Age at Marriage: Recent Trends and Prospects*

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Introduction

THE overall trend in marriages is an important determinant of other changes in the size and character of the population. Young couples set up new households, have children, and effectively enter the economy as units for the consumption of goods and services. A young man's standing in the labor force is generally stabilized by marriage, while for young women, marriage often changes that standing abruptly. Residential patterns of newly formed families help to determine the distribution in space of the population as a whole. Thus, an examination of marital patterns is useful for an understanding of the nation's population-- its distribution, annual births, new families and households, the size and composition of its labor force, as well as of its rate of population growth.

Of these characteristics, population growth, of course, has been of particular interest recently because of its detri-

mental effect on economic and social development. The prevailing level of age at marriage can affect a population's rate of growth in several ways. General postponement of marriage results in a delay in the process of family formation and thus diminishes the average completed family size of married women surviving the childbearing period.[1]

In addition, delayed marriage - - independent of its effect on family size - - increases the mean length of a generation,[2] an important determinant of the population's annual growth rate. Finally, delayed marriage, by shifting the age pattern of fertility, results in the elimination of some potential childbearers by the cumulative effect of mortality.

It would seem, then, that a general delay in the age at marriage of Filipinos might effectively curtail fertility and help to diminish the current high rate of population growth. Questions arise, how-

[1] This is demonstrated for the Philippines in Mercedes B. Concepcion, "Fertility Differences Among Married Women in the Philippines" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1963), pp. 27-29.

[2] The average time between the birth of a female child and the birth of her first daughter.

ever, concerning the real utility of delayed marriage as a means toward reducing fertility in the Philippines. Firstly, how large a shift in the average age at marriage would be required to produce a significant effect upon fertility? Secondly, is it reasonable to hope for a shift in marriage patterns of this magnitude? The answers to these questions must await further information on Philippine social and demographic patterns.

A first step must be to evaluate the pattern of age at marriage up to the present time. As an effort in this direction, this paper discusses the available data on marriage patterns in the Philippines. It centers upon the estimation of the level and the trend of age at marriage in the Philippines in recent years. Recent studies have presented evidence of an incipient rise in the age at marriage of Philippine women. This paper extends these research efforts, re-evaluating earlier findings in the light of a further examination of the data and a comparison of these data with other available information.

Sources of Data

Data describing marriage patterns in the Philippines have three general sources: the marriage registration system, the census population by marital status, and retrospective surveys of ever-married women regarding their ages at first marriage. No single source of data provides an entirely accurate picture of Philippine marriage patterns, and in addition, interpretation of the data is not a straightforward matter. However, carefully weighing and contrasting the data from the three sources allows some degree of confidence in the conclusions that have been drawn from them.

The Data on Registered Marriages

Marriage registration data provide, in principle, the most realistic approach to the study of marriage patterns. When all marital events are accurately recorded over a long period of time, longititudinal experience as well as periodic (annual) patterns can be observed.

While the Philippine data are not suitable for cohort analysis, they do allow the examination of annual patterns. An unbroken series of annual data is available from 1956 to 1964.[3]

Two problems are of particular importance in interpreting the registration data presented below.

Firstly, the marriage registration system is characterized by severe under-registration. A rough estimate of the extent of under-registration of marriages is provided by a procedure utilizing the census proportions single and appropriate survival factors.[4] This procedure suggests that perhaps 40% of annual first marriages in the Philippines are not registered. The possible causes of such under-registration are many. For example: (a) consensual unions are extra-legal and therefore are not recorded (they, however, are reflected in the census proportions single); (b) local civil registrars often fail to submit reports for annual publication; (c) and the reports of reporting registrars are often incomplete. Poor reporting is concentrated

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[3] Registration data are taken from the Bureau of the Census and Statistical *Vital Statistics Report* for each year.

[4] The 1960 Census single population, in five-year age groups, was treated as a stationary population. Differences between successive age groups, minus expected deaths to single persons by age, are an estimate of expected marriages over a five-year period. Expected and registered marriage were then compared. See Peter C. Smith, "Age at Marriage in the Philippines" (Unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of the Philippines, 1966), pp. 18-20.

in rural and relatively inaccessible areas where the age at marriage is probably lowest; thus reportng problems would cause an overstatement of the actual age at marriage. Unreported consensual unions are probably those occurring to young persons, also creating an overstatement of age in the registration data.

Secondly these data reflect annual fluctuations in addition to actual trends. Specifically the medians in Table 2 are espe-

cially sensitive to variations in the annual numbers of marriages occurring to women under age 19 or 20.

The following analysis is based upon the data shown in Figure 1, and Tables 1 and 2. The distributions of marriages by single years of age are essentially the same over time for both sexes. A typical distribution is that for 1960, illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1
Distribution of Registered First Marriages, Males and Females, 1960
(Source: Vital Statistics Report, 1960)
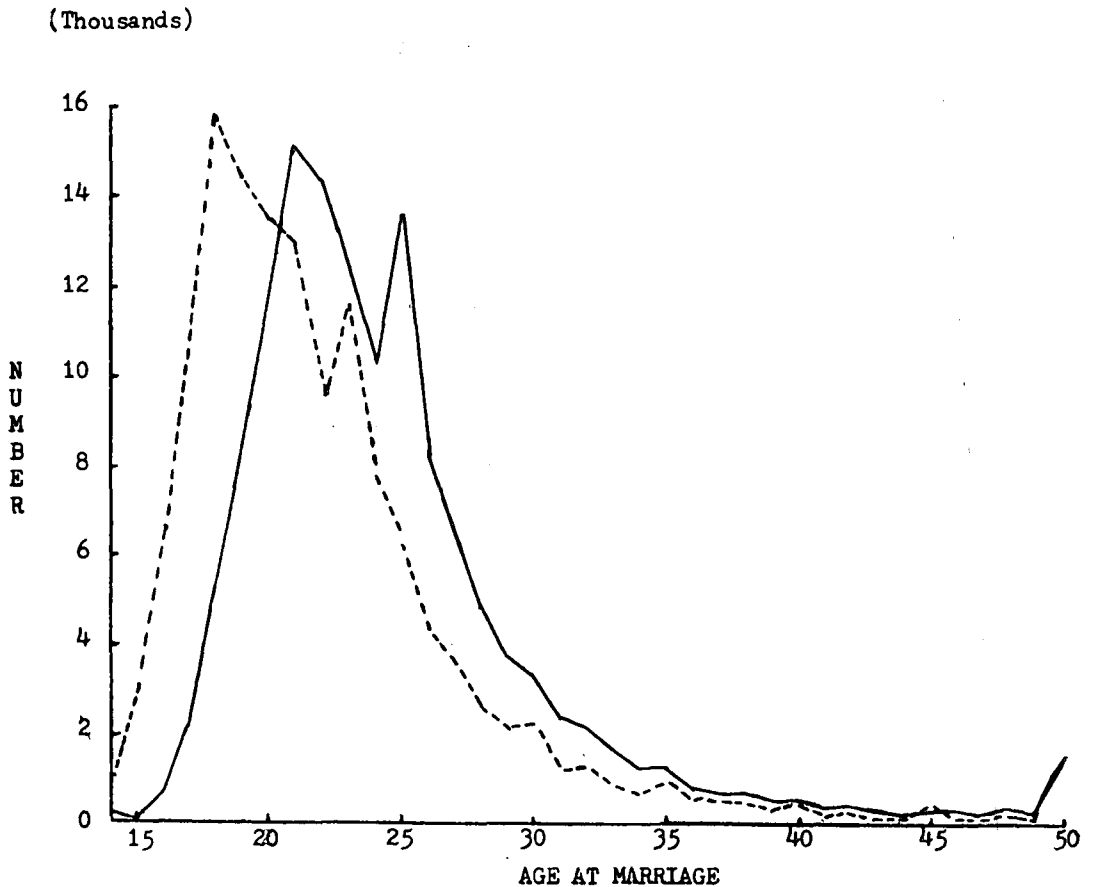
DATA FOR FIGURE 1
FIRST MARRIAGES 1960

AGE	MALE	FEMALE
Under 15	128	1111
15	72	2837
16	756	6564
17	2271	11571
18	5634	15990
19	8322	14311
20	11940	13483
21	15011	12900
22	14193	9677
23	12401	11948
24	10143	7801
25	13632	6199
26	8096	4357
27	6486	3517
28	4953	2657
29	3777	2023
30	3398	2109
31	2222	1185
32	2063	1190
33	1536	932
34	1222	746
35	1246	917
36	874	602
37	704	656
38	720	558
39	566	431
40	675	598
41	377	269
42	397	392
43	290	240
44	256	236
45	376	408
46	264	232
47	249	196
48	342	300
49	187	134
50 and Over	1262	1557

The distributions are bi-modal for both sexes. The typical age at marriage is 21 for males and 18 for females, with secondary modes at ages 25 and 23 for males and females, respectively. These secondary modes are perhaps caused by the marriage law provision that men and women younger than those ages must secure parental approval before marrying, or in lieu of that approval must wait three

months before marrying.[5] Couples in this situation may sometimes choose to falsify their ages when applying for the marriage license rather than wait for three months as required by law. Alternatively, this legislation may be a real constraining influence causing many couples to delay marriage until both parties are of legal age. Bimodality may also be an indication of differential age at marriage among distinct social or economic groups in the population (see the discussion of differential age at marriage below).

Table 1 presents the percentage distributions of registered marriages, in broad age groups, for the available years. These data suggest a slight decline in the proportions of persons of both sexes marrying under age 20, although females show rising proportions marrying under 20 since 1961. Proportions of marriages to females age 30 and over rise slightly until 1960, and then level off.

As Table 2 indicates, the median age at marriage for the female registration series shows a slight rise between 1956 and 1964, while the means for females show no clear trend.

The data for the years until 1960 present a clear pattern - - a declining proportion of females marrying under age 20 - - resulting in a rising median age at marriage over the period. A simultaneous rise in the proportion of females marrying at age 30 or over perhaps accounts for the lack of any trend in the mean. The data for marriages since 1960 are difficult to interpret, however. The proportion marrying under age 20 shows a rise and the median age at marriage levels off. The proportion of females marrying at age 30 or over declines, while the mean continues

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[5] *New Civil Code*, Book I, Title III. Marriage, Articles 54 and 62.

TABLE 1
PERCENT DISTRIBUTION OF REGISTERED MARRIAGES
BY BROAD AGE GROUPS, MALES AND FEMALES, AVAILABLE YEARS

YEAR	% Under Age 20	% Age 30 And Over	YEAR	% Under Age 20	% Age 30 And Over
		M A L E			
1956	13.7	13.0	1961	11.8	13.8
1957	12.9	13.4	1962	12.0	12.7
1958	12.6	14.6	1963	11.7	13.8
1959	14.0	13.6	1964	12.1	13.7
1960	12.5	14.0			
		F E M A L E			
1956	41.8	7.4	1961	34.4	8.1
1957	40.7	7.4	1962	36.7	8.7
1958	38.3	10.4	1963	36.8	8.5
1959	39.7	7.5	1964	37.9	7.7
1960	37.2	9.9			

TABLE 2
MEAN AND MEDIAN AGES AT MARRIAGES,
MALES AND FEMALES, AVAILABLE YEARS

YEAR	M A L E		F E M A L E	
	MEAN	MEDIAN	MEAN	MEDIAN
1956	24.4	22.7	21.7	19.8
1957	24.5	22.8	21.7	19.9
1958	24.8	22.9	22.2	20.2
1959	24.5	22.7	21.8	20.0
1960	24.6	22.8	22.4	20.4
1956-1960	24.6	22.8	22.0	20.1
1961	24.7	22.8	22.1	20.4
1962	24.5	22.7	22.2	20.4
1963	24.8	23.0	22.1	20.4
1964	24.7	23.1	21.9	20.3
1961-1964	24.7	22.9	22.1	20.4

to remain relatively stable. When the effect of the war upon the 1940-1945 birth cohorts is considered, it is difficult to know whether the rising median for 1956-1960 should be considered a trend, or perhaps as the final phase of a process of adjustment to a temporary shortage of available spouses of desired ages.

Lacking further data, we can conclude only that the rise in the median age at marriage of females marrying from 1956 to 1960 may possibly reflect a long-term trend toward a rising age at marriage.

The data for males show a decline in the proportion marrying under age 20. While this trend for males can have no

direct impact on fertility, it is highly signi-ficant for its relation to family welfare and stability. A continuation of this trend would result in a decline in the number of families with heads under age 20 and thus cut back on social problems from this source. Adjusting the above data for probable under-registration, the level of the median age at marriage can be placed at around 22.5 and 20.0 for males and females, respectively. These inferences can be compared with those based on the other types of marriage data.

The Census Population by Age and Marital Status

Tabulations of the proportions single in successive age groups in the 1948 and 1960 censuses reflect past marital patterns, and under certain conditions these data can yield a summary measure of the age at marriage.

The census reports marital or civil status in four categories: never married (hereafter "single"), married, widowed, and separated or divorced. Single persons include those who have never married and those whose marriages have been annulled. Married persons include those married for the first time and those are currently in a second or subsequent union; persons who are "living together as husband and wife, whether legally or consensually" at the time of the census are considered married.[6]

Proportions single at successive ages from the censuses of 1948 and 1960 are shown in Table 3. These data indicate that few males marry before age 20. The largest proportion of males marry at age 25 to 29. Among females, a large proportion marry before age 20 and most are married by their early twenties.

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[6] This *de facto* definition of marriage has advantages and disadvantages relative to a complete picture of marital life. On one hand, many consensual marriages are permanent unions totally missed by the marriage registration system but reflected in the marital status data. On the other hand, some consensual unions are not stable marriages; the inclusion of these unions in the marital status figures would artificially overstate the proportion married by age.

TABLE 3
CENSUS PROPORTIONS SINGLE BY AGE
MALES AND FEMALES, 1948 and 1960

AGE	MALE		FEMALE	
	1948	1960	1948	1960
10-14	.9921	.9973	.9932	.9972
15-19	.9600	.9700	.8428	.8730
20-24	.6393	.6551	.3991	.4431
25-29	.2671	.2712	.1852	.1954
30-34	.1202	.1138	.1232	.1161
35-39	.0717	.0614	.0925	.0813
40-44	.0529	.0412	.0850	.0758
45-49	.0348	.0323	.0675	.0705
50-54	.0341	.0297	.0652	.0773
55-59	.0268	.0265	.0554	.0692
60-64	.0272	.0242	.0585	.0677
65+	.0251	.0236	.0585	.0606

Table 3 indicates that males under age 30 moved into marriage more slowly around 1960 than in 1948. At ages above 30, the movement into marriage seems to have accelerated, however. A similar pattern is indicated for females with the 1960 Census exhibiting larger proportions single under age 30 and smaller proportions remaining single at later ages.

These patterns of change in Census proportions single are consistent with the shifts in the age distribution of marriages observed in the vital statistics data.

The magnitude of the shifts in proportions single in the two censuses are quite small - - a 3% increase in the proportion single among women age 15 to 19, and a 4% increase for women age 20 to 24. This is further indication that changing marital patterns in recent years can as yet have had only a negligible effect on the median age at marriage for either sex.[7]

A summary measure of age at marriage can be derived from the Census proportions single. A procedure to accomplish this has been reported by Hajnal and has proved useful over a wide range of data.[8]

The stationary population assumptions implicit in the procedure, however, partially determine the level of the resulting mean age at marriage. Thus the useful-

ness of the procedure in the present analysis is limited to a comparison of Hajnal's "singulate" means for the 1948 and 1960 Census data. The means for 1960 are 24.9 and 22.3 for males and females, respectively, while the mean for females in 1948 is 22.1. Thus, according to this measure, changes in marital patterns in the intercensal years have had a negligible effect on the age at marriage.

The Retrospective Data

Retrospective data on the age at first marriage of ever-married women interviewed at a point in time are an important resource for analyzing the level and trend in the age at marriage. Retrospective data are generally superior to census data on proportions single for two major reasons. Firstly, retrospective information on age at first marriage is obtained directly rather than by inference from the proportions single, which represent hypothetical cohorts at best. Secondly, retrospective data provide a picture of marriage patterns for birth cohorts, on one hand, and for women married in the same time period, on the other. In this later respect, retrospective data are parallel to vital registration figures gathered over many years. Retrospective data, in addition, have the advantage of being collected at one time rather than over an extended period.

Two basic difficulties, however, diminish the value of retrospective data relative to a long time series of good vital statistics information. Firstly, these data are dependent upon the accuracy and honesty of responses regarding events of the distant past. Secondly, retrospective surveys can only obtain information from the survivors of successive birth cohorts as they are enumerated at a particular point in time. The deceased cannot be

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[7] A correction for age-reporting errors might well lead to a different pattern in these proportions, depending on whether age-misstatements in the Censuses were differential by marital status. Age reporting problems in the 1948 and 1960 Censuses are discussed in Frank Lorimer, "Analysis and Projections of the Population of the Philippines," *First Conference on Population,* Proceeding (Manila: University of the Philippines Press), pp. 273-287.

[8] The method was reported in John Hajnal, "Age at Marriage and Proportions Marrying," *Population Studies,* VII, No. 2 (November 1953), pp. 111-136. Hajnal examined European data. Indian data and a modification of Hajnal's procedure were used in S.N. Agarwala, *Age at Marriage in India* (Alahabad: Kitaba Mahab Private, Ltd., 1962).

represented and we cannot easily assume that mortality has not been selective with respect to age at first marriage. The effect of mortality on these data is elaborated further below.

The data described here were drawn from two independent sample surveys. In the Philippine Statistical Survey of Households of May, 1956,[9] and again in the 1960 Census enumeration, samples of ever-married women were questioned on their age at first marriage as well as on their childbearing history. The tables utilized here show ever-married women in five-year age groups of present age and age at first marriage.

The PSSH data reflect a multi-staged sampling design while the 1960 Census

[9] First conducted by the National Economic Council, and since 1958 by the Bureau of the Census and Statistics, this survey is now called the Bureau of the Census and Statistics Survey of Households.

data are derived from questions included in Part II of the population schedule of the 1960 Census of Population and Housing. The sampling frame was the complete listing of households prepared for the census enumerators, and every tenth household was systematically selected to be included in the sample.

The basic data from both sources are presented in Tables 4-A and 4-B. These data allow an examination of marriage patterns from two perspectives. We may investigate the marital experience of successive birth cohorts (each horizontal line or group of women by current age representing a birth cohort) or we can observe the experience of successive marriage duration groups (a marriage duration group is represented by any diagonal line including all marriages of a particular duration).

TABLE 4-A

EVER-MARRIED WOMEN BY PRESENT AGE AND AGE AT MARRIAGE
MAY, 1956 PSSH*

BIRTH PERIOD	PRE-SENT AGE	EVER-MARRIED WOMEN	AGE AT MARRIAGE				
			Under 15	15-19	20-24	25-29	30 & Over
1942-1956	Under 15	1700	1700				
1937-1941	15-19	164200	11600	152600			
1932-1936	20-24	543750	17500	363800	162450		
1927-1931	25-29	585700	22400	297100	222050	44150	
1922-1926	30-34	568600	22800	276150	173300	81800	14550
1917-1921	35-39	498350	18000	252400	142650	65100	20200
1912-1916	40-44	413250	12300	190500	134250	50850	25350
1907-1911	45-49	393500	24050	172100	121850	45350	30150
1902-1906	50-54	242500	18300	111950	72400	21750	18100
1897-1901	55-59	187100	11500	90250	51300	19450	14600
1892-1896	60-64	153200	11950	71800	42100	15600	11750
1887-1891	65+	282500	19800	115800	90750	36850	19300
	All ages	4034350	191900	2094450	1213100	380900	154000

* Women for whom no age was reported are excluded.

TABLE 4-B
EVER-MARRIED WOMEN BY PRESENT AGE AND AGE AT MARRIAGE
1960 CENSUS*

BIRTH PERIOD	PRE-SENT AGE	EVER-MARRIED WOMEN	AGE AT MARRIAGE					
			Under 20	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40 and over
1945-1960	Under 15	2140	2140					
1940-1944	15-19	174170	174170					
1935-1939	20-24	688810	472170	216640				
1930-1934	25-29	792410	422280	307810	62320			
1925-1929	30-34	691350	331790	254700	89480	15380		
1920-1924	35-39	663530	320020	240930	74960	21730	5890	
1915-1919	40-44	496550	210370	193250	62680	20140	7830	2280
1910-1914	45-49	463520	183440	178170	67140	21850	8900	4020
1905-1909	50-54	311920	118490	115080	50950	17140	6290	3970
1900-1904	55-59	217640	86320	78770	34100	11200	4230	3020
1895-1899	60-64	180250	70880	65560	27560	9990	3360	2900
To 1895	65+	334460	130140	120290	55780	17580	6130	4540
	All ages	5016750	2522210	1771200	524970	135010	42630	20730

* Women for whom no age was reported are excluded.

Proper interpretation of these data requires cognizance of several sources of difficulty inherent in the sources of information or in the format in which the data appear.

Firstly, the data represent only surviving, ever-married women from original birth cohorts; thus, they provide no information on women in original birth cohorts who chose to remain single, an important group from the standpoint of marital patterns.

Secondly, the percentage distributions computed from the basic data (see Tables 5-A and 5-B) are easily misinterpreted. The percent distribution by age at marriage of women under age 20, for example, gives the proportion of women in that age group which had married by enumeration day. It does not yield the ultimate proportion of women in the cohort which would have married under age 20. To allow for this factor, we must limit our analysis of cohort experience to women age 30 and over in Table 4-A and to women age 40 and over in Table 4-B.

Thirdly, the data are for five-year age groups for both present age and age at marriage. This grouping necessarily results in a loss of information. We must assume that women married within each age interval were married at the mid-point of the interval, an assumption which is not justified. Women married at age 15 to 19, for example, were married at an average age centering closer to age 20 than to age 15.

Fourthly, analysis of certain duration-of-marriage groups must be ommitted because they are not fully represented in the tables. Marriage duration groups (represented by the diagonal lines) with durations longer than 30-40 years and 20-30 years in the 1965 and 1960 data, respectively, have not been considered. Note that these duration groups

are greatly depleted at the later ages of marriage.

Lastly, the cumulative effect of mortality upon the distributions by age at marriage of successive birth cohorts and marriage duration groups must be clearly recognized: (1) for successive birth cohorts (the horizontal lines), mortality will affect the analysis only if its effect is differential by marital status. No data are available on this point, and the effect of mortality in the age range including most first marriages is assumed to be negligible; (2) the influence of mortality on successive marriage duration groups (the diagonal lines) is quite different and must be kept in mind. For any duration group (any diagonal line in Table 4-A or 4-B), women with a later age at marriage are

necessarily older on the survey date, and have had a smaller probability of surviving to the survey period. Thus, the distributions of women by age at marriage for successively longer marriage duration groups are increasingly biased toward the younger ages at marriage, and the medians computed are thus progressively understated as duration of marriage increases.

The retrospective data under review here must be considered in the light of the above discussion. Tables 5-A and 5-B present the percentage distributions of ever-married women by age at marriage for successive birth cohorts for the 1956 PSSH and the 1960 Census data, respectively.

TABLE 5-A
PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF EVER-MARRIED WOMEN
BY AGE AT MARRIAGE, BIRTH COHORTS, MAY, 1956 PSSH

BIRTH PERIOD	PRESENT AGE	A G E A T M A R R I A G E				
		Under 15	15-19	20-24	25-29	30 & Over
1922-1926	30-34	4.00	48.57	30.48	14.39	2.56
1917-1921	35-39	3.61	50.65	28.62	13.06	4.05
1912-1916	40-44	2.98	46.10	32.49	12.30	6.13
1907-1911	45-49	6.11	43.74	30.96	11.52	7.66
1902-1906	50-54	7.55	46.16	29.86	8.97	7.46
1897-1901	55-59	6.15	48.24	27.42	10.40	7.80
1892-1896	60-64	7.80	46.87	27.48	10.18	7.67
1887-1891	65+	7.01	40.99	32.12	13.04	6.83

The data suggest the absence of any trend in the marriage patterns experienced by successive birth cohorts of Philippine women. This is seen in the median ages at marriage for these birth cohorts, presented in Table 6. The medians fluctuate, with no apparent trend, for both sets of data. However, these retrospective data do not allow analysis of changes in mar-

riage patterns for younger cohorts, precisely those cohorts for which an incipient change in marriage patterns might be observed. Thus, the retrospective data for successive birth cohorts do not adequately test the hypothesis that the age at marriage of Filipino women has recently been rising.

TABLE 5-B
PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF EVER-MARRIED WOMEN
BY AGE AT MARRIAGE, BIRTH COHORTS, 1960 CENSUS

BIRTH PERIOD	PRESENT AGE	AGE AT MARRIAGE					
		Under 20	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40 & Over
1915-1919	40-44	42.47	38.92	12.62	4.06	1.58	0.46
1910-1914	45-49	39.58	38.44	14.48	4.71	1.92	0.87
1905-1909	50-54	37.99	36.89	16.33	5.49	2.02	1.27
1900-1904	55-59	39.66	36.19	15.67	5.15	1.94	1.39
1895-1899	60-64	39.32	36.37	15.29	5.54	1.86	1.61
To 1895	65+	38.91	35.96	16.68	5.26	1.83	1.36

TABLE 6
MEDIAN AGES AT MARRIAGE,
BIRTH COHORTS
MAY, 1956 PSSH AND 1960 CENSUS

1956 PSSH		1960 CENSUS	
BIRTH COHORT (Present Age)	MEDIAN	BIRTH COHORT (Present Age)	MEDIAN
30-34	19.7	40-44	21.0
35-39	19.6	45-49	21.4
40-44	20.1	50-54	21.6
45-49	20.0	55-59	21.4
50-54	19.6	60-64	21.5
55-59	19.5	65+	21.5
60-64	19.5		
65+	20.3		

A disturbing feature of these data is that the 1956 and 1960 figures are clearly incompatible. One or both sets of data misrepresents actual marriage patterns. Medians computed from the 1960 cohort data are consistently higher than those for 1956. The two surveys were less than five years apart and we should therefore expect the median for any five-year age group in 1960 to approximate the median for the adjacent age group in 1956. For example, women age 45 to 49 in 1960 - - who make up the majority of the women age 40 to 44 in 1956 - - have a median age at first marriage of 21.4 years compared with 20.1 years for the younger group in 1956. The reliability of neither source can be demonstrated conclusively with the information at hand, but evidence suggests that the 1956 PSSH data are somewhat more reliable than those from the 1960 Census sample. The median ages at marriage for successive birth cohorts and marriage duration groups in the 1960 data are higher than would seem plausible in the light of the vital statistics results. Also, the medians for marriage duration groups in the 1960 data (see Table 8) show large fluctuations, diminishing the usefulness of these data. Lorimer's comparison of data taken from various censuses and PSSH rounds, on children ever-born per ever-married woman, provides a further indication that the 1960 Census sample data may be deficient.[10] He selected the 1956 PSSH data on children-ever-born over similar data from the 1960 Census sample.

In the light of this scattered and inconclusive evidence, we have taken the 1956 PSSH results to be fairly represen-

[10] See Frank Lorimer, op. cit., 231-235.

tative of true marriage patterns, and have
assumed that the 1960 Census marriage
patterns are greatly influenced by errors.
This conclusion is highly tentative and the
accuracy of these and other surveys is
an important area for future investigation.

Tables 7-A and 7-B present the basic
data rearranged to show the percentage

distributions of ever-married women by
age at marriage for successive marriage
duration groups. This arrangement of the
allows analysis of patterns in the age at
marriage of women married in successive
calendar periods, similar to the analysis
above based on the marriage registration
data.

TABLE 7-A
PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF EVER-MARRIED WOMEN
BY AGE AT MARRIAGE, DURATION GROUPS, MAY, 1956 PSSH

DURATION (In Years)	AGE AT MARRIAGE				
	Under 15	15-19	20-24	25-29	30 & Over
0- 5	0.45	40.64	43.26	11.75	3.37
0-10	1.65	52.01	31.74	11.69	2.88
5-15	3.02	51.37	29.96	11.25	4.38
10-20	4.28	52.88	27.31	9.73	5.77
15-25	4.82	53.37	28.38	9.59	3.83
20-30	4.90	51.94	33.22	5.93	3.98
25-35	4.27	59.75	25.13	6.75	4.07
30-40	10.82	50.38	23.08	7.02	8.68

TABLE 7-B
PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF EVER-MARRIED WOMEN
BY AGE AT MARRIAGE, DURATION GROUPS, 1960 CENSUS

DURATION (In Years)	AGE AT MARRIAGE				
	Under 20	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40 & Over
0- 5	36.54	45.45	13.07	3.23	1.24	0.48
0-10	52.29	34.09	9.91	2.41	0.87	0.45
5-15	53.80	32.45	9.55	2.57	1.13	0.57
10-20	49.78	36.15	9.40	3.28	0.94	0.45
15-25	52.92	31.96	11.10	2.83	0.70	0.48
20-30	45.87	38.85	11.11	2.44	0.73	0.99

The 1956 PSSH data suggest a steadily
declining proportion of marriages occur-
ing to women under age 20. The per-
centage of women marrying under 20
is 61.2% for those women married from

30 to 40 years in 1956 (i.e., married in
the period 1917-1926); however, this figure
declines to 53.7% for women married 0
to 10 years (married in the period 1947-
1956). This is followed by a sharper de-

cline to 41.1% for women married 0 to 5 years in 1956. The percentage of women in each duration group marrying at age 20 to 24 increases from 23 to 43% over the same time period. These percentages suggest a tendency for women who previously married before age 20 to postpone marriage until after their twentieth birthday. The pattern is not as apparent in the 1960 Census data (Table 7-B), except for the 0 to 5 years duration group, in which a sharp decline in the proportion of women marrying under age 20 is also observed. These patterns result in the median ages at marriage for successive marriage duration groups shown in Table 8.

TABLE 8

MEDIAN AGES AT MARRIAGE MARRIAGE DURATION GROUPS, MAY, 1956 PSSH AND 1960 CENSUS

1956 PSSH		1960 CENSUS	
DURA-TION (In Years)	MEDIAN	DURA-TION (In Years)	MEDIAN
0-5	21.0	0-5	21.5
0-10	19.6	0-10	19.8
5-15	19.6	5-15	19.6
10-20	19.3	10-20	20.0
15-25	19.2	15-25	19.7
20-30	19.3	20-30	20.5
25-35	18.8		
30-40	18.9		

These medians suggest a clear trend toward a rising median age at marriage for recent marriage groups, corroborating the earlier findings of other researchers. These researchers, examining the 1956 PSSH and 1960 Census data, noted a trend toward a rising median age at marriage and a very sharp rise in the most recent dura-

tion group.[11] However, several considerations, detailed below, place serious qualifications upon this straight forward interpretation of the upward trend in median age at marriage observed in both sets of data.

The apparent rise in median age at marriage for the 0-5 year duration group in each table results from each cell in the 0-5 year diagonal being incomplete. That is, the 0-5 year duration group is composed of married women presently age 15-19 and married at age 15-19, presently age 20-24 and married at age 20-24, and so on. However, the diagonal does not include women in each age group who are single at the survey date but who will be married before they enter the next age group. This factor has created an upward bias in the medians shown in Table 8, since the age-at-marriage groups under 20 are relatively less complete than those over age 20. That is, most women age 15-19 who marry in that age range do so late in the period (near age 20), and most women age 20-24 who marry in that age range do so early in the period (also near age 20).

Also, the lower median ages at marriage noted among the longer duration groups are largely explained by the cumulative effect of mortality upon the original cohorts of women. Every diagonal is composed of groups of women of successively older achieved ages on the survey date, and each of these groups of women is successively more depleted by mortality. The 25-35 year duration group in Table 7-A, for example, contains women who were married at age 15-19 and who were

[11] Mercedes B. Concepcion, *op. cit.*, Table 4, p. 21; and Adriana Cruz-Regudo, "Fertility Patterns of Ever-Married Women in the Ilocos, Central Luzon and Bicol Regions: 1960," (Unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of the Philippines, 1965), Table 10, p. 35.

45-49 years of age in 1956. These women had not been greatly diminished by mortality, whereas those who married at age 30 or over were 55-65 years of age and relatively more diminished by mortality in 1956. Thus, for each marriage duration group in the tables, women with later ages at marriage tend to be under-represented. This effect is felt more stongly as duration of marriage increases; thus, the median ages at marriage in Table 8 are seriously understated for the longest duration-of-marriage groups.

The effect of this mortality factor was assessed by utilizing life table survival ratios to "revive" women of successive age gorups in the duration diagonals. Women were revived to their age at marriage, and median ages at marriage were computed from the numbers of women shown at each age at marriage after the effect of mortality was eliminated. This procedure was performed on the 30-40 year duration group in the May, 1956 data from Table 4-A. Each set of women by age at marriage within the diagonal was revived to its respective age at marriage, according to the survivorship schedule represented by United Nations mortality level 65 ($e^{o}_{0} = 52.5$).[12] For example, women married at age 15-19 who were age 50-54 were revived to age 15-19. With the effect of mortality "eliminated" in this manner, the median age at marriage was 20.7. This rperesents an increase of 1.8 years over the median of 18.9 computed from the original distribution of women. This particular estimate is probably too high, but the procedure does demonstrate that the upward trend in median age at marriage observed for successive marriage duration groups largely, if not entirely,

reflects the action of mortality upon the cohorts involved.

In addition to these basic considerations, there are several kinds of errors characteristic of all retrospective sample data. These are, briefly, sampling error, faulty recall respondents, and misstatement of present age. In asking age at first marriage, we also risk errors due to the use of age at re-marriage, age at legal or religious ceremony rather than age at actual first union, and the deliberate use of an age at marriage adjusted to ages of visible children.

In summary, data from independent retrospective surveys, the May, 1956 PSSH and the 1960 Census, have indicated patterns of age at marriage for successive birth cohorts and marriage duration groups of ever-married women. The 1956 data have been tentatively accepted as best reflecting the true level of age at marriage. The medians for birth cohorts show to trend. However, on the whole, they refer to marriages which occurred well before 1960. The medians for duration groups show sharp rises for both sets of data, but it has been demonstrated that these probably do not represent actual age-at-marriage patterns.

The Indicated Level and Trend in Age at Marriage: Summary

The three types of data examined here provide somewhat divergent pictures of Philippine marriage patterns. They do corroborate one another to a certain extent, however. The level of age at marriage can be set at about 20 years for females and 22.5 for males. This is slightly lower than the series of medians computed from the vital statistics data, which probably overstate the true annual medians. The retrospective data (1956

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[12] This is the mortality level for 1960 utilized by Frank Lorimer, *op. cit.*

(PSSH) seem to support this estimate although interpretation of these data is much less clear.

There is no clear evidence of a trend toward a rising age at marriage among females. The registration data show a rise in the median between 1956 and 1960, but this does not continue in the period 1961-1964. It is only possible, at best, that a long-term rise in age at marriage is reflected in these data. The sharp upward trend seen in the retrospective data has been shown to be essentially spurious.

Differentials in Age at Marriage

The two sets of retrospective data allow a discussion of marriage patterns among certain sub-groups of population. It is important to supplement a discussion of marriage patterns for the total population with an analysis of patterns among certain population sub-groups, since the social forces which encourage later marriage operate most strongly on particular socio-economic groups. Generally speaking, these are the urban dwellers rather than the rural population and persons of higher educational and economic status levels. By studying marriage patterns for population sub-groups, we can better understand the manner in which shifts in national patterns might come about.

The May, 1966 PSSH provides a breakdown of the ever-married population by urban and rural residence, with each residence group presented in five-year age classes of present age and age at marriage. The 1960 Census retrospective data are are available for various religious groups and for different educational levels . Patterns discernible in these data are briefly as follows.

The age at marriage is higher for urban than for rural women, not a surprising result. Educational level is directly related to the median age at marriage, except for women with no education. The data for women classified by religion are largely inconclusive but suggest that Buddhists have a median age at marriage considerably higher than any other religious groups.

These results lend some credence to a conclusion that the Philippine age at marriage has shown a slight rise in the recent past. We might also project from these data, that the age at marriage will rise, albeit very slowly, in the future.

There has been little discernible shift from rural to urban residence in the period from 1948 to 1960. However, the building of roads and the expansion of mass communications have led to a widening of the influence of the city on rural life. Furthermore, this influence is bound to increase in the future, particularly as cities other than Manila grow to be truly urban in character. Thus, a higher age at marriage in urban areas suggests that the age at marriage for all women may be influenced by the urban environment in future years.

Educational achievement among Filipinos - - already high by regional and even world standards - - has risen modestly in recent years, and must be considered a factor exerting pressure toward a rise in the age at marriage. While the relationship between industrialization and the age at marriage is not entirely clear, it seems reasonable to assume that overall change in the economic structure of the Philippines would tend to delay marriage for many young couples.

Conclusion

The relationship between age at marriage and fertility has not been considered in detail in this paper. Interest in the age at marriage of Filipinos has centered on the effect of this factor on fertility, and thus, it is important that a final comment be directed to this resultant of marriage patterns. Several important questions must be answered. How large a decline in the Philippine birth rate seems necessary to relieve pressure from this source? To what extent can shifts in the age at marriage contribute to this decline (a relevant factor here is the present level of age at marriage, already at the U.S. level or higher)? How large a rise in the median age at marriage will be required to produce the desired effect on the birth rate, and over how long a period of time?[13] How quickly or slowly is the Philippine age at marriage rising at present? It is realistic to assume that the required shifts can be brought about, either by changes in social and economic climate, or by public policy? Finally, the broad repercussions of shifts in age-at-marriage patterns upon family structure and the society at large need to be carefully considered.

The present paper suggests that any recent rise in age at marriage, if indeed there has been a rise, has been small, so small as to make measurement difficult. Continuation of these marriage patterns can have but little effect on Philippine fertility.

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[13] For a rough initial attempt to relate marital patterns and fertility, see Frank Lorimer, *op. cit.*, pp. 291-232.