



# A Development Concept of Adolescence: The Case of Adolescents in the Philippines

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## I. ADOLESCENCE: A DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT

Often categorized with teenagers, youth, young people and young adults are *adolescents* who form a distinct population group due to their unique biological, psychological and social characteristics. These unique features derive mainly from the implicit process that they experience: adolescence. *Adolescence*<sup>1</sup> may be viewed as a transition stage in human development from childhood to adulthood. During this period, an individual goes through many changes including the formation of one's values, attitudes and behavior to adapt and adjust childhood behaviors to culturally acceptable adult forms.

The biological cue is *pubescence*<sup>2</sup>. Hormonal changes during this period trigger the later growth spurt. With the onset of *puberty*, an "individual reaches sexual maturity and becomes capable of bearing offspring and reproducing the species" (Dusek, 1996: 4). This is often characterized by unusual height and weight increases that come with further changes in how adolescents think and act.

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### Biological Perspective of Adolescence

Adolescence is considered a distinct stage of human development. Hall in 1904 posited that humans develop in stages: Infancy (birth to age 4), Childhood (4-8), Youth (8-12), Adolescence (12 to mid 20s), and Maturity (Dusek, 1996). He saw adolescence as a period of "storm and stress" (S&S), i.e., turbulent and transitional, which concurs with Rousseau's views of adolescence. Many people still adhere to Hall's view. First, parents find this a convenient explanation to mask their own difficulty in letting go or permitting their adolescent children to become independent. Second, the media promote this view through television programs so many are tempted to generalize to the adolescent population as a whole. Adults also write about adolescents, which may be both unfair and unrealistic. However, there is neither convincing scientific evidence to support the idea of emotional instability during adolescence nor research indicating dramatic changes in personality or social relations (Dusek, 1996).

Parents, peers, teachers and society exert considerable pressure on the adolescent to grow up during adolescence. However, Coleman (1978 as cited in Dusek, 1996) clarified that various stresses in adolescence do not occur at the same time. Rather, adolescents deal with one or two stressful events, which alleviate the stress, then deal with the others. The peak age for stressful situations varies. Although there may be some overlaps, it is unlikely that several would peak at the same time and very rarely do they concentrate at one time. Coleman's view implies that adolescence is not a relatively short period of time (i.e., it lasts six, seven, 10 or more years for some people) and adolescence is not any more or less stressful than any other developmental stage. Some adolescents may have very difficult and stressful experience, but in general, the majority do not. Hence, adolescence seems to represent a series of smoothly evolving changes in development.

In societies that practice a puberty rite ceremony or rite of passage, adolescence is an extremely short duration: from the beginning to the end of the puberty rite. The rite of passage marks the end of childhood and the beginning of adulthood (Dusek, 1996: p.5).

Gender differences in the rate of biological growth may spell differences in adult expectations for acceptable behavior of adolescent females and males. For example, young girls often are expected to behave more like adults than are boys of the same age.

Similarly, the timing of maturation, whether one is an early or late maturer, influences social interaction with parents, other adults such as teachers, and peers. Early physical maturers are often treated as more socially and emotionally mature than they are, or than their age-mates. This may result in unreasonable expectations being imposed on them, which may have lasting effects on their personality.

Moreover, two important changes that influence adolescent development are psychobiological<sup>3</sup> and psychosocial<sup>4</sup> changes (Ausubel, 1954 as cited in Dusek, 1996). Psychobiological changes are universal while psychosocial changes are culture-specific.

### **The Developmental Psychology Viewpoint of Adolescence**

Often an important stressor during adolescence is the increase in sexuality. Freud (1948) noted that this brings about a recurrence of the Oedipal situation, which must be resolved through attraction to opposite sex peers. The increase in the sex drive creates stress and anxiety (fear of opposite sex and fear of feeling sexual), which may call into play one or more defense mechanisms<sup>5</sup> to restore equilibrium and protect the individual from experiencing anxiety. Use of defense mechanisms may result in avoidance of opposite sex, having only platonic relationships, and not dating. They may reduce the anxiety associated with the drive and satisfy immediate needs but frequent use of these mechanisms may lead to unsatisfactory interpersonal relationships as they stunt personal growth and increase social distance between the individual and others.

In the context of adjustment to sexual and biological maturation, Blos (1962, 1967, 1972, 1974 as cited in Dusek, 1996) divided adolescence into five stages. These are: Latency (Inhibition of instincts, e.g. sex drive), Early Adolescent (Peer group relations are strengthened), Adolescent (Love relationships develop), Late Adolescent (Identity: "Who am I?"), and Post Adolescent (Begins to adopt adult roles). It is during early adolescence when they adopt values that oppose those of parents. Hence, delinquency behavior may emerge since parental views are no longer seen as absolutely correct by adolescents. In late adolescence, self-esteem becomes stable and one's sex-role identity is established leading to the emergence of a stable personality.

Erikson (1963 cited in Rice, 1999) shifted the emphasis of psychoanalytic theories of adolescence from the sexual nature of the stage to the psychosocial realm. He emphasized the acquisition of ego identity and sense of who and what one is and the cultural determinants of development. He viewed development within a series of psychosocial stages that are in part biologically determined. Associated with each of Erikson's Eight Stages of Development<sup>6</sup> is a crisis, which is simply a psychosocial task that is encountered. Each crisis involves conflict and has two possible outcomes.

Erikson believed that there is a disruption of identity during adolescence resulting from both physical and social factors (such as increasing emphasis on making educational decisions and beginning to consider future occupations) that force the adolescent to consider alternatives. He noted the importance of developing a vocational identity and a personal philosophy, which shall provide the adolescent with a reference for evaluating and coping with life events; otherwise, the adolescent may not be capable of forming a coherent and acceptable identity leading to self doubt, role confusion and indulgence in self-destruction activities (e.g, juvenile delinquency or personality aberrations).

During adolescence, one begins to integrate various roles he/she plays in meaningful and constructive ways. As one prepares for adulthood, there is wide variation, however, in adolescent experiences in accomplishing a set of developmental tasks (Dusek, 1996:10).

*Developmental tasks* are skills, knowledge, functions or attitudes that individuals must acquire at various stages during their lifetime in order to adjust successfully to the more difficult roles and tasks that lie before them. They are acquired through physical maturation, social fulfillment, and personal effort. Failure to attain them can often result in maladjustment, increased anxiety, and an inability to deal with the more difficult tasks to come. Havighurst (1951) believes the developmental tasks of any given stage are sequential in nature; that is, each task is a prerequisite for each succeeding task. The optimal time for each task to be mastered is, to some degree, biologically determined. The nine major tasks are:

1. Accepting one's physical makeup and acquiring a masculine or feminine sex role.
2. Developing appropriate relations with age-mates of both sexes.
3. Becoming emotionally independent of parents and other adults.
4. Achieving the assurance that one will become economically independent.
5. Determining and preparing for a career and entering the job market.
6. Developing the cognitive skills and concepts necessary for social competence.
7. Understanding and achieving socially responsible behavior.
8. Preparing for marriage and family.
9. Acquiring values that are harmonious with an appropriate scientific world picture.

At any given time, adolescents may be dealing with several of these tasks. The importance of specific developmental tasks varies with early, middle and late periods of the transition (Ingersoll, n.d.). The Developmental Tasks Model expects an adolescent who mastered these tasks to emerge from adolescence as a well-adjusted and well-socialized adult. However, some tasks are now more difficult to master (Thornburg, 1970-1971). For example, in entering the job market there are fewer lower skill jobs and more jobs that require advanced training now than ever before.

Erikson also distinguished two components of a well-developed identity. First is the continuity of the self over time. This means that the self, which represents basic values, beliefs, ideals and goals, remains the same from day to day; although it becomes less similar as one goes further into the past. This implies that identity changes albeit slowly and gradually. Next is the integration of the self, i.e., one can switch from one role to the next with ease. This refers to the various roles adolescents play. The self one projects with parents is different from the self he/she projects when playing the role of a worker. If there are substantial similarities making it easy for you to switch from one to the other, then identity is integrated.

Marcia (1980) refined Erikson's view of identity. He saw identity as a continually changing organization of one's attitudes, values and beliefs. For him, the process of identity formation involves facing a crisis (a period of questioning and thinking) and making a commitment (adoption) to a set of values and beliefs that guides behavior.

Marcia identified four identity statuses based on whether one has faced a crisis and made a commitment. *Identity achievers* experienced a period of decision-making and now committed to an occupation and set of ideological values, which are all self-chosen. They accept both their strengths and weaknesses and they are considered adaptive and well adjusted. *Foreclosures* had made a commitment but their choices have been made by others. *Identity diffusion* had no commitment to an occupation or ideological stance, although they may have experienced a decision-making period. *Moratorium* refers to those who are in crisis about occupation or ideological decisions. Marcia agreed with Erikson that identity changes over time. As new roles and experiences are encountered, the identity may change. The identity crisis is continually present and subject to new resolution.

### **The Intellectual-Competency View of Adolescence**

Other qualitative changes that occur during adolescent years are changes in thinking skills (abstract thinking ability), peer relations (development of friendships that help explore one's own individuality), and moral thinking (new views about right and wrong). These changes in the adolescents influence further change in how they relate with children and adults around them as others' expectations for one's behavior change and the views of the self change. Unlike when they were children, adolescents are capable of abstract thinking (formal operations), which allows them to view their social environment. They begin to understand the thought processes of others and interact with the environment in new and different ways. These cognitive advances lead to changes in moral thinking and in views of the self as well as the way they feel about the biological and developmental changes that they experience. The adolescents also learn to cope with abstract thinking, and the consequences of that thinking, as related to self views, social development, and to interactions with parents, teachers, peers, and others who have a significant impact on the socialization process.

Cognitive development reaches its peak during adolescence. Piaget (1952) argues that intelligence develops in a series of stages and it reflects the emergence of biological predispositions as well as cultural influences. While a *preadolescent* is already capable of concrete operational thinking, i.e., thinking about what is real, the "here and now", an *adolescent* can think about how he/she might be, not just how he/she is. Abstract thinking allows them to consider identity issues such as "who am I?" and answer this question in more concrete terms than just age, name and various likes and dislikes. The adolescent also has thinking skills to weigh alternatives and make long-term plans and commitments.

Piaget's Theory of Intellectual Development is further clarified by Selman's Social Cognition Theory (1980), which states that adolescents have the ability to consider not only their own perspectives but also those of others. This is made possible through social cognition and social role taking skills. Social cognition refers to how we think about others and our relation to them, about the relation between people and society and how we infer others' intentions and feelings. However, social role taking skills relate to adolescents' views of the nature of friendships and their view of the social system, which include laws, morality, and importance of mutual consensus.

### The Social View

Part of the adult self-projection phase is the exploration and discovery of their capacities and limitations. This is often achieved through making modest and/or grand decisions leading to significant life events that set the pace and/or direction of their future lives as adults begin to firm up. How these new individuals with a capacity to think, decide and act freely handle life challenges eventually help shape society's views about them.

There is diversification in the social roles adolescents have to play and concurrent societal expectations likewise shift towards greater liberalization. As they are exposed to greater responsibilities associated with new roles and statuses, they are also being introduced to a wider range of circumstances requiring decisions, some of which may affect their future lives. Being adolescents give them greater freedom but less burden (i.e., compared to adults) to explore these new situations.

Relational dynamics with family also change. With less and less exposure to their families attendant to the diversification of activities and circle of associates, the adolescents' relations with their own families may contract while relations with others may widen both in scope and depth. Hence, there is greater variability in relational quality and quantity during adolescence.

The importance of environment in advancing the nature of development, which provides a theoretical description of development based on concepts from learning theory and theories of imitation and modeling, is underscored by the Social Learning Theory (SLT). This theory posits that environmental agents (parents, teachers, peers) shape (teach) behavior both by directly reinforcing desired behavior and by providing models of socially appropriate behavior. Bandura (1969, 1973) outlined the basis for SLT and in conjunction with Walters (1959, 1963) discussed SLT as it relates to adolescent development. By observing a model, the adolescent may learn an entirely new behavior, e.g., delinquent behavior (*Modeling Effect*), while observing a punished/rewarded behavior of the model inhibits/disinhibits the adolescent from doing an act (*Inhibition/Disinhibition Effect*). On the other hand, by observing the response to the model, the observer may be cued to demonstrate a similar behavior, which is already in his/her repertoire (*Response-Facilitation Effect*).

SLT does not support the idea that development occurs in a sequence of stages. Adolescent development is seen as a direct consequence of cultural conditioning and social expectations for certain kinds of behaviors. The best way to understand this is to examine the impact of models and the odds of reinforcement on adolescent experiences. Any deviant development is seen as failure of socialization processes that began in childhood.

Although individual and biological factors play a role in how one will develop, Mead (1950, 1953), argued that development differs from one culture to another because of differences in cultural institutions. Cultural contexts define expected and allowable behavior of adolescents and they exert a significant impact on the nature of adolescence. In different cultures, psychological and social changes are associated with behavioral expectations and different sanctioned behaviors within cultural contexts.

Ruth Benedict's Theory of Adolescent Transition to Adulthood (1938) provided further specification of cultural influence on adolescent development. She argued on the importance of differences and similarities in roles children and adults are expected to play. A discontinuity in adolescent and adulthood roles produces emotional strain, which in turn produces conflict. However, cultural continuity produces a smooth and gradual growth from childhood to adulthood with relatively little conflict. Three dimensions of continuity vs. discontinuity she considered important in understanding adolescent development are: 1) responsible vs. non-responsible role status, 2) dominance vs. submission, and 3) contrasted sexual roles. Since cultures vary in the degree of continuity in child-adult roles, the nature of transition from childhood to adulthood is expected to vary as well. In the Western Culture where children must relearn new behaviors and must unlearn childhood behaviors in order to become adults, transitions to adulthood are relatively more difficult than in other cultures where there is continuity in child-adult roles.

Historians provide a different slant by examining how societal changes impact on the nature of adolescence. Their studies look into causes of changes in the nature of adolescence across generations and how these shape the nature of adolescence in specific ways across and within generations by inquiring into the influence of historical events (economic trend, political climate, job opportunities) and changes in social institutions (school structure, family structure).

The emergence of new ideologies and technologies hasten changes in the social and cultural milieu that may contribute to resolving relational issues between the adolescent and parents, teachers and peers. This also means that socializing adolescents or teaching them to become responsible adults may be more difficult nowadays.

The nature of adolescence of very early and very late maturers would differ greatly from the 'average' or 'typical' adolescents. Studies focusing on descriptions of 'average' or 'typical' adolescents should nevertheless acknowledge unique, individual development experiences.

Adolescence is also a time when they can experiment with adult roles and determine a realistic sense of self. Adolescents may not have to accept the degree of responsibility that adults do when they take on various roles. The long-term consequences of trying out a role and having it to fail are not as great as they are for adults. Adolescence can determine the degree to which various social roles and situations are comfortable. It is a time when one may ask the question 'Who am I?' and begin to answer it meaningfully.

Adolescence is the period during which the skills and attitudes are acquired to help develop adults who will eventually contribute to society in meaningful ways. Adolescents may obtain the skills and training necessary to prepare for a vocation in a society. Those who did not acquire marketable skills at this stage are at a disadvantage in their later life.

Society will also suffer if its adult members are not well prepared for their marital, parental and civic roles. With society becoming increasingly complex, the learning of these roles becomes more difficult compared to previous generations. These complexities contribute to the lengthening of the period of adolescence in modern times.

For today's adolescents to reach their greatest possible potential, society must provide the needed support structure such as access to technical training programs or a college education. The development of society and the individual should be in synchrony; otherwise, it will produce frustration for both the individual and society. In effect, transitions experienced during adolescence will be more difficult.

### **Adolescents as Members of Groups**

Adolescents may also be viewed as members of social groups (e.g., peer groups, community, society, and the nation state). Identification with a particular social group and participation in group activities involves realignment of one's views and activities with others who share his/her interests, concerns and/or problems. The degree of one's commitment to the ideals espoused by the social group may determine the quality of involvement in group activities.

Although some adolescents decide to join or not to join any formal or informal social group, they may also have models or reference groups as basis for developing how they project themselves as unique human beings. For many who belong to social groups that require experiencing significant events/moments with their group members (example: hazing in a sorority/fraternity), being member of that group becomes a cherished accomplishment. Hence, behavioral expectations change through attachment or membership in certain social groups.

### **Age Does Not Define Adolescence**

Apparently, researches on adolescent issues does not use the teen years or age to define adolescence. There are several reasons for this position. First, there is considerable variation in the onset of pubescence, i.e., about four years. Second, age is simply a measure of time;



therefore, it is a very rough proxy for experiences one encounters, which are critical to adolescent development. Third, limiting adolescence to teenage years ignores the fact that many individuals (e.g., college students) still play some 'adolescent' roles even into their early 20's.

## II. ADOLESCENTS IN THE PHILIPPINES

### Local Terms for Adolescents

In the Philippines, there are various terms used in the different parts of the country to refer to adolescents. One dialect may have several terms for adolescents, which often reflect cultural identity and diversity. For example, *dalagita* and *binatihyo* in the Tagalog language means young women and men, respectively. These terms denote that they are going through changes toward becoming *dalaga* and *binata*. Other colloquial terms for the very young *dalaga* are *dalaginding* and *dalaginday* (Panganiban, 1972). The corresponding Ilocano terms for these are *ballabagitolay* and *babaracito*.

Even minority groups in the country have their own terms for adolescents. The Tausugs in Mindanao refer to an adolescent girl as *d'ga* or *budjang*, i.e., a maiden girl in puberty stage and *subul* refers to a young unmarried man past the age of puberty (Hassan, et al. 1994). A more gender-neutral term for adolescents in the Bicol region is *juvenes*.

### The Age-Grading of Adolescence

Despite the weak theoretical basis of using age in defining the period of adolescence, it remains useful in defining adolescents in the Philippines in aid of identifying target population for the provision of public services and important population subgroups for public policy/research. No legal document defines adolescents but the definition for youth is age-graded.

Youth in the Philippines consists of the 15-30 years old population according to the "Youth in Nation Building Act" of 1995 or RA 8044, which created the Philippine National Youth Commission (NYC). Sandoval (2000) noted that this definition stems from the varying youth definitions used in government departments. Anyone below 21 years of age except those emancipated in accordance with the law is considered a child or minor or youth. RA 7610 (1992), Section 12, however, defines the Age of Majority as 18 years old.

There is, however, wide variation in legal ages for regulated activities in the country. In securing a driver's license, anyone at least 16 years of age can get a student permit. But applicants who are 18 years or below need written consent of parents or guardians before their applications are processed. Professional driver's license is given to qualified applicants 18 years or more while nonprofessional driver's license has the minimum age requirement of 17 years.

Article V of the 1987 Philippine Constitution guarantees the right of every Filipino to exercise his/her right to vote provided he/she is at least 18 years of age, has resided in the country for at least one year and in the place wherein he/she proposes to vote for a minimum of six months immediately preceding the election. The minimum age required for an elective position, however, depends on the position at stake.

The youth may also vote and run for office in the *Sanguniang Kabataan (SK)* Federation. Anyone between ages 16 to 21 are eligible to vote and run for an SK elective position. For a term of three years, an SK Chairman and seven SK counselors are elected in each barangay in conjunction with the regular local government elections.

In obtaining a marriage license, the Family Code of the Philippines (1987) specifies 18 years of age or more, with no legal impediment to marry, as a basic requirement for a male and female to apply for a marriage license. If either or both contracting parties are between the ages of 18 and 21, written parental consent is required. If either or both contracting parties are between the ages of 21 and 25, “they shall be obliged to ask their parents or guardians for advice upon the intended marriage. If they do not obtain such advice, or if it is unfavorable, the marriage licence shall not be issued until after three months following the completion of the (marriage) application.”

Various departments/agencies in the government also use differing age markers for the youth. The State of the Philippine Population Report (SPPR) II Task Force’s (2001 as cited in Cabigon, 1999) review of the youth definition revealed that the Department of Social Welfare and Development, the Department of Labor and Employment, and the Teaching Education and Skills Development Authority are using the 15-24 years old age-range; the Department of Interior and Local Government uses a shorter age-range of 15-21 years; and the Department of Health uses 10-24 years. The Fifth National Nutrition Survey conducted by the Food and Nutrition Research Institute-Department of Science and Technology covered adolescents age 11-19 years old (Villavieja et al., 1998). On the other hand, the 1988 Survey of Youth conducted by the National Manpower and Youth Council (NMYC) used the age-range 7-24 years old, which is closer to the Department of Education definition of 7-30 years old. The Commission on Population, by virtue of its mandate to address population and reproductive health policy issues, delineated three age groupings: ages 10-14 as pre-childbearing years, ages 15-24 as reproductive years, and ages 25-30 as young adult and marrying years.

In the same manner, youth definitions by non-government organizations are based on programs, projects, and activities that address service requirements of their target population groups. The SPPR II Task Force (as cited in Cabigon, 1999) noted the following age-grading of adolescents/youth in the country:

Foundation for Adolescent Development, Inc. (FAD)	15-24 years old
Family Planning Organization of the Philippines (FPOP)	15-24 years old

Young Adults Fertility and Sexuality (YAFS II) Survey	15-24 years old
National Demographic Survey (NDS)	15-19 years old
PLAN International, Southern Leyte	13-17 years old
Alan Guttmacher Institute (AGI)	10-19 years old

Definitions used by other stakeholders likewise vary. Having been commissioned by the National Youth Council (NYC), the Social Weather Station (SWS) in its 1992 Youth Survey covered the 15 to 30 years old (Sandoval et al., 1998). Another Study on Filipino Youth by McCann-Erickson in 1992 defined youth in ages 12 to 21 years. The more recent Filipino Youth Study conducted in 2001 by the Ateneo Research Group covered ages 7-21 years old.

A Baseline Survey on the Knowledge, Attitudes and Practice of Adolescents and Adults on Reproductive Health conducted by Cruz and Diaz (2001) covered the youth defined as first to third year high school students in ages 11-20 years old.

A recent comparative study in the Asian region was also conducted. United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Survey of Children carried out in Australia, Cambodia, China, East Timor, Hongkong, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Macau, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam focused on youth ages 7-19 years old (Domingo, 2001; Bordadora, 2001).

#### **Parents' Definition of Adolescents and their Expectations**

As a child moves from one age-group to another, the roles expected of him/her also vary. Correspondingly, his/her privileges and responsibilities, accountability for his/her actions, and authority gradually increase as he/she grows older. Adolescents in the Philippines are treated with more tact than their younger counterparts (Medina, 1991). Because of adolescents' heightened sensitivity and greater tendency to rebel, they are less subjected to corporal punishment. Parents rarely resort to slapping but scolding with an explanation of why such behavior is disapproved is a more common form of parental discipline (Mendez and Jocano, 1979 as cited in Medina, 1991). However, treatment of adolescent boys and girls differ: boys are more likely to be allowed to stay out late than girls. Moreover, girls' behavior to the opposite sex is more restricted than that of the boys.

A focus group discussion (FGD) conducted with parents of adolescents in Mandaluyong indicated the use of both positive and negative styles of parenting (FGD Parents, 2001). While parents are relatively more liberal in their dealing with adolescent behavior nowadays compared to the earlier generation, awareness and fear of likely consequences of risky adolescent behavior was apparently expressed.

Also validated by the FGD is gender differences in the treatment of adolescents but there are signs of a shift towards more gender-neutral parental disposition for adolescents of today. Adolescents are indeed making decisions in their life with little or no parental advise/

approval. However, parents still have influence on whether a girl will have a boyfriend, and whether a boy will get into a relationship and find a job, among others.

There was consensus among FGD parent participants that the fast changing social, economic and environmental conditions require greater parental attention, respect, and moral guidance for their adolescent children. Although the school was noted as an important agency of socialization, it was expressed that parents should follow through lessons learned by adolescents in school. Inconsistencies in acceptable behavior learned in school and observed family/household relations may distort adolescent perception of social reality and may lead to questions relating one's social worth, which is important for self-development.

Parents felt that adolescents should be made aware of the consequences of their likely actions before they make critical decisions in life. Underscored in the FGD is the belief in role modeling and greater parental surveillance of adolescent behavior to prevent either intentional or unintentional adolescent misdeeds. Nevertheless, they noted that parental intake and support is deemed necessary in times of the occurrence of such events considering that adolescents have a long life ahead and a misguided decision at this transitional phase would affect their lifetimes. However, the range of attendant issues and consequent change in his/her roles and expectations should be explained to the adolescent to guide him/her in future decisions in life.

#### Own Definitions and Expectations of Adolescents

The onset of adolescence in the Philippines proceeds unnoticed except for circumcision and voice change in boys and the onset of menstruation in girls (Medina, 1991). However, additional biological markers for puberty are revealed in the preliminary report on 22 FGDs conducted among out-of-school-youth (OSY) in various parts of the country by Health Action Information Network in December 2001 for the third in a series of Young Adult Fertility and Sexuality Studies (YAFS III). For males, these are physical changes in the body, attraction to the opposite sex (*umiibig, nagkakagusto*), greater appetite, and *tulog ng tulog* (Tan, 2002). For females, in addition to validating menstruation as a marker (FGD Female OSY 2001, Tan 2002), other markers are attraction to the opposite sex (*pagkakaroon ng crush*) and behavioral change (*mabihin kumilos, maayos, malinis, di na pwedeng maglaro*). Greater self consciousness, was commonly perceived for both sexes (males: *pumoporma*, females: using cosmetics) (FGD Female OSY 2001; Tan 2002). The FGD for Female OSYs further revealed that females were quite aware of the physical, emotional and mental transformation that they were going through during adolescence. The male rather than female OSYs, however, were more receptive to the greater social and economic involvements required of being adolescents compared to being children. Among others, males described adolescents as already dependable (*maasahan*); can decide/solve problems (*marunong nang magsolve ng problema*), and have developed their own view of life (*mayroon nang pananaw sa buhay*) (FGD Male OSY 2001).

Both FGDs for male and female OSYs in Mandaluyong (2001) exhibited their current concerns about poverty (*kahirapan, o kawalan ng pera*), what to do tomorrow (*ano ang gagawin sa susunod na araw*), breakdown of communication within the family (*hindi pagkakaunawaan ng mga magulang at mga kapatid*), increasing drug-dependency of people in their neighborhood (*dumadami ang nagda-drugs*), harassment (*kinukursunadahan o napagtitripan ang mga dumadaan*), how to help their parents (*makatulong sa magulang*), looking for work (*maghanap ng trabaho*), remaining healthy (*malayo sa sakit*), unemployed siblings (*di nag-aaral na mga kapatid na di makahanap ng trabaho*), parents quarrelling about money but gambling when they have some, unhappy with early marriage (*pagsisisi sa maagang pag-aasawa*), and wanting to go back to school.

They considered today's adolescents as irresponsible, indifferent (*walang pakialam sa paligid*) and materialistic (*lahat ng nakikita sa tv akala masarap*). They also perceived respect for self (*respeto sa sarili muna para respetohin ka ng iba*) and self discipline (*disiplina sa sarili*) as areas to be improved among adolescents. On the positive side, they found today's adolescents as resolute (*matapat*).

They observed a change in how others treat/perceive them, specifically their parents. For example, a female OSY noted that while she used to be the subject of parental ire for unacceptable behavior, this has ceased to occur because her parents do not know how to handle her anymore (*hindi na nila ako kaya*).

There is also a change in self perception. While one would be happy before with almost any new material acquisition (*mababaw ang kaligayahan*), a female OSY would now want to acquire things through her own efforts (*gusto ng pagpaguran ang ikaliligaya*). Another indicated the increasing independence exercised in adolescence (*sarili mo ng decision*).

### **Related Teachings/Beliefs that Shape Expectations of Adults about Adolescents**

Medina (1991) noted that there is no "rite of passage" or formal initiation, which marks the shift in status from childhood to adulthood in the Philippines. Compared to the evident parent-youth conflicts in Western culture, Filipino adolescence is generally not turbulent or characterized by tension, rebellion, and confusion (Mendez et al., n.d. as cited in Medina, 1991). It is perceived that the strains and stresses of growing up are experienced more by urban rather than rural adolescents in view of the greater social structural complexity and faster rates of change in the former (Medina, 1991). Greater urbanization and industrialization, in particular, have notable consequences on Filipino family life: more favorable attitudes toward working wives and mothers, changing role structure of the family, decline in authority of the husband and father, decline of the family's influence on the individual, more permissive norms and behavior, breakdown of the consanguineal family as a functional unit (Medina, 1991).

In light of more recent technological advancements and globalization, the Filipino family as the primary agent of socialization is changing quite rapidly. Daily activities of adolescents,

which used to be within parental purview, are fast becoming loosely linked as adolescent independence accelerates. The range of adolescent activities requiring exclusive parental authorization in the past is fast expanding (FGD Parents, 2001). "Malling" or going to the malls, is a popular adolescent recreation, over which many parents no longer have authority.

Traditional norms of childrearing have been transformed as well. Since adolescents of the past are now parents of adolescents themselves, more liberal parental disposition of adolescent behavior is becoming apparent. Some parents during the FGD did not even consider an adolescent indiscretion (e.g., premarital pregnancy) enough reason to influence their son/daughter to marry someone (*pag nabuntis ang anak, kung hindi siya stable, bakit mo siya ipapakasal?*) (FGD Parents, 2001). This apparently is inconsistent with religious teachings on giving appropriate aid for people who are "lost."

Also commonly known are religious teachings on appropriate adolescent behavior. Most religions prohibit adolescents from engaging in premarital sex, promiscuity, and abortion. The Christian religion, within which majority of the Philippine population belong, has a staunch position on these issues, more particularly the Roman Catholic church with its quite articulated position.

Adolescents who engage in these adverse behaviors are, therefore, expected to be stigmatized or looked down upon. However, with more prevalent and/or popularized cases of these types of behavior, especially among people considered by adolescents as role models (e.g., actors and actresses), the stigma traditionally attached to such behaviors appears to have been watered down, making it less and less inadmissible over the years. Hence, the influence of religions on adolescent behavior is becoming increasingly challenged.

As more adolescents are staying in school longer, further delays in their entry to economic and political roles will be anticipated. This suggests greater economic strain for earning members of the households/families as requirements for adolescent development skyrocket in view of the need to keep up with the lifestyles of their own crowd.

### III. CONCLUDING REMARKS

This initial review looks at adolescents within a developmental frame as they transcend from childhood to adulthood. Changes that adolescents are experiencing within themselves redefine their roles as members of their family, peer group and the society as they, in turn, perceive these changes. While age tracking aids in describing general patterns of these changes, individual differences remain making each adolescent unique and deserving special attention. Hence, communicating with the youth is crucial in better understanding how parents, teachers and other stakeholders could make their experience through adolescence pleasant and less traumatic.

## NOTES

- 1 This term comes from the Latin verb *adolescere*, which means "to grow up or to grow to maturity."
- 2 *Pubescence* refers to "the approximately two-year period that precedes puberty; it is the period when the physiological changes that cause development of both the primary and secondary sex characteristics that make the individual a biologically mature begin." (Dusek, 1996; pp.4-5).
- 3 *Psychobiological change* refers to psychobiological change that results from biological change, an example of which is psychological reactions to the increase in sex drive.
- 4 *Psychosocial change* refers to personal and social changes that are due to cultural factors.
- 5 Defense mechanisms refer to ascetism (deny instincts) or intellectualism (make drive seem nonconflictual).
- 6 Erickson's Eight Stages of Development: Infancy (Trust vs. Mistrust), Early Childhood (Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt), Preschool Age (Initiative vs. Guilt), School Age (Industry vs. Inferiority), Adolescence (Identity vs. Identity Confusion), Young Adulthood (Intimacy vs. Isolation), Adulthood (Generativity vs. Stagnation), and Senescence (Ego Integrity vs. Despair).

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