

## EDITOR'S NOTE

EVERYONE knows *something* comes between childhood and adulthood. The modern vision of this transition phase is adolescence – a term and concept first popularized by psychologist G. Stanley Hall in his two-volume *Adolescence* published in 1904. Many were quickly enamored by his idea. Indeed, the social historian Philippe Aries (1962) called the 20th century the Century of the Adolescent. In literature, music, and popular culture, the adolescent is our hero – from Huck Finn to Anne Frank to Holden Caulfield to Luke Skywalker. Age is devalued while youth is celebrated as a time of spontaneity, joy, ideals and energy.

Societal preoccupation (and consternation) with adolescents is perhaps intensified even more in this new millennium, if only because of their sheer number – a billion adolescents world-wide by the turn of the century, according to the US Population Reference Bureau (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1995). So even though adolescence is only one of three or four major turning points in the course of a human life, in our contemporary society, no life stage continues to attract as much attention, excites such feeling, and is so keenly the focus of adult hopes and disappointments. It should also not be surprising then that no other developmental epoch creates as much disagreement among scholars and receives as much scrutiny as adolescence. Since the Second World War, “the youth” has become a favorite topic both for developmental study and popular accounts.

Filipino psychologists, too, have always studied adolescents – in a sense. In fact, seven<sup>1</sup> of the 12 papers in the maiden issue of the *Philippine Journal of Psychology* thirty-five years ago, were devoted to empirical studies of high school and college students! However, beyond adolescent students' captivity and convenience as research subjects for various psychological topics, the choice of *adolescent experience* itself as a subject of serious scholarship is a distinctively fresh phenomenon (see Ventura, 1981). Such academic concern (as well as public curiosity) for the psychology of the adolescent has been marked in recent years by several high-profile youth surveys, and reached a high point in the Fifth National Social Science Congress (NSSC V), organized in 2003 by the Philippine Social Science Council (PSSC), with its theme of “What’s with the Filipino Youth? Perspectives from the Social Sciences.” According to the PSSC (2003), the

turn of the century is an “auspicious time for discussing the youth since the era has ushered in a social milieu greatly shaped by globalization and technological revolution...these twin phenomena...have wrought drastic changes in today’s young Filipinos...and it is imperative to take stock of these changes and influences...to help ensure their successful transition to...responsible adulthood.”

Yet up to this point in time, research on Filipino adolescents has remained “highly segmented and somewhat uncoordinated”, resulting in a “fragmented picture that may contribute to misconceptions about the youth, and engender inappropriate social policies and interventions” (PSSC, 2003). The congress was meant to address these gaps.

So does this special volume of the *PJP* on Adolescent Psychology – thematically inspired by the NSSC V – which consists of five papers that scrutinize both adolescents and those who study them. The anchor paper in this issue, originally presented by Alampay, de la Cruz, and Liwag at the aforementioned NSSC, is a comprehensive overview, from a methodological standpoint, of the past two decades of research on Filipino adolescents. After examining the study characteristics of more than 140 published and unpublished papers from 1983 to the present, the authors strongly argue for a stronger *developmental* perspective in future adolescent research, that is, a greater sensitivity to the unique and dynamic developmental issues, processes, and changes taking place in this life stage.

While the Alampay et al., review concentrated on the methodological features of the landscape of Filipino adolescent research, it did determine four broad content areas into which the youth studies of the last twenty years may be catalogued. These are studies on the *cognitive* and *socio-emotional* aspects of adolescent development; research on adolescent *lifestyle*; and research on *problem areas* of adolescent life. The rest of this special volume follows this “taxonomy”, and includes one paper on each area.

In the cognitive realm, Bernardo explores college students’ beliefs about the value of education and their links to academic goal orientations and learning strategies. Why is this an important developmental issue? A focus on the future, “futurity,” is said to be one of the intellectual hallmarks of the adolescent era. In this view, adolescence is the first time when young people become meaningfully aware of a future connected to the present, and can think realistically about it (Piaget, 1969). The nature of Filipino students’ formal cognitions about education – its abstract and pragmatic value – may be particularly relevant to their future strivings and life chances.

Turning to the socio-emotional sphere, Alampay's study portrays once more how issues of self come visibly to the fore in adolescence, especially as young people confront a developmental challenge unique to their age – the search for an “identity”. Her culturally-grounded inquiry into Filipino adolescents' self structures – in terms of their self-complexity and self-construals – remind us that the self is both a subjective experience and a social event that grows in the context of essential others (Cohler, 1991).

It is virtually impossible today to speak of adolescent lifestyles without mentioning technology in the same breath. Estuar's paper gives us a glimpse of how mobile phones and their accompanying texting technology have completely penetrated the Filipino urban youth culture and smashed temporal and spatial barriers in communication and relationships within adolescent peer networks.

This issue ends with a close-up view of problematic adolescent-parent relationships from a clinical psychologist's perspective. Garcia intensively studied nine teenage boys who had been referred for psychotherapy, and from his original case studies, weaves a narrative of these troubled boys' “meeting and knowing” their parents as they navigate their uneasy paths to being and becoming. True, Garcia's clinical account reveals some disturbing themes (that only half of these adolescent males seems to have an adequate attachment to their fathers is one), but it does underscore the comforting fact that the family remains a principal source of psychological sustenance and emotional stability in Filipino adolescent life.

Despite the current lively efforts to understand adolescence through scientific investigation – which the NSSC V documented and this special volume shares only a small part - much more needs to be done. Nevertheless, speaking as a developmental psychologist, I am confident that the five papers here raise meaningful questions and contribute vital, if necessarily tentative, answers, about this highly consequential period between childhood and adulthood that is now recognized conceptually and experientially as “adolescence”. I end with a special hope that this volume will also be of interest to young students of psychology and the other social sciences, for the most helpful critics of a work are those on whom the discussions center – in this case, adolescents.

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## NOTE

See Bulatao & Reyes-Juan, 1968; Carlota, 1968; de Jesus, 1968; Felipe, 1968; Gavino, 1968; Macaranas, 1968; and Tiglao-Torres, 1968.

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