



New Path to Marriage: The Significance of Increasing Cohabitation in the Philippines

Midea M Kabamalan^{**}

I. INTRODUCTION

Marriage is a major social institution. It is a key element of the social structure and as a part of the system, it is connected to other social institutions (Goode, 1982; Nock, 1998; Waite & Gallagher, 2000). As an institution, it is bound by legal and social principles. It accords benefits, as well as expectations to those who subscribe to it and married people are treated accordingly by other members of the society. As Davis (1985: 4) argues, “public approval and recognition is the only trait that constitutes the unique character of marriage” compared with other forms of unions. Marriage is the foundation of the family and as such, it is the venue for sexual activity, child bearing and child rearing and where coresidence is expected.

However, marriage is changing. In western countries, some social scientists believe that marriage has been transformed into or demoted to a “purely private” or “just another” relationship (Blankenhorn, 1997: 15; Waite & Gallagher, 2000: 8). Some argue that this is due to the growing independence of women brought about by improvement in their educational attainment and better employment opportunities.

Others tend to attribute changes in marriage to ideational factors. Norms and values are

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** Graduate student, Department of Sociology, University of Hawaii at Manoa, and Data Processing Coordinator, 2002 Young Adult Fertility & Sexuality Study

also changing, and as a consequence the meaning of marriage has been transformed (Pagnini & Rindfuss, 1993; Thornton, 1989). In most western societies, premarital sex is now approved of and nonmarital childbearing has become acceptable. This debunks the previously held notion of marriage as a prerequisite for sexual gratification and having children. (Tucker, 2000).

Moreover, the increase of cohabitation as an alternative family form has given rise to the belief that the institution of marriage has weakened. Bumpass, Sweet and Cherlin (1991) have shown that cohabitation has offset the sharp declines in first marriage rates in the United States. Compared with marriage, however, cohabitation is generally perceived as inferior. In most cases, it is short-lived and may be temporary as couples could either go separately or continue with the union through marriage. It is believed to be selective of people who have liberal views about marriage and divorce. People in cohabiting unions tend to be younger and less religious.

But like marriage, cohabitation has a strong economic nature. Those wanting to form unions but are economically insecure may choose cohabitation over marriage (Thornton, Axinn, and Teachman, 1995). This view is shared by Seltzer (2000) who shows that cohabitation is more common among those with less education and with more constrained economic resources. Likewise, Carter (1999: 274) opines that "the prevalence of cohabitation might be a consequence of economic necessity rather than a preferred lifestyle for the least educated." This she attributes to the less initial economic commitment required of cohabiting unions compared with marriage.

There is also the view that cohabitation is a part of the process toward marriage, after dating and courtship. Such framework considers cohabitation as a trial period before embarking on a formal and more permanent union. Still, others consider it as just another form of living arrangement (Rindfuss and VandenHeuvel, 1990; Wiersma, 1983).

Paradoxically, despite the presence of this alternative marital arrangement, people still value, desire, and aspire marriage and parenthood (Thornton, 1989; Waite & Gallagher, 2000). But while marriage is highly valued, there are economic issues to consider (Tucker, 2000). It is a prevalent perception that maintaining a family entails resources. There is the expense for daily living, the education needs of children, and the general wellbeing of the family. This can perhaps bridge the seeming disjoint explanations of union formation. Marriage is ideal but other (practical) considerations may fall into the picture.

In the Philippines, cohabitation is not really a novel phenomenon. Its existence has been documented in textbooks for decades (although it remains a small section in the discussion on marriage and family). Estimating the proportion of the population in cohabiting unions however is quite difficult given limited data sources. Two forms of cohabitation—consensual marriage and the *querida* system—have been practiced in the country for a long time (Hunt, Quisumbing, Espiritu, Costello, and Lacar, 1987; Scott, 1994). Consensual marriage is one where

the relationship is seen as permanent but one that is not sanctioned by a formal marriage ceremony. Some relationships are long-lasting that these were treated as substitute to marriage to avoid any expense associated with having a wedding ceremony. The other form of cohabitation, the *querida* system, is the keeping of a second wife or family. While both are publicly known, the latter is considered more problematic especially when seen from the point of view of the people whose norms were predominantly influenced by Catholic teachings. For Catholics, monogamy is the rule and marriage is a sacrament. The wedding is a religious event as much as it is a public affair. Even civil marriages are frowned upon such that some couples married by public officials eventually go through a church wedding later (Medina, 1991). This was the case for some married people in Metro Manila in the mid-1970s. Twenty percent of them had a civil wedding preceding their church wedding (Vancio, 1977).

This suggests very strong norms against cohabitation in the Philippines, although media articles in most recent times tend to show otherwise. By focusing on the personal lives of popular personalities particularly those in the entertainment industry and politics, the media have unwittingly challenged the conservative view towards living-in. But while personal views may have changed, the perception of the opinion of others may have remained the same (see Fields and Schuman, 1976). In addition, there is a feeling of ambivalence when it comes to cohabitation. For example, Williams, Kabamalan and Ogena (2001) find that some Filipino men admit that it is all right for them to cohabit but they would prefer that their children and grandchildren would marry. To a certain extent, this also implies a weakening of the norm against cohabitation. Moreover, the stigma people are afraid of, in reality, may not be present anymore, for stigma has a temporal quality (Falk, 2001).

In addition, stigmatization may not translate into other concrete negative sanctions. For example, children born to cohabiting parents are not “punished” because it is believed that it was not their choice to be in such a situation. The government had likewise made provisions in the inheritance laws to protect rights of children from these marital arrangements. It is possible then, that the norms and implicit societal sanctions take the back seat when other concerns occur—like that of a new life status, or economic standing. As Coontz (1997) argues, referring to U.S. experience, “stigmatization would not necessarily prevent unwed motherhood among impoverished women.” The same may be true in the Philippines although in the first place, Eviota (1994) believes that sexual mores may not have been effectively embedded among the poor Filipinos. Hunt et al (1963) believe that cohabitation is a substitute for marriage especially among the lower class. Additionally, while marriage remains desirable, it is postponed due to financial inadequacy (Williams, Kabamalan, and Ogena, 2001).

This paper documents changes in marriage patterns in the Philippines with special focus on cohabitation. In particular, I examine these changes between 1994 and 2002 and document the characteristics of those who cohabit and compare them with those who married or stayed single in terms of sex, education, main activity, religiosity, and parental guidance until

the youth reached age 15. Moreover, I explore how cohabitation has become a stage in the marriage process in the Philippines. Finally, I examine the relationship between attitude toward cohabitation and behavior in 2002.

In this paper, "marriage" or "being married" are used to mean that there was a wedding ceremony (regardless of type, i.e., church or civil) recognized by the state that took place to begin the union. In contrast, "cohabitation" is used to refer to the practice of living together of two individuals like married couples without going through a wedding ceremony. "Union" is used to collectively refer to both. At times, the terms "formal" or "legal" are used to describe the "marriage" for emphasis.

Marriage in the Philippine: Trend and Patterns

As mentioned earlier, cohabitation has been existing in the Philippines for a long time but no statistical data are available to provide information about its level of prevalence. The only estimate available is from the study of Vancio (1977) on marriages in Metro Manila. He found two percent of his sample in common-law marriages.

However, it is now possible to estimate their numbers on a national scale. According to the Philippine Census, in the year 2000, there are more than 2.4 million Filipinos who are cohabitating and 18% of them are between ages 20-24. Table 1 shows that among the 20-to 24-year-olds, the proportion never married has remained fairly stable. Since the 1990s, the proportion never married has hovered around 66%. Consequently, the proportion ever been in a union is about 34%.

However, the character of union is changing. Filipinos continue to form unions but they do not necessarily "marry." Data show that there are increasing numbers who are in cohabiting unions. Almost all of those who are in union in 1990 (35%) were legally married while those who cohabit were very few. Ten years later, the proportion legally married dropped to 27%, and the decline was obviously absorbed by cohabitation. Over 6% are in cohabiting unions in 2000 and they now comprise about 19% of all those who are currently in union. Estimates using data from the Young Adult Fertility and Sexuality Studies, the main data source of this paper, reveal higher levels of cohabitation¹ and likewise show an increase between 1994 and 2002. The increase manifested for both males and females, although females show higher levels of cohabitation compared with males.

Data and Methods

This paper uses survey data from the Young Adult Fertility and Sexuality Studies (YAFS) in 1994 and 2002. Both are national in scope and cover a wide range of topics including marriage and cohabitation. The 1994 data surveyed all youth ages 15 to 24 while the 2002 data included those ages 25 to 27 years as well.² But for the purpose of this paper, only individuals ages 20-24 will be used here for comparison to be possible. This decision is also

TABLE 1. Percent distribution of population^a 20-24 years old, by sex and marital status: Philippines, 1990 to 2002

Sex and marital status	Census			YAFS	
	1990	1995	2000	1994	2002
Both sexes					
Never married	64.5	66.0	65.8	66.4	66.6
(Legally) married	34.7	30.6	27.0	25.1	21.8
Common-law/Living-in	0.2	2.7	6.4	7.8	10.6
Separated/Widowed	0.7	0.6	0.8	0.7	1.0
Males					
Never married	73.3	74.5	74.1	78.3	81.0
(Legally) married	26.2	22.7	19.6	15.0	10.6
Common-law/Living-in	0.2	2.4	5.9	6.3	7.8
Separated/Widowed	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.4	0.6
Females					
Never married	55.8	57.5	57.5	55.3	54.6
(Legally) married	43.0	38.5	34.4	34.6	31.1
Common-law/Living-in	0.3	3.0	7.0	9.2	13.0
Separated/Widowed	1.0	0.9	1.1	0.9	1.3

^a Excludes institutional population

Sources: Census of Population and Housing and Young Adult Fertility and Sexuality Survey for years specified.

due to the rather limited experience of the youth 15-19 when it comes to marriage and cohabitation.

To examine differences in patterns by selected characteristics, multinomial logistic regression was used. This statistical method enables for the control of the effects of the other variables in the model. The resulting coefficients were then used to compute for adjusted percentages shown in Tables 4 and 5 (see Retherford and Choe, 1993). The examination of the relationship between attitude toward marriage and cohabitation and union status, however, will only focus on 2002 simply because comparable questions were not asked in 1994.

These survey data are complemented with information from in-depth interviews conducted in selected regions of the country—Leyte in Eastern Visayas, Sultan Kudarat in Central Mindanao, and Metro Manila. Eastern Visayas consistently ranks first in level of cohabitation. Central Mindanao has comparatively low cohabitation rates and high marriage rates. Metro Manila ranks among the top five regions with high cohabitation levels. The

respondents were selected from the 2002 YAFS survey data mainly due to their cohabitation experience.

II. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Compositional Changes in Youth Population Ages 20-24

Between 1994 and 2002, no dramatic changes have occurred in the composition of the youth population 20 to 24 years old (Table 2). The male population decreased from 48% in 1994 to 45% in 2002.

Their educational attainment has generally improved during the period. There are more

TABLE 2. Distribution of respondents ages 20-24 by selected characteristics: Philippines 1994 & 2002

Selected characteristics	Year	
	1994	2002
Sex		
Male	47.7	45.3
Female	52.3	54.7
Education		
Lower than high school	20.4	11.3
High school	41.3	42.5
Higher than high school	38.3	46.2
Main activity		
None/Unemployed/Housework	40.8	45.3
Working/Unpaid family worker	40.9	35.3
Student	18.3	19.3
Religiosity		
Attend services > once a week	9.4	7.5
Attend services once a week	44.7	35.2
Attend services 1-3 times/wk	21.8	22.5
Rarely/Never attend services	24.1	34.8
Person/s who raised the youth		
One parent and/or others	15.9	18.0
Both parents	84.1	82.0
Total	100.0	100.0
N of cases	4,422	6,338

youth who reached at least high school level education in 2002 (89%) than in 1994 (80%). Consequently, only 11% of the youth in 2002 had low education, a figure that is much lower than in 1994 (20%). Bearing in mind that the educational system in the Philippines would require six years in elementary schooling, four years in high school, and another four years for a college degree, one can graduate by age 20. Thus it is not surprising to find few of these youth reporting to be in school (18% in 1994 and 19% in 2002). However, there are more youth in 2002 (45%) who reported not doing anything, unemployed, or doing housework than in 1994 (41%). In contrast, there was a decrease in the proportion of working youth during the same time period.

Findings also show that the youth are getting to be less religious in general. Using attendance at religious services as a measure of religiosity, fewer people attend religious services at least once a week and more people reported they rarely or never attend religious services in 2002 (35%) than in 1994 (24%). Youth raised by both parents have decreased slightly from 84% in 1994 to 82% in 2002.

Formation of First Unions

As shown earlier, the proportions of youth who have never been in a union have remained the same between 1994 and 2002. Table 3, which refers to first union experience³, necessarily shows similar numbers for those who have never been in a union. As discussed earlier, the character of union in the Philippines is changing because formal marriage has declined and this was compensated by cohabitation. However, aside from this compensating effect of cohabitation on marriage, there is also indication that cohabitation is more prevalent than Table 1 shows. Table 3 reveals that some of those who formally married have actually cohabited prior to the wedding. Of those already married in 1994 (26%), almost half (47%) were in live-in arrangement before the formal marriage. In 2002, this proportion increased to 54%, consequently reducing the proportion of those who formally married without going through a cohabitation episode. The proportion of those who passed through living-in stage and have married already by the time of survey, remained at the same levels during the two time points.

In Table 4, the distribution of youth's first union status by selected characteristics is shown. The percentages were adjusted to control for the effects of the other variables in the model. Those who have never been in a union are more likely to be males, have reached educational level higher than high school, most likely doing something productive like being in school or working, attends religious services more than once a week, and were raised by both parents at least until they reached age 15. These patterns hold for both survey years.

Table 5 provides a distribution of youth's first union status by selected characteristics.

TABLE 3. Percent distribution of youth ages 20-24 by first union status by sex: Philippines, 1994 and 2002

Union status	1994			2002		
	Both sexes	Male	Female	Both sexes	Male	Female
Never been						
in union	66.5	78.3	55.6	66.6	81.0	54.7
Ever been						
in union	33.5	21.7	44.4	33.4	19.0	45.3
Marry only	13.6	7.7	19.1	10.1	5.2	14.2
Live-in only	7.8	6.3	9.1	11.5	8.3	14.1
Live-in then marry	12.1	7.7	16.2	11.8	5.5	17.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	4,514	2,178	2,336	6,365	2,883	3,479
Ever married	25.7	15.4	35.3	21.9	10.7	31.2
Ever lived-in	19.9	14.0	25.3	23.3	13.8	31.1

The percentages were also adjusted to control for the effects of the other variables in the model. The table shows that in 1994, females are more likely than males to marry. Likewise, those who are not very religious, and those who were raised by both parents have higher proportions in married state compared with the other groups. The same can be said in 2002 although a different pattern emerged for main activity. If in 1994, main activity did not matter, eight years later, a significant difference emerged. The working youth became more likely to marry than those who were not working.

Cohabitation seems to attract a different group of people, in fact, the converse of those who were married. This time, males, the lower educated, and those who were not raised by both parents, are more likely to cohabit than their counterparts. And while the patterns remained the same for 1994 and 2002, the differences became more evident in 2002 than in the previous survey year. For example, there is a higher increase in cohabitation among males than females and this results to a wider gap between sexes as the males have already had higher levels of cohabitation in 1994. The same widened gap occurred between those working and not working, and between those raised by both parents and not raised by both parents.

In 1994, living-in was not very popular among the very religious, i.e., those who attended religious services more than once a week were not likely to be in live-in arrangement. An interesting pattern emerged in 2002 where the highest increase in cohabitation was found among the very religious. In 1994, 14% of the very religious reported they were cohabiting. This rose to 31% in 2002. Among those who were not religious, 25 and 39 per cent were in

TABLE 4. Adjusted percent distribution of first union status of youth ages 20-24 by selected characteristics: Philippines, 1994 and 2002

Selected characteristics	1994			2002		
	Never been in a union	Ever been in a union	N of cases	Never been in a union	Ever been in a union	N of cases
Sex-						
Male	81.4	18.6	2,109	85.4	14.6	2,874
Female	59.7	40.3	2,313	60.6	39.4	3,465
Education						
Lower than high school	61.0	39.0	902	57.8	42.2	715
High school	67.4	32.6	1,825	67.1	32.9	2,693
Higher than high school	79.6	20.4	1,695	81.9	18.1	2,930
Main activity						
None/Unemployed/ Housework	56.8	43.2	1,805	58.0	42.0	2,871
Working/Unpaid family worker	70.1	29.9	1,807	69.9	30.1	2,245
Student	92.2	7.8	810	95.6	4.4	1,222
Religiosity						
Attend services > once a wk	79.1	20.9	417	79.2	20.8	475
Attend services once a wk	73.0	27.0	1,977	74.8	25.2	2,228
Attend services 1-3 times/wk	66.3	33.7	963	72.3	27.7	1,427
Rarely/Never attend services	69.1	30.9	1,066	72.5	27.5	2,208
Person who raised the youth						
One parent and/or others	67.4	32.6	705	68.3	31.7	1,142
Both parents	72.0	28.0	3,717	74.9	25.1	5,196

cohabiting unions in 1994 and 2002, respectively.

Interestingly, those who cohabited before marrying were statistically no different from those who married without cohabiting. Or stated differently, those who were living-in before marrying resembled characteristics similar to those who married directly. This may imply that the factors that propel a marriage without cohabitation also acts the same way as to hasten a marriage if one does cohabit first. In 2002, those who cohabited before marrying were in such state for 14 months on average while those who were still living-in had done so for 30 months already.

TABLE 5. Adjusted percent distribution of youth ages 20-24 ever been in union by selected characteristics: Philippines, 1994 and 2002

Selected characteristics	1994				2002			
	Marry only	Live-in only	Live-in, marry	N of cases	Marry only	Live-in only	Live-in, marry	N of cases
Sex								
Male	48.5	27.8	23.7	457	45.2	45.4	9.4	548
Female	54.3	20.2	25.5	1,031	46.4	29.8	23.8	1,572
Education								
Lower than high school	56.7	30.4	12.9	419	51.1	42.3	6.6	363
High school	48.6	22.2	29.2	730	44.3	37.3	18.4	1,138
Higher than high school	55.8	14.9	29.3	339	46.6	23.1	30.3	618
Main activity								
Not working	52.4	22.5	25.1	960	43.8	34.8	21.4	1,451
Working	52.8	22.2	25.0	528	51.3	30.8	17.9	668
Religiosity								
Attend services > once a wk	59.3	13.5	27.2	99	52.9	30.9	16.2	131
Attend services once a wk	52.4	22.4	25.2	624	44.5	28.5	27.0	732
Attend services 1-3 times/wk	50.5	22.8	26.7	370	46.5	34.0	19.5	518
Rarely/Never attend services	52.9	24.7	22.4	396	46.1	39.2	14.7	738
Person who raised the youth								
One parent and/or others	48.0	26.3	25.7	276	42.0	43.4	14.6	468
Both parents	53.6	21.6	24.8	1,212	47.3	31.0	21.7	1,651

Cohabitation as Part of the Marriage Process

The data do not necessarily imply that marriage has become unpopular for the Filipinos in general. Remember that the analysis is limited to 20-24 years old, and thus, the probability of marriage in the future is high.⁴ If at all, these data might suggest two interrelated things: that marriage is being postponed and that cohabitation has become a stage in the marital process.

That marriage is continuously being postponed in the Philippines is evident from the increasing singulate mean age at marriage (SMAM) or the average length of time spent in singlehood. In 1960, SMAM for males was 25 years and for females, it was 22 years (Xenos and Gultiano 1992). These increased to 26 and 24 years, respectively for males and females in 2000.⁵ Theoretically speaking, however, the estimates for 2000 could even be higher by about

one year each for both males and females if those who are cohabiting will be treated as still single. Cohabiting couples do not register their union in the civil registrar until they do formally marry.

So why do young people cohabit? Reasons for such decision vary among young people. In 2002, 36% said they opted for such arrangement for economic reasons. Twenty three percent cited pregnancy, while 15% said they wanted to try if marriage would work for them. Thirteen percent admitted they were too young to marry, or because their parents did not allow them to marry and they had not finished school (3%), or simply because they did not have the necessary documents needed to marry (2%). Except for economic reasons, these are straightforward justifications for choosing cohabitation over formal marriage. But what exactly it is about finances that drive people to cohabit cannot be deduced from the survey data but which qualitative data can provide.

Interviews conducted among young people did not suggest a strong desire for the couples to be financially stable first before going through a wedding. Rather, most of them indicated the need for money to use for the wedding, especially for the reception and/or for the paperwork needed for the wedding. As MFM said, "We don't have money yet to have a wedding. Don't we need to have a gathering, a reception?" Similarly, LCP said, "It's a shame to have a wedding without a reception, a celebration." Obviously, these young people view marriage as a celebration that should be shared with family, friends and neighbors.

"Mass wedding" programs organized by either the church or by politicians could not be had either because they still did not have money to spend for the documents needed to get a marriage license. This was aggravated by the fact that some did not have a birth certificate or could not get one. MFM said her partner did not have a birth certificate and was, in the first place, not registered because he was delivered by a "hilot" (traditional birth attendant). Similarly, LCB said she did not have a birth certificate and did not know enough information about the circumstances of her birth to make it easier to get one. Hence, cohabitation was prolonged.

This was sustained by the belief or practice that one has to get married civilly first and then get married in church, as found in Leyte province. According to LMB and LFA, the church would not approve a church wedding if the couple had not gone through a civil wedding first. This was seconded by LFO. Unfortunately, civil wedding requires a birth certificate while a baptismal certificate was needed for a church wedding. While they can easily get a baptismal certificate, they still could not be married in church because they still need to be married civilly first, which brings them back to their inability to get a birth certificate.

In addition, they differentiated the purposes of a civil wedding against a church wedding. LFA said that a civil wedding was for the "hukuman ng mga mambabalaod" which literally means "court of the lawmakers" while a church wedding was for the "hukuman ng Diyos"

which literally means "court of God". In a sense then, the civil wedding was thought to be for the people and the church wedding is for God. While others do not believe that one has to go through a civil wedding first before a church wedding, all of them believed that through a church wedding, they would receive God's blessings.

Their desire to marry however is propelled by their desire for their children to carry the name of their father. In the Philippines, the New Family Code of 1987 stipulates that children born out of wedlock are to be registered under the name of the mother. Hence, if these cohabiting people can get away with it and will not be asked for their marriage contract, they simply declare they are married. Others give a "tip" so the birth attendant will register the child in the father's name. Still, others simply register their children under the father's name, knowing that they cannot claim the birth certificate until they can provide proof of marriage. Others delay registration of their children until they get married.

This desire to marry intensifies when the children are approaching school age and is best manifested in the case of this woman⁶:

A boy asks his mother why he does not have the same last name as his father. This happens when the mother was enrolling the child in school for the first time. The mother cries because she has difficulty explaining the reason to her son that he cannot have his father's name until they get married. Her "husband" is still married to another woman although they have been separated for a long time. However, circumstances changed when the "original wife" passed away a day later due to a lingering illness. Relatives and neighbors were quick to say "she is lucky for she can now marry (her live-in partner)".

For some others who are already married but have lived together before the wedding, they simply say that since they are going to be married anyway, living-together should not be an issue. Such is the case of LCP couple. They are now married but they have lived together first for less than a month prior to their wedding. Their parents have agreed to their engagement already and because LFB's place of work is nearer LMA's residence than her own, it just made sense for her to live with LMA then. The case of SFM is slightly different. SFM was already engaged to be married in the next few months and one day, her fiancée asked her to go with him to their residence. She went with him thinking that it would just be a visit but she eventually was not allowed to go home anymore and she did not object knowing they would be married soon anyway. This partly explains the shorter duration they spent living-together before marrying compared with those still cohabiting.

The general sentiment among young people in cohabiting union is to be able to marry someday once the obstacles are resolved. Nonetheless, they say they are quite satisfied with their life now, although they believe their union will be happier, more stable and their bond stronger when they do marry. Marriage remains ideal.

In the meantime, some say they have to sacrifice. In the case of LFM, her sacrifice is to bear the brunt of her children being called “bastardo” (illegitimate). Even if cohabitation is publicly known in the village and tolerated, they are subject to gossip and ridicule. LFM said she stopped socializing with her neighbors so she would not hear them say that her children are “bastardo”.

Attitude toward Marriage and Cohabitation

The situation of LFM reveals an example of societal norm at work. On a bigger scale, the Catholic-run Fourth World Meeting of Families held in Manila in 2003 exemplified the strong message of rejection of those who do not follow norms. They excluded single parents, unwed mothers, separated partners, homosexual couples, and those living together outside of marriage “because they did not fit its standards” (Rivera, 2003). This occurs despite the seeming growing acceptance of various non-traditional living arrangements among Filipinos.

Unfortunately, studies in the Philippines examining norms, values and attitudes regarding marriage and cohabitation are still lacking. The limited literature on the issue still points to very strong norms against it. These studies also suffer from lack of adequate empirical data. An exception is the recent study by Casuga (1996) that compares the Philippines with 21 other countries in terms of attitude toward marriage and cohabitation. She found that the Philippines is still conservative when it comes to cohabitation, with only 17% approving of cohabitation.

In order to remedy this deficiency, this section will focus on the attitude of the youth towards marriage and cohabitation. Understandably, this study will still not be able to make conclusions about societal norms but it can definitely give insights as to how the youth views marriage and cohabitation now. Moreover, studies have shown a strong relationship between attitude and behavior although debate about the casual direction is not firmly established. Some argue that it is attitude that shapes behavior while others believe that change in attitude occurs to make it compatible with behavior. With this caveat in mind, it is still instructive to explore the relationship between attitude and behavior of these young Filipinos in terms of marriage and cohabitation.

In the 2002 YAFS survey, the respondents were asked if they strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, or strongly disagree with the following statements:

1. It is alright for unmarried people to live together even if they have no plans to marry {LIVEIN}.
2. It is alright for a woman to get pregnant even if she is not married to the father of the child {UNWEDMOM}.
3. It is alright for a woman to get married/live together with someone before she finishes her studies {MARNOSCH}.

4. In general, married people are happier than unmarried ones {MARHAPUN}.
 5. In general, married couples are happier than living-in couples {MARHAPPY}.

Table 6 shows the distribution of respondent's attitude toward the above five statements. Overall, 64% of the youth aged 20-24 disagreed or strongly disagreed that it was alright for unmarried people to live together even if they had no plans to marry, one in five agreed or

TABLE 6. Percent distribution of youth ages 20-24 by attitude and union status: Philippines, 2002

Selected characteristics	Union status		
	Never been in union	Ever been in a union	All
1. It is alright for unmarried people to live together even if they have no plans to marry (LIVE-IN).			
Agree	21.7	18.2	20.5
Neutral	15.6	13.9	15.0
Disagree	62.7	67.9	64.4
N of cases	4,315	2,171	6,486
$x^2 = 17.525; df = 2; sig. = .000$			
2. It is alright for a woman to get pregnancy even if she is not married to the father of the child (UNWEDMOM).			
Agree	17.9	19.0	18.3
Neutral	15.5	14.5	15.2
Disagree	66.6	66.4	66.5
N of cases	4,308	2,160	6,468
$x^2 = 1.665; df = 2; sig. = .435$			
3. It is alright for a woman to get married/live together with someone before she finishes her studies (MARNOSCH).			
Agree	24.6	26.9	25.4
Neutral	18.9	19.5	19.1
Disagree	56.5	53.6	55.5
N of cases	4,415	2,248	6,663
$x^2 = 5.406; df = 2; sig. = .067$			
4. In general, married people are happier than unmarried ones (MARHAPUN).			
Agree	52.2	51.0	51.4
Neutral	24.9	24.7	24.8
Disagree	22.8	24.3	23.8
N of cases	4,414	2,247	6,661
$x^2 = 1.805; df = 2; sig. = .406$			
5. In general, married couples are happier than living-in couples (MARHAPPY).			
Agree	65.0	63.8	64.6
Neutral	21.0	20.0	20.6
Disagree	14.0	16.2	14.8
N of cases	4,307	2,168	6,475
$x^2 = 5.358; df = 2; sig. = .069$			

strongly agreed, while 15% presented a neutral attitude. Comparing single youth and those who had ever married, we find a significant difference in their attitude. The former were more likely than the latter to agree with LIVEIN (22% versus 18% respectively). Or stated conversely, those who had ever married were more likely to disagree with LIVEIN than those who were still single (68% versus 63%).

The general pattern for UNWEDMOM and MARNOSCH were similar—two-thirds disagreed with unmarried women getting pregnant and 55% did not agree that it was alright for women to be married or to live-in before finishing her studies. However, there were no significant differences in attitudes between the never married and the ever married.

Likewise, there was no difference in attitude toward MARHAPUN and MARHAPPY although 51% agreed that married people were happier than the unmarried and 65% agreed that married couples were happier than living-in couples.

Nonetheless, since the levels only ranged from 52 to 67%, these suggest that the conservative attitude toward marriage and cohabitation was not universal. Perhaps this has something to do with their current situation. Note that one-third of the youth had ever been in a union and 70% of them were cohabiting or had experienced cohabitation. As noted by Triandis (1971), attitudes function to protect self-esteem and that attitudes change to make them consistent with the implication of the event. If this was the case, we should expect those who had ever lived-in to hold more liberal attitude toward cohabitation. So far, the data suggest otherwise because the ever married, composed mostly of individuals who had experienced cohabitation were more likely to disapprove of living-in than the never married. An examination of their attitudes disaggregated by cohabitation status will shed light on this.

There was a significant difference in attitude toward cohabitation by the different union statuses. Those who were married with no cohabitation episode were the least likely to approve cohabitation (80%), followed by those who married but had a cohabitation episode (71%) and finally by those who were still living-in (54%). Thus those who experienced cohabitation were indeed more likely to approve of it. However, the large proportion of those who were living-in who said they neither agreed nor disagreed (17%) with cohabitation may suggest some sort of ambivalence in their attitude. Perhaps some tried to justify their situation by saying it was alright for couples to live-in while others were more frank to admit that they did not like their status and would rather be formally married. The strong desire to marry among the in-depth respondents presented earlier support this disjunction.

Moreover, while majority of those who had ever been in union agree that married couples were happier than living-in couples, a quarter of those currently living-in gave a neutral response to this statement and another 23% disagreed with it. Again, this seems to suggest that despite their desire to marry in the future, they were not necessarily unhappy with their current situation. This was also evident in the responses of the in-depth respondents. When asked if they were happy with their current situation (i.e. cohabiting), they said they are happy

with their life now but believed they would be happier when they did get married. Thus, LFM tried having her children carry the name of their father so that the neighbors would stop calling her children "bastardo".

In general, the same pattern exists for all five attitude statements, such that those who are currently cohabiting exhibit the most liberal attitude and those who married without a cohabitation episode are the most conservative. Those who lived-in before marrying are threading a thin line between being liberal and conservative. Perhaps they can sympathize with both the cohabitators and the married because they experienced both.

III. CONCLUSION

The character of union among youth in the Philippines is changing. They still form unions but they do not necessarily "marry". One-third of the youth aged 20 to 24 have already formed a union and 70% of them begun their first union with cohabitation. Some are still cohabiting while others have formally married already.

This paper found that those who have never been in a union are more likely to be males, have higher educational attainment, most likely to be doing something productive like being in school or working, attend religious services more than once a week, and were raised by both parents at least until they reached age 15. From a policy and societal standpoint, the characteristics found here to be related to being single can be taken as good indications that the youth are postponing unions perhaps until they finish school or have jobs. Or put differently, being in school or doing something productive deters early unions. Likewise, attendance at religious services and parental guidance also act as deterrents to early unions. And for those who have already formed unions, these same characteristics propel a marriage even if they cohabit first. In contrast, those who are still cohabiting have less education, not doing productive work, less religious, and were raised by only one parent with or with other people. This highlights the importance of other social institutions in the timing of union formation and the process towards marriage.

The survey data allude to the importance of finances in marriage formation. The in-depth data, however, show that such importance given to economic resources is mainly due to the need to spend for the wedding, particularly in holding the reception and the procurement of documents and licenses and not so much for the financial aspect of raising a family. The absence of money in this case leads to the decision to postpone marriage and opt for cohabitation in the meantime.

However, laws and cultural practices sustain cohabitation as well. Cohabitation period is prolonged because of the belief that a civil wedding is required before a church wedding (at least in some provinces of the country) and that these two are for different purposes. In addition, the requirements for these two types of weddings are believed to be different and

could not be easily acquired, again, partly due to finances.

While this study points to the importance of finances in union formation and the process towards marriage, it is also useful to examine attitude toward marriage and cohabitation. There is a large proportion of the youth who approve of cohabitation, but the level is far from universal. This might suggest a waning of the importance of a formal marriage but at the same time, this might also suggest some sort of rationalization on the part of those who do go through a cohabitation episode before a formal marriage. Nonetheless, marriage remains ideal.

NOTES

- 1 See Williams, Kabamalan and Ogena (2001) for a discussion of possible explanations for the differences in level of estimates.
- 2 For more details about the survey methodologies, see Xenos, Raymundo and Diaz (1999) for 1994, and Berja and Kabamalan (2004) for 2002.
- 3 Note that of those who have ever been in a union, 94% are in their first union while the rest have had more than one union or were separated or widowed.
- 4 According to the 2000 Census, 6% of the population ages 45-49 were still single.
- 5 These estimates were calculated from the 2000 Census reports.
- 6 This young woman is not part of the survey data and the in-depth interviews but this observation was made during the author's initial attempt to interview cohabiting individuals in the Eastern Visayas.

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