female. The University of the Philippines and the University of Santo Tomas were two popular choices for

\textsuperscript{110} Ceniza Choy, Chapter 1, Location 304. The improvement of health in the Philippines was a major goal of the American “civilizing mission” in the Philippines. Victor Heiser, the colonial Director of Health, wrote that “it is to be understood that the health of these people is the vital question of the Islands. To transform them from the weak and feeble race we have found them into the strong, health, and enduring people that they yet may become is to lay the foundations for the successful future of the country.”

\textsuperscript{111} Ibid., Chapter 2, Location 570.

\textsuperscript{112} Castillo, 76.
prospective nurses. To show the degree to which women were pushed into the nursing profession, the School of Nursing at UP was initially only open to women, but in the early 1920s, it slowly began to accept male students.\footnote{Sobritchea, 91.} This was a reversal of the more typical pattern in higher education, in which formerly male-dominated programs gradually began to accept female students. In every nursing program, biology, hygiene, and home economics served as the foundation for the curriculum. Similar to normal school, nursing schools consisted of classroom education combined with practical experience in hospitals (most often St. Paul’s, Philippine General, and St. Luke’s Hospitals) under experienced American nurses.

To this day, nursing remains a female-dominated field and one of the most popular career choices for Filipinas.\footnote{Philippine Commission on Women. In 2010, 27 percent of all licensed professional Filipino women were nurses, many of them working abroad.} While progressive in affording women more visibility in society, both teaching and nursing embodied the values of the Spanish colonial period and what Roces calls the “traditional” or “Catholic” ideal of womanhood. Teachers and nurses alike nurture, heal and attend to their pupils or patients. This was not unique to the Philippines; rather, these prescriptions for Filipino women were also reflections of educational and feminist developments in the United States. In much the same manner that home economics made its way across the ocean to establish itself in Philippine secondary schools and universities, so too were teaching and nursing reflections of the model of modern womanhood in American society.
Conclusion

In the short run, American education in the Philippines was seen as a blessing, bringing liberty, democracy, and practical knowledge to the Filipino people. With regard to Filipino women, American education allowed them to play more active roles in society as teachers, nurses, pharmacists, physicians, businesswomen, and other occupations. Since the 1960s, it has been common for Filipino historians to look back on American education and condemn its overarching effects on Philippine society as harmful to its successful development as a nation. By the 1930s, the Philippines’ dependence on the United States had already become apparent through education, as “a captive generation had already come of age, thinking and acting like little Americans.”

In many ways, American colonial education (and American colonial rule in general) was patriarchal, self-serving, and not much different from the long-criticized British or Dutch empires in many parts of the nineteenth and twentieth-century world.

For the young Filipino women coming of age during this time, the new system of education and the resulting conceptions of modern womanhood was laced with contradictions. Expanding career options and greater visibility outside the home went hand-in-hand with their being pushed back into the home, encouraged to maintain their roles as wives and mothers for the “betterment” of their society. According to Tirona, “For the transitional Filipinas, the most meaningful act of liberation was the jump from kitchen to the classroom. But the world beyond the colegio’s walls seemed forbidding.

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115 In Philippine nationalist historiography, timing plays an important role in scholars’ evaluation of American rule in the Philippines. Castillo’s thesis, which praises the American colonial education system in the Philippines, was published in 1942; Constantino’s treatise The Miseducation of the Filipino, published in 1959, condemns it.
116 Constantino, 5.
117 Yet, at the same time, American colonial education was very different from British and Dutch colonial education in the extent to which it tried to reach out to ordinary people.
The only exception was her involvement in the community where the same principles of home management could be extended to the larger aggrupation of the nation’s underprivileged families.” Indeed, this was how Filipinas were pushed into certain “womanly” occupations. Public education therefore permeated colonial society with American prescriptions for knowledge, behavior, and opportunities associated with modern womanhood. It was a formal tool of civilization and “Americanization” of Filipino women that helped to dictate their roles in society in the years leading up to the suffrage movement and, eventually, Philippine independence. These new roles in public and private society would also satisfy the requirements for “cultural citizenship” in the suffragettes’ minds, as increased education and participation in civic life strongly warranted the right to vote.

Still, the extent and influence of formal schooling was not as far-reaching or hegemonic as the term “universal public education” makes it out to be. It is easy to assume that the bulk of the Philippine populace was uneducated since schooling past the primary level was mainly accessible only to members of the middle and upper classes. The bulk of poorer and rural women did not have access to secondary and higher education, and therefore were unlikely to aspire to the ideal of modern career woman that were represented by prominent figures such as Paz Marquez Benitez or Maria Paz Mendoza-Guazon. Still, the majority of Filipino children now had a primary education. This new generation was exposed to Western mores and values, and possessed at least a rudimentary understanding of the English language. Together, these two concepts were characteristic of the first few generations of young Filipinos who were raised in an

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118 Tirona, 117.
increasingly multi-cultural and multi-lingual society. Regardless of whether or not they were able to obtain secondary or higher education, young Filipinos—including young women—now possessed somewhat progressive American values and a greater understanding of the written language. These tools would further allow them to navigate the waters of “modern womanhood” through a newer, widely-accessible means of communication that was shared by women of all social classes throughout the remainder of the American colonial period: the popular press.
CHAPTER 3

Between Ladies’ Home Journal and Liwayway:
Competing Representations of Modern Womanhood in the American Colonial
Philippines, 1922-1937

June 8, 1924, San Juan, Manila. It’s late at night—past one o’clock—but one light in the Benitez house is still burning bright. Thirty-two-year-old wife, mother of three young children, and literature professor Paz Marquez Benitez is working away in her study, putting the finishing touches on the layout of her magazine, the Woman’s Home Journal. It is during these wee hours of the morning that she is able to get the most work done. As the founder and editor-in-chief of the Woman’s Home Journal, the first true Filipino women’s magazine, she spends many late nights poring over the content, debating over what changes should be made to which articles, and which ones are polished enough to make it into this upcoming issue. She smiles with approval as she reads over the submissions of her contributors. Paz Bautista, the fashion editor, has written an article about updating one’s wardrobe on a budget. Leonarda and Salud, the housekeeping editors, have compiled a collection of home decorating tips for summer. And Honoria and Severina submitted a very informative piece for new mothers about transitioning infants from breastfeeding to bottle-feeding.¹ This is going to be a fantastic issue, she thinks to herself as she takes a sip of tea.

¹ Virginia Benitez Licuanan, Paz Marquez Benitez: One Woman’s Life, Letters, and Writings (Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1995), 65. The contributing editors of Woman’s Home Journal “included the more progressive-minded women in Manila at that time:” Paz Legazpi Bautista (fashion editor), Leonarda Limjap de Ubaldo and Salud de Unson (housekeeping editors) and Honoria Acosta Sison and Severina Luna Orosa (two of the first female doctors in the country, and editors of the “Mother’s Page”).
An hour later, the layout is finished. Eyes drooping, Paz turns out the light and heads up to bed, where her husband Francisco has likely been snoring soundly for the past several hours. She wraps her shawl tight around her to ward off the night’s chill—or is it a shiver of excitement?—as she thinks about tomorrow, when she will submit the issue to the printers. Paz originally founded the Woman’s Home Journal five years earlier. As an elite Filipina who holds a prestigious job as an educator, she felt that she had a responsibility to provide a quality publication of modern knowledge and culture to her readers, her fellow countrywomen. It is well-known in the upper circles of Manila how hard-working, enthusiastic, and optimistic Paz is, and many admire her as the true embodiment of the modern Filipino woman. Does Paz herself really know, though, how important and influential her work—and the work of others like her—will be to the shaping of modern womanhood in the American colonial Philippines, especially for the generations of women to come after her?

**June 8, 1936, Zamboanga City.** Twelve years later, on a dark and cloudy afternoon, twelve-year-old Ofelia Hidalgo is running home from school as fast as she can. She splashes through wet, muddy streets, and jumps over deep brown puddles. She bounds up the rickety wooden steps to her aunt’s front door, slips in, and quickly pulls it shut behind her to keep the wind and rain from coming in the house. It’s a washout of an afternoon—what an awful day to have free time before starting chores and homework!

Ofelia hears a small sound and spins around abruptly. The family dog, Pinky, sighs and gazes back at her from his spot under the table, his head resting lazily on his paws. He must have found his way inside to take shelter from the rain.
“I know, Pinky,” she says, taking off her muddy shoes by the door and wringing out her wet hair. “I wish it wasn’t raining so we could be outside! What should we do until Tita gets home?”

Ofelia scans the kitchen, looking for something to keep her occupied indoors until her aunt gets home from work. She guesses she could start her chores early, but that seems particularly unappealing as she is already in a foul mood about the weather. Pinky is no fun; he seems quite uninterested in getting up from underneath the table. Just above the dog, though, she sees a magazine on the table, and goes to have a look. Hmm, she thinks to herself as she picks it up. *Liwayway.* The woman on the cover appears to be a Filipina movie star. She is wearing makeup, her hair pulled half up away from her bright face, with pearl-drop earrings adorning either side of her head (Fig. 3.1). She is beautiful and elegant, and her gaze meets Ofelia’s in a confident smile. Intrigued, Ofelia sits down to look through the magazine.

For the next two hours she pores over the glossy pages of *Liwayway*. It’s in Tagalog, the national language of the Philippines which her aunt and uncle have been trying to teach her since she was small. She can understand most of the words. The articles, stories, images, and advertisements transport her away from her gloomy house into a world of fashion and glamour. Twirling a strand of dark hair around her finger, Ofelia’s mind begins to wander as she imagines the life she will lead as an adult—a successful schoolteacher by day, and a happy homemaker by night. After a long day at work, she envisions herself returning to a clean and tidy little house, where she will spend

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2 Corazon Dacanay Lopez, e-mail message to author, March 9, 2014. Born in Bacolod City but orphaned as an infant, Ofelia grew up with her aunt in Zamboanga, who was a schoolteacher and Protestant minister.

the remainder of the evening with her handsome husband and adoring children. The gentle beating of the rain on the roof lulls her into a happy daydream.

Although Paz and Ofelia lived a generation apart, the role of women’s magazines in their lives constituted a shared experience among Filipino women during the American colonial period. It is highly likely that both women would have read magazines like *Liwayway* because of their universal appeal to all Filipinas, regardless of socioeconomic class. Paz Marquez Benitez was upper-class, well-educated, and held a job as a university professor. This position allowed her to write, contribute to, and even found her own women’s magazine, the *Woman’s Home Journal*. Girls like Ofelia Hidalgo, a young Zamboangueña growing up during the late American period, also perused women’s magazines, admiring the fashion pages, poring over advice columns, and immersing themselves in short stories.

The prescriptions for modern Filipino womanhood circulated by the popular press during the American colonial period reinforced what young women were learning in public schools. Home economics programs dictated the new norms for modern housewifery, and teaching and nursing programs dictated the professions into which women could enter. Education thus afforded elite women a much greater degree of public participation by way of employment, but at the same time, American colonial policy continued to promote the “queen of the home” or “separate sphere” ideology that had been dominant since the Spanish period. By the early 1920s, these contradictions had raised a host of questions about the proper role of women in Philippine society. Did American education and colonial policy aim to help Filipinas conform to the “modern” standards and consumer habits of American women, or was it simply a different
manifestation of “separate spheres,” the very same ideology that had limited Filipina public participation during the Spanish colonial period? In other words, was “modern womanhood” really all that different from traditional concepts of womanhood? If so, in what ways?

These were the questions facing middle and upper-class Filipinas who were able to obtain education beyond the primary level and partake in the consumerist ideology circulated by the popular press. They are important questions that this chapter seeks to answer. The inherent contradictions of “modern womanhood” produced by American public education were clearly evident in—and further complicated by—the popular press. This chapter traces the representations of Philippine femininity in the popular press (specifically, women’s magazines) from the late Spanish colonial period to the end of the
American colonial period. Focusing mainly on the 1920s and 1930s, it draws comparisons and contrasts between the representation of the “modern woman” in the American *Ladies’ Home Journal* and the Filipino *Liwayway* in an attempt to see how American cultural trends blended with Spanish and traditional ones to complicate the Filipino womanhood debate. To date, *Liwayway*’s wealth of articles and advertisements have remained a largely untapped source in studying Filipino female culture during the American period. The magazine’s stories, articles, illustrations, and advertisements offer valuable insight into a sophisticated culture that incorporated elements of modern American femininity and patterns of female consumerism (and therefore strongly reflected the colonial government’s goal of creating export markets for American-made consumer products) while still retaining traditional fashions, morals, and behaviors reminiscent of the Spanish period. This discrepancy in the representation of women in magazines is evidence of the Filipino people’s appropriation of the press as a tool to challenge supposedly “hegemonic” colonial constructions of modern womanhood. The complex and multi-layered depictions of Filipinas in the 1920s and 1930s support the notion that women’s magazines were important arenas in which the battle over defining “modern Filipino womanhood” was fought.

**Windows to Womanhood: The Rise of Women’s Magazines in Spain, the United States, and the Philippines**

As many scholars have pointed out, the popular press is often used as a tool—both wittingly and unwittingly—to promote dominant social ideology.4 In the early days

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of American rule, the Philippine press was mainly oriented toward an elite audience. As the years went on, however, the press increasingly acquired democratic qualities, resulting in its appropriation by Filipinos of all classes, men and women alike. Because of its universal appeal, readership at all levels of society, and its ability to foster a sense of community among a group of people, the presence of the press was able to make itself known from the “bottom up:” although newspapers and magazines were read by a mostly middle-to-upper-class audience, they still have the possibility of being perused by the lower classes. Therefore, the popular press serves as a useful contrast to the much more formal “top-down” influence of colonial education, whose upper levels were only available to a small portion of the native population. This had enormous implications for Filipinas and the making of modern womanhood; it meant that Philippine women’s magazines reflected the model of the “ideal Filipino woman” as dictated by the colonial powers and collaborating Filipino elite, although these definitions were often muddled and challenged because of the democratizing capacity of the popular press.

The popular press in the Philippines expanded greatly during the U.S. colonial period. As American rule progressed, the English language became more widely used. A host of American-backed papers like the Manila Times and Philippines Free Press were established alongside existing Spanish-language publications, printing Filipino-authored articles, poems, and short stories in English. However, the Manila Times initially did not have a large Filipino readership because of the language barrier, as well as the fact that it reported mostly on American events. Native readership did increase as more Filipinos became proficient in English over the next two decades. Still, the options were quite

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limited for Filipinos; women especially had few print material options that were accessible in terms of language, let alone that contained material to which they could relate. Much of women’s reading material alienated the majority of the population because it catered strongly to an upper-class lifestyle. For example, the *Manila Times* contained a “Special Page for Women” in every issue; however, most of it was gossip about American socialites and cultural pieces geared toward the upper-most members of society, which most Filipinas would have found impractical. Other than the most upper-class Filipino women, who may have comprised a small portion of its readership, newspapers like the *Manila Times* were intended mainly for Americans and elite native collaborators of the colonial regime.

Still, the core concept of a “women’s page” would prove to be a very influential form of mass media in negotiating and defining popular notions of “modern womanhood.” In mid-nineteenth-century United States and Spain, women’s magazines began to increase in popularity. Most catered to the upper and middle classes of society, such as *Harper’s Bazaar*, an American fashion magazine established in 1867. Covers and articles featured the most cutting-edge fashions from Europe and encouraged American readers to adopt these styles. Spain, too, was home to a host of women’s magazines catering to an elite female audience. *El Album de las Bellas, La Amenidad, La Antorcha,* and *Las Hijas de Eva* were just a few publications that contained “short historical stories, poems, and good advice for both men and women about the proper behavior of ladies at

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7 Buhain, 31.
any age,” as well as “beautiful colored and engraved fashion [plates] with the latest news of Paris fashion . . . music sheets of polkas . . . and patterns for needlework.”9 As a significant ramification of empire was the transfer and blending of cultural elements between metropole and colony, a number of Philippine women’s magazines were founded during the Spanish colonial period mimicked the format and layout of these upper-class Iberian publications. These titles included La Ilustracion Filipina, El Bello Sexo, Madrid-Manila, La Moda Filipina.10 By providing articles on morals, fashion, literature, and history, the goal of these women’s magazines was to make Filipinas more “cultured” like their Spanish counterparts.11 These Spanish magazines, remained, were elitist in their format, their language, and their intentions. They alienated the majority of the female population, in many ways reflecting the women’s pages of American colonial newspapers like The Manila Times. On the other hand, by the 1920s, Philippine women’s magazines such as Woman’s Home Journal and Liwayway were beginning to acquire the more democratizing and egalitarian characteristics of American women’s magazines.

Around the turn of the twentieth century, women’s magazines in the United States were becoming more inclusive in terms of their content, and appealed to all women regardless of socioeconomic or educational background. Catering to women of all classes, young and old, single and married, these twentieth-century American publications contained a mix of “fiction, general-interest news, and service departments

10 Encanto, 31.
11 Ibid., 18.
for food preparation, fashion, and household management.” Magazines like *Ladies’ Home Journal, McCall’s, Delineator, Woman’s Home Companion, Pictorial Review, and Good Housekeeping* were becoming household names in print culture. As opposed to elitist publications like *Harper’s Bazaar*, which for the majority of women promoted unrealistic standards of living, these six magazines appealed to the dual nature of modern womanhood—the need to present themselves as modern and independent, while at the same time maintaining their role in the home as wives and mothers. A closer look at the content of magazines like *Ladies’ Home Journal* reveals that they implicitly endorsed the idea that American women were a universal and unified group who shared common interests, and assumed that all women desire to be three things: beautiful and fashionable in appearance, successful in their careers, and effective wives and mothers in the home.

When translated over to the world of magazines, the dual nature of modern womanhood took on a new role: that of female consumer. In their advertisements, articles, and pictures, magazines encouraged the use of mass-produced, American goods by upholding the modern female consumer’s dual role as both “fashionista” and “housewife-and-mother.” These two categories, termed by Ikeya, are useful here in looking at the dual nature of modern womanhood that was promoted by Anglo-American empires. On the one hand, the female magazine reader was encouraged to buy beauty products and conform to the latest styles of dress in order to remake herself in the image of the modern woman. On the other hand, women were also pushed to buy the latest food products and household items, as part of an adherence to scientifically and medically-

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backed practices of housekeeping and child-rearing. Ikeya writes, “The former was associated with self-indulgent consumption while the latter was associated with wise and dutiful consumption. Yet both were closely linked to new bodily practices that placed emphasis on health, hygiene and beauty, self-improvement, and self-fulfillment . . . Both illustrate that what it meant to be modern was shaped by the rising culture of consumerism.”

Only by partaking in this model of consumerism would they be able to emulate the modern manifestation of a housewife-and-mother.

These ideals were particularly visible in the hordes of advertisements that were found in women’s magazines like Ladies’ Home Journal, first published in 1883. By bombarding its readers with over a hundred pages of short stories, advice columns, and advertisements in each issue, the Journal appealed to both the “fashionista” and “housewife-and-mother” roles of female consumers in powerful ways that would shape their conceptions of modern womanhood. Kathy Peiss has emphasized the extremely potent role of advertising in the rise of modern American female consumer culture at the turn of the twentieth century. The newfound ability of companies to mass-produce items (as a result of the industrial revolution) required them to adopt new marketing strategies in order to reach the largest possible consumer base. As women were in charge of the household, they began to exercise an increasingly active role in decisions regarding the purchase of domestic-related goods. Additionally, the type of female consumerism that emerged at the turn of the century was distinct from previous forms in that it associated class status with purchasing power. A woman’s ability to adopt the most modern beauty

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trends, fashions, home goods, and childcare practices ensured her acceptance into the cult of “modern womanhood.” Advertisements became potent and powerful new sources of information, competing with and often surpassing the magazine’s editorial content in terms of making connections with the female readership.\textsuperscript{15} It was through advertising that businesses influenced the purchasing decisions of women, and in turn transformed the paradigm of femininity that magazine readers would strive to emulate.

Through the workings of colonial connections and cultural exchange, the Philippine press followed the American example in democratizing women’s magazines. Soon they, too, became “avidly read by women of diverse ages and socioeconomic and educational backgrounds, for the glamour, glitz, fantasy, and the smorgasbord of information they offer.”\textsuperscript{16} This is why the imagery and advertisements in magazines were so influential: uneducated women “could not be expected to have the slightest grasp of the political problems with which the country is likely to be faced during the next generation,” but they were able to internalize ideas about womanhood that were presented to them through magazines.

English and Tagalog-language Philippine women’s magazines during the American colonial period embraced these new ideas regarding the dual role of the modern female consumer. In the wake of the popular success of \textit{Ladies’ Home Journal} and others, a number of women’s magazines (including general-interest magazines that appealed to women) began to appear in the Philippines. In 1919, the first Philippine

\textsuperscript{15} Scanlon, 1-2, 9. Where Peiss outlines the development of American consumer culture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Scanlon looks at the how this development was represented in \textit{Ladies’ Home Journal}. The Journal’s popularity and influence on American female culture is evidenced by the fact that it was the first women’s magazine to reach a circulation of one million, in 1904.\textsuperscript{16} Encanto, 1.
women’s magazine, the *Woman’s Home Journal*, was established by prominent Filipina educator and short-story writer Paz Marquez Benitez. The *Woman’s Home Journal* was comprised of contributions from Paz’s elite female friends. The contributing editors covered *Ladies’ Home Journal*-esque topics such as home decorating, cooking, and childcare.

Three years later, the Tagalog weekly magazine *Liwayway* was established by Ramon Roces as a re-vamped version of his former publication, the less-successful *Photo News*.17 The *Photo News* was originally published in three languages—Spanish, English, and Tagalog—to appeal to the multilingual population of the Philippines. However, readership declined because readers thought it unnecessary to pay for two other sections that they did not read. Roces thus took out the Spanish and English sections, altered the format, and in 1922 released *Liwayway* as a purely Tagalog publication. *Liwayway*’s establishment marked a major step in fostering the growth of a uniquely Filipino print-media culture. With its affordable price (twelve centavos), literary-based content that appealed to a large majority of Filipinos, and language accessibility due to its being in Tagalog, the magazine helped to widen the native readership base. Although at first it was not specifically intended for women, much of *Liwayway*’s content appealed as much to women as it did to men, and became more female-oriented throughout the 1930s.

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17 Dennis Villegas, “A History of the Liwayway Magazine,” *PilipinoKomiks: Looking back at the rich history of the Filipino comics tradition* (blog), December 21, 2005, http://pilipinokomiks.blogspot.com/2005/12/history-of-liwayway-magazine.html (accessed February 13, 2014). *Liwayway*’s predecessor, the *Photo News*, was originally published in three languages—Spanish, English, and Tagalog—to appeal to the multilingual population of the Philippines. However, readership declined because readers thought it unnecessary to pay for two other sections that they did not read. Roces thus took out the Spanish and English sections, altered the format, and in 1922 released *Liwayway* as a purely Tagalog publication.
Together with other women’s magazines such as the *Woman’s Home Journal, Liwayway* played a large role in shaping the daily lives of Filipinas of all social strata.\(^{18}\)

As the American colonial regime became established in the islands, the definition of ideal womanhood was altered to include the role of woman-as-consumer at its core. Through advertisements in magazines like *Liwayway*, Filipinos were increasingly being bombarded by American news, cultural trends, and consumer products, as this new era of colonialism ushered in both a “spiritual and material transformation of dependence” on the United States.\(^{19}\) A Filipina could neither be considered a fashionable woman nor a good housewife if she did not invest in American personal and home goods, due to the belief (promoted by the colonial government) that mass-produced American consumer products possessed a transformative quality that “made progress and modernity easily available to everyone.”\(^{20}\) Heavily influenced by new, twentieth-century American conceptions of femininity and consumer culture, Philippine women’s magazines focused on both the fashionista and housewife aspects of modern womanhood, and underscored the expectation of increased consumerism in achieving both of these standards.

It should be emphasized that women’s magazines were more than just guides to fashion, manners, and consumer products. More importantly, they represented spaces of contestation and negotiation in the struggle to define “modern womanhood,” both in the

\(^{18}\) Chapman, 6. Despite the similarities that these magazines shared in their support for women’s suffrage, Chapman is careful to point out that “feminist” publications such as Woman’s Home Journal differed from “commercial” publications like Liwayway in that feminist publications have specific feminist political goals in mind. On the other hand, commercial publications aimed to appeal to a wider public audience in which women’s interests and socio-political issues played only a minor or secondary part.


United States and in the Philippines. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, American feminists found themselves fighting to break out of the domestic sphere and obtain greater participation in the public sphere. Women’s magazines served as an important arena in which these debates were explored. An example was *Godey’s Lady’s Book*, an American women’s magazine founded in 1830 in Philadelphia. In *Godey’s* articles and editorials, editor-in-chief Sarah Josepha Hale was able to voice her support for female education and argue for the greater economic participation of women in the mid-nineteenth century United States while still maintaining (through images, advertisements) that a woman’s foremost responsibility was to the home.\(^1\) Feminist issues were also present (sometimes overtly, and sometimes covertly through the ways in which women were represented visually) in subsequent women’s magazines like *Ladies’ Home Journal*. Contributors and editors, both male and female, were able to voice their often differing opinions and recommendations for the roles that women should (or should not) play as the United States became an increasingly developed and modernized society. Thus, the press served as a battleground on which women were able to interact and negotiate with conflicting definitions of modernity.

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\(^1\) Jennifer Scanlon, *Inarticulate Longings: The Ladies’ Home Journal, Gender, and the Promises of Consumer Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 2; Doris Weatherford, “The National Women’s History Museum Presents ‘Women with a Deadline: Female Printers, Publishers, and Journalists from the Colonial Period to World War I,’” National Women’s History Museum, exhibit curated by Stephanie Edwardtsoski and Tamar Rabinowitz, 2007, https://www.nwhm.org/online-exhibits/womenwithdeadlines/wwd9.htm (accessed February 15, 2014). Hale was originally the founder of the first American women’s magazine, *Boston Ladies’ Magazine*, in 1828. Two years later, her magazine merged with another publication, *Godey’s Lady’s Book*. Godey’s would become one of the most popular nineteenth-century magazines in the United States and was known as “the queen of monthlies.” Additionally, both Scanlon and Weatherford point out that Hale was relatively progressive for her time by advocating for women’s education; however, she still supported “separate sphere” ideology and conformed to prevailing notions of womanhood during the mid-nineteenth century.
In the Philippines, it can be argued that the press played an even more influential role in the way that it facilitated the “modern womanhood” debate between three competing representations of femininity: the Spanish colonial model, the American colonial model, and the pre-colonial indigenous Filipino model. In *Refiguring Colonialism, Women, and Modernity in Burma*, Ikeya traces the evolution of the modern woman (*khit kala*, literally “woman of the times”), using magazines and newspapers as one category of analysis. Ikeya’s detailed interpretations of Burmese magazine articles, columns, and advertisements offers a great deal of insight into the conflicting images of tradition and modernity that the modern Burmese woman (*khit kala*) had to negotiate, as did Filipino women. However, the Burmese example differs from the Philippines in that Filipinas had to navigate among three models of femininity, while the *khit kala* of colonial Burma only had to navigate between two: the pre-colonial Burmese and the British colonial model.

In addition to reflecting and incorporating different colonial constructions of womanhood, women’s magazines also possess the capacity to challenge these constructions, thereby preventing any one model from becoming hegemonic. Georgina Reyes Encanto has viewed Spanish, American, and Tagalog magazines in the Philippines as tools of “acquiescence and resistance to the dominant capitalist ideology,” as colonial capitalism attempted to impose Western constructions of womanhood upon the masses. At the same time, though, Encanto contends that Philippine women’s magazines were also tools for challenging the dominant social order and prescriptions for female roles.

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22 Ikeya, 2-3.
23 Encanto, 3, 8-11. Encanto draws heavily on Gramsci’s theory of hegemony and Althusser’s theory of ideological state apparatuses to describe the ways in which the popular press can serve to both uphold and subvert the dominant social norms promoted by the ruling classes.
The American colonial period was an example of a time in which the popular press could challenge the dominant order, as Filipino men and women alike tried to reconcile old and new models of femininity.\textsuperscript{24}

Representations of Philippine femininity changed over time, as what it meant to be a “modern woman” was influenced more and more by American culture.\textsuperscript{25} As a result, Filipino and American women’s magazines depicted new roles for women; however, they did not completely break away from older stereotypes. These stereotypes included Victorian and Edwardian fashions and manners in the United States (which were actually borrowed from England, but became ingrained into upper-class American culture). The nineteenth-century Victorian-American paradigm of womanhood shares many similarities with the model that dominated the Spanish colonial Philippines, often exemplified by the character of Maria Clara in Jose Rizal’s famous novel \textit{Noli Me Tangere}. Maria Clara embodied the virtues of meekness, piety, and virginity, and as a result, she is often typecast as the “traditional” model of the Filipino woman. Filipinas considered women like her to be “ideal” during the late Spanish colonial period as they identified with (or, in the case of lower-class women, strived for) her conservative Catholic behavior, obedience to males and elders, and elite lifestyle.

\textsuperscript{24} Scanlon, 7. For the most part, mainstream women’s magazines like \textit{Ladies’ Home Journal} influenced their American readers to accept, rather than challenge, “the corporate capitalist model and their home-based role in it.” However, when the magazine’s messages were translated over to a colonial society like the Philippines, its hegemonic power was always challenged in some way or form because of the cultural differences between colonizer and colonized.

\textsuperscript{25} Encanto, 41. The writers, editors, and publishing magnates of Philippine newspapers and magazines during the American colonial era were upper-class products of the American regime and educational system, so Philippine publications in the 1920s bore a decidedly American influence in their content and advertising.
Victorian Ladies and “Maria Claras:” Late-Nineteenth Century Femininities in Spain, the United States, and the Philippines

In the late nineteenth-century United States, the Victorian model of femininity represented the precursor to the “modern woman” that emerged during the American women’s suffrage movement in the 1900s and 1910s. This ideal, based on the examples of middle and upper-class women of Victorian Britain, was one of limited education and confinement to the domestic sphere. Beginning in the 1820s and 1830s, the Industrial Revolution created a ready surplus of consumer goods available in stores. This meant that women no longer had to work to produce things like clothes and other everyday items. They now had increased amounts of leisure time, during which they could hone their “womanly” skills in the arts of embroidery, home decorating, reading, and playing music, among other activities. Education, especially for upper-class women, was characterized by “finishing subjects” that would prepare her for social life in drawing rooms and at formal social gatherings. Additionally, Victorian women were allowed minimal degrees of participation in society, usually through social clubs or charity work. Respectable occupations for middle-class women included teaching and serving as governesses, while lower-class women often found themselves working in factories in both England and the United States. The “ideal” concept of womanhood during this time was decidedly upper-class in nature and therefore was usually unattainable for the masses.

This Victorian ideal of womanhood had much in common with the Spanish colonial model of womanhood that dominated the nineteenth-century Philippines. As Catholicism was a powerful tool of Spanish colonial rule, religious values greatly

informed social mores and did much to solidify the “separate spheres” between the sexes. Public society was almost exclusively dominated by men, as evidenced by their greater access to education and employment compared to women. Meanwhile, as stated in the previous chapter, the Spanish colonizers greatly limited education for Filipinas, often restricting them to the study of “womanly” subjects that resembled the “finishing education” of Victorian girls. By depriving the majority of Filipinas of a basic education, and by limiting it in scope to elite women, the Spanish emphasized the belief that a woman did not need formal schooling and that her place should be in the home.

The nineteenth-century middle and upper-class “model Filipina” therefore came to be highly influenced by Catholic values of piety and devotion to wifehood and motherhood. Her presence is often evoked through a well-known fictional character, Maria Clara, the star-crossed love of hero Crisostomo Ibarra in Jose Rizal’s famous novel *Noli Me Tangere*. Mina Roces has been one of many Philippine historians to look at the “Maria Clara model” as the popular representation of ideal femininity in the Spanish colonial Philippines. Born into an upper-class Spanish mestizo family, Maria Clara is well-known for her beauty, delicate manners, and sweetness of character. Her behavior reflects the convent education she received in her youth; she is always obedient to males and her elders, and is pure in body and spirit. According to Roces, Maria Clara is “isolated from knowledge of politics and kept in the domestic sphere . . . She is a beauty in form and a Catholic saint in action.”

As a Philippine nationalist and revolutionary, it is quite possible that Rizal intended Maria Clara to be a satirical model of womanhood in the Philippines. He probably used her to bring attention to the fact that unquestioning obedience to males, elders, and priests was a fundamental character flaw of upper-class Filipino women. Thus, many scholars have asserted that Maria Clara is not the “ideal” Filipina because of her flaws, as well as the obvious fact that she bore no resemblance to the bulk of middle and lower-class Filipino women. However, Maria Clara does accurately represent the elite model of femininity promoted by the Catholic Church and the Spanish colonial regime.

The Philippine press during the Spanish colonial period reinforced dominant patriarchal ideology and perpetuated the submissive, “Catholic” model of womanhood, particularly Spanish-language women’s magazines that were established for an elite Philippine audience. Since nearly all these magazines were published in Spanish, they were targeted exclusively to members of the upper classes. Publications like La Ilustracion Filipina, El Bello Sexo, Madrid-Manila, La Moda Filipina all shared the common goal of trying to “mold and recreate the Filipina in the image of the ideal woman of sixteenth-century Iberian society.” They aimed to make Filipinas more “cultured” by offering articles on morals, behavior, fashion, literature, and history, as

28 Jose Rizal, “Letter to the Women of Malolos,” Tagalog-English special edition (1889), 15. Rizal warns against these weaknesses of Filipinas in his 1888 letter to this elite group of women who desired a Spanish education: “There was, it is true, an abundance of girls with agreeable manners, beautiful ways, and modest demeanor, but there was in all an admixture of servitude and deference to the words or whims of their so-called ‘spiritual fathers’ . . . due to excessive kindness, modesty, or perhaps ignorance.” It is this ignorance that Rizal suggests is most dangerous as it would perpetuate Spain’s abuses toward the Filipinos, especially the women, as the “typical” Filipina would not or could not stand up to her oppressors.


30 Encanto, 31.
well as better housewives and mothers, with articles on “health and hygiene, embroidery, cooking, and the home arts.”

It is important to emphasize that, as in Victorian Britain and the United States, lower and working-class women in the Spanish colonial Philippines were ostracized from this upper-class, religion-based, domesticated model of womanhood. In reality, lower-class Filipino women were very active in society, working in markets, farms, and factories, similar to lower-class American and British women. The fact that working women moved between the public and private spheres was “interpreted as a threat to both the psychic and external patriarchal order, consequently intensifying patriarchal anxiety.” These women challenged the dominant ideology promoted by the Spanish and elite ruling classes through the Philippine press. Still, as Spanish-language women’s magazines were one of the main forms of entertainment for women in the nineteenth century, they did much to coerce Filipinas into accepting their subjugated position in society as “mothers and nurturers.”

Thus the “ideal Filipina” during this time was a paragon of morality and culture in the home, whose reproductive role was equal parts biological and cultural. She was not depicted as being “modern,” since the domestic role of women was more often romanticized using religious and class-based arguments than scientific evidence and consumerism (as it would be later on in the American period). Through virtuous and

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31 Encanto, 18.
32 Maria Luisa T. Camagay, Working Women of Manila in the 19th Century (Manila: University Center for Women’s Studies, University of the Philippines Press, 1995).
33 Elizabeth Mary Holt, Colonizing Filipinas: Nineteenth-Century Representations of the Philippines in Western Historiography (Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2002), 122.
34 Encanto, 32.
proper childrearing, the ideal Filipina also played an important part in raising the status of her nation. Says Encanto:

The domestic roles were made attractive to women because the magazines glamorized and romanticized them, referring to women as the ‘queen of the home,’ the most influential persons in society because it was they who were mostly responsible for nurturing children and molding them into upright, responsible citizens, exemplary Christians, who would thus determine the moral fiber of the whole country.35

As “queens of the home,” women were expected to purchase the Spanish consumer goods advertised in magazines.36 These ads, which were relatively scarce in magazines, were typically for imported Spanish beauty products (such as skin whiteners and soaps) and home goods (fabric shops and furniture). The emphasis on wifehood and motherhood extended beyond advertising to the illustrations that filled the pages of women’s magazines.

Cover photos especially and almost always show idealized and romanticized images of morally righteous Filipina virgins or mothers. Women are usually either depicted in religious scenes or wearing the “traditional Filipina costume” (or both, as in Fig. 3.2). This “costume” is known as the *terno*, also referred to during this time as the *mestiza* dress. This style evolved out of a much older pre-Hispanic style of lowland Filipina dress that combined a sarong-style skirt with a kerchief-like top that was draped over a woman’s bodice. During the Spanish period, the top (pañuelo) was worn over a pineapple-fiber or linen blouse (*camisa*) for increased sexual modesty. The sarong evolved into a fuller, longer, European-style skirt (called the *saya*), creating the Filipina

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35 Encanto, 22.
36 Still, the scale of advertising in Spanish and Philippine magazines was much smaller than it was in the United States and in the American colonial Philippines, both of which experienced a much more drastic revolution in female consumer culture.
mestiza dress depicted in many newspapers, magazines, and illustrations of the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{37} Sometimes, an apron-like garment called the \textit{tapis} was worn over the skirt. With all these garments in place, the Filipino woman was “modesty personified.”\textsuperscript{38} The \textit{mestiza} dress evoked images of female domesticity and conservative Catholic values. During the American period, the \textit{mestiza} dress underwent significant alterations, but was still widely used in the press (and later, by suffragettes) as a powerful representation of the memories and mores of an earlier era.

As the Philippines changed hands from Spanish to American imperial administration, the characteristics of “ideal womanhood” were altered once again. While the Spanish used Catholicism as their main tool of pacification in the islands, the United

\textbf{Figure 3.2:} Cover, \textit{La Moda Filipina}, 1890s. This women’s magazine cover, which depicts Catholic Filipinas exiting a church, shows the importance of both modest Filipina dress and religious virtue in late-nineteenth century Philippine culture. Pinoy Kollektor (blog) December 8, 2011, http://pinoykollektor.blogspot.com/2011/12/55-1890s-la-moda-filipina-prints-by.html (accessed April 2, 2014).

\textsuperscript{37} Paul A. Rodell, \textit{Culture and Customs of the Philippines} (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002), 113.
States decided they would take a different, more “benevolent” approach to colonialism. The Americans’ main tools were the secular apparatuses of democracy and universal education—two institutions which, according to notions of American self-importance, had made them into a great nation and burgeoning world power.\(^{39}\) Democracy and universal education had far-reaching effects in the Philippines, especially when combined with the potent powers of the press and American popular culture. As a result, the paradigm of modern Filipina womanhood began to incorporate new values associated with American womanhood.

**Negotiating “Modern Womanhood:” American and Filipino Women’s Magazines of the 1920s and 1930s**

There grew to be a marked difference in the way ideal womanhood was portrayed in American and Philippine magazines and how it was portrayed in Spanish magazines. In the 1920s, American culture increasingly permeated Filipino society, as the militant resistance of the war slowly but surely gave way to accommodation and acceptance among the upper and middle classes who saw the advantages of collaborating with the colonizer.\(^{40}\) Education and popular culture both played instrumental roles in instilling American values into the Filipino population. American popular culture made its way to the Philippines through print media (books, newspapers, and magazines) as well as Hollywood films, songs, and musicals.\(^{41}\)

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\(^{40}\) Encanto, 37-8.

\(^{41}\) Ibid., 35.
Reinforcing these cultural forms was the influx of American goods and products into Philippine markets. May and Jacobson have shown that the American government’s goal to establish overseas export markets in the Philippines remained at the forefront of colonial policy. Along with establishing a strong military presence, economic expansion was a main driving force behind the introduction of democracy and education to the islands.42 According to Philippine scholar Delia Aguilar, “U.S. colonial policy differed from that of Spain in that it understood well the prerequisites for unhampered economic exploitation . . . [its goals included the] recreation of Philippine society in the image of its conqueror, the conversion of the elite into adjuncts of colonial rule, and the cultural Americanization of the population.”43 A Protestant American missionary put it another way: “A savage, having nothing, is perfectly contented so long as he wants nothing. The first step toward civilizing him is to create a want. Men rise in the scale of civilization only as their wants rise.”44 To American colonial officials, this statement was not just true for “savage” men, but also for savage women, who must equally partake in consumerism and the satisfaction of “wants.” Essential to the realization of this goal were Filipinas, who constituted a ready market for the shiploads of consumer goods being produced by American factories. As American women’s magazines increasingly targeted women of all socioeconomic classes in order to sell their products, so too did Philippine women’s magazines promote the sale of American goods to their female readers.

Women’s magazines in the American colonial Philippines greatly reflected these imperial economic motives. They strongly appealed to the fashionista, who adopted the

42 Jacobson, 5.
44 Josiah Strong, Our Country (1886); quoted in Jacobson, 15.
most current styles in clothing, footwear, accessories, cosmetics, and hairstyles. They also appealed equally to the housewife-and-mother, who adopted modern practices of housekeeping and scientific child-rearing, and was encouraged to invest in the latest household products to update her home.\textsuperscript{45} Philippine women’s magazines contained “pages and pages of fashions heavily influenced by the dominant trends, patterns, and styles in the United States as well as advertisements of beauty products like soap, cosmetics, and toothpaste. [These advertisements] made for engaging reading and helped create a steady market of consumers for American products.”\textsuperscript{46} Many American advertisements were founded on “scientific” arguments; for example, why using a certain brand of soap will lead to more radiant skin, or why a certain food product is healthier for one’s family. Advertisements tended to reinforce the scientific approaches to housekeeping that young Filipinas would learn in their home economics classes, most importantly the need to remain up-to-date on the most modern technologies and products for the home.

From its first issue in 1922, \textit{Liwayway} modeled itself after American magazines like \textit{Ladies’ Home Journal}. Its continued emulation and evolution over the first decade and a half of its existence illustrates a slow but steady process of democratization, as the American influence caused Filipino womanhood to depart in some ways from the more conservative and elitist values of femininity in the Spanish era. In other ways, though, elements of the Spanish model would be upheld. While it is true that \textit{Liwayway} reflected many elements of American female consumer culture, it also exhibited the problem of reconciling American models with the Spanish and pre-colonial models of the past. Thus,

\textsuperscript{45} Ikeya, 96.
\textsuperscript{46} Encanto, 47.
an analysis of Liwayway shows that the concept of modern American womanhood in the early twentieth century was not completely adopted by Filipinas, and likewise the “traditional” Spanish model was not completely repressed. Defining Filipino femininity was an ongoing, incomplete, and contested process as the Philippines edged closer toward becoming an independent nation. Magazines, read by Filipino women at all levels of the social ladder, became a useful forum for this negotiation.47

Filipina “Fashionistas” in Women’s Magazines

The “fashionistas” described by Ikeya exemplified the process by which elite Burmese women adopted British beauty practices and styles of dress. These choices indicated a woman’s decision to conform to the standards of the khit kala. Similar processes of changing styles occurred in the American colonial Philippines. Since increased education for women corresponded to expanded career opportunities, they had to present themselves to society as well-groomed and professional in order to achieve success. Therefore, they had to buy into new patterns of consumerism, and purchase products and clothes that would allow them to reinvent themselves in the images of the women they saw on the glossy pages of magazines.

First and foremost, magazines instructed women that their transformation began with their daily toilette, which came to include the use of soaps, perfumes, facial creams, powders, nail care kits, and toothpaste. Advertisements for these products were featured

47 Ann Heilmann and Margaret Beetham, New Woman Hybridities: Femininity, Feminism, and International Consumer Culture, 1880-1930 (New York: Routledge, 2004), 5. According to Heilmann and Beetham, periodicals are useful sources for their ability to contain multiple, and often conflicting, viewpoints with regard to social issues such as the role of women in society and female suffrage; they can be analyzed to effectively show how society’s outlook toward these social issues is subject to change over time.
in *Ladies’ Home Journal* in the early 1920s and made appearances in *Liwayway* around the same time. This was not a mere coincidence; shared advertising reflected a strategic move by the Americans to impose their way of life on Philippine society. American soap companies (Palmolive, Lenox, etc.) advertised their products in the Philippines not necessarily to promote beauty practices, but also to raise the standard of hygiene in the colony.\(^4^8\) Hygiene played an important factor in advertisements for household products—soaps, medicines, and cleaners—which reflected the goals of the colonial administration and the public school curriculum that mandated home economics and hygiene classes for young Filipinas. This imperial intent disguised itself as soap ads appealed instead to women’s vanity: they argued that daily use would help maintain beautiful and healthy skin.\(^4^9\) An advertisement for Palmolive Soap in a 1922 issue of *Ladies’ Home Journal* offers a few paragraphs of explanation detailing the adverse effects of exposure to the elements, dirt, and makeup on one’s skin. In the ad, this scientific argument for health is secondary to the bold-faced, large-print argument for beauty: that “thorough cleansing once a day with fine, mild soap” like Palmolive would result in “a fresh, schoolgirl complexion” that men would find irresistible.\(^5^0\)

Advertisements suggested that women who used these products would appear clean and beautiful, and therefore would experience an instantaneous self-transformation into the “modern woman.”\(^5^1\) In an ad for Mavis Vivaudou beauty products that appeared in a 1925 issue of *Liwayway*, a woman is pictured in a bathrobe, showing off her

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\(^4^9\) Ikeya, 106.


\(^5^1\) Ikeya, 109.
beautiful skin. The caption reads, “Isang napakagandang balat…ang ibinubunga ng paggamit ng MAVIS,” or, “Very beautiful skin…consequences of the use of MAVIS.”

Other advertisements for hair products, such as Sta comb hair cream and Vaseline hair pomade, glistened with promises of instantaneous change, turning “buhok na hindi masupil” (“unruly hair”) into “cabello ondulado y brillante” (“wavy, shiny hair”). They suggested that caring for one’s skin and hair would equate to beauty, and subsequently, confidence and success in life.

Particularly in ads for beauty products, advertisers began to capitalize on what they saw as the sensibility, emotion, and taste of the female consumer. Peiss points out the gender stereotypes that led to this logic: “If men responded to the intrinsic qualities and function of a product, women dwelled on its social and psychological effects, its style and smartness.” The language of ads began to reflect what was imagined to be said during “intimate conversations” between women about their everyday life and relationships. This is evident in advertisements for Pompeian face cream, which appeared in both Liwayway and Ladies’ Home Journal, and was premised on a woman’s desire to make herself more attractive to a man. An ad in the January 1922 issue of the Journal shows a young American couple getting engaged, persuading women that any man’s love can be obtained if she has beautiful skin (Fig. 3.3). Likewise, an almost identical ad for Pompeian cream appears in the August 11, 1923 issue of Liwayway, with the same message: a man becomes enamored with a woman because of her bright, white, and clear skin (Fig. 3.4). Interestingly, the ad in Liwayway is geared toward a Filipino audience.

52 Mavis Vivaudou advertisement, Liwayway, September 4, 1925. 
53 Sta comb advertisement, Liwayway, August 14, 1925; Vaseline advertisement, Liwayway, March 5, 1926. 
54 Peiss, “American Women and the Making of Modern Consumer Culture.”
Figure 3.3: Pompeian cream advertisement, *Ladies’ Home Journal*, January 1922. University of Minnesota Library (Hathitrust Digital Library).

Figure 3.4: Pompeian cream advertisement, *Liwayway*, August 11, 1923. Very similar in format to the previous ad in Fig. 3.3, it reads, “His gaze was staring at the bright beauty of the young woman. He swore an undying love and happiness that has no equal. That’s the reward for beauty.” University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa Library.
because the woman is wearing *mestiza* dress. This demonstrates the malleability of American advertising in marketing their products to Filipino women: Filipinas could achieve some form of modernity by using American beauty products, but still wear traditional fashions. Additionally, because of the purported skin-whitening effects of the soap, the ad also suggests that whiteness is the standard for beautiful skin in the American colonial Philippines. Taken together, these two Pompeian advertisements also uphold the argument that advertising treats all women—both Americans and Filipinas—as a homogeneous group who share the same concerns, especially the need to appear beautiful to men.

In addition to a wealth of beauty advertisements in every issue, *Liwayway* also contained beauty columns throughout the 1920s and 1930s that instructed Filipinas in the uses of these new American products. In various issues throughout 1923, a column called “Dambana ng Kagandahan” (“Shrine of Beauty,” Fig. 3.5) appeared in *Liwayway*. The female authors of the column varied, and appear to have been both Filipino and American. In the 1930s, “Dambana ng Kagandahan” evolved into a new column called “Karunungan sa Pagpapaganda” (“Wisdom of Beautification”), which offered tips and tricks for a modern woman’s beauty routine. One edition of the column provides a week’s worth of daily beauty tips, from applying makeup to proper hair care to selecting outfits.55 Beauty articles such as these became staples of women’s magazines in both the United States and the Philippines. Overall, advertisements and magazine departments such as these upheld the notion that a diligent beauty routine was an essential part of being a modern woman. In their movement from private to public spheres, it became

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increasingly important to women how they were perceived by others. According to Peiss, “Ads maintained that beautifying and achievement need not be mutually exclusive: caring for appearance could be seen as an aspect of women’s self-expression and dignity.” Beauty advertisements and products appealed to a Filipina’s sense of vanity and self-worth in that American products would make her body healthier, more attractive to men, and more appealing to herself whenever she looked in the mirror. Still, washing her face and fixing her hair were not the only requirements of a modern woman. In addition to buying new products and following a beauty routine, the second requirement for becoming a “fashionista” was dressing the part.

Fashion during the American colonial period presented a unique challenge to Philippine society. American clothing starkly contrasted with the traditional mestiza dress

Figure 3.5: “Dambana ng Kagandahan,” Liwayway, September 29, 1923. University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa Library.

56 Chapman, 9.
57 Peiss, “American Women and the Making of Modern Consumer Culture.” However, Peiss argues that the idea that beauty is an inherent aspect of modern womanhood is problematic for the future, as it became “easily submerged in the celebration of female beauty as an end in itself.” This led to the promotion of certain privileged images of beauty (having a particular body type, hairstyle, complexion, etc.) that came to define American and Filipina femininity throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.
of Filipino women. In the 1920s, fashion magazines like *Harper’s Bazaar* typically promoted the latest high-fashion styles from France and elsewhere in Europe. *Ladies’ Home Journal*, too, promoted the fashions of the times, but since its audience was more middle-class, it usually depicted more practical styles, even providing do-it-yourself clothing alteration tips for women on a budget. During this time, the “flapper” look, also called the “boyish” or *garçonne* look, reflected the newly acquired political rights (as well as a certain degree of rebelliousness) of the modern American woman. Baggy, curveless dresses with dropped waists hung straight down on a woman’s frame, cinched with a belt around the hips. The fashion pages of *Ladies’ Home Journal* were full of these styles (see Fig. 3.6). Jewelry was an essential addition, as women often adorned their outfits with long strands of pearls, bangle bracelets, and dangling earrings. The flapper style, however, was not often depicted in *Liwayway* and made only the occasional appearance, as in the ad for Beck’s Department Store in Manila (Fig. 3.7). In fact, in the early years of *Liwayway*, women were sparsely represented in the magazine’s photographs, illustrations, and advertisements. Of these images, there existed only the occasional depiction of Filipinas in Western-style clothing. Oddly enough, most ads in the formative years of *Liwayway* depicted American women rather than Filipinas, as if they were copied right from American magazines. Exceptions did exist, such as the Pompeian beauty cream ad mentioned earlier, which very clearly portrays a Filipino couple. If they were pictured in *Liwayway*’s illustrations and advertisements, Filipinas

60 The *Liwayway* of 1922 was more of a general interest magazine and was not really as appealing to women as it would become in the late 1920s and 1930s. Thus, most issues typically contained only a handful of images of Filipino women.
Figure 3.6: “Paris Points the Way to January Bargains,” Ladies’ Home Journal, January 1922, 56. This article and corresponding illustrations depict the “flapper” style that defined modern womanhood in the 1920s United States. University of Minnesota Library (HathiTrust Digital Library).

Figure 3.7: Beck’s Department Store advertisement, Liwayway, April 24, 1924. This ad for an Easter sale at Beck’s Department Store in Manila depicts a rare appearance of the “flapper” style in Liwayway, as the dominant trend of the 1920s was to portray Filipino women in traditional mestiza dress. University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa Library.
were usually shown dressed in “traditional costume” (*mestiza* dress with puffed sleeves and long train) with their hair swept up and back in the traditional chignon. They may have been encouraged to use American beauty products, but it was clear that the dominant social ideology in the early 1920s did not encourage Filipinas to adopt the boyish styles of the American flappers.

Ironically, while magazines maintained that women should continue to wear the *mestiza* dress, they urged men to adopt American styles of menswear, particularly the suit or *amerikana* as it was called in the Philippines. Throughout various 1923 issues of *Liwayway*, Filipino men are shown donning American-style suits, even wearing bowler hats and using walking sticks, as in Figure 3.8. Roces states that the wearing of the *amerikana* was symbolic of the greater patriarchal nature of colonialism:

> The Western jacket was the signature of a powerful colonizer, and Filipino men, by wearing the *amerikana*, were linking themselves to the colonizers, while Filipino women, in *terno* and *pañuelo*, wore the attire of the colonized subject . . . men were identified as heirs of the colonizing powers—the future wielders of power in the emerging nation, while women were associated with the colonized nation’s meek and emasculated past.⁶¹

Thus, according to Roces, particular styles of dress can be powerfully charged symbols of different notions of citizenship for men and women: men were to be the bearers of modernity, while women were to be the bearers of tradition. Even into the early 1930s, as the debates around female citizenship began to take off, women were still more often portrayed in *mestiza* dress than in American styles of dress, perhaps supporting the opinions of some Filipinos that traditional values should prevail and women should remain in the domestic sphere.

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Figure 3.8: Short story illustrations, Liwayway, October 13, 1923 (left) and June 17, 1932 (right). It was typical during the 1920s and even the early 1930s for the press to show Filipino women in the *terno* and *pañuelo* or traditional *mestiza* dress, as they were considered the keepers of a traditional past. Meanwhile, Filipino men were almost always shown dressed in the *amerikana* (Western suit), as they more closely collaborated with the colonial regime and thus were considered to be bearers of American modernity.

In the mid-1930s, however, representations of Filipinas in Liwayway began to turn a corner. Emma Tarlo has argued that dress codes and styles in British colonial India can be indicative of certain cultural norms, and changes in dress therefore tend to signify social transformation on a larger scale. The same is true of the colonial Philippines, as the increasing popularity of American styles of dress reflected a larger degree of acculturation to American fashions and ideals during the late colonial period. In particular, democratic ideas such as the relaxation of formerly rigid gender roles were slowly beginning to be adopted and incorporated into existing Filipino social norms. In 1934, when the Tydings-McDuffie Act (also known as the Philippine Independence Act) called for a new constitution to be written, issues of female citizenship made their way to the forefront of public debate. The role of women in public society became a hot-button issue, and was likely the main driving force behind the changing representation of women.

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in Liwayway in the middle of the decade. In daily practice, some Filipinas had already begun to adopt Western styles of dress in the late 1910s and early 1920s, mainly because of its practicality and comfort. For example, prominent Filipina educator and woman suffragist Encarnacion Alzona was an advocate of Western dress for secondary and college students, arguing that the camisa’s thick material and puffed sleeves was not suitable for the outdoor activities required of school and sports. She believed that mestiza dress should be reserved for more formal settings, and wrote that “the gauzy, long-trained Filipino dress has now become, for a large number, a party dress for afternoon and evening wear.”\(^{63}\) Still, it was not until the mid-1930s that the popular press, as the promoter of ruling-class ideology and dictator of social norms, began to warm up to the idea of Filipino women adopting American styles of dress.

By the mid-thirties, advertisements and illustrations of women in Liwayway increasingly convey American fashions. Western-style clothes became increasingly accessible and affordable, especially in the Philippines, where American exports found a ready market exactly as colonial officials had predicted. In the United States, the boyish “flapper” look of the 1920s evolved into a softer, more natural look in the 1930s. Waistlines were raised from the hips back to the natural waist, but skirts remained somewhat fitted and tailored to create a “long, slim look.” As the decade progressed, skirts became shorter, hitting below the knees around the mid-calf region. Collars and buttons were typical additions to dresses.\(^{64}\) Liwayway actively incorporated these styles into short story illustrations, as shown in Figure 3.9. The first image shows a woman

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\(^{64}\) “Clothing,” University of Vermont Landscape Change Program.
Figure 3.9: Short story illustrations, Liwayway, December 25, 1936 (left) and January 1, 1937 (right). In the mid-1930s, as the inclusion of women in the public sphere became a hotly debated topic in Philippine society, Liwayway began to increasingly depict Filipino women in modern, American-style dress rather than traditional *mestiza* dress. University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa Library.

whose dress has cuffed sleeves and a tailored, buttoned waist—both characteristics of 1930s dresses and a marked departure from the billowing sleeves of the *mestiza* dress.

The second image depicts two women, both wearing American-style dresses. The butterfly sleeves on the dress of the seated woman are indicative of the *terno*'s transition from traditional bell-shaped sleeves to modern butterfly sleeves.\(^{65}\) Both women’s dresses are shorter and more tailored to create a youthful, slimming look, as opposed to the matronly look that the *mestiza* dress created. Their hairstyles also reflect the dominant American trend of the 1930s: hair continued to be cut short like the flapper’s, but slightly longer, with fuller curls. Other images of women in *Liwayway* between 1935 and 1937 show Filipino women adopting other forms of Western fashion, such as formal wear (one short story illustration shows a woman dressed in a form-fitting evening gown that bares

\(^{65}\) Roces, “Is the Suffragist an American Colonial Construct?” 44.
her shoulders) and even modern bathing suits (another drawing shows a Filipina with her bare shoulders and legs exposed and a man kneeling next to her!).

A decade earlier, such images would have been received with shock by the majority of Filipinos, who were most likely used to women in the press adhering to traditional dress and conservative Catholic behaviors.

Alongside short story illustrations and drawings that suggested modern alterations to Filipina dress, by the mid-1930s Liwayway was running columns and sections offering fashion advice and outfit inspirations. “Magagandang Tabas ng Damit” (“Beautiful Cuts of Dresses”), which was also sometimes titled “Magagandang Huwaran ng Damit” (“Beautiful Patterns of Dresses”), was a fashion column depicting American styles of dress for women. These fashion pages closely resembled their counterparts in Ladies’ Home Journal, which reflected European fashions in the 1920s and 1930s. In Liwayway’s fashion pages, however, new styles did not completely replace older ones. Certain elements of mestiza dress were still very much present in Filipino women’s wear as they were incorporated into American-style dresses and accessories. Sometimes, as in Figure 3.10, old and new fashions were combined simply by shortening the skirt and adding butterfly sleeves. Butterfly sleeves were a more practical, streamlined version of the sleeves of the terno. These sorts of cross-cultural, hybrid styles increasingly appeared throughout Liwayway. As Filipino women were frequently drawn and photographed

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66 Liwayway, January 1, 1937, 2, 4.
67 “Magandang Tabas ng Damit,” Liwayway, October 11, 1935, 43; “Magandang Tabas ng Damit,” Liwayway, March 13, 1936, 77; Castillo, 52. Castillo describes the evolution of mestiza dress from the end of the Spanish period to the end of the American period as such: “Today the camisa is made of sheer material, the sheerer the more admired. The sleeves which hung down loosely to cover the arms completely have taken on a new shape and dignity. They have become shorter but wider . . . the [lower] collar and wide puffed sleeves make the dress look as if it were designed from the gorgeous lines of [the] butterfly.” Additionally, Mina Roces also points out that butterfly sleeves were a popular trend in the United States during the 1930s as well.
alongside Filipino men dressed in *amerikana*, Filipino couples in magazines of the mid-1930s showed a great degree of acculturation to American colonial fashions.

Despite this acceptance of American fashion and the increased blending of Western and traditional styles, Philippine society as a whole was somewhat reluctant and slow in embracing American styles of dress. Furthermore, Filipino women did not wholly give up the fashions of the past.⁶⁸ There were still many depictions of Filipinas in the *terno*, *pañuelo*, and *mestiza* dress throughout the 1930s, suggesting a lingering cultural attachment to the idea of women as keepers of morality. Elite women in *mestiza* dress exuded nationalist and maternal appeal to the emergent Philippine nation. The maternal keepers-of-tradition notions associated with *mestiza* dress turned out to be quite

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⁶⁸ Ikeya, 99. Similar to the experience of Filipino women, Ikeya points out that Burmese women did not totally adopt the Western “flapper” image of fashion. Many Burmese thought that flappers looked somewhat androgynous, and as Burmese culture still placed value on femininity, the *khit kala* rejected many aspects of the flapper style as they blended traditional Burmese and modern British fashions.
compatible with modern Filipino womanhood. In addition to “fashionista,” the role of woman as “housewife-and-mother” also had strong nationalist implications, and became the other facet of Filipino femininity in which the American influence had to be contested and negotiated.

The Scientifically Savvy “Housewife-and-Mother”

Like Ladies’ Home Journal and other contemporary women’s magazines, Liwayway’s pages were home to a host of advertisements for household goods, cleaning products, imported American foods, and items essential to childcare that were deemed necessary for all Filipina wives and mothers to have in their homes. These ads reflected the scientific aspect of modern motherhood, promoted first in the United States among American women, and subsequently promoted in the Philippines as a way to uplift and civilize the Filipino people. Warwick Anderson and others have shown the centrality of medicine, health, and hygiene to the American “civilizing mission.” 69 These ideas had special emphasis when translated over to homemaking and child-rearing, first in the United States and then in the Philippines. The American colonial regime often used scientific and health-related arguments to promote the sale of American exports in the Philippines. Nancy Walker points out that beginning in the early twentieth century, magazine editors and contributors “interacted with advertising agencies, manufacturers of products, [and] experts in such fields as nutrition, medicine, technology, and childcare.” 70 The scientific aspect of being a modern housewife and mother required Filipinas to

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follow Western health and medical practices. In doing so, they had little choice but to quite literally “buy into” the capitalist system that increasingly pushed them to buy American-made products.

First and foremost, a modern home required updated amenities. In making sophisticated Western technology available to the masses, American companies found a ready market in housewives, both American and Filipino. They argued that their products and services would make housework easier and more efficient. One such company in the Philippines was Manila Gas Corporation, founded in 1912. During the winter of 1923-1924, Manila Gas ran a series of advertisements in Liwayway that exclusively targeted a female audience. One of them, under the heading, “New Year, New Life,” encourages Filipino women to celebrate the new year by getting their husbands to purchase a gas stove. The ad argues that gas stoves are more efficient and will make cooking easier.71

Another Manila Gas ad that appeared in an issue three weeks later (Fig. 3.11) urged women to invest in a gas-powered iron that would lessen their time spent ironing clothes and bedsheets. The gas iron was meant to replace the much more tedious and less convenient coal iron. Modern amenities such as this were promoted as investments that every housewife, American and Filipino, should make.

Other requirements for modernizing the Filipino home included the purchase and use of American food, housekeeping, and cleaning products. Liwayway featured a number of American food products (many of them canned, as they were imported) that were commonly advertised in both American and Philippine publications. These included Ovaltine, Campbell’s soup, Heinz mayonnaise, Libby’s corned beef, Del Monte fruit

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71 Manila Gas advertisement, Liwayway, December 28, 1923.
products, Sun-Maid raisins, and Hershey’s cocoa. As they were somewhat new to Philippine culture, Liwayway began to run a column called “Masarap na Ulam” (“Delicious Dish”), which provided new recipes, often incorporating the American food products advertised in the pages around the recipe. In addition to “Masarap na Ulam,” another column called “Karunungan sa Loob ng Tahanan” (“Wisdom in the Home”) appeared in Liwayway in the 1930s that offered advice for running a clean, stylish, and modern home. The column in the January 1, 1937 issue, for example, provided tips for maintaining an organized kitchen. It asserts that the kitchen is the most important part of

![Manila Gas advertisement, Liwayway, January 15, 1924. This ad sympathizes with the plight of Filipino housewives, who spend so much time ironing clothes and bedsheets. It says that the time it takes to iron can be lessened, and energy conserved, if they buy a “plantsang ‘de gas’ na makabago” (modern gas iron). University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa Library.](image-url)

Figure 3.11: Manila Gas advertisement, *Liwayway*, January 15, 1924. This ad sympathizes with the plight of Filipino housewives, who spend so much time ironing clothes and bedsheets. It says that the time it takes to iron can be lessened, and energy conserved, if they buy a “plantsang ‘de gas’ na makabago” (modern gas iron). University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa Library.

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72 Encanto, 41.
the home and thus must always be clean and inviting. Other editions of “Karunungan sa Loob ng Tahanan” offered advice for picking out curtains, rearranging furniture, and even setting the table.73

As “Karunungan sa Loob ng Tahanan” would emphasize, cleaning products were vital tools of modern housewifery. This idea was pushed onto Filipino women once again through scores of advertisements in Liwayway. An ad for Lenox Soap in the August 18, 1923 issue depicts two Filipina friends using the soap to launder baskets of clothes in a river. Underneath the illustration, the ad lists six good reasons for using Lenox brand soap for laundry, including arguments that it is gentle and effective on clothes, easy for a labandera (laundress) to use, and more economical than other soaps. This ad likely appealed to Filipinas of various social classes, from upper-class women who employed laundresses, to lower-class women who may have worked as laundresses, as well as middle-class housewives whose many domestic tasks included the weekly washing of their family’s clothes. The Lenox ad also employed the language and imagery of daily occurrences (the task of doing laundry) that Filipinas would have easily identified with, an advertising strategy that was particularly important in appealing to the modern housewife-and-mother.74

Although laundry had always been a task associated with housekeeping, the fact that advertisements in Philippine magazines now encouraged women to wash their clothes with American soap was indicative of the new, modern incarnation of the housewife-and-mother. Modern domestic ideology encompassed much more than daily

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73 It is likely that “Karunungan sa Loob ng Tahanan” was strongly influenced by American home decorating articles, such as “The Complete Furnishing of the Little House,” Ladies’ Home Journal, January 1922, 29.
74 Peiss, “American Women and the Making of Modern Consumer Culture.”
chores and the physical structure of the home. During the period of increased female consumerism in the early twentieth century, the notion of the “domestic” realm expanded to include “family and social relationships, child-rearing practices, personal well-being, purchasing habits . . . civic involvement, food preferences, health, and personal appearance.”75 This multi-faceted role of the modern wife-and-mother can be seen in soap advertisements, as soap itself can be used for various purposes. In addition to being marketed as a daily facial cleanser and makeup remover for women (as in Palmolive ads), and as a household cleaning agent (like in the Lenox ad), soap was marketed to women in a third important way: as an antibacterial cleanser to keep babies and children healthy. An Ivory Soap ad that appeared in the October 16, 1925 issue of Liwayway shows an illustration of a mother giving her baby a bath. Alongside the image are the words, “Ang pinakamabuti nating kaibigan sa mga panahon ng sakit,” or, “Our best friend in times of illness.” In accordance with the American colonial regime’s promotion of public health as well as the importance of the home in democratizing Philippine society, the health of the current generation of young Filipinos was always at the forefront of these advertisements, underscoring the importance of women’s roles as mothers for the greater health and well-being of the Philippine nation.

Under the public health aspect of the American imperial project, the popular press increasingly encouraged Filipino women to change their traditional practices of childrearing. According to Rima D. Apple, “scientific motherhood” is the belief that women should rely on expert scientific knowledge and medical advice, mainly from

75 Walker, viii.
doctors, to properly raise their children in good health.\textsuperscript{76} Educational and cultural forums, including women’s magazines, increasingly disseminated this medical knowledge to American (and subsequently Filipina) mothers. Apple explains that

\[ \ldots \text{most importantly, “Mamma’s scientific:” this [modern] mother knows about the dangers of the old customs and new knowledge has taught her to fear not only the old ways but also newly discovered threats, such as germs. No longer were women assumed to look to their mothers, sisters, and neighbors. The modern, the scientific mother of the early twentieth century looked to medical and scientific experts for the information on how to raise her children.}\textsuperscript{77}

Articles and columns that promoted scientific and medical aspects of childcare, such as “Ang Pag-aalaga ng Bata” (“Childcare”) in the May 21, 1937 issue of \textit{Liwayway}, reflected those that regularly appeared in \textit{Ladies’ Home Journal}. By providing childcare advice, women’s magazines also supported the idea that the modern mother should buy Western hygienic products backed by science for the sake of her children’s health. In her examination of the discourses surrounding motherhood in twentieth-century Malaysia, Maila Stivens noted that “the commoditization of child care accompanying the emergence of the recently modern mother is remarkable. To be a modern mother is to be an active consumer under great pressure to acquire all the commodities necessary for the satisfactory performance of motherhood.”\textsuperscript{78} Indeed, a mother could not be deemed modern without bathing her children with Western soap or giving them Western medicine for their aches and pains. Just as the Ivory ad claimed that a mother could improve her baby’s health by bathing him regularly with antibacterial soap, so too could she heal her

\textsuperscript{76} Rima D. Apple, “Constructing Mothers: Scientific Motherhood in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries,” \textit{Social History of Medicine} 8, no. 2 (1995), 161.


\textsuperscript{78} Maila Stivens, “Modernizing the Malay Mother,” in \textit{Maternities and Modernities: Colonial and Postcolonial Experiences in Asia and the Pacific}, ed, Kalpana Ram and Margaret Jolly (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 63.
child’s wounds and illnesses with over-the-counter remedies imported from the United States. An advertisement for Vaseline Petroleum Jelly claims that it “comforts and treats” a child’s cuts and scrapes underneath a picture that any mother could relate to: a mother attending to her daughter’s scraped knee. Whereas Vaseline was marketed for its healing properties, Wintersmith Tonic was another over-the-counter remedy lauded for its preventative properties. The ad (Fig. 3.12) argues that “All houses need a bottle” of Wintersmith Tonic to prevent malaria, anemia, and other sicknesses. It also hits at the nationalist heart of Filipino motherhood by reminding women that they have a responsibility to protect their families from sickness. The illustration—a young mother in traditional Filipina dress pouring a teaspoonful of tonic for her child—demonstrates the morally upright Filipino woman upholding her duties to her family.

Figure 3.12: Wintersmith Tonic advertisement, Liwayway, October 16, 1925. This ad appeals to the duty of Filipino mothers to protect their families from sickness. (“Utang ninyo sa inyong sarili ang pangangalaga sa inyong pamilya laban sa pamiminsala.”) University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa Library.

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79 Vaseline Petroleum Jelly advertisement, Liwayway, September 4, 1925. The ad explains how Vaseline brings immediate relief to the pain produced by burns, cuts, scratches and other kinds of damage, relieving inflamed skin.
Despite the persuasive moral language of these ads for Vaseline and Wintersmith Tonic, perhaps the advertisements that appeal most strongly to the scientific aspect of modern motherhood are for baby milk. Star and Crescent, Horlick, and Carnation were three American canned milk companies whose ads appeared in Liwayway in the 1920s and 1930s. Of note here is the strongly scientific language and rhetoric employed in their arguments for why their particular brand of imported canned milk was most beneficial for young children. (See Fig. 3.13.) “In the diet of children,” reads an advertisement for Horlick Malted Milk, the product is “easily digestible, safe, cornstarch-free, and easy to prepare. Like mother’s milk, it creates a soft coagulation within the stomach that makes it very easy to digest.” Similarly, an ad for Carnation Condensed Milk advises mothers that “The baby’s health is worth careful preservation. Specially formulated for the delicate stomachs of infants, Carnation Milk will not cause sickness or indigestion, as it is sterile and free of germs. It is safe for babies of all ages, from the first week until early childhood, and will help them gain weight and strength.” Medical explanations such as these, with their mention of germs, digestion, and the effects of diet on a child’s development, sound as if they came from physicians themselves. They suggest that doctors agree with their messages that canned milk will allow mothers to raise their children in proper health.

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, Liwayway’s advertisements and advice columns were heavily influenced by American ideologies and models of the scientifically savvy “housewife-and-mother.” The creation of an updated, clean, and hygienic home, as well as adoption of medically-backed childcare practices, was crucial in order to gain acceptance into the cult of modern womanhood. As Apple has shown, these were ideas
first promoted in the United States, and as Ikeya and Stivens have shown, they subsequently made their way into the colonies through advertisements in the popular press. Women’s magazines, therefore, constitute an important space where ideas about motherhood are negotiated and linked to larger ideas of modernity and nationalism. Ikeya adds that “expectations of a wife and mother were also informed by the emergence of patriots, and the female patriot had the additional duty of nurturing and protecting a

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80 Advertisements for American consumer products in the popular press also reinforced what Filipino women were learning in their home economics classes in American public schools.

81 Stivens, 63.
patriotic family.\textsuperscript{82} This was especially true of the Philippines in the 1930s, when the islands were inching ever closer to becoming an independent nation. What had to be determined now was whether or not Philippine society would accept the Western paradigms of fashionable career woman and scientific housewife-and-mother. The debate was played out in magazine editorials and articles, but also visually in the ways that Filipino women were represented on the covers of \textit{Liwayway} and other popular magazines.

\textit{Working Women or Dutiful Domestics? The Ambiguous Modernity of Liwayway Cover Girls}

So far, we have seen that women’s magazines in the Philippines embraced twentieth-century American beauty practices, showed increased (albeit uneven) patterns of adopting certain American fashions, and enthusiastically promoted the role of modern housewife-and-mother. However, the role that women were to play in civil society was a different matter, and turned out to be more controversial in the 1930s than any previously discussed aspect of modern womanhood. The definition of “modern womanhood” itself embodied contradictory prescriptions for the private and public roles of women. On the one hand, it encouraged women to obtain a more comprehensive and in-depth education so that they might be have a professional career; on the other hand, these careers were limited to “womanly” occupations, and the role of housewife-and-mother was still promoted as a woman’s default position. Women’s magazines of the 1920s and 1930s, in both the United States and the Philippines, embodied these conflicting social roles in their

\textsuperscript{82} Ikeya, 166.
content and illustrations. *Liwayway* very much reflected the shifting (and, at other times, stubborn and stagnant) attitudes of the Philippine public toward the modern Filipina’s social and civic role.

In the United States, it was generally true that *Ladies’ Home Journal* defined quite limited roles for women in terms of public participation, emphasizing their duty to the domestic sphere as homemakers and mothers. At the same time, though, the magazine itself served as an important space for female editors, writers, and readers to negotiate their changing public and private roles in American society. In the 1920s, the *Journal’s* articles, ads, and illustrations increasingly appealed to both working women and stay-at-home housewives. By the early 1930s, *Liwayway*, too, had begun to reflect this quasi-feminist and ambiguous attitude toward the modern woman. Schoolgirls and career women—teachers and nurses in particular—made frequent appearances in the magazine. Working women in American-style dresses were shown alongside illustrations of Filipina housewives in traditional Spanish *mestiza* dress, and behind cover images of rural country girls in outfits reminiscent of the pre-colonial *tapis*. These were quite conflicting messages that the magazine was sending!

There was one significant difference between representations of modern womanhood in *Ladies’ Home Journal* and *Liwayway*, which is best illustrated through comparing the cover images of these two magazines throughout the first three decades of the twentieth century. Cover images tend to depict “model” women, and are a good indicator of what ideal women of a particular society looked like at a particular moment.

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83 Scanlon, 2.

84 Rodell, 113. The *tapis* was a pre-Hispanic “sarong-style dress . . . used as an overlapping attachment similar to an apron.
in time. With this in mind, the Journal’s cover images represent a rather straightforward trajectory with regard to the increasing entry of women into the public sphere, and is occasionally punctuated with representations of the scientific housewife-and-mother who used modern appliances and goods in her home (as in Fig. 3.14). On the contrary, Liwayway’s cover images are not nearly as consistent in their representations of Filipinas. In an uneven evolutionary trajectory, they often revert back to Spanish and even pre-colonial images of femininity.

In the early 1920s (Liwayway’s formative years), cover photos and illustrations usually depicted traditional images of women and conservative representations of the family. Sometimes this was an elegantly-dressed elite woman in mestiza dress; other

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Figure 3.14: Cover, Ladies’ Home Journal, October 1920. This image of womanhood—a modern housewife working in her kitchen—most closely matches the actual content of the magazine. This same model was also promoted in the pages of Liwayway, though its covers were not as consistently modern in nature as Ladies’ Home Journal. University of Minnesota Library (Hathitrust Digital Library).

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times, it was a “pretty provinciana with a basket . . . laden with fruits and vegetables from the market” (as in Fig. 3.15); other times it was a Catholic religious illustration in which women played a prominent role.\(^{86}\) In 1926, however, more modern-looking women—“modern” by American standards—began to appear on the cover. For example, the March 5, 1926 cover depicts a Filipina schoolteacher in a *terno* and *pañuelo* instructing young male pupils (Fig. 3.16). Likewise, the issue of *Liwayway* that young Ofelia Hidalgo was reading in the beginning of this chapter had featured a beautiful Filipino actress wearing makeup, jewelry, and a half-up hairstyle, looking straight at the camera/reader with a confident smile. Both these covers suggest a greater acceptance of career women, female professionals, and women holding visible public roles in

![Figure 3.15: Cover, Liwayway, August 11, 1923. Images like this one of a “pretty provinciana” depict the problematic status of the “modern woman” in the American colonial Philippines, and show a nostalgic yearning of the Philippine public for the past. University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa Library.](image)

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\(^{86}\) Encanto, 49.
Figure 3.16: Cover, *Liwayway*, March 5, 1926. This image of a Filipina schoolteacher suggests a greater acceptance of working women in Philippine society. University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa Library.

Philippine society. Additionally, in the mid-1930s, cover girls were increasingly pictured in American-style dress, such as the female student on the cover of the June 12, 1936 issue (Fig. 3.17). Still, these modern-looking women did not completely replace the “traditional” cover girls of the previous decade. Filipinas in the billowing *camisa* and the elegant *saya* remained staples of *Liwayway* covers well into the late 1930s and the tail end of the American colonial period. These inconsistent and rather conflicting images represent the controversial status of Filipino women. The press was unable to choose one colonial model of femininity over another, and the public was unable to pinpoint how “modern” the “ideal” Filipino woman should be.

Encanto acknowledges that women’s magazines had to find a balance between feminism and traditional female domesticity. Filipino magazines had to negotiate
“between the traditional past and its conservative ideals of modesty and subservience, and the present with its pressure to accept the modern ways brought in by the influx of books, films, and magazines that propagated the ‘liberated’ American lifestyle.”

Thus, in the decade between the mid-1920s and mid-1930s, *Liwayway*’s cover images are much more inconsistent in their portrayal of Filipino women. They often revert back to nineteenth-century-style scenes and portraits that display a sense of nostalgia for the pastoral Philippine society of the past, while occasionally showing “modern” Filipino women embracing the modern roles made available to them under American colonial rule. Indicative of the greater struggle to define Filipino womanhood in the years leading up to the birth of the Philippine nation, the covers of *Liwayway* refute any assumptions

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87 Encanto, 49.
that either of their colonizers—Spanish or American—had a total hegemonic cultural influence on Filipino society. Instead, they reflect the beginnings of a hybrid model of womanhood that emerged in the late 1920s and early 1930s during the female citizenship debates and women’s suffrage movement.

**Conclusion**

The modern Filipina of the 1920s and 1930s, like Ikeya’s modern Burmese woman, “disrupts the misleadingly discrete and stable binary categories such as ‘modern foreigners’ and ‘traditional natives’ common in many histories of colonialism.”

Burmese women did not totally copy the British model of womanhood, and instead blended British elements with their own Buddhist customs; likewise, Filipino women did not completely embrace American ideals of modern womanhood. American cultural elements were appropriated by Filipinas in such a way that they were able to present themselves as fashionable, strong, and independent. Yet, as the covers of *Liwayway* illustrate, Philippine society did not completely banish the “traditional” conception of Filipino femininity, the Spanish model which required them to act as dutiful daughters, wives and mothers in accordance with Catholicism. (Additionally, as the next chapter will show, the Filipino model of modern womanhood increasingly drew on pastoral memories from a pre-colonial time when women exercised a fair amount of social autonomy and civic power.) As a result, during the 1920s and 1930s, Filipinas were able to incorporate Western modernity into their construction of modern womanhood through the “scientific housewife-and-mother” role. The Filipina’s sense of duty and

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88 Ikeya, 10.
responsibility as a wife and mother appealed widely to traditionalists and paternalistic Filipino men. This would become an extremely important image to maintain in the suffrage movement, as suffragettes were aware of the need to keep their solidarity with Filipino men in pushing their feminist agenda.

Philippine magazines of the 1920s and 1930s like Woman’s Home Journal and Liwayway were therefore not only concerned with culture and consumerism. They also responded to feminist social issues, just as American women’s magazines like Ladies’ Home Journal had done in the 1910s. The most pressing issue, of course, was women’s suffrage. As the push for female citizenship gained in momentum, Liwayway and other magazines became increasingly concerned with political rights for women. In the late 1910s and early 1920s, a host of lesser-known women’s magazines were founded by women’s clubs made up of upper-class, educated Filipinas. Overall, women’s magazines were important during the 1920s and 1930s because they provided a “venue for the battle over the representations of women,” and a space for Filipinas to articulate and negotiate the conflicting images of modern femininity in light of their struggle to secure the rights of citizenship.

The major question of the suffrage movement was to define exactly what, or rather who, the “modern Filipino woman” was. This “woman question,” raised in Philippine women’s magazines, finally culminated in the debates on female suffrage in the early and mid-1930s as the Philippines transitioned from colony to nation. The definition that resulted would turn out to be the one that would prove to be the greatest compromise between Filipino men and women, between tradition and modernity, and would bridge precolonial, Spanish, and American values. Ultimately, agreeing on a
definition of the ideal, modern Filipino woman would secure Filipinas the right to vote, raising them to equal political status with men as citizens of the new nation.
CHAPTER 4

Toward New Definitions of Philippine Citizenship:
Debating and Creating the Modern Filipina of the 1930s

By the 1930s, Paz Marquez Benitez was enjoying the height of her career. Having already founded a magazine (*The Woman’s Home Journal*) and continuing to work regularly on another one (*The Philippine Journal of Education*), as well as having founded the Philippine Women’s College, a school devoted to higher education for Filipinas, Paz was thoroughly enjoying her job as an associate English professor at the University of the Philippines. Not to be limited to one or two activities—her passion for life and all it had to offer often led her to become involved in many different things—she also found herself becoming increasingly caught up in the politics of her country. The 1930s were a time of great political change in the Philippines. The Tydings-McDuffie Act of 1934 had established a ten-year transition period during which the Philippines would gradually become independent from the United States. That same year, a new constitution was in the making. As a result, Paz and her husband Francisco, both prominent academics and high up in Manila’s social and political circles, found themselves assuming crucial roles in determining the future of their nation.

Paz had always been highly political and loved to talk about politics with her husband, children, and friends.¹ “Old friends and classmates were playing major roles in

¹ Virginia Benitez Licuanan, *Paz Marquez Benitez: One Woman’s Life, Letters, and Writings* (Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1995), 8-9. Licuanan fondly remembers the interest in politics that her parents imparted onto her and her brothers. “My parents,” she writes, “who always maintained their academic objectivity and independence, were nevertheless intensely interested if not actually involved in the political events of the time . . . conversation around the family dinner table was invariably punctuated with stories my father would bring home from long sessions at the ‘Round Table’ at Tom’s Dixie Kitchen of Plaza Sta. Cruz, which was the watering hole where all the leading public figures of the day would
politics or occupying important positions in government,” wrote her daughter, “and this
drew the couple out of academe into the ‘real world.’” These “old friends” included
many prominent Philippine politicians of the American colonial period and the formative
years of the nation, including Manuel Quezon, Sergio Osmeña, Manuel Roxas, and
Elpidio Quirino. All four regularly consulted with Paz on political issues as much as they
did with Francisco. They are mentioned frequently in Paz’s letters to her daughter and
husband, in which they appear as colorful characters in detailed accounts of private
discussion, as well as dinner parties and other social or political gatherings. Paz was also
close with these politicians’ wives, particularly Alicia Syquia Quirino and Esperanza
(“Titay”) Limjap Osmeña, and they would often talk politics together over lunch and
meryenda. Their topics of discussion ranged from broad national and international
problems (such as Philippine nationalism and the threat of an impending Japanese
invasion) to their husbands’ petty quarrels in the legislature.3

In an article entitled “The Real Paz Marquez Benitez” published in the Philippines
Free Press on October 4, 1933, a photograph of Paz in traditional mestiza dress was
accompanied by a caption that criticized the seemingly radical suffrage movement but
upheld a conservative notion of the modern Filipino woman: “As a university instructor,
gather for Tom Pritchard’s famous apple pie and long hours of lively and sometimes heated discussion
and argument pro and con the latest political developments. Invariably, these discussions echoed and
reechoed in the old house on Easy Street, and the children learned early to dissect and digest political
issues along with their dinner.”

2 Licuanan, 76.
3 Ibid., 103-4, 140; “Benitez, Francisco F,” Filipinos in History: Education, National Historical
Commission of the Philippines, April 12, 2013, http://nhcp.gov.ph/wp-
in Congress like many of his longtime friends, he held various education-related positions in or related to
the government, in addition to his job as Dean of the School of Education at the University of the
Philippines. These included honorary Philippine correspondent in the International Bureau of Education in
Geneva, president of the Philippine National Federation of Teachers, and representative at the World
Federation of Education Associations, Institute of the Pacific Relations, Philippine-China society, and the
Japan-Philippine Society.
a wife and mother, she exemplifies the type of Filipino womanhood which makes its influence felt on the national life without joining clubs, organizing, or harassing legislatures. While Paz was an educated elite Filipino woman who was fully conscious of the potential impact that women could have on the society of the new nation (as evidenced by her hard work in fostering the growth of Filipina university education), she was also a devoted wife and mother. She loved and respected her family above anyone and everyone else in her life. She would not have been classified as the sort of radical feminist who called for women’s rights to overturn the history of oppressive patriarchy in the Philippines; instead, she represented a less radical and more realistic “modern Filipino woman” of the 1930s because she remained dedicated to her family and was able

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Figure 4.1: This photo shows Paz and Francisco Benitez with some of their elite politician friends, 1930s: “Happy party days in the house on Easy Street in the thirties: In the old porch a group of old friends gather (from left) Jose Abad Santos, Don Sergio Osmeña, Paz Marquez Benitez, Jorge Vargas, Francisco Benitez (standing) and 'the life of the party,' Doña Titay Osmeña, on the floor.” Reprinted from Licuanan, 72.

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4 Licuanan, 156.
to balance working and domestic duties. Paz likely supported woman suffrage and viewed it as part of the logical course of events in Philippine history as it entered the realm of modern nations, but was not as vocal about it as other influential elite Filipinas of her time.

In the early twentieth century, there was perhaps no greater symbol of national modernity than for the government to extend the right to vote to its female citizens. The increasing visibility and participation of women in public life led them to become increasingly politicized. Although lower-class women had been participating in public life as workers since pre-colonial times, middle and upper-class women had only recently gained the ability to obtain higher levels of education and enter into the professions. Unlike lower-class women, though, these elite Filipinas had been exposed to the rudimentary makings of female political life through social work activities organized by their women’s clubs. Not surprisingly, middle and upper-class Filipinas began to question why they should not be considered citizens as their fellow men were. It was during the American period that they had been able to assume both public and private roles to qualify for participation in civic life, thereby fulfilling the requirements for “cultural citizenship;” therefore, it was also during the American period that they began to push for the right to enter civic life by way of the women’s suffrage movement.6

Why suffrage? Why were social work projects and club activism not enough for these women? Contrary to its all-powerful liberating capabilities, as it is often mistakenly assumed, suffrage was not the be-all-end-all to Filipino women’s gender equality

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problems. Yet, it should be still be seen as a progressive step forward, and was the most progressive step for women, politically speaking, that could be taken during that time. Filipina writer Fe Mahangas gives three reasons why the securing of female suffrage in 1936 was such an important accomplishment for Filipinas. First, it disproved the notion that women were too weak and helpless to vote. Education, professionalism, social activism, and political mobilization certainly erased the “traditional” image of the Filipina, proving that she should not simply be confined to the home. Second, entry into the political sphere gave women the means to fight more effectively for economic and social rights. Third, it sheds light on the sexism that is ingrained in the capitalist system itself. In societies like the United States and now the Philippines, there existed for women a “real contradiction between the need to participate in the political and economic spheres and their ‘primary role’ in the home or domestic sphere.”⁷ In the suffragists’ opinion, obtaining the right to vote and having a say in the affairs of the nation were means by which they could begin to ameliorate this glaring inequality.

The women’s suffrage movement in the Philippines was premised on the contradictions and complexities of two colonial cultures blending with indigenous values and traditions. Likewise, by their very nature, Filipina suffragettes themselves embodied sharp conflicts within Philippine society with regard to citizenship and nationalism. They were highly educated, publicly active, and held prominent occupations in society (many were doctors, professors, social workers, and clubwomen), yet they often presented themselves to the Philippine legislature dressed in traditional mestiza attire or in the terno

Their arguments for suffrage seemed radically feminist to their opponents, yet at the same time, these arguments were carefully framed around the concept of “republican motherhood,” which emphasized a woman’s domestic duties as wife and mother. These strategically formed compromises made suffragettes seem much less radical and threatening, and accordingly, their opponents in the legislature were more inclined to hear what they had to say.

While some may argue that these apparent contradictions were merely concessions and pure strategy on the suffragettes’ part to appeal to their male opponents in the legislature, they were also representative of larger issues regarding models of Philippine femininity. Men and women alike seemed to be at a loss over which cultural construction of the feminine should be endorsed by the emerging nation. Should it be the Spanish influenced “pious, religious woman confined to the domestic sphere,” or the Americanized, “English-speaking, university educated . . . professional with the right to vote?”

Taking the contradictions raised in education and the press to a whole new level—the national government—the debates on suffrage turned out to be the most important site where cultural constructions of the ideal, modern Filipino woman were elaborated, argued, and ultimately decided.

This chapter will look at how the suffragettes, as the leaders of the first-wave Filipino feminist movement, had to carefully negotiate through conflicting ideas of womanhood. The first section describes how the Filipino women’s suffrage movement

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was modeled on the American suffrage movement, as by this time American colonial education, women’s magazines, and consumer culture had created an elite Filipina class that increasingly resembled the women of the middle-to-upper tiers of American society. Parallels between the two groups of women were clearly evident as American suffragettes worked closely with their Filipina “sisters.” The second section describes how Filipina suffragettes had to argue their case many times over, due to the nature of the course of political events in the Philippines throughout the 1930s. They had to make multiple concessions and compromises along the way. Their claims to suffrage, therefore, highlighted their increased education and public visibility, but also upheld their duty as mothers, framed in nationalist terms. In other words, their arguments were based on the modern American model of womanhood, but also invoked the pre-colonial Philippine past in which women played a prominent civic role. At the same time, the suffragettes’ arguments maintained traditional elements of domesticity from their immediate Spanish and American colonial pasts, showing that in some ways, the “modern woman” was not actually that radically modern after all. The third section describes how the fight for women’s suffrage culminated in the 1936 plebiscite, which would decide once and for all whether or not Filipinas would be able to vote as citizens of the future nation. By the end of the women’s suffrage movement, the Filipina suffragettes had created a new definition of the modern Filipino woman—one that embodied what they saw as the best of both tradition and modernity. As it turned out, no single colonial construction of the feminine would prevail over another, as Spanish, American, and even pre-colonial elements combined to form a hybrid model of womanhood that dominated the Philippines for much of the twentieth century.
The Struggle turns Transpacific: Americans, Filipinas, and the Fight for Woman Suffrage

Under Spanish and most of American rule, in order to vote, a Filipino had to be male, 21 years old, pay 30 pesos annual tax, and own property worth at least 500 pesos.\(^\text{10}\) Initially, these voting restrictions remained in place as the American colonial government tried to limit female activity in political life. Although the United States extended formal public education to women, which logically would open up opportunities for women in the public sector of society, American administrators and elite male Filipino collaborators believed that women’s public activities should be restricted to “the classroom, charitable institutions, the church, and voluntary organizations where their nurturing qualities could benefit the whole community.”\(^\text{11}\) The rising generation of highly educated and Western-influenced Filipinas began to express their strong discontent with these patriarchal and oppressive arguments. As these were also arguments against female suffrage that were prevalent in the United States at the turn of the twentieth century, American and Filipino suffragettes began a trans-Pacific collaboration. For a time, especially during the 1910s, the two women’s suffrage movements converged, as each attempted to hash out what “modern womanhood” meant in their respective societies, as well as how they would use that definition of modernity to stake their claims to citizenship.

Although the Filipina struggle to become enfranchised took place a mere two decades after the American one, it would be overly simplistic to assume that the Filipinas relied completely on the example and tutelage of American suffragettes. They did work closely together at times, but for the most part, the Filipina path to suffrage, as well as the

\(^\text{10}\) Lanzona, Amazons of the Huk Rebellion, 123-24.
\(^\text{11}\) Ibid., 124.
resulting definition of modern Filipino womanhood that was taking shape, was their own hybrid construction. One commonly held misconception regarding the popular narrative of Filipino woman suffrage is that they only began to fight for the right to vote after American women obtained it in 1919. While it is true that interest in the issue greatly increased after 1919 and 1920, linkages between the two movements had existed since the United States acquired the islands in 1898. Sneider has examined how American female suffragists like Carrie Chapman Catt used the backdrop of U.S. expansion and imperialism to advance their own interests, namely, securing the right to vote for American women. Catt and others argued that it was the “duty” of American women to help uplift women in their new island possessions of the Philippines, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico. American suffragettes’ collaboration with colonized women—in effect, participation in the imperial project—would demonstrate to male politicians that American women clearly had the capacity for citizenship. Expansion and empire changed the parameters of the woman suffrage debate in the United States because it “provided an important intellectual and political context for lifting the woman suffrage question out of the states’ rights framework that had structured thinking about the woman question since the Civil War,” and subsequently placed it into a broader national and imperial framework, much to the advantage of women like Catt. This trans-Pacific collaboration between suffrage movements also showed that the United States was never against woman suffrage in the Philippines, as it supported the democratizing aspect of the

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12 On May 19, 1919, the U.S. Congress passed a joint resolution proposing a constitutional amendment that would extend the right of suffrage to women; on August 18, 1920, the Nineteenth Amendment was ratified, prohibiting any American from being denied the right to vote on the basis of sex.

“benevolent” colonial project; it was seen as a logical step on the path to Americanization.

Filipina suffrage, then, did not just appear out of nowhere in the early 1930s; it had been an issue as early as 1899. American suffragists led by Catt ardently supported Filipino women gaining the right to vote. She argued that women, no matter what race or nationality, were inherently more civilized than men and thus deserved political rights. When the U.S. Congress held a series of debates in 1902 over the passage of the Organic Act (which would determine the type of colonial government that would be set up in the Philippines), woman suffrage was included on the list of concerns. Many Americans were in favor of it, particularly suffragists like Catt, who realized the potential implications it could have for her own cause. However, like American women at that point in time, Filipinas were passed over for suffrage, and the issue disappeared into the political background for the remainder of the decade.

14 Roces, “Is the Suffragist an American Colonial Construct?” 31. The mention of woman suffrage in 1899 was not under American rule; rather, it was in the 1890s as the ilustrados developed plans for the First Philippine Republic (also called the Malolos Republic). Apolinar Mabini was pro-suffrage when he drafted the Malolos constitution in 1899. He believed that qualified, taxpaying, educated adult women should have a role in forming the new republic. However, female suffrage did not make it into the final constitution because of the disapproval of the all-male Congress, led by Aguinaldo.

15 Ibid., 102.

16 Sneider, 103. Despite the enthusiasm of Catt and other American suffragettes, not all were in favor of supporting Filipino suffrage—or the Philippines at all, for that matter. Harriot Stanton Blatch, Elizabeth Cady Stanton’s daughter, criticized colonialism and any involvement of American women in overseas territories by emphasizing the unnecessary sacrifices the “white woman’s burden” required. Citing the British model as an example of what could happen to the United States if they continued their involvement in the Philippines, Blatch wrote that “the creation of standing armies necessary for Britain’s vast colonial interests abroad was creating an imbalance of the sexes at home with unforeseen and damaging results,” leading to problems in Britain such as increased poverty, a rise in the number of single mothers, children roaming the streets, and prostitution.

17 Mary Grace Ampil Tirona, “Pañuelo Activism,” in Women’s Role in Philippine History: Selected Essays, 2nd ed., 109-130 (Quezon City: University Center for Women’s Studies, University of the Philippines, 1996), 117. Another attempt to introduce a woman suffrage bill was made in 1907 by Paz Villanueva Kalaw, but never made it past the National Assembly.
In the United States, suffrage for women took a backseat to issues of racial citizenship during the first decade of the twentieth century. Still, Catt did not abandon her cause in the Philippines. In 1912, she visited Manila during her round-the-world tour with her friend Aletta Jacobs, a Dutch physician and feminist. While in the Philippines, Catt and Jacobs encouraged elite Filipinas to organize a suffrage movement, just as elite women had been doing in the United States through social activism and the formation of women’s clubs. At the urging of Catt, Jacobs, and Bessie Dwyer (an American writer who spent many years in the Philippines), a group of elite Filipinas led by Concepcion Felix formed the Society for the Advancement of Women (SAW). SAW was later renamed the Manila Women’s Club and joined forces with the National Federation of Women’s Clubs (NFWC) in 1915. Other women’s clubs sprang up alongside the Manila Women’s Club and the NFWC. The Liga Nacional de Damas Filipinas (National League of Filipino Women) was founded in 1922 by elite clubwoman Maria Ventura and physician-professor Maria Paz Mendoza-Guazon. The Women’s Citizen’s League was another important Filipino women’s club in the 1920s. Founded in 1928, also by Ventura and Mendoza-Guazon, it attracted a large following of working and lower-class women, whose numbers would prove crucial to the later success of the suffrage movement.

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18 Sofia Reyes de Veyra, “Some Things You Should Know about the Philippine Islands,” *The Woman Citizen* 4, no. 22 (December 20, 1919); Encarnacion Alzona, *The Filipino Woman: Her Social, Economic, and Political Status, 1565-1933* (Manila: University of the Philippines Press, 1934), 70. Bessie Dwyer was a collaborator and partner of the Filipina women. An anomaly among other American suffragists dealing with the Philippines in that she had actually lived and worked in the islands for a number of years, she was well-respected by her Filipino peers for her solidarity with and support of the Filipina suffrage movement.

19 Tirona, 119. The joining of the Manila Women’s Club with the National Federation of Women’s Clubs established lasting international ties between American and Filipina suffragettes.

20 Tirona, 119. The earliest women’s club in the American Philippines, and one that was very much involved in the suffrage movement, predated Catt and Jacobs’ visit: the Asociacion Feminista Ilonga, established by dedicated suffragist Pura Villanueva Kalaw in 1906.
movement. However, the League was short-lived and was soon replaced by the Philippine Association of University Women (PAUW), with Mendoza-Guazon as its first president. PAUW actively lobbied the government for woman suffrage in the 1930s.\textsuperscript{21} Additionally, multiple organizations including the Catholic Women’s League, PAUW, and the Women’s Writers united to form the National Council of Women, giving added strength to the suffrage movement.\textsuperscript{22}

At first, these organizations were more concerned with service and social work than they were with suffrage, as community service and social work were deemed appropriate forms of public involvement for Filipino women. Initially reluctant to become involved in politics, as they were more concerned with the issues of civil society that directly affected women, Felix and her fellow clubwomen in SAW organized small social work projects that sought to aid women and children in their immediate communities. These social work projects often resembled those that British and American clubwomen undertook during the Victorian era in the late nineteenth century. They fed Manila’s poor and homeless, cared for orphans, nursed the sick (a few brave women volunteered at the Culion leper colony), and operated welfare programs for the poor. Women’s club activities increased during the First World War, as Filipinas were very much involved in aiding the war effort. “There is no spot in the United States which has anything on the Filipinos in war work,” declared clubwoman and suffragist Sofia Reyes de Veyra in 1919. “These island women have gone the whole length of Red Cross, Liberty Loan, Food Administration, thrift and abstinence programs, and have worked in


\textsuperscript{22} Lanzona, \textit{Amazons of the Huk Rebellion}, 125; Tirona, 118-23.
public health and social hygiene measures with the best of the women of the world. They are even proposing a People’s Kitchen.”

Their participation in these patriotic projects led them to become increasingly political in the years to come.

Between 1902 and 1918, suffragettes and their male sympathizers in the Philippine legislature attempted to pass multiple women’s suffrage bills, but every time they were denied as the Philippine legislature deemed them “irrelevant.” These defeats, with the added fact that American women obtained suffrage in 1919, gave the Filipino suffrage movement a new, fiery momentum. Helping to increase this momentum was the growing generation of Filipinas who were becoming politically conscious. According to Roces, this large group of young, college-educated elite women were beginning to realize that “supporting the nationalist project meant lobbying for a government that would disenfranchise them as women . . . while men were assured of their roles as politicians in the colonial and the future independent state, women were not.”

Women came to believe that being denied rights in the new nation was grossly unfair. After World War I and the defeat of yet another woman suffrage bill by the Philippine legislature in 1918, the core belief upon which women’s organizations operated was that women should be included in the nationalist project as full citizens, and with increasing vociferousness they demanded the right to vote. Men were already politically involved in the nationalist struggle, as they had possessed voting rights since the Spanish colonial period, and would therefore be able to determine the organization of the new nation once independence was achieved.

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23 De Veyra, “Some Things You Should Know about the Philippine Islands.”
24 Roces, “Is the Suffragist an American Colonial Construct?” 29.
secured. Women, on the other hand, would have to fight twice as hard—not just for independence, but also for their stake in the new nation.

**New Women, New Roles: Debating Filipina Suffrage**

As shown in the last chapter, women’s magazines served as the battleground on which the struggle to define “modern Filipino womanhood” took place. In the 1920s, the press was also becoming a battleground for the issue of woman suffrage, as many magazines were exhibiting more feminist political tendencies. The large number of educated women who actively participated in the Philippine magazine industry typically wrote about topics that related to women’s public life (education, social activism, and law) on top of their domestic life (fashion and beauty, housekeeping, relationships, and child-rearing). This shows the proactive way that women were confronting their ambiguous role in society. Paz Marquez Benitez’s *Woman’s Home Journal*, though it reflected the woman-as-homemaker trends of the day, had a staff almost entirely comprised of elite, progressive, politically conscious women, and therefore, had more of an overtly political feminist agenda than other magazines like *Liwayway*. Still, *Liwayway* began to soften its attitude toward modern ideas of womanhood; along with including images of women in modern dress as described in the last chapter, the magazine began to publish articles such as “Bakit di Bigyan ng Suprahio ang mga Babae?” (“Why Not Give

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26 Ann Heilmann and Margaret Beetham, *New Woman Hybridities: Femininity, Feminism, and International Consumer Culture, 1880-1930* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 2-3. Magazines that had political feminist agendas provided “a discursive space in which the meanings of femininity were contested and which spanned the public/private divide. It therefore provided a forum in which women, not all of them professional writers, could find a voice . . . New Women were thus the objects of a debate in the press and so were able to challenge the traditional discourses on femininity, masculinity, sex, marriage and the family.”
Suffrage to Women?”) in 1931.27 Another magazine, *Dawn* (later renamed *Woman’s World*), was the official publication of PAUW, while *The Woman’s Outlook* served as the official publication of the NFWC. As an alternative to these English-language magazines, *La Mujer*, founded in 1925, was published in Tagalog and Spanish. Within the first year of its publication, it had already ran a series of articles debating the role of women in society and showing support for woman suffrage.28 Soon, popular opinion—the press included—had begun to sway in favor of female citizenship, due to the determination and tireless efforts of Filipina clubwomen and suffragettes.

At the same time that the press were becoming more vocal in debating political rights for women, elite Filipinas were becoming more active in arguing publicly for suffrage. Though the press had begun to change its attitude, the majority of Philippine society remained divided on female suffrage during this time. The series of events that transpired between 1931 and 1936 would ultimately determine the fate of Filipino women as citizens of the new nation. All of the arguments in these debates, whether written in the pages of a magazine or in a speech delivered on the floor of the Philippine legislature, are centered on two underlying, all-important questions: to what degree should the modern Filipino woman be able to participate in public society? And which colonial model, if any, should she strive to emulate?

For those in favor of suffrage, the answer to these questions was obvious. Women should be able to exercise the right to vote and assume their roles as citizens because it

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followed the logical course of events along the Philippines’ journey to modernity. Once the United States extended the right to vote to their countrywomen in 1919, female suffrage became increasingly seen as an indicator not just of the success of American national and imperial projects, but also of the ability of colonial societies like the Philippines to conform to their colonizer’s modern democratic ideals. According to Sneider, “woman suffrage was well on its way to becoming a benchmark of progress and the successful expansion of democratic values in the context of U.S. empire.” The women of the island possessions acquired by the United States in 1898 were conscious of this fact, and fought hard for citizenship in the new nation.29

During the congressional hearings of 1931 and the constitutional debates of 1934, Filipina suffragists made a number of arguments that were met by counter-arguments from their conservative male opponents in the legislature. The suffragists believed that, first and foremost, Philippine women’s higher levels of education and participation in public society as workers would require them to have a hand in voting on local and national issues. A second argument in favor of female suffrage was based on the premise of “republican motherhood” ideology. The suffragists took the concept of republican motherhood a step further by claiming that the modern woman’s domestic duties required her to be politically active as well. The third argument strategically appealed to the nationalist cause by invoking the pre-colonial Philippine past, highlighting the prominent role that women played in it. These lines of reasoning drew condemnations from opponents of female suffrage in the Philippine legislature.

29 Sneider, 135.
If the American colonial regime encouraged modernity as a prerequisite for the successful adoption of democratic ideals, and adherence to American democratic ideals was a prerequisite for Philippine independence, then the suffragettes presented elite, educated, socially active Filipinas (in other words, themselves) as model candidates for citizenship. After all, the American ideal of the “modern woman” was one who was “English-speaking, public school educated (preferably university educated, a professional or a ‘clubwoman’ active in civic work), and by the 1920s a suffragist (and thereby a participant in the American democratic project).”\(^{30}\) Yet this only included a small portion of the female population. To make their arguments slightly more class-inclusive, the suffragettes also pointed to the large numbers of lower-class working women in Philippine society who were providing for their families while continuing to uphold their duties as wives and mothers. Women’s magazines and periodicals subtly supported the belief that a woman should reign supreme in the home, but still had to venture outside the home to be a good wife and mother. Throughout the 1930s and into the 1940s, Castillo observed that many Filipino women were able to successfully balance these two important tasks. He noticed that the demands of employment outside the home were softened by the home economics training that Filipinas received in schools, which prepared them to become more effective mothers. As a result, Filipino women “find no difficulty in reconciling their career with the ideals of the home and their professions do not at all weaken the strength of family bonds.”\(^{31}\)

\(^{30}\) Roces, “Is the Suffragist an American Colonial Construct?” 27.

\(^{31}\) Toribio C. Castillo, “Changing Social Status of the Filipino Women during the American Administration,” Master’s thesis, University of Southern California, 1942, 72-3. He adds that Filipino women and feminist supporters “believe that the stability of the home is not hampered because there is always someone willing to take care of the home activities. It is said that the Filipino family ties are strong, and that there is always a mother, an aunt, or cousin willing to serve as housekeeper” (that is, if the family does not already have a housekeeper). However, the reality behind this comment is that such a
In addition to the flexibility of hardworking Filipino women who are able to juggle responsibilities of public and private life, there was also the issue of ideal-vs-reality with regard to family life in the Philippines. Having the father as the breadwinner and the mother stay at home all day without working was quite unrealistic for many Filipino families. Mendoza-Guazon, who championed the cause of the common Filipina and often did whatever she could to make the suffrage movement more inclusive, described the reality of life for many Filipinas across the country: “This theory [of the “traditional” family] is congruent for the lucky one who belongs to a well-to-do family; but the orphan, the widow with many children, the woman who is compelled to work to support her parents, or her husband . . . for such women the story is entirely different.”

Whether or not a Filipino woman’s decision to participate in the public sphere was voluntary or forced due to socioeconomic circumstances, by the mid-1930s, many believed that she could not be denied political participation for much longer. “Times have changed,” announced suffragette Pilar Hidalgo-Lim in her testimony during the 1934 Constitutional Convention, “and the ideal modern woman is the educated and learned woman, highly responsible, and to this type of woman we cannot deny the privilege of the vote.”

Even lower-class women were deserving of the vote, argued Maria Paz Mendoza-Guazon, because they worked hard to provide for their families; additionally, the modern domestic prescriptions of female consumerism and “scientific” housewifery lifestyle is only attainable for the well-to-do who can, first and foremost, afford a lengthy formal education through the college level; and second, who can afford to have a housekeeper take care of their homes and children.


Discusso del Delegado Lim, Constitutional Convention Record, no. 81, November 5, 1934, 73; quoted in Roces, “Is the Suffragist an American Colonial Construct?” 24.)

Subido, 32.
applied to all Filipinas, regardless of class status. If the Philippines could be considered a modern nation, it could not continue to oppress its women. Hurtling toward modernity, Lim and her compatriots argued that there would be no turning back until they achieved citizenship for all Filipinas.

Another argument for woman suffrage was rooted in the concept of “republican motherhood.” Though the term was not coined until 1976 by American historian Linda Kerber, its reflection of democratic ideals in the late eighteenth century United States accurately describes the attitudes of woman suffragists in the United States during the early twentieth century, as well as in the Philippines during the 1920s and 1930s. The strong nationalist appeal of republican motherhood fits in seamlessly with other arguments for female suffrage. Kerber draws on Enlightenment philosophers like Locke, Rousseau, and Montesquieu, as well as the alternative arguments from others such as Judith Sargeant Murray, Benjamin Rush, and Susannah Rowson, to claim that a woman’s “political task was accomplished within the confines of her family.” She outlines the post-1776 and 1789 revolutionary ideal that women, as mothers of the next generation of citizens, were critical to the success of the nation as they would impart their wisdom, values and morals onto their children. In other words, “The model republican woman was a mother. The Republican Mother’s life was dedicated to the service of civic virtue; she educated her sons for it; she condemned and corrected her husband’s lapses from it.”

This concept of the woman’s political function as one that was limited to a supporting role was not necessarily new to the Philippines during the American colonial period; in the Spanish era, *ilustrados* encouraged Filipino women to support the

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nationalist cause against Spain by assuming these political “support roles,” while continuing to deny them citizenship rights and positions of political leadership. In his famous “Letter to the Women of Malolos,” Rizal encouraged them to

[Quote]

be reasonable and open [your] eyes, especially you women, because you are the first to influence the consciousness of man. Remember that a good mother does not resemble the mother that the friar has created; she must bring up her child to be the image of the true God. . . . Awaken and prepare the will of our children towards all that is honorable, judged by proper standards, to all that is sincere and firm of purpose, clear judgment, clear procedure, honesty in act and deed, love for the fellowman and respect for God; this is what you must teach your children.36

Here, Rizal simultaneously connects the duties of a mother not only with nationalist values, but also with the religious fervor of Catholicism. Religion was such an integral part of Philippine culture, and this could help to explain why suffragettes in the 1930s continued to invoke this same concept of religious nationalism. It fit within the parameters of modern Filipino womanhood, because the way that it came to be defined never fully disconnected itself from conservative religious values.37 The primary role of the modern Filipina was to fulfill her “sacred function” as a mother and educator of future citizens. A woman’s moral duty to the home, in accordance with the ideology of republican motherhood, constituted her civic contribution to the nationalist cause.

How could this interpretation of republican motherhood, which placed an emphasis on the home and family, be reconciled with the increasing numbers of working

37 Castillo, 143. It was important for Filipinas to maintain a strong sense of Catholic virtue in their definition of modern Filipino womanhood. In 1942, Castillo wrote that the Filipino woman’s “religion has served her well through the years, in maintaining her dignity, honor and morality. Through it, she has been able to command the respect of everyone; marriage has become a sacred institution . . . and by it she has become a lovable, considerate, devoted mother as well as a woman.” This represents an aspect of “traditional” Spanish femininity that proved to be compatible with secular ideas of womanhood brought in during the American period; therefore, Catholicism was still valued in the post-1937 definition of modern Filipino femininity.
women in Philippine society? To appeal to their fellow Filipinas, the suffragettes emphasized the sisterhood and solidarity created by wife-and-motherhood. Motherhood was still promoted as “the noblest profession” and the home a woman’s “main responsibility.” The suffragists simply tweaked this idea and argued that the domestic realm was an integral part of the nation, but that political and civic involvement outside the home would make them more informed (and therefore better) wives and mothers. Still, it was emphasized that women should only participate in the public sphere if they could balance these outside activities with their family and domestic responsibilities. As Mendoza-Guazon instructs her fellow Filipinas,

> In your preparation, however, never lose sight of the fact that you are women, and Filipino women. As women, your sacred function is to be mothers, the educators of future citizens. In fulfilling this mission let other interests and engagements be subordinated to that and never try to play two roles at the same time, unless you feel that you are not working injustice upon your children and husband, your clients if you are a professional, your employers if you are employees, and yourself.

By instructing women to put the interests of their husbands and children first, the Filipina suffragettes’ interpretation of republican motherhood ideology implicitly allowed women to work or participate in public society if it was necessary for the well-being of their families. Thus, women like Mendoza-Guazon framed republican motherhood ideology in a certain way to make it more inclusive and accommodating to the concerns of working Filipino women, regardless of class.

Finally, to make their argument even stronger, Filipina suffragettes knew better than to present suffrage as a binary choice between Spanish and American colonial models. In a brilliant strategic move, they invoked the prominent social, political,

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38 Roces, “Is the Suffragist an American Colonial Construct?” 36-7.
39 Mendoza-Guazon, 60-61.
economic, and religious roles of pre-colonial Filipino women. This appealed to the nationalist struggle for independence that united all Filipinos against the United States. Indeed, in pre-colonial times, women were more or less held in equal esteem with males. On occasion, women could even rise to positions of great prominence such as chieftain or queen. As many pre-colonial rulers were female, the Philippines was long known as the ‘queen country’ of ancient Asia. The majority of Filipino women, though, enjoyed gender egalitarianism through active participation in the economy, as well as sharing with their husbands the responsibility of providing for their families. Husbands and wives also shared equally in making family decisions. Family inheritance followed both patrilineal and matrilineal lines, women retained full inheritance rights after marriage, and they were also allowed to initiate divorces should their marriages prove unhappy.

Encarnacion Alzona’s 1933 Ph.D.-dissertation-turned-nationalist-feminist-propaganda piece, The Filipino Woman, is based upon this premise that Filipino women have always been active in public sectors of society since pre-colonial times; however, she points out that those rights were taken away during the Spanish colonial period. Alzona is careful to praise the American colonial regime for increasing education and professional opportunities for Filipinas, but throughout the book, it is clear that her nationalist and feminist leanings appeal to the idealistic Philippine past—sentiments that were shared by many male legislators. She writes:

40 Mendoza-Guazon, 64; Manuel Buaken, “Filipino Women Soldiers,” Daily News, January 8, 1942; quoted in Castillo, 88. According to Buaken, a Filipino writer, there existed a female Philippine ruler named Queen Urduja: “This Malayan princess not only took to the field in battle, but she also ruled her country wisely. She knew many languages and she led her country into profitable commercial relationships with Java, India, and Borneo.” Whether or not this female ruler actually existed is not as important as the fact that such examples of historical figures were invoked to support the increased public role of women in Philippine society.

A close and impartial study of Philippine affairs will reveal that our women with their talent, skill, and industry have contributed in a large measure to the building of our present economic and social structure; for, unlike the women of other Oriental countries, they were never confined to a life of sheltered seclusion and ease, but they have always participated freely in industrial and religious, and even political activities. Largely due to the traditional freedom and high position of their women, the Filipinos by the time of the Spanish discovery were already in a relatively advanced state of culture.42

Such arguments proved to be extremely advantageous to the suffrage movement.

Mendoza-Guazon wrote that obtaining political equality “will tear that shroud [of Spanish oppression toward Filipinas] into shreds, and the real native soul of the race will be reborn in its women with new energy, ambition, and faith, ready to assume their ancient and almost forgotten role in the affairs of their country.”43 Likewise, a forward-thinking editorial in a 1923 issue of The Woman’s Outlook, written by suffragette Trinidad Fernandez, denounces the Spanish colonial model of feminine demureness.

Fernandez links the contemporary, American-influenced modern Filipina to the “true” Filipino woman of pre-colonial times, emphasizing the clear minds and strong hearts of Filipinas both past and present:

The true type of Filipino woman, as our history reveals to us, was one who was full of self-sacrifice, devotion, and loyalty. But at the same time, she had common sense and had a head to rule her heart . . . She did not mope at home, burning candles before her favourite saint while her home, her children and her country were in peril. That was the type of Filipino woman we had and have today. And we are proud of her!44

42 Alzona, 3-4.
43 Mendoza-Guazon, 64-5. Mendoza-Guazon wrote that “the Spaniards came and this vigorous, dynamic, and progressive soul of the Filipino woman was shrouded by the ‘womanly woman charms’ of an affected civilization.”
Thus, the Filipina suffragettes formed their arguments in such a way that played to the nationalist sentiments of their fellow countrymen: by invoking traditional conceptions of Philippine society, they specifically highlighted the public and political participation of women, while simultaneously denouncing the oppressive and patriarchal system of Spanish colonialism. Through the act of connecting Philippine history to the present through the prominent public role of Filipinas, the suffragettes showed how female citizenship was more relevant than ever to the modern world into which the new nation would be born.

So how did the rest of Philippine society respond to these compelling arguments for woman suffrage? In the early 1930s, most of the Philippine public remained divided on the issue, as evidenced by the debates over the role of women that were raging in the press. As for the Philippine government, the American colonial administrators supported female suffrage, especially after it was granted to American women. In a 1919 editorial, de Veyra expressed confidence that a woman suffrage bill would soon be passed because a number of influential men, both American and Filipino, had expressed their favor and support of it. These men included Manuel Quezon, who at that time was President of the Senate, Speaker of the House Manuel Roxas, Senator Rafael Palma, and American governors-general Francis Burton Harrison and Leonard Wood.45 Harrison in particular

45 De Veyra, “Some Things You Should Know about the Philippine Islands;” Alzona, 65. In a speech to his fellow congressmen, Sen. Rafael Palma argued in support of woman suffrage, saying that “female suffrage is a reform demanded by the social conditions of our times, by the high culture of women, and by the aspiration of all classes of society to organize and work for the interests they have in common . . . There is no reason why suffrage should be a privilege of sex, considering that the duties of citizenship rest as heavily upon women as upon men . . . female suffrage spells justice and vindication for the modern woman and we must adopt it forthwith, without unnecessary delay and formalities.”
regarded woman suffrage as a particularly important way of measuring the readiness of the Philippines for independent self-government.\footnote{Sneider, 135.}

The majority of those who opposed female suffrage were Filipino men, especially elites and politicians, who were reluctant to share political power with women. They exhibited conservative leanings and a vision for the new nation that would be characterized by a return to the traditions of the Spanish colonial past. Rather than the politicized modern Filipina, they favored instead the nineteenth-century, Iberian-influenced, “Maria Clara” model of femininity. Many Filipino men believed that extending citizenship to women would cause them to become too outspoken and too involved in activities outside the home, which in turn would cause tension within marriages as well as the neglect of their children and households. According to Tirona, many Filipino men “took a protective stance and preferred that the Filipina remained...
unsullied by the dirt and grime that was Philippine politics. They worried about home and family management in the face of ambitioning politicized wives and mothers. They were imagined to become so preoccupied with politicking to the neglect and detriment of husband, children, and household as the menfolk were wont to do themselves.\(^{47}\)

Furthermore, another argument from anti-woman suffragists was based on what they saw as a major character weakness in Filipino women: their tendency and desire to conform so readily to foreign notions of American womanhood.\(^{48}\) They believed that women’s desire for suffrage was not so much Filipino as it was American-influenced, and that it borrowed too heavily from American structures of government, thus directly undermining the Philippine nationalist project. These opponents failed to see the compromises and adaptations that elite Filipinas made, not just in their careful selection of which American characteristics of modern womanhood to adopt, but also in their incorporation of Spanish and pre-colonial elements of femininity.

This patriarchal, “protective” stance of many Filipino men led them to suggest that women’s public roles should be limited to social work and club activities; in other words, that the status quo for Filipino women should remain in place even after the nation gained independence. In this case, women would not have the right to vote and would not become citizens. Suffragists fired back, claiming that this did not reflect the Philippines’ inevitable path to modernity. Furthermore, they argued that the idealized, “Maria Clara” type of woman had long ago disappeared from Philippine society. De Veyra remarked

\(^{47}\) Tirona, 126; Wil Burghoorn, Kazuki Iwanaga, Cecilia Milwertz, and Qi Wang, eds., Gender Politics in Asia: Women Manoeuvering within Dominant Gender Orders (Malaysia: NIAS Press, 2008), 4. The notion of “republican motherhood” implicitly argued by the suffragettes was the one that most strongly appealed to Filipino men’s insistence that women maintain their duties to the home.

\(^{48}\) Roces, “Is the Suffragist an American Colonial Construct?” 36.
with disgust that male arguments against Filipina suffrage were all “prehistoric ones of the oak and the vine.”⁴⁹ Alzona, too, argued that the “natural modesty and reserve” of Filipinas did not need protecting, and that they could balance the duties of womanhood and freedoms of public life with grace and ease.

As the arguments and counter-arguments were laid out, public opinion seemed to be swaying in favor of Filipino woman suffrage. Still, regardless of public opinion, the suffragettes would have to convince the all-male, mostly conservative legislature that female suffrage would be a positive addition to the national constitution. Now, the only thing left for them to do was to put the finishing touches—or, rather, finishing compromises—on the model of the “modern Filipino woman” that they would present to the legislature, in hopes that it would bring them the rights of citizenship for which they had been fighting over the course of the past three decades.

Compromise Completed: “The Politics of Dress,” a Plebiscite, and the Emergence of the Modern Filipina

During the 1931 Constitutional Convention, elite Filipinas pushed for women’s suffrage to be put on the agenda. The congressional hearings at the Convention included public testimonies from a number of prominent suffragettes, including Encarnacion Alzona, Pilar Hidalgo-Lim, Concepcion Felix Rodriguez, Josefa Llanes Escoda, Josefa Jara Martinez, Asuncion Perez, and Maria Paz Mendoza-Guazon. Members of PAUW and the NFWC were also present.⁵⁰ Their efforts proved to be successful, and in 1933, the government passed the Woman Suffrage Act. Set to take effect January 1, 1935, the right

⁴⁹ De Veyra, “Some Things You Should Know about the Philippine Islands.”
⁵⁰ Alzona, 65.
to vote was promised to female residents of at least one year who were at least 21 years of age and literate in English, Spanish, or a native language. This marked a huge victory for Filipina suffragists; however, the victory was short-lived. The following year, when the Tydings-McDuffie Act of 1934 granted the Philippines independence from the United States after a period of ten years, a technicality of the act stated that the Philippine legislature had to draft a new constitution. Thus, the Woman Suffrage Act was declared null and void.\(^5\) Having achieved success only to have it so quickly ripped away, Filipina suffragists now had to convince legislators all over again to pass a bill for their enfranchisement.

The Constitutional Convention opened on July 30, 1934. Between August 21 and November 5, woman suffrage was brought up multiple times on the Assembly floor. Once again, a number of women made appearances and argued their case in elegantly delivered testimonies. Their elegance lay not merely in their words, but in also in the way that they presented themselves to the convention. In all of their public appearances at the convention, these suffragists wore the *terno* and *pañuelo*, the modern manifestation of traditional Filipina *mestiza* dress.\(^5\) The aim of this fashion choice was to appeal to the conservative nationalist sentiments of the male legislators, the traditionalists who wished for the new nation to depart from modern American ways. They longed for a return to the way things were: an idyllic, pastoral Philippines populated by “traditional” Filipino women.\(^5\) To them, the Filipino woman pushing for suffrage constituted a threat to their

\(^{51}\) Subido, 33; Tirona, 125.
\(^{52}\) As the most modern manifestation of *mestiza* dress at that time, in this essay the *terno* and *pañuelo* is synonymous with *mestiza* dress.
\(^{53}\) Alzona, 85. Although she and Mendoza-Guazon generally advocated the more comfortable and practical Western dress for everyday wear, as a suffragist Alzona still sang the praises of the *mestiza* dress, writing that “the most ardent nationalist need not fear that this new attitude will lead to the disappearance of the native costume. It will never die, it is safe to predict, because of its beauty and becomingness to the
“utopian vision” of male dominance and female subordination. As the suffragettes were all too aware of this fact, their wearing of the traditional dress was a very strategic and clever move to make.

The scholarship of Mina Roces highlights the importance of dress choices in the suffrage movement in winning over the male legislators. During their campaign, especially when making appearances or speeches in the legislature, the suffragettes could not openly attack existing constructions of femininity, lest they jeopardize their cause by appearing too radical. The mestiza dress greatly aided their cause in two ways. First, it convinced the male legislators that woman suffrage was not as radical or threatening as many perceived it to be. Roces contends that the use of fashion was a strategy to appeal to what male Filipino politicians thought an ideal Filipino woman should look and act like. The strategy to “present themselves publicly as non-militant, non-aggressive women who still glorified motherhood and the ‘home’ and as beautiful women closely identified with civic work made their new demands for political power and equality in civic law seem less threatening. Lobbying for women’s equality seemed less ‘modern’ if the lobbyist was dressed in a terno and a pañuelo.”

Furthermore, invoking the indigenous pre-colonial and Spanish colonial pasts would dispel criticisms that they were simply “mimicking American colonial constructions” of the modern woman, which made their approach seem more conciliatory to the sentiments of their menfolk. Yet, their arguments for gender equality still proved to the United States and to the rest of the world

Filipino type. Foreigners who have had the privilege to see the fine specimens of this costume are lavish in their praise of it.”


55 Roces, “Is the Suffragist an American Colonial Construct?” 42.
that they were modern in every sense of the word—educated, socially active, and embracing the boldness that was attributed to the American modern woman. The second way that wearing *mestiza* dress helped to advance the suffragist cause was that it served as a powerful nationalist symbol. The *terno* and *pañuelo* represented a compromise between conservatism and liberal modernity in the making of Filipino womanhood. It showed that the suffragists were still willing to commit to the ideals of republican motherhood, and would not abandon their duties as wives and mothers. Thus the suffragettes implicitly stated that the two narratives of tradition and modernity could coexist in the “new Filipina.”

While at first glance it may have seemed odd for the vanguards of modern womanhood to present themselves in traditional dress while arguing their case, it was instead a brilliant strategic move. By embracing both traditional and modern values through their dress and their words, respectively, the suffragettes were able to market themselves—and Filipinas in general—as prime candidates for citizenship. This careful presentation of the “modern Filipina” to the Philippine legislature was able to successfully convince them that woman suffrage would be beneficial for the new nation.

After much deliberation, the suffragettes achieved success once again. In September 1936, a compromise bill was passed, stating that the vote would be extended to women provided that 300,000 out of the 497,000 eligible potential female voters were in favor of it. This would be decided in a special plebiscite to be held on April 30, 1937. This day represented the culmination of everything the Filipina clubwomen and suffragettes had been working toward for the past few decades. In an outpouring of

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56 Subido, 37. The bill was passed on September 30, 1936 and became Commonwealth Act No. 34. It stated the steps for registering female voters and set the requirements for the plebiscite.
sisterhood, solidarity, and support, women all over the country mobilized for the event. Many chapters of various women’s organizations took charge of recruiting voters in their respective areas. Members of the Junior Federation of Women’s Clubs, which had chapters throughout the country, offered to babysit so that mothers with small children could go vote. Clubwomen opened their houses to accommodate out-of-town voters, and well-to-do families offered the use of their cars to help ease the burden of travel.57 Pilar Hidalgo-Lim describes the daunting (but exciting) task of recruiting her fellow countrywomen to vote in the plebiscite as she and other suffragettes traveled across their designated area in Northern Luzon:

_We worked unceasingly. We wrote to all provincial clubs to write to their respective delegates, and asked many women to invite one or two delegates to small luncheons and dinners to persuade [them]. The [final] compromise was not a victory but a challenge. We worked through the block in the poblacion and barrio under one or two clubwomen who would go from house to house to convince women to register and say “yes” on plebiscite day._58

In the end, most of the Filipino women who voted that day did say “yes.” The final results of the plebiscite were 447,725 in favor of woman suffrage and only 44,307 against it. In other words, over 90 percent of eligible Filipinas turned out to vote, and the overwhelming majority were in favor of it. Effective September 15, 1937, the right to vote was extended to Filipino women who were twenty-one years of age or older, who could read and write, and who were residents of the Philippines for at least one year. At last, the hard-working Filipina suffragettes had achieved political equality for women—the highest standard of gender equality in politics at that time. The cross-cultural, multi-

57 Subido, 45.
Figure 4.3: A copy of the official ballot used in the 1936 special plebiscite on woman suffrage. Reprinted from Subido, 39.

The colonial Filipino woman who embodied the best of tradition and modernity was set to become a voting citizen of the new Philippine nation.

Conclusion

Women’s suffrage in the Philippines directly resulted from the increased educational opportunities and active consumer role of Filipinas during the American colonial period. The emergence of the modern Filipina citizen in 1937 combined what the suffragists saw as the best aspects of three different conceptions of Filipino womanhood:
the duties to home, family, and religion that were inherent to the Spanish Catholic model; the education, expanded career opportunities, and increased consumerism of the American model; and, not forgetting the pre-colonial past that so cherished by the nationalist movement, the high degree of gender equality and public visibility that was enjoyed by the pre-colonial Filipino woman. Therefore, the “new Filipina” or “modern Filipino woman” was not the result of the dominance of one colonial construct over another. She was neither a direct emulation of the American woman, nor a complete abandonment of “Maria Clara” and her Iberian values. She was her own uniquely Filipino construction who chose to embrace the best of her colonial and pre-colonial pasts rather than forget them. Such a construction, as we have seen, underwent many years of evolution and debate over what the modern Filipina should look and act like, as well as what positions she should occupy in society. These debates themselves—in the realm of education, in the press, and in the Philippine legislature—“unwittingly recognized the
critical leadership role that women play in the national arena."59 They directed attention to the fact that the modern twentieth-century Filipina could no longer be denied participation in the nation. The Filipino woman could now take her place among the female citizens of the twentieth-century world’s developed nations, contributing to her country in both the private sphere as modern wife-and-mother, and the public sphere as an educated professional and politically active citizen of the nation of the Philippines.

CHAPTER 5

Epilogue and Conclusion:

The Filipina Takes on the Modern World

A few years after Filipinas obtained suffrage, their hopes of progress toward the new Philippine nation, along with other Filipinos, were dashed by the Japanese invasion in 1942 and subsequent occupation until 1945. By this time, nineteen-year-old Ofelia had fallen in love with her next-door-neighbor in Manila, a handsome young Ilocano policeman named Pablo Dacanay.¹ In 1943, in the midst of the national upheaval caused by the Japanese Occupation, Pablo and Ofelia were married. According to their daughter Susan, they wasted no time in getting married due to the dangerous circumstances; as an attractive young Filipino woman, Ofelia was in danger of being raped by the ruthless Japanese soldiers.² The Occupation was a time of apprehension and constant fear for many Filipinos, and even the elite Benitez family did not escape unaffected. Paz kept a detailed diary of her family’s experience:

January 22, 1942. Yesterday afternoon I sat at the front door and listened to the radio music coming on the air from San Francisco. I had a feeling of listening to echoes, echoes of an old life that may for all I know be forever gone. Freedom! A word that used to be so vaguely beautiful, so full of general hazy implications. Now I know what it means. It means not having to close my doors for fear the laughter in my house may attract attention hence disaster. It means not having to lower my voice when speaking of “the constituted authorities.” It means not having to have permission to come and go.³

January 8, 1943. The house is as shabby as the garden, help is hard to get, the family is in the house all day, dirtying up the floors and messing things

¹ Corazon Dacanay Lopez, e-mail message to author, April 4, 2014.
² Susan Dacanay, phone conversation with the author, March 31, 2014.
³ Virginia Benitez Licuanan, Paz Marquez Benitez: One Woman’s Life, Letters, and Writings (Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1995), 221.
up generally. That is one distressing thing in all this new life of ours—the lack of respite from the nagging demands of life that has been reduced to the bare essentials, the lack of variety, the lack of outside interests, I stay at home day in and day out and have become quite a worker and a scold.  

*Date unknown, 1945.* Since I last wrote in this book, the world has changed utterly; myself not the least. So many things, sad, bad things, have happened, so many people have died.

World War II and the Japanese Occupation of the Philippines represented a step back in the forward progress of Philippine feminism. Denise Cruz argues that the Japanese Occupation altered the cultural construction of the “modern Filipina” that had been born out of the suffrage movement, as the Japanese goal was to suppress and eradicate the American influence in their attempt to build their own Pacific empire. The Japanese also consciously attempted to push elite Filipinas back into the private sphere, claiming that domesticity constituted practices of “practical patriotism” that would encourage pan-

![Figure 5.1: Pablo and Ofelia Dacanay’s wedding photo, Manila, November 1943.](image)

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4 Licuanan, 235.

5 Ibid., 243.
Asian sisterhood and benefit their burgeoning empire.⁶ Therefore, after the war, women in the United States and Philippines alike were pushed back into the home. They were encouraged to take up roles of nurturing, healing, and support as the world struggled to return to normalcy in the wake of so much destruction. In the late 1940s, Philippine First Lady Trinidad Roxas emphasized the role of women in the home as mothers, sisters, and daughters, saying that they were needed to help the nation rebuild both physically and emotionally.⁷ The politicization of women that had been so vibrant and active only a decade before was significantly diminished. According to Vina Lanzona, the war left unfinished the exploration of the “cultural construction of the Filipina” and reversed the political gains that women had made in 1937.⁸

For Filipinos struggling to rebuild in the wake of the Occupation, including Paz and Ofelia, “life went on because it had to.”⁹ The golden years of the thirties and now the war behind her, Paz resumed her job as a professor of English at the University of the Philippines until 1941, when she retired to spend time with her children and grandchildren. Ofelia, too, continued her work as a fifth-grade schoolteacher after the war, and would continue to teach for over twenty-five years at Moises Salvador Elementary School in Sampoloc, Manila. As a modern Filipina, she learned to simultaneously manage her working life and home life just as Paz had a generation earlier. Ofelia and Pablo’s first child, a daughter whom they named Corazon, was born in 1947. Over the course of the next fourteen years, the Dacanays welcomed five more

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⁷ Vina A. Lanzona, “Capturing the Huk Amazons: representing women warriors in the Philippines, 1940s-1950s,” South East Asia Research 17, no. 2 (July 2009), 142.
⁹ Licuanan, 243.
children: Dennis, Ernesto, Victor, Susan, and Allan. On occasion, when their nanny had
days off, the children used to tag along to school with their mother when they were
young. With both her and Pablo’s incomes, the Dacanay family was able to live in a
comfortable house in Marikina City, a suburb of Manila, near members of Pablo’s
extended family (see Fig. 5.2). Ofelia continued to teach for over twenty-five years until
1970, when she retired to immigrate to the United States with her husband and two
youngest children.10 In the United States, she had to work twice as hard as she did in the
Philippines to make ends meet, but her reward was many fruitful years in the
Washington, D.C. area spent with children, grandchildren, and relatives. Ofelia’s
emigration to the United States hints at another stage in the evolution of modern Filipino

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10 Lopez, e-mail message to author, March 9, 2014.

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**Figure 5.2:** Dacanay family photo, Manila, 1949. Ofelia Hidalgo Dacanay is seated first on the left,
holding her infant son, Dennis. Her toddler-age daughter Corazon (”Zonnie”) is the first child standing on
the left, with the large bow in her hair. The elderly couple seated in the middle are Ofelia’s husband Pablo’s
parents, and the six young adults standing in the back row are his siblings, though Pablo himself is absent
from the photo. Original family photo.
womanhood that appeared later on in the 1960s and 1970s: the diaspora. Her decision to move to the United States is indicative of the neo-colonial legacy that the Americans left on Filipino women. Migration can be seen as a form of female empowerment, especially if women move for work or to seek a better life.\footnote{Catherine Ceniza Choy, \textit{Empire of Care: Nursing and Migration in Filipino-American History} (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), Kindle Electronic Edition: Epilogue, Location 2405.}

The ideological postwar push back into the domestic sphere was generally accepted by Filipinas without much resistance, yet it did not completely eradicate women completely from the public sphere. Instead, the ever-increasing power of the modern capitalist economy led to most women being forced into the dual role of working woman and housewife-and-mother. As the suffragists demonstrated in their arguments for female citizenship, the model of Filipino womanhood that emerged as a result of American education, the popular press, consumerism, and the suffrage movement had called for the public and private (working and domestic) roles of women to coexist side by side. Constituting “the bulk of the reserve army of labor, pulled in when needed and discarded when not,” they dutifully took up whatever role or responsibility that would best serve their family and nation.\footnote{Rosalinda Pineda-Ofreneo, “Women and Work: Focus on Homework in the Philippines,” \textit{Review of Women’s Studies} 1, no. 1 (1990), 42.}

As a result of the nature of capitalism, however, the majority of Filipinas increasingly found that they had absolutely no choice but to labor outside the home in order to make ends meet.\footnote{As a wealthy, elite Filipina, Paz certainly would have had the option not to work if she did not want to. Ofelia, on the other hand, took up three jobs upon immigrating to the United States, and her husband took up two, in order to make ends meet.} For example, in order to provide for her six children and maintain a middle-class lifestyle, Ofelia had to continue to work as a schoolteacher and could not stay at home during the day with her children (luckily for her, teaching was a job she thoroughly enjoyed). Most lower-class women, too, had to work in order to get
by, but their hard labor barely resulted in enough income to subsist on, and many found
themselves and their families slipping deeper into poverty.

According to Maria Mies, due to the rapid rise of capitalism in the twentieth
century, the sexual division of labor became firmly entrenched across the globe,
dependent on the exploitation of women in both the public and private spheres. Rendered
a struggling capitalist nation tied to the United States by neocolonial dependence, the
Philippines was no exception, and Filipino women became victims of this “capitalist
patriarchy,” doubly exploited by the economy and by their gender.  

The Philippines, like many countries, continues to operate under the assumption that housewives do not
“work,” that they are dependent on their husbands’ incomes, and if they do have an
outside job, then it is only considered secondary or supplementary income. This is all
despite the capitalist reality that most lower-class women had no choice but to labor
outside of the home as well as continue with their unpaid labor, doing housework and
raising children. Making matters worse for women was the 1950 passage of the Civil
Code of the Philippines, which embodied the strong patriarchal Catholic tradition that
continues to oppress Filipino women in modern society. Lower pay rates for women, less
benefits, and the official labeling of married women’s income as “supplementary” to that
of their husbands are explicitly laid out in the Civil Code of the Philippines, all remain
facts of life for working Filipinas to this day.
Despite all these difficulties, throughout the twentieth century, subsequent generations of Filipino women have continued to build on the previous successes of the “first-wave feminists” who achieved modernity and female suffrage in the 1930s. Increased education for Filipinas at all social levels has led to a large transnational workforce, and millions of Filipino women hold a wide variety of jobs all over the world. According to the Philippine Commission on Women, the number of female Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) is always increasing and remains competitive with the number of male OFWs. Increased education and Filipinas’ diligent political involvement has led to a number of successful Filipina congresswomen and senators (including Paz’s own niece, Helena Benitez), and has even produced two female presidents, Corazon Aquino and Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. Additionally, women’s political activism has recently resulted in the reversal of outdated laws that exhibited discrimination against women, such as the recent December 2012 birth control law which required government health centers to make contraceptives available to the poor free of charge. Although there were setbacks, progress continued throughout the twentieth century and continues into the twenty-first for Filipino women, as they build on the initial gains made by the first generation of Philippine feminists.

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18 “Philippine top court defies church to back birth control,” BBC News Asia, April 8, 2014, http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-26938667 (accessed April 22, 2014). The intentions of this controversial reproductive health law are to reduce the country’s birthrate as well as the maternal mortality rate, both of which are among the highest in Asia. As soon as it was passed, the law came under fire from the Catholic Church; however, on April 8, 2014, the Philippine Supreme Court upheld the law, marking a defeat for the Church.
As stated in the previous chapter, Filipina citizenship was not the final solution to the feminist struggle in the Philippines. The economic and social exploitation of Filipinas after World War II is evidence of female suffrage’s failure to bring about any radical change in the condition of most Filipino women. However, this does not come as a surprise, considering the nature of the suffrage movement. In reality, the suffragettes were “conservative feminists,” rather than adherents to the mainstream definition of feminism, because of the conservative and conciliatory approach they took as they fought for suffrage. They argued that they deserved the honor of being called “modern women” for a number of reasons, mostly related to their adaptability and acculturation: their expanded education in the American tradition, the adoption of American imperial prescriptions for women’s roles as publicly active “fashionistas” and scientifically savvy housewives and mothers, and their inclination to conform to practices of American female consumerism. In this manner, “modernity” was strongly associated with American colonial ideals. The path taken by the Filipina suffragettes therefore shows adherence to American arguments for female citizenship that were rooted in modernity. At the same time, however, other aspects of the modern Filipino woman, such as the upholding of Catholic values of femininity and nationalist arguments for the importance of motherhood, were reminiscent of the “traditional” Spanish model of womanhood. They successfully appealed to traditionalists in the Philippine legislature who were worried that the suffragettes’ claims would be too radical. Filipina suffragettes were able to bridge these binaries between American and Spanish models of womanhood by proving that many “modern” elements were not all that new, and “traditional” elements were not really all that outdated. They successfully combined what they saw as the best of each
colonial construct, even harkening back to the pre-colonial model of womanhood in order to maintain nationalist ties to their roots. Filipino women thus created their own form of “cultural citizenship,” proving that modernity and tradition could exist in harmony in the contemporary, late-1930s construction of modern Filipino womanhood.

This study has sought to analyze the multiple colonial influences that contributed to the making of modern Filipino womanhood during the first few decades of the twentieth century, focusing mainly on American imperial motives regarding education and consumer culture that gave Filipinas the opportunity to raise themselves to the status of “modern women.” However, elite Filipinas did not completely abandon their Spanish colonial and pre-colonial pasts, as they actively combined the most advantageous of these new qualities with the old ones and thus stayed true to the nationalist cause. Despite the numerous challenges of capitalist dominance and patriarchal attitudes that they continue to face in society, Filipino women have prospered, branching out across the world as a result of the labor migration and diaspora of the latter half of the twentieth century. If scholars’ analyses—including this study—are correct, then Filipinas will continue to adapt and adjust to accommodate new conceptions of post-modernity. They will not be the products of just two or three colonial constructions of femininity. As examples of “modern Filipino women,” Paz Marquez Benitez and my own lola, Ofelia Hidalgo Dacanay, have demonstrated in their resilience, adaptability, and zeal throughout their long lives that the modern Filipina will continue to evolve, making the best of whatever comes her way, and always with the utmost dignity, style, and grace.
Figure 5.3: Paz Marquez Benitez “with her four grandchildren: Francisco Licuanan III, Lourdes Benitez, Patricia Licuanan, and Kristina Benitez.” Reprinted from Licuanan, 153.

Figure 5.4: Ofelia Hidalgo Dacanay with her granddaughter Katherine, Falls Church, Virginia, 1991 (left) and 1993 (right). Original family photos.
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