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On Their Own: Effect of Home- and School-leaving on Filipino Adolescents' Sexual Initiation

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AYARR

Asian Young Adult Reproductive Risk Project

This research is a product of the East-West Center's Asian Young Adult Reproductive Risk (AYARR) project, supported by USAID through its MEASURE Evaluation Project. The AYARR project supports a research network devoted to producing an Asian regional perspective on young adult risk behaviors through secondary and cross-national comparative investigation of large-scale, household-based surveys of youth.

The project presently involves investigators and national surveys in six Asian countries. The government of **Hong Kong** (now the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region) has supported area-wide youth surveys, both household-based and in-school, in 1981, 1986, 1991, and 1996. The 1994 **Philippines'** Young Adult Fertility and Sexuality Survey (YAFS-II) was conducted by the Population Institute, University of the Philippines, with support from the UNFPA. **Thailand's** 1994 Family and Youth Survey (FAYS) was carried out by the Institute for Population and Social Research at Mahidol University, with support from the UNFPA. In **Indonesia**, the 1998 Reproduksi Remaja Sejahtera (RRS) baseline survey was funded by the World Bank and by USAID through Pathfinder International's FOCUS on Young Adults program. The RRS was carried out by the Lembaga Demografi at the University of Indonesia under the supervision of the National Family Planning Coordinating Board (BKKBN). The **Nepal** Adolescent and Young Adult (NAYA) project, which includes the 2000 NAYA youth survey, is being carried out by Family Health International and the Valley Research Group (VaRG) with support from USAID to Family Health International (FHI). The **Taiwan** Young Person Survey (TYPF) of 1994 was carried out by the Taiwan Provincial Institute of Family Planning (now the Bureau for Health Promotion, Department of Health, Taiwan) with support from the government of Taiwan.

On Their Own: Effect of Home- and School-leaving on Filipino Adolescents' Sexual Initiation

Elma P. Laguna

Introduction

The concern for adolescent welfare and development is universal. In fact, there has been a rise in the number of researches worldwide that deals with adolescent issues. Most societies have afforded considerable attention to the needs and problems of this segment of the population.¹ But of all the areas in adolescent development, it is adolescent sexuality that attracts the most attention and interest from almost all sectors of society. By all accounts, it can be considered the most studied and dissected area of research. From the identification of level and trends in adolescent sexual behavior, investigations have progressed into the identification of factors and contexts that facilitate its occurrence among adolescents.

While various factors have been identified to influence adolescent behavior, literature on adolescent sexuality has consistently given emphasis on the important roles of socialization agents, particularly family and school on young people's decision to initiate sex during adolescence (Upchurch, et al., 1999; Raymundo, et al., 1999; Perkins, et al., 1998; Whitbeck, et al., 1999). As the primary unit of socialization, the family is responsible for nurturance and care of and in preparing the adolescent for the challenges of the outside world. It is within its confines where the adolescent first develops his/her self-concept, ideals, values, motivations and aspirations (Medina, 1991).

Moreover, although we recognize that family and school offer explanation in understanding adolescent sexuality issue, they are not sufficient and are just part of the constellation of factors that explain why certain groups of adolescents choose to engage in premarital sex earlier than others. Previous efforts in establishing the connection between family/school and sexual behavior have been anchored mainly on the characteristics, situations and structures of these institutions. Admittedly, the findings have been more than enough to predict who are the adolescents likely to engage in sexual intercourse given their familial and school backgrounds. But beyond the effects of

¹ This refers to the 15-24 age group. While there are several definitions and age categorization used to describe this segment of the population, no distinction is made for this analysis. Adolescent, youth and young adults are interchangeably used in this study.

school and family characteristics, it is also interesting to explore how “breaking away”² from these institutions itself would affect adolescent sexual behavior. Does the protective effect of parental supervision necessitate that the adolescent spends the entire period within the watchful eyes of his/her parents? Similarly, does the school extend the same protection at the time the adolescent is within its care? At what age can the adolescent be on his/her own and be responsible for his/her actions? Does departure from family and school or onset of sexual activity signals transition to adulthood?

Several studies have pointed out that the lack of parental control and curtailment of education increases the possibility of more risky behaviors among young people (Umali, 1999; Raymundo and Lusterio, 1996; Diaz, 1999; de Guzman, 1996). But to what extent does the timing of these so-called “separation” affect early initiation to sexual intercourse remains unexplored.

This analysis tries to fill in the gap by looking at the relationship between the timing of events, home- and school-leaving and sexual initiation among Filipino youth. In addition, it is also the objectives of the paper to:

- 1) describe the prevalence and timing of school and home-leaving as well as sexual initiation among Filipino youth;
- 2) identify the factors that affect premarital sexual initiation among young adults in the Philippines;
- 3) determine if early departure from home and school leads to early sex; and finally,
- 4) explore how these events affect transition to adulthood among Filipinos.

Furthermore, the analysis will make a distinction between males and females to account for possible gender differences.

² The assumption here is that the adolescent is the one departing from these institutions, regardless of whether the decision is voluntary or not.

Background of the study

Adolescence is a critical stage of human development where life-defining choices are made. Unfortunately, most societies tend to view this period as problematic, reinforced in part by the rising incidence of teenage pregnancies, nonmarital births, early marriages and other risk behaviors such as smoking, drinking, and drug use

Petersen and Leffert ((1995), as cited in Schulenber, et al., 1997) assert that adolescence need not be tumultuous and problematic. In fact, such situation happens only as a response to societal conditions. Several studies have confirmed this observation and pointed out the impact of economic development in the demographic composition of adolescents and the role they assume in society. In her critical review of the cultural, historical and subcultural contexts of adolescence, Crockett (in Schulenberg, et al., 1997) claims that adolescent development is dependent on cultural and historical contexts. In the pre-industrial period for example, children were considered as economic assets, thus, adolescents were fully integrated into adult society. With industrialization however, demand for child labor decreased and emphasis on education increased. This shift continued up to the present times where the prevailing notion of adolescence is that “it is a life stage when full time education replaces full time employment as the primary activity of young people” (Furstenberg, 2000).

That adolescence is culturally and historically bound is made more evident by recent studies that highlight the changes in the pattern and trends of youth demographic transition (Xenos and Kabamalan, 1998). In his analysis of different countries in Asia, Xenos (2000) argued that the youth age group will experience a particular transition “consisting of a substantial but temporary rise in the growth rate of the youth population, accompanied by a rising youth share of the total population”. Such youth bulge according to Xenos is due to the timing of demographic and social transitions, which in turn is being propelled by larger economic transformations.

Interestingly, the Philippines was identified to have a distinct pattern of youth transition. Compared with its neighboring countries, the Philippines experienced an earlier onset of fertility decline that unfortunately was not sustained in succeeding decades. This slow and less decisive pattern will have long-term repercussion on the overall demographic transition of the country, and with youth population projected to grow for another 25 years (Xenos, 2000).

Situating Filipino adolescent sexuality

As it is, the youth age group (15-24) comprises 20 percent of the population and they contribute 770,000 to annual births. In 1994, 18% of them admitted to have had premarital sex experience with a considerable proportion initiating as early as their teen years (Raymundo, Xenos and Domingo, 1999). This trend is expected to rise in the coming years as more and more factors and situations contribute in facilitating sexual initiation among young people. Advances in technology and health led to improved nutrition of new generations of Filipinos. Age at puberty has been falling while a considerable proportion of young adults is spending more time in school and delaying entry to marriage (Xenos, 2000; Raymundo, Xenos and Domingo, 1999).³ With the lengthening of time between puberty and marriage, the gap serves as a fertile ground for experimentation on sex related activities. The McCann Erikson Youth Study 2000 (2001) pointed out that the present generation of adolescents live in a different kind of environment. Infrastructure developments (malls, coffee shops, commercial establishments) have been rapid, providing adolescents access to a wide array of facilities and activities. Technological innovations such as the internet, mobile phones have redefined social interaction among youth, as well dating and courtship practices. The mass media's influence on adolescent attitude has become increasingly pervasive and as the group more susceptible to outside influences, this segment of the population are mass media's most eager consumers. Another important aspect that should not be overlooked is the increasing influence of peers during adolescence. Individually, these factors, contribute to the formation of attitude regarding sex and other issues related to sexuality that paves the way for behavior to eventuate. In most cases however, they work in tandem with other factors, forming a confluence of influences affecting adolescent sexual behavior. Without discounting the effects of other influences, and inasmuch as the focus of the study is on family and school, discussion of other factors in this analysis is limited. A brief review of some research findings is presented below.

The family and school as factors for sexual initiation

Various aspects of family interaction, structures and composition have been credited both as predictive and restrictive factors for adolescent premarital sexual behavior. Family stability for instance was cited as an important correlate of sexual activity among teenagers (Hogan and Kitigawa, 1983; Mott, 1984; Thorton, 1983; and

³ Data not shown. For a detailed discussion of youth transition, see Xenos and Kabamalan (1998) and Xenos (2000).

Zelnik, Kantner and Ford, 1981, as cited in Moore, et al., 1984). Adolescents living in single-parent or stepparent households are found to likely engage in premarital sex than those living with their biological parents (Upchurch, et al., 1999). Parents' characteristics likewise predict onset of sexual activity, with low educational attainment and low income of parents leading to greater likelihood of early sex among adolescents (Moore, et al., 1984).

In the Philippines, local studies have arrived at similar results. Raymundo (1993; 1995) and more recently, De Guzman (1996) observed higher incidence of premarital sex among adolescents raised by solo natural parents, with or without a partner. Using the same dataset (1994 Young Adult Fertility and Sexuality Study) Umali (1999) noted that family situations have more effect on youth's premarital sexual behavior than family characteristics. In particular, she cited living away from parents and loosening of maternal control as the most important variables affecting premarital sex. To some extent, this supports earlier claim by Raymundo (1984) that "migration to cities for education or employment by single, young girls is a predisposing factor for premarital sex, particularly when these girls set up their single-person households in their city residence". Frias (2000), on the other hand, argued that the effect of family on the adolescent's propensity to engage in sexual intercourse is contingent on the level of urbanization. She observed that since highly urbanized areas are characterized by "high incidence of family disorganization, low level of family religiosity, high level of parental control and high exposure to all forms of media", young adults in these areas have greater likelihood to initiate sex during adolescence. Meanwhile, Cruz et. al, (2001) found that the rise in the proportion of alternative family set-ups has challenged not only the prevailing intact-family households, but the general influence of family on the lifestyle and behavior of young adults. As more and more adolescents are growing up in single-parent households, they face greater risk of engaging in risk behaviors such as smoking, drinking, drug use, premarital and commercial sex. The influencing role of parents also manifests on the adolescents' perception of their attitudes on issues such as premarital sex, living-in, and early marriage. The study noted that adolescents who perceived their parents to hold liberal attitudes regarding these issues are likely to engage in premarital sex and other risk behaviors as well as marry early. Similarly, as another form of parental control, strictness of parents serves as protective factor in risk behaviors and even in media consumption of young adults. Adolescents who perceived their parents

as strict are likely to refrain from negative forms of mass media (x-rated films, videos), and avoid activities and behaviors that are risky.

On the other hand, formal education is regarded as a central component of socialization and the school represents an important socialization environment for adolescent behavior. Less permissive school environment delays timing of sexual initiation (Teitler and Weiss, n.d.). On the other hand, there are also findings showing higher incidence of premarital sex among adolescents from sectarian schools that usually promote conservative values. In general however, the school influence is operationalized most often through the effect of education (level of education) on adolescent behavior. But the school is not limited on teaching skills and inculcating values necessary to prepare the adolescent for a responsible adulthood, it also provides opportunities for adolescents to interact with their peers. It is while in school when most young adults have their first crush and where most relationships are formed. While for some, having romantic relationship while still in school does not deter them from finishing their degrees, a number have actually gone wayward and dropped out of school because of unintended pregnancies and early marriage. In contrast with family where an intact set-up (with both parents around) is correlated with lower probability of sexual intercourse, (Upchurch, et al., 1999; Cruz, et al., 2001; Umali, 1999) the same cannot be forthrightly established with school. However, attachment to school in general can be viewed as an indicator of overall aspiration of an individual. Thus, adolescents who have greater aspiration in life are more likely to finish school, refrain from engaging in risk behaviors, avoid mistimed pregnancies and early marriage, and gain financial independence as adult.

Transition to adulthood: how does it happen?

In general, transition to sexual activity is a natural occurrence, so are departures from school and the parental homes. These events however, are socially-timed and the timing varies from one culture to another. The society also ascribes social significance to these events that leads to their identification as important markers to adulthood (Crockett, in Schulenberg, et al., 1997). According to Brooks-Gunn and Reiter (as cited by Crockett in Schulenberg, et al., 1997), in the old days, biological markers like menarche are anticipated “in settings where puberty is linked to marriage and marriage in turn has important political and social functions”. This does not hold true anymore in industrialized societies where the emphasis is on other events that accurately measure

readiness for adulthood. In most cases, completion of formal schooling, entry into labor force and moving out of parental supervision are significant markers for entry to adulthood (Elliot and Feldman, 1990 as cited by Crockett in Schulenberg, et al., 1997). In addition to this, most societies anchor social roles, status and expectations to chronological age, expressed in terms of age norms or age-specific legal enactments (Xenos, 2000). But then again, norms on developmental transition also change depending on the prevalence and timing of events. However, the nature of such transitions still originates from the interaction of physical maturation processes, cultural influences and expectations as well as personal values and goals (Schulenberg, et al., 1997).

Briefly, I will discuss how this transition occurs in Filipino society. In a traditional Filipino setting, age is equated with wisdom and experience, and a young man is never considered mature unless he lives out of his parental home or get married and establish his own household (Mendez and Jocano, 1974). The Family Code on the other hand considers 18 as the age of majority, “where emancipation shall terminate parental authority over the person and property of the child who shall then be qualified and responsible for all kinds of civil life” (Art. 236, Family Code of the Philippines). It is also at this age where more rights are bestowed on the adolescent such as his/her voting rights, the right to drive and even buying of alcoholic beverages and access to otherwise prohibited materials (e.g. adult films). Although not a common practice, some sectors of the population (at least those at the upper economic ladder), mark the occasion with a coming out party for their adolescent daughters.

Within the Philippine educational system, formal education involves 14-15 years of schooling: six years of elementary education, 4 years of secondary education and 4-5 years college education⁴. Adhering to this set-up, it is expected that one will finish college once he/she reaches the age of 20 or 21.

Even the phenomenon of nest-leaving among young people occurs within the context of pursuing higher education and/or for employment purposes. The recent statistics on inter-provincial migration in the country is consistent in establishing that young and single women are more migratory compared with their male counterparts. The pattern is especially preponderant in the National Capital region and major urban centers where most schools are located and employment opportunities abound (Go,

⁴ A baccalaureate degree is typically a four-year course, except for specialized course such as engineering that requires five years of college education.

Collado, & Abejo, 2001). Considering that the major reasons are education and employment, such move is expected to occur at 16 or right after completion of secondary school. Parents, however, expect their adolescent children to return to their parental homes after completion of education. This extends even up to marriage, with parents encouraging their married children to still live with them at least during the early years of union.

Mainly because the Philippines is a Catholic country, sex is expectedly sanctioned only within the bounds of marriage. The law also states that contracting marriage below age 21 shall require parental consent. Albeit, such event is encourage only if one has finished college and is gainfully employed.

This ideal set-up then considers completion of education as the central event marking the many aspects of the passage to adulthood, such as, entrance to labor force, marriage, onset of sexual relations, parenthood and departure from natal households.

Methodology

The 1994 Young Adult Fertility and Sexuality Study (YAFS 2), a nationwide survey of young adults in age group 15-24 is the major data source for the analysis. It provides a rich source of information on adolescents' attitude, perception and practices on sexuality and reproductive health, among others. The extensive background information on the individual and his/her family allows for exploration of possible relationships. Some selected background information will be used to correlate with premarital sex behavior. Four main groups were identified as possible correlates. These are: 1) *individual characteristics* which include urbanity, religion, religiosity, and whether adolescent has sexually active friends; 2) *family variables*: whether the respondent was raised by both parents, and parents' educational attainment; 3) *exposure to media*, such as TV, radio, newspapers, movies, and x-rated films; and 4) *experience of intervening events* such as living away from home⁵ and whether he/she is still in school or not. Appendix Table 1 is a summary of the distribution of respondents according to these background characteristics. Lifetime probabilities of occurrence of important events were also estimated using life table method.

⁵ Taken from the question, "have you ever-lived away from home for at least 3 months?". Caution should be observed in interpreting results of the study since the measure used signifies that the event is only episodal. For purposes of the study however, mere exposure outside of the home is assumed as an important event that might affect behavior.

Since the focus is on the timing of events, event-history analysis is employed by creating person-age records that will reflect time-varying variables such as age first lived-away from home, age first left-school and age at sexual initiation were created.⁶ The person-age record serves as unit of analysis. A multivariate analysis was conducted to predict factors affecting premarital sex behavior.

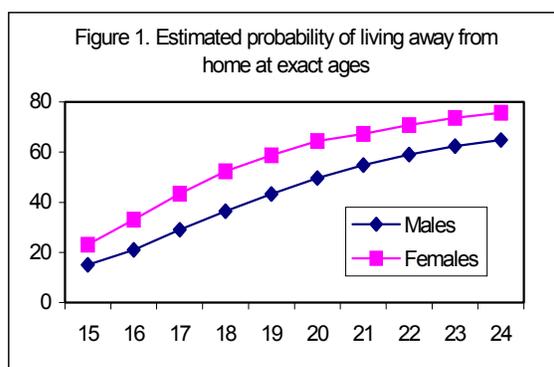
The paper also takes into consideration the varying effect of age and gender, thus separate analysis was done for males and females as well as for different age groups: 15-19 and 20-24.

Results and discussion

First, I will provide an overview of how school and home leaving occur among the study sample. This will be followed by a description of patterns in premarital sex behavior with emphasis on how this varies by selected background characteristics. At another level is the identification of factors that affect premarital sex initiation. Finally, a more focused look on how timing of the events under consideration impacts on the timing of sexual initiation will be presented.

Away from home and school

More than half of the adolescent females in the study had experienced separation from their family compared with only 39% among the males (Table 1). This

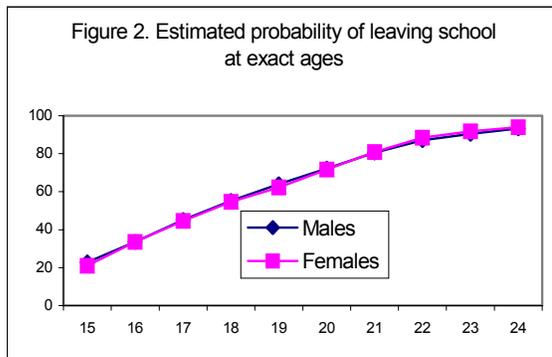


event also occurs earlier among females than males as indicated by the mean age at which living away from home happens. Furthermore, females have generally higher lifetime probability of leaving the parental homes than the males. At age 15 for example, nearly a fourth would have experienced the event and the proportion

⁶ A good discussion on this technique is contained in Minja Choe's *Notes on Dynamic Event History Analysis*. Another valuable source on the use of life-course approach is Peter Xenos' *Events Information and the Life Course in YARH Survey Studies of Adolescent at Risk*. (1999).

rises steeply with age that by 18, half of female adolescents are expected to have experienced leaving their parental homes. In contrast, not until they reach the age of 20 are half of the males likely to experience departure from their parental homes.

With regards to school leaving, adolescent boys and girls share a somewhat similar pattern although a slightly higher percentage of males are no longer in school compared with females. Lifetime probability of leaving school does not show any marked difference between males and females as well.



What is obvious from the findings is the noticeable difference in the prevalence and timing of home-leaving between male and female Filipino adolescents. Better understanding of the departure from home phenomenon however requires a grasp of how and when school-leaving occurs among young

people. Needless to say, references on how the two events are linked have been mentioned in the early section of this paper.

As shown by the data, for both males and females, school leaving usually occurs at about age 16. This is also the time of graduation from high school and where most adolescents are either entering tertiary level of education or preparing to join the labor force. To a certain extent, the finding presents a paradox. Filipino parents in general are more restrictive of their daughters than sons (Cruz, et al., 2001), thus, it is assumed that between the two, it is the male who enjoys more latitude. Obviously, some factors are at play here. The discordance could very well be attributed to demographic and social factors: one is an established fact while the other, a recent phenomenon. Women in general marry earlier than men which gives yet another reason for the departure from parental home. And even if marriage occurs early among men, in Filipino setting, it is socially acceptable for a man to bring his wife back home to live with his parents. Finally, the increasing proportion of women seeking higher education and actively participating in the labor force could be one important explanation for the obvious gender difference. Suffice it to say, the data cannot substantiate these assumptions since reasons for leaving home were not sought during the survey.

Meanwhile, monetary considerations are the primary impetus why most adolescents dropped out of school (Table 2). Twenty one percent of males on the other

hand said they dropped out of school because of boredom or failure in their studies compared with only 11% among the females. Leaving school because of pregnancy and/or marriage is more common among the female than male adolescents. More so if premarital sex occurred, where 23% of sexually active females reported dropping out of school because of pregnancy or marriage compared with only 2.7% among the males (data not shown). This shows that women more than men are likely to face the consequences of early sexual initiation.

Table 1. Prevalence and timing of events, males and females
Philippines, 1994

| Events | Male | Female |
|----------------------|------|--------|
| Lived-away from home | | |
| % | 38.8 | 51.2 |
| Mean | 15.5 | 15.0 |
| Median | 16.0 | 16.0 |
| Std. Deviation | 4.5 | 4.3 |
| No. | 2003 | 2837 |
| Left school | | |
| % | 57.5 | 55.5 |
| Mean | 16.0 | 16.2 |
| Median | 16.0 | 16.0 |
| Std. Deviation | 3.2 | 3.0 |
| No. | 2898 | 3046 |
| PMS | | |
| % | 26.2 | 10.2 |
| Mean | 18.1 | 18.5 |
| Median | 18.0 | 18.0 |
| Std. Deviation | 2.2 | 2.3 |
| No. | 1370 | 570 |

Table 2. Reasons for leaving school, by sex
Philippines, 1994

| Reasons for leaving school | Male | Female |
|-------------------------------|------|--------|
| ▪ Education completed | 15.4 | 18.6 |
| ▪ Monetary considerations | 56.2 | 55.7 |
| ▪ Failed in/bored with school | 21.0 | 10.9 |
| ▪ Got pregnant/marry | 1.3 | 8.5 |
| ▪ Other reasons | 6.0 | 6.3 |
| N | 2855 | 3004 |

Premarital sex among Filipino youth: variations among subgroups

What becomes apparent from the data is the higher prevalence of sexual experience among males than females (Table 3). Twenty six percent of males reported having had premarital sex (PMS) while only 10% reported the same among females. In terms of individual characteristics, premarital sex for both sexes is likely among older respondents (20-24). In addition, males who are Catholics and are living in the urban areas also show higher PMS prevalence. Women who go to church more than once a week have lower PMS prevalence than those who are not so observant of their religious obligation. Association with sexually active peers appears to influence adolescents' sexual behavior as higher prevalence of PMS is noted among those with friends who had PMS. This is observed for both male and female adolescents.

In terms of mass media effect on premarital sex behavior, exposure to any form of mass media among males is associated with higher premarital sex prevalence. The reverse is true for females except in exposure to x-rated films which appears to have a general effect of hastening sexual initiation.

For both sexes, there are more sexually active among those who have experienced living away from home and those out of school. Nearly 4 out of ten males who had left home at some point in their lives had PMS. On the other hand, a third of those who are no longer in school had experienced PMS compared with 15% among those who are still in school. The same trend is observed among females but at a lower proportion. In fact, almost 17% of females who are no longer in school had PMS experience compared with only 2 percent among those still in school.

With regards to parents' education, PMS prevalence among males increases with parents' education. Twenty eight percent of those whose father and mother have at least high school education are already sexually active compared with 24% among those with less-educated parents.

Table 3. Premarital sex experience, by selected background characteristics, male and female

| Background Characteristics | Males with PMS | Females with PMS | Both sexes, with PMS |
|--|----------------|------------------|----------------------|
| Individual | | | |
| Sex | | | *** |
| Male | | | 26.2 |
| Female | | | 10.2 |
| Age | *** | *** | *** |
| 15-19 | 12.6 | 4.0 | 8.1 |
| 20-24 | 45.4 | 18.7 | 31.5 |
| Urbanity | *** | | *** |
| Urban | 29.9 | 9.7 | 19.3 |
| Rural | 21.8 | 10.8 | 16.2 |
| Religion | *** | | *** |
| Catholic | 27.0 | 10.4 | 18.5 |
| Non-catholic | 20.2 | 8.7 | 17.8 |
| Frequency of attending church services | * | *** | *** |
| At least once a week | 27.1 | 13.7 | 21.3 |
| More than once a week | 25.3 | 8.1 | 15.2 |
| If any unmarried friends had sex | *** | *** | *** |
| Yes | 44.7 | 18.4 | 34.4 |
| No | 7.5 | 6.4 | 6.8 |
| Family Variables | | | |
| Father's educ | *** | | |
| At most elementary | 24.0 | 10.6 | 17.2 |
| At least high school | 28.5 | 9.7 | 18.6 |
| Mother's educ | *** | | |
| At most elementary | 23.9 | 11.1 | 17.3 |
| At least high school | 29.0 | 9.2 | 18.6 |
| Person/s who raised R | | | |
| Both parents | 26.0 | 10.4 | 18 |
| Other combination | 27.2 | 9.3 | 17.2 |

Table 3 (con't)

| Media exposure | | | |
|---------------------------|------|------|------|
| TV | ** | ** | * |
| Yes | 26.8 | 9.7 | 18.2 |
| No | 22.0 | 12.7 | 16.4 |
| Radio | * | ** | |
| Yes | 26.6 | 9.8 | 18 |
| No | 20.4 | 13.9 | 16.6 |
| Newspaper | *** | *** | |
| Yes | 28.6 | 8.7 | 18.2 |
| No | 20.2 | 14.1 | 17.1 |
| Movie | *** | *** | *** |
| Yes | 28.8 | 8.3 | 19.4 |
| No | 20.2 | 12.6 | 15.5 |
| X-rated films | *** | | *** |
| Yes | 40.5 | 11.5 | 35.1 |
| No | 20.2 | 10.1 | 14.3 |
| Intervening Events | | | |
| Left home | *** | *** | *** |
| Yes | 37.5 | 14.3 | 25.4 |
| No | 19.1 | 5.8 | 8.2 |
| Left school | *** | *** | *** |
| Yes | 34.2 | 16.9 | 23.9 |
| No | 15.3 | 1.8 | 12.9 |

*** p > .001; ** p>.05; p>.10

Factors affecting early sexual initiation

The above analysis underscores the different level of premarital sex experience between males and females as well as younger (15-19) and older (20-24) groups of adolescents. Table 4 presents the results of the logistic regression on ever-sex experience of Filipino adolescents by sex and age group.

Table 4. Logistic regression estimates predicting likelihood of premarital sex, by age and sex (Relative Odds ratio and statistical significance), Philippines, 1994

| Background characteristics | Males | | Females | |
|-----------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| | 15-19 | 20-24 | 15-19 | 20-24 |
| <i>Individual characteristics</i> | | | | |
| Urban | 1.12 | 1.27 | 1.11 | .97 |
| Catholic | .96 | 1.83** | 1.46** | 1.50 |
| Religiosity | .83** | 1.22 | .63*** | .98 |
| Pal had sex | 4.59*** | 3.62*** | 1.89*** | 2.60*** |
| <i>Family</i> | | | | |
| Raised by both parents | .92 | 1.22 | 1.11 | 1.20 |
| Father at least high school | 1.16* | 1.06 | 1.35** | .96 |
| Mother at least high school | 1.24** | .91 | .99 | 1.08 |
| <i>Media Exposure</i> | | | | |
| TV | 1.09 | 1.01 | 1.28 | 1.18 |
| Radio | .80 | 1.50 | .84 | .77 |
| Newspaper | .96 | .90 | .62*** | .65** |
| Movies | 1.21** | .85 | .77** | .54** |
| X-rated films | 1.44*** | 1.55** | 1.10 | 1.43 |
| <i>Intervening events</i> | | | | |
| Left school | 1.04 | .95 | 1.59** | .86 |
| Lived-away from home | 1.30*** | 1.29* | 1.52* | 1.49** |
| R ² | .1031 | .0635 | .0722 | .0484 |

***P<.001, **p<.05, *p<.10

Omitted categories: rural, non-catholic, goes to church less than once a week, without friends who had sex, not raised by both parents, father at most with elementary education, mother at most with elementary education, without exposure to TV, radio, newspaper, movies and x-rated films, had not lived-away from home and still in-school.

Individual characteristics. Of the individual characteristics that were considered, only urban residence did not display any significant effect on the likelihood for sexual initiation of adolescents. On the other hand, being Catholic as against belonging to other religious affiliations predisposes younger female and older male adolescents in engaging in premarital sex. As a general measure of religion's effect however, this finding is inconclusive as Catholics by far outweigh non-Catholics in numbers. In fact, about 80% of adolescents consider Roman Catholicism as their religion. Looking at their religiosity meanwhile provides a snippet on how religion affects sexual behavior. This was measured using the frequency of attendance to church activities. Those who go to mass more than once a week are deemed more observant of their obligations and are considered religious. Using this as reference, more frequent church attendance is a protective factor as it decreases the odds for sexual initiation among younger males by 14% and by 37% among females. This however does not apply among older cohorts of adolescents.

Consistent with the findings of other studies, having sexually active friends appears to be the greatest contributing factor on the adolescents' decision to engage in PMS. Among younger cohort of male adolescents, the likelihood of sexual initiation among those with friends who had PMS increases four-folds, while the odds double among the same cohort of female adolescents. The influencing effect of peers is carried over at later ages as indicated by the significant odds ratio among older cohorts of adolescents.

Mass Media. The dynamic nature of Philippine mass media highlights the varying effect it has on young adults. Exposure to newspaper and movie serves as preventive factors for female adolescents' premarital sexual behavior. In contrast, younger males have greater likelihood of PMS when exposed to movies. This could be attributed to the different media material preference of males and females. Men are likely to patronize movies that can be classified sex-and action-oriented while women prefer drama and light comedy.⁷ Furthermore, exposure to adult films increases the odds for sexual initiation among males, regardless of age.

Family Variables. Parent's education affects the likelihood for PMS in various levels. Younger adolescents (15-19) who have well educated fathers have greater likelihood to engage in PMS than their counterpart. On the other hand, having educated mothers are likely to lead younger males into sexual initiation. While this deviates from results of other studies, this is not without basis. For one, it is possible that educated parents are likely to be more liberal, thus, are more permissive of their children's behavior.

Intervening Events. Living away from home is consistent as a predisposing factor for both males and females, regardless of age. Younger cohort of males who experienced separation from home have 30% greater likelihood of PMS compared with those who have not experienced living away from home, while among females, the likelihood of PMS increases by 52%. Further, almost the same odds of PMS is found among older adolescents. Dropping out of school on the other hand is a significant predictive factor for PMS only among younger cohort of adolescent females.

How the timing of these events predicts the timing of premarital sex initiation will be dealt with in the next section.

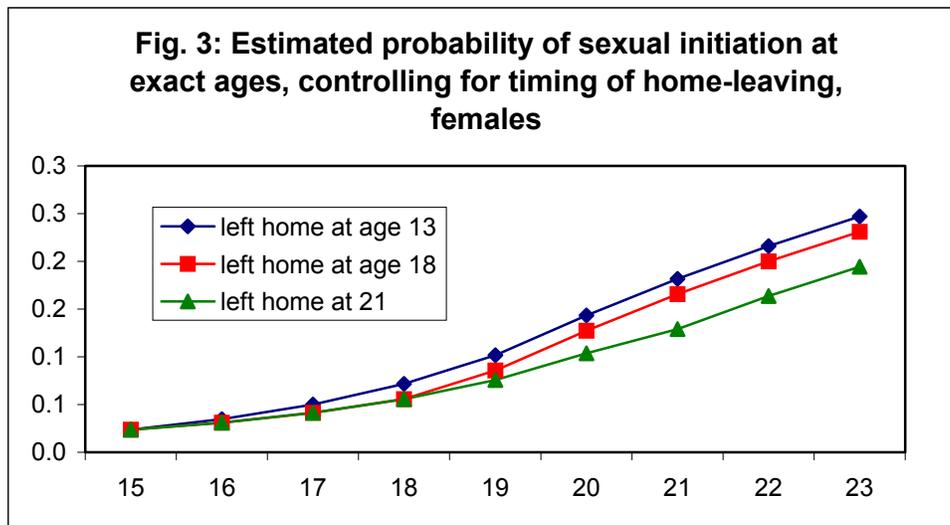
⁷ As caveat, it is assumed that adolescents' media preference and pattern of consumption are the same all throughout the adolescence. Note that the logistic regression analysis used the person-age as unit of analysis, in effect, a respondent who is 18 at the time of the survey will have records for ages 15, 16, 17, and 18. Except for variables that are age-varying, (living-

Timing of events as precursor to early sexual initiation

This section presents result from multiple classification analysis. Holding all other covariates constant, timing of home and school leaving is assumed to occur at certain ages. Since the two events are in most cases interdependent, the same possible timing of departures are used. These are as follows: 1) at age 13, when high school education starts; 2) at age 18, the age of majority; and lastly 3) at 21, when most adolescents graduate from college. Cumulative probability of sexual initiation at exact ages is estimated using the life table approach.

Female adolescents premarital sex experience.

Being used to constant supervision, living away from the family can be an exhilarating experience to a young adolescent. This gives her more freedom in doing things that would otherwise be impossible if she is within the watchful eyes of her family. Female adolescents who had experienced separation from home are likely to engage in

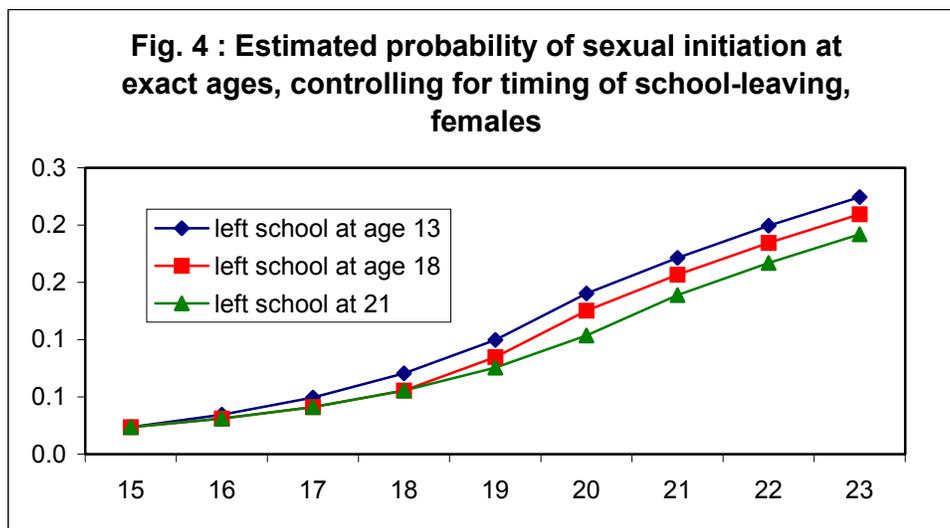


premarital sex. Further, the earlier this independence happens, the greater the likelihood that such behavior will occur. Reflected in Figure 3 is the cumulative proportion of female adolescents sexually active at a particular age, controlling for the timing of home leaving. Comparing the premarital experience of those who left home earlier (at ages 13 and 18) and those who were independent only after 20, less proportion is observed among the latter. At age 21 for example, only 13% of females who experienced separation from home at this age are sexually active, about 5

away from home, premarital sex, and leaving school), other variables assume constant values in all the person age records created for each respondent.

percentage lower than the proportion of those who experienced living away from home as early as 13. Judging from this finding, it seems that early “weaning” from home leads to a more permissive sexual attitude and behavior.

Similar pattern is apparent when timing of school leaving is controlled. Female adolescents who left school at 13 exhibit higher proportion of premarital sex experience than those who dropped out of school at later ages. The gap becomes distinct particularly at age 19. By then, almost 10% of those who left school at 13 have already lost their virginity compared with 8% among those who left at 18 and 7% among those who left at 21. Figure 4 presents this result.



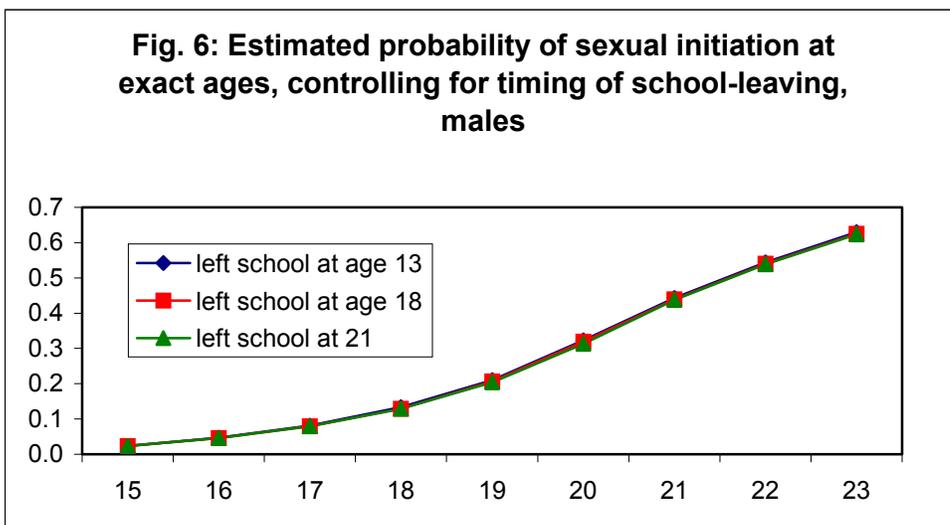
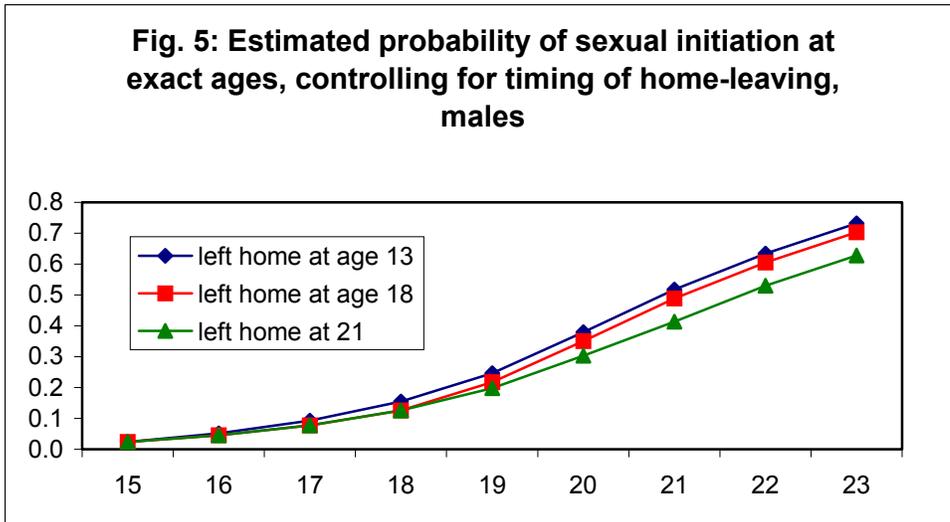
Male adolescents premarital sex experience.

In general, Filipinos are more lenient to male’s sexual behavior. For males, it is a proof of masculinity if a man has already had sexual experience. Oftentimes, the earlier this occurs, the more “macho” one becomes. The YAFS data show that higher proportion of Filipino males is sexually active in any given age than the females.

Despite this perceived leniency to male sexual behavior, family control still exerts influence on the timing of sexual initiation of adolescent males. When timing for home leaving is controlled, males also showed the same pattern as females. Males who left home at later ages have lower proportion of PMS across all ages compared with those who experienced the event earlier.

Unlike the females however, timing of school leaving does not show marked difference in the timing of sexual initiation of male adolescents. At age 15, almost the same proportion of sexually active male adolescents is estimated regardless of whether

one left school earlier or much later. Based on the results, early school leaving for men does not necessarily lead to early sexual initiation. In most cases, it could be that those who stopped schooling are the ones who ended up earning a living at an early age. Generally, men have the responsibility to help provide for his family even at such a young age.



Summary and Conclusion

Adolescence is an important stage in the development of a person, and how one makes the transition to adulthood depend in large measure on how he/she fares during this defining period. The paper has shown, as well as confirmed findings of other studies that adolescent behavior is shaped by the family, social institutions and in general, society and the extent of influence of these factors may change through time as a result of the prevailing social and economic order.

There are however things that remain constant - the family and school will always have the strong influence in adolescent behavior, and although breaking away from these institutions during adolescence may not necessarily lead to negative outcome, the absence of control contributes to the probability of engaging in risk-taking behavior like premarital sex. The foregoing analysis has shown that early departure from home hastens early sexual initiation for both male and female adolescents. Effect of school departure on premarital sex on the other hand manifests only among females. Obviously, females face limited options in life which are largely contingent on completion of their education. Once they dropped out of school however, they are at greater risk of early sexual initiation and eventually, marriage.

Similarly, the study also underscores the presence of other significant factors on adolescent sexual behavior. With the increasing influence of the mass media, adolescents learn more about sexual norms from media portrayals. In addition, presence of sexually friends contribute to greater likelihood for early sex initiation of adolescents. To a certain extent, being religious and observant of church obligations serves as a protective factor against early sexual initiation.

Appendix Table 1.: Weighted distribution of respondents, based on selected characteristics,
by sex

| Background | Males | Females | Both | Total |
|--|--------------|----------------|-------------|--------------|
| Individual | | | | |
| Age | | | | |
| 15-19 | 58.5 | 58 | 58.2 | 6335 |
| 20-24 | 41.5 | 42 | 41.8 | 4544 |
| Urbanity | | | | |
| Urban | 54.2 | 55.9 | 55.1 | 5991 |
| Rural | 45.8 | 44.1 | 44.9 | 4889 |
| Religion | | | | |
| Catholic | 88.2 | 86.4 | 87.2 | 9482 |
| Non-catholic | 11.8 | 13.6 | 12.8 | 1388 |
| Frequency of attending church services | | | | |
| At least once a week | 52.3 | 36.8 | 44.3 | 4816 |
| More than once a week | 47.7 | 63.2 | 55.7 | 6063 |
| % with friends who had sex | 55.6 | 31.1 | 42.5 | 4199 |
| Family Variables | | | | |
| Father's educ | | | | |
| At most elementary | 51 | 49.3 | 50.1 | 5450 |
| At least high school | 49 | 50.7 | 49.9 | 5429 |
| Mother's educ | | | | |
| At most elementary | 54.5 | 53.6 | 54 | 5880 |
| At least high school | 45.5 | 46.4 | 46 | 4999 |
| Person/s who raised R | | | | |
| Both parents | 85.4 | 82.7 | 84 | 9136 |
| Other combination | 14.6 | 17.3 | 16 | 1743 |
| Media exposure | | | | |
| % exposed to TV | 87.8 | 82.4 | 85 | 9237 |
| % with radio exposure | 93.4 | 91.1 | 92.2 | 10026 |
| % with newspaper exposure | 71.4 | 72.2 | 71.8 | 7801 |
| % with movie exposure | 70.3 | 55.1 | 62.4 | 6778 |
| % with x-rated film exposure | 29.8 | 6.4 | 17.7 | 1922 |
| Intervening Events | | | | |
| % ever-left home | 38.8 | 51.2 | 45.2 | 4910 |
| % ever-left school | 57.5 | 55.5 | 56.5 | 6141 |
| Dependent Variable | | | | |
| % ever had sex | 26.2 | 10.2 | 17.9 | 1940 |

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