

How are the Filipino Youth Changing?

THE SHIFTING LIFESTYLES OF OUR NATION'S YOUNG,
1970s TO 1990s *

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ABSTRACT

Tinatalakay sa papel na ito ang mga pagbabago sa pamumuhay ng mga kabataan sa ating lipunan. Sa pamamagitan ng mga paghahambing ng mga naunang pag-aaral noong dekada sitenta at otsenta sa mga pag-aaral ng dekada nobenta, maraming nakitang matingkad na pagbabago sa pamumuhay, pag-iisip at pagpapalagay ng mga kabataan. Ipinakita din kung paanong ang mga sosyo-pulitikal at pang-ekonomikong salik tulad ng paglaganap ng AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) at pagdaluyong ng migrasyon ay nakakaapekto sa anyo at direksyon ng mga pagbabagong ito.

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No other segment of any society, in any nation, mirrors its potentials as its youth. Hence, every society strives to ensure the provision of all opportunities possible for the development of their youth towards their becoming healthy, well educated, culturally endowed, socially adjusted, morally upright and politically active.

Yet, no one is as vulnerable to external influences, good or bad, as the young. As they mature, these influences would eventually help define their self identities, frames of mind and world views. It is therefore very important to examine lifestyle changes among the youth in the light of the varied and colorful social, economic, and the attendant political events that have occurred during the past 30 years.

During this period, there have been profound changes in most spheres of human existence — social, economic and political changes, both global and local. How are the Filipino youth in particular changing?

Worth noting, are the changes in our government since the 1970s and current political uncertainties, which are closely intertwined with the economic state of the nation. The surge in Filipino contract labor migration, which largely began also in the 1970s, continues to transform Filipino families in nontraditional ways.

Moreover, changes in the international scene, particularly the discovery of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, which hangs like a scepter over unprotected and ill-prepared societies; and globalization which was spurred by rapidly evolving information technology, among others, seem to make our lives more complex and, at times, incomprehensible. Through it all, it is our young who are most affected.

I. OBJECTIVES, STUDY FRAMEWORK AND DATA SOURCES

This study aims to review and analyze changes in the lifestyles of the Filipino youth over the past 30 years. The limited coverage of the dimensions included in the study does not indicate a particular bias for any facet of youth behavior. Rather, this study was based on what data or information was available and accessible.

Lifestyle is broadly defined here as the characteristic way of life of a group or individual as reflected in one's material surroundings, attitudes, behavior, etc. (Neufeldt 1988, the Chambers Dictionary 1994-1996). The youth, adolescents or young adults, which are used interchangeably here, are Filipinos 15-24 years of age. This definition is in accordance with the UN definition and POPCOM's policy on delayed marriage (Raymundo 1991).

By adopting a multi-dimensional framework (see Figure 1), which blends the rich and varied theoretical and empirical knowledge and experiences to date, the lifestyles of the Filipino youth may be better understood.

During adolescent years, the youth simultaneously undergo physical, mental and psychosocial changes and adjustments. These are often associated with emotions such as tension, confusion and uncertainty. During the adolescent development process, conflicts arise as they rationalize and redefine their complex relationships with people around them such as their parents, peers, and the opposite sex. This is a critical period in the youth's life: many decisions and actions they take may have consequences directly affecting their future life as adults.

From birth to death, each person is expected to experience special events in a pattern towards maturity and aging. These critical "life course transitions" are often experienced during young adult years, in conjunction with physiological changes and cognitive development. Usually these revolve around education, work, sexual debut, marriage and migration, among others.

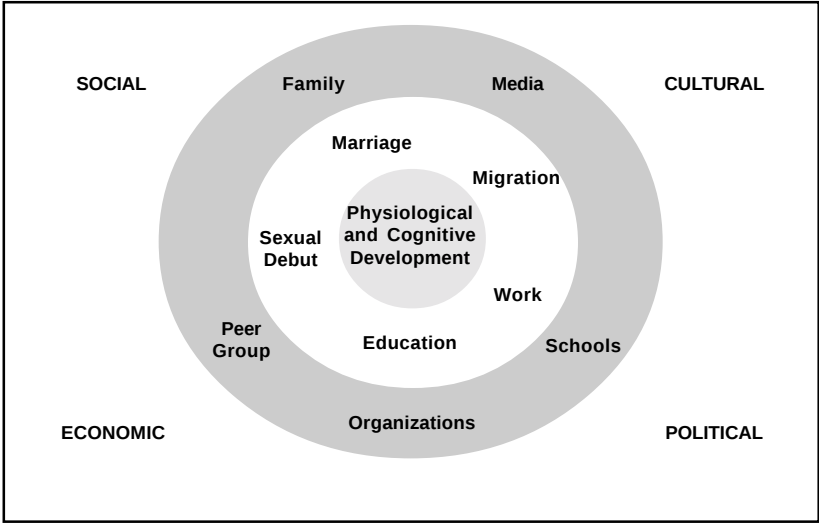
The timing and occurrence of these events are influenced to a large extent by one's level and nature of exposure to various agents of socialization (i.e., family, peer group, school and media) and the social, cultural, economic and political environment one is exposed to.

These entail a change in lifestyle. For example, a young high school graduate from a rural high school who migrates to Metro Manila to continue his/her education will have to adjust to an urban lifestyle. On the other hand, a young high school graduate who marries after graduation or a young person who finds employment immediately after graduation will need to adjust to a different way of life compared to his/her student years.

The review entailed digging through archives and resources of various academic and research institutions, as well as NGOs involved in adolescent and related issues. Both quantitative and qualitative researches were explored, with a view to providing a holistic, yet in-depth, view of issues relating to adolescents.

Specifically worth noting as useful in establishing trend and patterns are the Young Adult Fertility Surveys I and II, which were conducted by the UP Population Institute in 1982 and 1994, respectively, among the 15-24 years old women population in the Philippines. The later survey included young males in the sample.

FIGURE 1. STUDY FRAMEWORK



Note: An expanded version of the Ecological Framework of Small and Luster (1994) for Adolescent Sexuality was adapted for lifestyle changes of the Filipino youth

A 1992 study on Filipino youth by McCann-Erickson, a leading advertising agency, was also utilized. This was conducted among males and females aged 12-21 years, using a mix of qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Also quite informative were the Child and Youth Research Center (CYRC) studies on the youth in the 1980s, the 1996 Social Weather Stations (SWS)-National Youth Council (NYC) Study on the Situation of the Youth in the Philippines, the selected studies commissioned by the Foundation for Adolescent Development (FAD); and a wide array of ethnographic data.

II. CULTURE AND VALUES/EXPECTATIONS

The Filipino youth in the 1970s were relatively outgoing, aware of current social issues and active in civic and religious organizations (Carlos 1977 as cited in Lanuza 1998). In the 1970s study commissioned by the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines on in-school and out-of-school youth in the age-group 13 to 25 years from urban and rural areas,

clear gender differentials were revealed. Young females were found aspiring for professional satisfaction while young male counterparts were inclined to aspire for acquisition of material things. For example, young males would like to be leaders in their future jobs like their fathers while young females would like to learn and enjoy their jobs if they become permanent (Gomez et al. 1976). The youth from high income groups indicated preference for jobs that would enable them to help other people while the youth from low income groups valued occupations that could make them rich or famous. The urban youth were mainly concerned with peer and community adjustment. The rural youth, on the other hand, were concerned with money matters. Religion was treated more as a private affair, with affective motives as the main reason for youth involvement in religious activities. More young females than males were likely to join religious organizations while more males than females were likely to join athletic organizations.

A study of the Child and Youth Research Center (CYRC) on adolescent ideology, volunteerism, values, and sex practices in the 1980s, however, revealed that the Filipino youth were “very much aware of their environment, their duties and responsibilities unto themselves and to society” (Hernandez 1981: 9). For the youth, the family was the major provider of moral, spiritual and emotional support. The father was head of the family even though mother and father both work and make family decisions. The adolescents of the 1980s advocated for a nuclear family with a clear delineation of roles and functions of every member. On the other hand, the school was viewed as instrumental for the further development of the youth in becoming economically productive and socially oriented individuals. Diligence and time management was also seen as instrumental in attaining higher education, which was considered a passport to a better life. The church was viewed narrowly as a place where they can pour out their problems and sorrows in life.

The youth viewed society as a result of a complex interplay of pressing problems. Foremost of which are overpopulation, malnutrition, poverty, peace and order, unemployment, high prices and lack of cooperation from the citizenry. The burden of identifying and implementing solutions to these problems were heavily placed on the government. The youth were of the view that government social services should veer away from its dole-out tendency. It should focus more on types of assistance that would develop the capacity of the youth in the short run so they would be able to help themselves. Provision of vocational skills training and small business loans were cited as examples. They also supported the

ideals of self-commitment, volunteerism and community involvement, at the same time quite aware of both material and non-material returns from their exercise.

Hernandez (1980) also found that traditionalism, family solidarity, respect for authority, economic security and social acceptance, in their order of importance, characterized the values system of the Filipino youth at that time. Maintenance of the *status quo* or preservation of existing and established practices and customs were given higher premium by the youth. This was particularly strong during the early adolescent years, but over time it started to sway equivocally particularly on traditionally accepted beliefs and practices. As the youth age and mature, they developed positive attitudes toward:

- ◆ women who chose to further their education and transcend beyond traditionally ascribed mother and wife roles;
- ◆ marrying women with a “colorful” past or of a different religion; and
- ◆ husbands helping their wives with household chores.

In the 1980s, The Filipino youth began to develop their own notions and creativity in fostering family closeness. A gradual weaning away from physical closeness as they matured was desired. While young adolescents favored the holding of family celebrations, even if expensive, and the building of homes near their parents after marriage, older adolescents no longer agreed to these practices. Likewise, they were lukewarm to the idea of sacrificing personal interest in favor of the family and in repaying their parents for their sacrifices by supporting them in old age. However, they affirmed that they would provide assistance to their parents if needed.

As the adolescent grew older, there was increasing resistance against traditionally held practices, e.g., manifesting respect for authority figures like parents, husbands, leaders in government and other organizations. (Hernandez 1980) Whereas very young adolescents would be silent when scolded by parents, older adolescents would reason out because they see scolding as an interactive process. Older adolescents did not want to be dictated upon, but would rather participate in decisions such as choosing a candidate in an election. This is particularly true in decisions regarding career and lifetime partners.

On economic security, Hernandez (1980) also found that the youth as they mature exhibited a tendency to transcend beyond wealth and luxury as basis for their happiness. Compared to younger adolescents, older adolescents were of the view that they would not find it difficult to live happily in a community where almost everyone else had modern comforts in life, which they themselves might not have. They also tended to tolerate and respect people for who they are rather than their status in society. As the youth matured, a greater premium was placed on expressing one's ideas and sentiments rather than on being socially accepted, with the older adolescents tending to be more vocal in expressing even dissenting opinions.

In the 1990s, Filipino adolescents' had become quite "multifaceted, hierarchical and differentiated" which was reflective of the Filipino society's structural complexity (Peña 1998). The adolescents were both "independent/individualist" and "interdependent/collectivist" having been socialized in a complex and changing nature of the Filipino culture as shaped by the historical and emerging socio-economic and political development interactions with various cultures. Esteemed as individualistic/independent goals were self-assertion, achievement and autonomy. On the interdependent/collectivist side, values such as developing good interpersonal relations and preserving social norms and values were affirmed.

The young are also beginning to recognize and transcend stereotypical roles traditionally dictated by one's sex (Peña 1998). As such, adolescent girls showed a greater tendency to be more self-reflective and aware, resulting in better self-expression. Adolescent boys, however, are now better able to show concern in their relationships and social responsibilities. The changing concepts of womanhood and manhood as they impact on gender roles are therefore changing as well.

III. MEDIA AND POLITICAL EXPOSURE

The political cynicism of the 1970s (Sikat 1972) shifted to political maturity and vigilance in the 1980s and 1990s, respectively. It is therefore not surprising to find the youth to be quite politically mature during the 1980s, considering the heightened media exposure of the population and the reorientation of many programs for youth consumption.

Political maturity¹ was associated with urban residence, intelligence and socio-economic status (Gomez et al. 1986). The same study also

found the same relationship between political maturity and intelligence in rural areas. The youth widely practiced their political rights to form associations, and of assembly and speech. As a pressure group, youth organizations have been quite vocal. In fact, the youth have composed some of the most militant and active political groups in contemporary history.

In 1989, slightly more than 77 percent of the youth spent at least 3 hours daily watching local entertainment and local information programs on TV (Belen 1989). Parents were likely to impose discipline, but they exercised democratic process in doing so. Majority of the youth felt neither parental influence on program selection nor viewing time, although some experienced parental control over duration of viewing. The 10 randomly selected case studies showed that long TV viewing was reflected in their personal appearance, social interaction, and reinforcement of values. There was parental guidance on type of programs viewed for majority of the cases.

The popularity of various mass media formats among the female youth remains high based on NDS data. However, girls' exposure to newspapers (from 72.8% to 63.0%) and radio (from 90.7% to 79.6%) declined between 1993 and 1998 but TV viewing slightly picked up over the period (from 72.0% to 79.8%).

As the influence of globalization picks up in the late 1990s, there is increasing access to and use by the youth of new communication technologies like the internet, CD walkmans, beepers, cellular phones, text messaging, palm technologies, etc.

IV. EDUCATION AND WORK

The 1994 Functional Literacy, Education, and Mass Media Survey (FLEMMS) in 1994 revealed that basic literacy increased from 93.5 to 95.8 between 1990 and 1995. Due to the greater number of learning centers in urban center, the literacy rate in urban areas was higher than in rural areas, i.e., 96.5 and 91.2, respectively. About 62.1 percent of the total in-school population were in the ages 15-24 years, with those in urban centers outnumbering their rural counterparts. There were more in-school males than females in urban areas. In rural areas, conversely, there were more females in schools than males.

Urban areas accounted for 53.6 percent of the total out-of-school youth (OSY), with a greater proportion of females at 67 percent. The

highest proportion of the OSY is in the National Capital Region (NCR). About 41.9 percent of the OSY in the 15-24 age-group were employed.

The youth had relatively high labor force participation rates, i.e., 40.9 percent and 67.3 percent for the 15-19 and the 20-24 age-groups, respectively. Nearly half of Filipino young males were in the labor force in 1997 to 1999. In comparison, only about one in every four young females have joined the labor force during the same period. Among those in the labor force, young males were more likely to be employed than young females. There was, however, an increasing unemployment pattern as exhibited by the data (see Table 1).

TABLE 1 LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATES OF THE YOUNG POPULATION, 1997-1999

	Males		Females	
	15-19	20-24	15-19	20-24
1997 Labor Force				
Participation Rate (LFPR)	45.33	82.06	26.57	49.23
Employment Rate	86.88	85.10	81.71	81.31
Unemployment Rate	13.12	14.90	18.29	18.69
1998 LFPR	47.38	82.17	27.31	51.21
	81.80	82.29	79.09	77.03
	18.20	17.71	20.91	22.97
1999 LFPR	45.07	80.99	25.81	52.67
Employment Rate	82.21	80.83	78.63	76.38
Unemployment Rate	17.79	19.17	21.37	23.62

Source: Labor Force Surveys, various years (October Round) National Statistics Office, Republic of the Philippines

V. GENDER AND SEXUALITY

Gender distinctions (i.e., masculine and feminine) are defined by the Filipino youth in relation to physical attributes and personality traits (Tan et al. 1996). The youth in the 1990s have imbibed traditional gender stereotypes: males are breadwinners and decision-makers while females are *mabait* and conforming to men's wishes.

Homosexuals and lesbians were still generally viewed as "abnormal" (Tan et al. 1996). Homosexuality in adolescence, however, is classified under Identity Disorder in Adolescence (Ladrigo-Ignacio 1986). This is

when a young person struggles to form a strong sexual orientation and identity so he/she could emerge as a whole person, comfortable in being a male or a female, and ready to enter into more acceptable reciprocal relationships later.

The YAFS II data revealed that homosexual activity among the youth (i.e., 5.1% for males and 1.8% for females) is quite low compared to homosexual attraction data (Padilla 1995). However, more females than males admitted to same-sex attraction: 13.6% of single females, 10.8% of married females compared to 6.2% of single males and 5.5% of married males. These data may suggest that females are less able or not willing to act on their feeling of attraction into sexual activity compared to their male counterparts. Surprisingly, less urbanized areas exhibited higher levels of homosexuality than urban areas. The comparative figures are 10.3% for homosexual attraction and 5.0% for actual sex in less urban areas while for urban areas there were 9.7% and 2.5%, respectively.

Of the 1200 nationally representative sample of the 1996 SWS-NYC Youth Study, 73% of males vs. 63% of females chose their own sex if they would be given the choice (SWS 1996). About 5% of males preferred to be females while 7% of females preferred to be males. The remaining percentages indicated no sex preference.

Living Arrangements

Both YAFS I and II data attest to the high mobility of Filipino youth, which is particularly true for women more than men (Raymundo 1984, Xenos et al. 1999). Females were more likely to marry early and leave away from home if they were single (Xenos et al. 1999). While majority of sexually active young females still lived in intact family households during growing up years, Table 2 shows an increase over the 12-year period in the proportion of females who grew up in households with only one biological parent present.

Other data show that the proportion of the youth living with their parents declined by about 4% from 66% in 1992 (McCann-Erikson 1993) to 61% in 1996 (SWS 1996). The remaining youth population lives in households with single parents, with one or both parents working overseas, or with broken families. The McCann-Erikson study further showed that even among adolescents who lived with their fathers and mothers there was hardly any quality time spent by the family together as indexed by the marked absence of shared activities and few talking points between parents and the youth.

TABLE 2 PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF YOUNG FEMALES PERSONS WHO RAISED THEM: 1982 AND 1994

Persons	1982	1994
ALL FEMALES		
Both mother and father	88.3	82.7
Father only	1.6	1.5
Mother only	3.8	7.1
Father with another person	0.6	0.8
Mother with another person	0.7	1.9
Other people	5.0	6.2
SEXUALLY ACTIVE FEMALES		
At least one biological parent	9.4	11.1
Intact family	84.3	81.1
Others	6.3	7.8

Sources:

All Females: Appendix Table 2.B in Raymundo et al. 1999, p. 125.

Sexually Active Female: Table 5 in Diaz 1999, p. 46.

Parental absenteeism and the diminishing influence of parental authority on the youth was noted in the McCann-Erikson report along with the significant drop in Family Life satisfaction vs. 1987 data. The report concluded that the lessening family authority, the search for identity, independence, intimate relations and tangible role models make the youth vulnerable to the influence of their peer groups and the mass media. With the peer groups and the media acting as surrogate parents to the youth, there is an apparent decline in moral values (McCann-Erikson 1993). The study concluded that the norm for youth behavior has shifted its basis from moral principles to social acceptance, i.e., leaving to negotiation the standards for right and wrong.

Menarche

The reproductive clock of a woman begins at menarche. Menarche also signifies a girl's transition to another life cycle stage, which carries with it greater self and social responsibility.

Data from YAFS reveal a slight decline in the proportion of young women who menstruated before age 13 in 1994 compared to 1982. Moreover, the mean age at menarche in the Philippines has not changed much during the period — from 13.32 to 13.44, respectively (Diaz 1999). About 70% of the young Filipino women in 1994 became physiologically mature for reproduction between 13 and 19 years of age.

Dating/Courtship

Courtshipⁱⁱ as practiced in the traditional Philippine society has been undermined by industrialization and urbanward migration (Medina 1991). Chaperonage has been replaced by datingⁱⁱⁱ which is less formal and spontaneous as the idea of wide circulation or “playing the field” has become more acceptable for the youth and their parents (Medina 1991). Coeducation and new technologies (e.g., telephone, beepers, cellular phones, text-messaging, internet) give more opportunities for young men and women of today to meet and to communicate with one another.

Perhaps one of the most salient behavioral indicators of adolescence is the onset of sexual awareness and curiosity. This includes the need to be noticed and admired by the opposite sex, which is a precursor to dating. Comparative YAFS data on these life cycle stages related to dating of the unmarried youth revealed two important findings (De Guzman 1997). First, the average age at which events related to dating of young girls has declined. This is particularly more apparent in urban areas (see Table 3), and implies that girls in 1994 were having crushes, being courted, going on a first group date, having boyfriends and having their first single date at younger ages compared to their counterparts in 1982. Second, there is a lengthening of the transition from one stage to the next. Owing mainly to the earlier onset of sexual awareness, urban girls in 1994 took, on average, 2.3 years and rural girls about 1.8 years to have a boyfriend from the time they had their first crush. Comparative transition periods among the girls in 1982 are 1.8 and 1.4 years, respectively.

The 1994 data on boys, on the other hand, showed that they were late bloomers compared to the girls. However, the average ages at having a first girlfriend for boys and having a first boyfriend for girls were relatively the same. The duration from having a first crush to having a girlfriend was about 1.7 and 0.8 years among urban and rural boys, respectively. There was no comparable data in YAFS I for the boys.

The data also revealed that by age 17, about half of the Filipino youth have already group-dated or single-dated (De Guzman and Diaz 1999). The first-date partners were likely to be their friends/neighbors, classmate/officemate or someone they met at a social gathering/activity. Movie theaters (34.8%), restaurant/dinner (26.1%), shopping mall (10.6%) and park (18.5%) were the favorite places for these first dates.

Types of dating have changed over the 12-year period. Table 4 shows that in 1982, a majority of the youth either group-dated (40.4%) or group-

TABLE 3. AVERAGE AGE AT LIFE CYCLE STAGE RELATED TO DATING AMONG THE UNMARRIED: 1982 AND 1994

EVENT	URBAN			RURAL			TOTAL		
	MALE	FEMALE		MALE	FEMALE		MALE	FEMALE	
	1994	1982	1994	1994	1982	1994	1994	1982	1994
Age at first crush	14.5	15.0	14.1	15.8	15.2	14.7	15.1	15.1	14.3
Age first had admirer	-	15.7	15.0	-	15.7	15.4	-	15.7	15.1
Age began admiring	14.8	-	-	15.4	-	-	15.1	-	-
Age at first group date	16.0	16.3	15.7	16.2	16.0	16.1	16.1	16.2	15.9
Age at first boyfriend/girlfriend	16.2	16.8	16.4	16.6	16.6	16.5	16.4	16.7	16.4
Age at first single date	17.0	18.0	17.6	17.7	17.4	17.7	17.1	17.8	17.6

Source: Table 3 in De Guzman (1997)

dated but eventually split to single dates (39.7%). In 1994, the youth were nearly equally distributed along the four identified types of dating. There are notable increases in the proportion of girls who single-dated and those who never dated.

What really happens during dates? Although many would start out with group dates, twosomes would eventually break away, which offers opportunities for engaging in intimate behavior. Again YAFS II data showed that during the first single date, more than half of the Filipino youth did nothing or at most held hands. Nearly one of every five youth admitted to kissing during their first date. Some reported engaging in greater intimacies like petting and “going all the way” (9.7% and 2.9%, respectively) during their first date (De Guzman 1997). As dating became a more regular activity among the youth, intimacies heightened. This resulted in an increase in the corresponding proportions of the youth engaging in petting and sexual intercourse, 16.3% and 8.1%, respectively (De Guzman 1997).

Population Education and Knowledge about Family Planning

Family planning is included as a topic in Population Education (POP-ED), which has been institutionalized in Philippine schools' curricula since the 1970s. Only 50%, however, of the young women in 1982 reported taking POP-ED while they were studying (Raymundo 1984). The YAFS I

TABLE 4 PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF SEXUALLY ACTIVE FEMALES 15-24 YEARS OLD BY TYPE OF DATE, 1982 AND 1994

Type of Date	1982	1994
Group date	40.4	23.0
Single date	14.6	23.2
Group then single date	39.7	26.0
Never date	5.3	27.8
Total	100.0	100.0
No. of Cases	1,029	951

Source: Table 5 in Diaz 1999, p. 47.

data revealed that about 84% of those who had POP-ED remember having been instructed about family planning. Nonetheless, about one in every three young women felt inadequate in her knowledge of the subject and desired more information about family planning.

Pills (77.7%) and condoms (59.0%) were claimed to be the best known methods while sterilization procedures (45.4%) and rhythm (51.3%) were the least known methods. Data on knowledge about safe and unsafe periods of the menstrual cycle, which is crucial for use of the rhythm method, revealed that claims of knowing or recognizing the method were not associated with any sufficient practical knowledge on non-risk periods. This knowledge of risk periods improved with formal lessons on family planning, although the percentages remained quite low.

Attitudes on Virginity, Premarital Sex and Abortion

Have the youth of today become more liberal and/or permissive? Data from YAFS-I and II indicate that there is no evidence to prove this. On the contrary, there was a slight increase in the proportion of young women who feel that the virginity of a woman before marriage is important, i.e., from 91.0% in 1982 (Raymundo 1984) to 93.1% in 1994 (Zablan 1995). Both surveys show that about four of every five young women perceived that men still value virginity in their choice of their wives.

On the question whether they approve of women having sex before marriage, there was a slight decline in the proportion of young women

who gave a positive response, i.e., from 9.57% in 1982 (Raymundo 1984) to 7.6% in 1994 (Zablan 1995).

The youth in 1982 also perceived that unwed mothers are acceptable to society in general (69.89%), neighbors (62.33%), girl friends (78.35%), and family (69.66%). Comparable data in YAFS II are 78.6%, 75.4%, 87.6%, and 84.1%, respectively. There are marked increases in perceived acceptability of unmarried mothers in all the groups over the 1982 to 1994 period.

In 1994, young men were included in the survey and were also asked about their views on virginity before marriage and premarital sex. They recorded higher approval rates compared to their women counterparts (Zablan 1995). About 18.4% and 40.6% of the young men approved of women and men, respectively, having sex before marriage. However, the virginity of women they will marry was still important among these young men (89.8%). The perceived acceptability of young unwed mothers by the four reference groups was generally higher for males than for females.

Abortion views were also asked in the YAFS II questionnaire, despite its exclusion from the Philippine population program. About one in every 27 young men and women (or 4%) approved of induced abortion in general (Cabigon 1995). When a continuing a pregnancy would likely endanger the life of the mother, the approval of abortion increased to about one half. Only about 20% approved of it if the baby is likely to have serious birth defects. Social reasons for abortion, irrespective of the degree of gravity, received low approval rates.

Sexual Debut and Premarital Sex (PMS)

Filipino young adults are quite conservative in terms of prevalence and the timing of their first sex act when compared to Western standards. In 1982, YAFS I data revealed that about 12% of young adults have engaged in premarital sex: married adolescents reported very high PMS prevalence of 39%, while the unmarried reported only about 2.5% (Raymundo 1984). Comparable PMS prevalence data for unmarried Americans were 27% and 35% in 1971 and 1976, respectively.

The median age at first premarital sex of young women was about 18 years and 21 years for her partner. A majority of the young women was not studying at the time of their sexual debut. For 9 of every 10 girls who had PMS, the first time was with their boyfriends or their fiancés. This suggests that PMS likely occurred within perceived committed

relationships. Popular venues for the initial sex encounter were the respondent's or the partner's homes.

In 1994, 18% of the youth — around 26% of the boys and 10% of the girls — have had premarital sex experience (Raymundo and Lusterio (1995). In 1982, the percentage of young females who had PMS was actually higher (12%), dispelling the notion that PMS had increased among females.

The YAFS II data further showed that boys and girls did it the first time at around age 18, on average. Most of the females had their initial sex encounter with their boyfriends in homes. For many of the males, it was in motels with persons that they have no romantic attachments with. About 10% of the girls with premarital experience reported that their first sexual experience happened without their consent.

Smoking, having unmarried friends who had PMS and having lenient parents increased the odds of engaging in premarital sex among boys and girls (De Guzman 1997). For boys, being a Catholic increased by 20% the likelihood of having sex before marriage. For girls, on the other hand, living in rural areas increased the likelihood of engaging in premarital sex by about 12% but having population education in schools reduced the odds of PMS by about 70%. The latter result suggests that despite the youth's perceived apparent inadequate coverage of family planning methods in their POP-ED classes, POP-ED remains effective in preventing PMS.

VI. MARRIAGE AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

Marriage Timing and Patterns

Contemporary Filipino youth are marrying later than their earlier counterparts (De Guzman 1996). The singulate mean age at marriage (SMAM) or the number of years spent in single blessedness has increased from 24.8 years in 1980 to 26.6 years in 1995 among males. The SMAM for females also increased from 22.4 to 24.1 over the same period. Males were marrying later than females by about 2.5 years, on average. This gap in SMAM may be attributed to the differentials in gender roles and expectations associated with marriage.

For young males, getting married traditionally depends on his earning capability. This often entails waiting until he has finished schooling, gained employment, and accumulated some savings. Thus, it generally takes

several years before he can be confident that he can start his own family (De Guzman 1996).

The concept of economic stability, however, is relative. For low-income young adults, this may simply mean having a job. Middle- and high-income young adults, on the other hand, may consider having a house as an indicator of stability (Tan et al. 1996). Moreover, poorer, less educated, and rural women marry at younger ages (Balk and Raymundo 1999).

Census data revealed that the proportions of both young males and females remaining single are steadily increasing (see Table 5), with young females accounting for larger increases from 1980 to 1995 due to lower initial levels recorded.

Among young adults who had PMS, the YAFS II data yielded a higher proportion of young men than women who believed that they married at the right age, i.e., 42.1% vs. 28.5%, respectively. On the other hand, more young females (71.0%) than males (57.2%) reported that they had married too young.

TABLE 5 SINGULATE MEAN AGE AT MARRIAGE (SMAM) AND PROPORTIONS REMAINING SINGLE BY SEX: CENSUS YEARS

Sex/Age Group	1970	1980	1990	1995
Males				
15-19	97.6	96.2	97.1	96.7
20-24	69.3	63.3	73.3	74.6
SMAM (years)	25.4	24.8	26.3	26.6
Females				
15-19	29.2	85.9	89.4	90.4
20-24	50.3	45.5	55.8	57.7
SMAM (years)	22.8	22.4	23.8	24.1

Source: Table 3 in De Guzman (1996)

In a society where sexual activities are sanctioned only within marriage (Medina 1991) and where virginity of the bride is highly valued (Zablan 1995), adolescents who engage in early sexual activities are predisposed to marry early (De Guzman 1996). Among the boys who said they married too young, 38% indicated that they got their partners pregnant so they were forced by the parents to marry while 28% perceived that they were forced by the circumstance (*napikot*).

There is a clear gender differential in the timing of sexual encounter before marriage. At age 18, about 22% of boys while 8% of girls have lost their sexual innocence. By the time they reached 21 years of age, 45% of the boys and 18% of the girls have been initiated to sex (De Guzman 1996). Hence, boys got their sexual initiation earlier than girls but they married later than the girls.

Adolescent Pregnancy and Fertility

The total fertility rate (TFR) in the Philippines gradually declined from 5.97 in 1970 to 3.73 in 1996 (see Table 6). Despite this reduction in TFR, the contribution of young adult mothers has increased from about 27% in 1980 to 30% in 1996 due mainly to the substantial decline in birth contributions of women age 25 and over (Diaz 1999).

Vital statistics in 1989 and 1992 further show that young women were mothers to 36.3% and 35.1% of the total births in the country, respectively. The slight decline is due to the reduction in number of births to women in their teens relative to their elder sisters in the 20-24 age group (Diaz 1999).

**TABLE 6 AGE-SPECIFIC FERTILITY RATES
OF YOUNG WOMEN AND TOTAL FERTILITY RATES:
15 TO 24 YEARS OLD, 1970 TO 1996**

Age Group	1973 NDS (1970)	1983 NDS (1980)	1993 NDS (1991)	1998 NDHS (1996)
15-19	56	55	50	46
20-24	228	220	190	177
TFR	5.97	5.08	4.09	3.73

Note: Rates for 1970-1980 are five-year averages and 1991-1996 are three-year averages centered on the years in parentheses

Sources: NDS 1993 and NDHS 1998, Macro International, Inc.

Given the large population base of the adolescents, the observed decline in the share of teenage mothers to total births in the country corresponds to an increase in the absolute number of births contributed by adolescent mothers. Hence, there is increasing number of adolescent mothers considered in the high-risk group for pregnancy-related illness and death.

Balk and Raymundo (1999) noted some interesting differences in the YAFS I and II findings. Foremost is the increase in the proportion of young adults who would like to start childbearing right after marriage from less than one-quarter of the women in 1982 to about one-third in 1994. The ideal number of children that was reported by the 15-19 age-group in 1994 was slightly lower (2.7) than what was reported by this age-group (2.9) in 1982.

Fifty-seven percent of women married for at least one year give birth to their first child within their first year of marriage. Urban and wealthier women have shorter lag time from marriage to first birth than rural and poor women. Thirty-six percent of married women conceive prior to the onset of marriage. The percentage is greater for women who eloped or lived together prior to marriage. Elopement is more commonly found among wealthier, urban women, whereas living together was more commonly found among less-educated, poorer women...After four months postpartum, half of all 15-24 year old mothers resume menstruation, thus making them at risk of another pregnancy. By one year postpartum, 6 to 18% of women are still amenorrheic. Although educated women start bearing children at older ages, they have shorter intervals between births, at least up to age 25. (Balk and Raymundo 1999: 56-57)

A multivariate analysis of the pooled YAFS I and II data revealed that there was a slight increase in pregnancy prevalence among sexually active young females, i.e., from 87.1% in 1982 to 88.9% in 1994 (Diaz 1999). Variables on later socialization (i.e., age at first boyfriend, age before pregnancy) were found to have greater influence than early socialization variables (i.e., biological maturity, family structure, education of parent, type of date and age at first sexual intercourse) on the odds of pregnancy among the sexually active youth.

Reproductive Health (RH)

Many young adults experienced a wide range of RH problems but they rarely sought medical attention even with the emergence of serious symptoms (Cruz and Berja 1999). About 57.6% of adolescents ever had RH problems with 23.4% having at least one serious problem. Although males were less likely to have experienced RH problems, they were more likely to have had serious problems. Only 16% of adolescents sought medical attention for their RH problems, with women more likely to do so than men. In general, the married adolescents were more prone to RH problems and more likely to seek health care than their unmarried counterparts.

Cruz and Berja (1999) noted that sexually active adolescents appear to disregard the risks of premarital pregnancy with their low level of contraceptive use (26.6% among those with PMS and 31.4% among currently married women) considering their high level of contraceptive knowledge. The FP service utilization among those with PMS was quite low (9.5%) compared to 88.6% among currently married women. Sexually active unmarried adolescents prefer less effective methods like condom, withdrawal and rhythm while married adolescents had high usage rates of more effective methods. The most popular source of methods/services for the youth was the drugstore. The unmarried youth utilized private sector outlets while married adolescents used public sources.

Smoking, Alcohol Consumption and Drug Use

Smoking, alcohol consumption and use of drugs are only a few of the activities that the youth find irresistible and/or compelled to try and experiment with. The YAFS II findings of Domingo and Marquez (1999) showed that males and females in the 1994 differ in their pattern of initiation into these activities based on their average timing of initiation into the specific activity. Males, on average, smoke first (16.4 years), drink alcoholic beverages next (16.5 years) and then try taking drugs (16.9 years). Females on the other hand, try using drugs first (16.4 years), smoke (16.9 years) next and then drink alcoholic beverages (17.4 years).

About two for every five adolescents have ever tried smoking; 21% were current smokers (90% of which were males) and 16.1% already quit the habit in 1994. Boys were more likely to smoke (40.3%) than girls (4.2%).

Drinking was a more acceptable behavior than smoking with more than half of the youth having tried it. In the 1994 study, about 37% of those who tried smoking have not cut the habit while 32.8% were drinking occasionally and 17% already stopped.

Drug use is the least common of the three activities. Only 1.5% were drug users in 1994, with a greater proportion having stopped the activity compared to current users. These three practices are quite interrelated leaving only 43% as practicing "clean living" (Domingo and Marquez 1999). Boys were also found to have greater proclivity than girls toward these types of behaviors. Adolescents with parents who smoke and drink were found as likely to be smokers and drinkers themselves (Domingo 1995).

VII. CONCLUSION

In general, the Filipino youth have been typically outgoing and aware of current social issues including, among others, their duties and responsibilities to themselves, their families and society. They were resolute in preserving established practices and customs but at the same time were challenged by both traditionalism and the unfamiliar/precarious.

Over the past three decades, the Filipino youth appear to have shifted from idealism to pragmatism regarding relationships in their young lives. With decreasing parental influence, increasing involvement in political and social discourses as well as the search for one's self-identity coupled with greater sexual awareness and curiosity, a media-pliant youth culture has emerged. Continually evolving forms of technology-driven communications media (e.g., internet, beepers, cellular phones, palm technologies) further reinforce and accelerate this youth culture. Dents are emerging on established gender differentiated roles as Filipino youth's perception of womanhood/manhood shift.

It is interesting to note that a seemingly different pattern appears to have emerged between attitudes toward sexuality, on the one hand, and sexual behavior, on the other hand. Available data indicate that the former (attitudes) is moving towards permissiveness, while the latter (behavior) is not shifting towards the same direction. While there is no evidence that the Filipino youth have become markedly more liberal and permissive in the past three decades, at least compared to their Western counterparts, there is no question of shifts in their attitudes. These will continue to occur and almost certainly with greater urgency as social, economic and political developments proceed in the context of recent breakthroughs in information technology.

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ENDNOTES

- ¹ *Political maturity* is indexed by essential knowledge of the Philippine government, knowledge and interest in current social issues, willingness to sacrifice personal interest for public good, knowledge of the rights and duties and privileges of citizens, and social, political and civic involvements (Gomez et al. 1986).
- ² *Courtship* consists of interactive patterns among unmarried people and parental kin with the key function of mate selection (Reiss 1976: 30 as cited in Medina 1991:64).
- ³ *Dating* is the process by which a man and a woman agree to be together at a designated place and time (Medina 1991:67).