

FAMILY PROCESSES AND SEXUAL RISK-TAKING BEHAVIOR AMONG MALE AND FEMALE ADOLESCENTS

MARIA PAZ N. MARQUEZ

ABSTRACT

The family, particularly its processes—family connectedness, parental permissiveness and parent-child communication—is well established as a significant influence of adolescents' sexual risk-taking behavior. This report offers a broadened understanding of the linkage by discussing evidence highlighting the processes' influence on an array of risky sexual activities of male and female adolescents. Data are based on the reports of 16,651 adolescents interviewed in the 2002 Young Adult Fertility and Sexuality Survey. Results reveal no substantial gender difference in regard to family connectedness, but in terms of parental permissiveness, male respondents posted substantially higher index scores relative to those obtained by female respondents, while female respondents had somewhat higher scores than males in so far as parent-child communication is concerned. Males consistently posted higher prevalence levels in each of the five risky sexual practices examined, with the greatest gender differential observed in sex with multiple partners. Results of the multivariate analyses have established the protective influence of both family connectedness and parent-child communication as well as the promotive effect of parental permissiveness on risky sexual behaviors.

KEYWORDS: *Filipino youth, family, sexual risk-taking behavior, sexual risk-taking*

INTRODUCTION

ALONG with the significant contributions of peers, mass media and the adult world, the family—specifically the processes occurring within it—is a significant factor to adolescents' predisposition to take risks in sexual terms. The internationally published research literature has strongly established the connection between family processes and the youth's sexual risk-taking behavior. For instance, family connectedness, which is also referred to in the literature as family cohesion, family cohesiveness or family attachment, has been found to be associated with adolescent sexual risk-taking behaviors (Markham *et al.*, 2003; Miller, Forehand & Kotchik, 1999; Rodgers, 1999; Whitaker *et al.*, 1999; O'Connor, 1998; Jaccard, Dittus & Gordon, 1996; Hovell *et al.*, 1994; Small & Luster 1994; Gillmore *et al.*, 1992). In particular, weak parental attachment tends to increase the probability of early sexual activity (O'Connor, 1998; Smith, 1997). Students in alternative schools who perceived high levels of family connectedness are found to be significantly less likely than their peers who perceived lower levels of family connectedness to have ever had sex, had sex without a condom in the past three months and to have ever been involved in a pregnancy (Markham *et al.*, 2003).

Parental permissiveness is another family process having a consistent association with young people's sexual risk-taking behavior. Adolescents who perceived their parents as accepting of premarital adolescent sexual activity are more likely to be sexually experienced (Jaccard, Dittus & Gordon, 1996; Small & Luster, 1994; Baker, Thalberg & Morrison, 1988). Permissive parental attitudes have also been related to earlier sexual debut among teens (Hovell *et al.*, 1994; Small & Luster, 1994; Thornton & Camburn, 1987). Among Filipino adolescents, those who perceived their parents to hold liberal attitudes exhibited an increased likelihood of engaging not only in premarital sex (Cruz, Laguna & Raymundo, 2001; and Raymundo & Lusterio, 1996) but also in commercial sex (Cruz, Laguna & Raymundo, 2001).

Along with family connectedness and parental permissiveness, parent-child communication—an aspect that has received a considerable amount of research attention—is another family process exhibiting a significant bearing on adolescent sexual risk-taking behavior (Blake *et al.*, 2001; Miller, Forehand & Kotchik, 1999; Rodgers, 1999; Whitaker *et al.*, 1999; Werner-

Wilson, 1998; Jaccard, Dittus & Gordon, 1996; Luster & Small, 1994). Miller, Forehand & Kotchik (1999) uncovered statistically significant associations between mother-adolescent general communication and mother-adolescent sexual communication with both the frequency of adolescent sexual intercourse and multiple sexual partnerships. Discussion of topics such as sexual behavior and AIDS has been reported to facilitate adolescents' knowledge about sex and their subsequent reduction in risk (Jaccard, Dittus & Gordon, 1996) as well as the adoption and internalization, at least on a short-term basis, of values, beliefs and behaviors that might prevent future high-risk sexual activity (Blake *et al.*, 2001).

This report seeks to contribute to a broadening of the scientific understanding of the linkage between the aforementioned family processes and the youth's sexual risk-taking behavior. This report's evidence differs from those offered by previous investigations in that the former is derived from an analysis of an array of risky sexual activities (rather than on premarital sex alone) that then serve as the basis for constructing a composite measure of overall sexual risk-taking, similar to the ones developed by Donenberg *et al.* (2002) and Rodgers (1999) (prior studies have examined the various risky sexual behaviors individually). Moreover, the present analysis compares adolescent men and women on account of the gender variations in adolescent sexual risk-taking and in the family processes (for instance, parents tend to be more permissive to their sons than to their daughters, and adolescent males are less likely to be attached or integrated with their family than their female counterparts).

METHODS

Data were taken from the Young Adult Fertility and Sexuality Survey (YAFS) conducted in 2002 and supported by the David and Lucile Packard Foundation. YAFS is the third in a series of nationally-representative surveys on Filipino adolescents jointly undertaken by the University of the Philippines Population Institute and the Demographic Research and Development Foundation. YAFS used structured interview schedules to elicit information on the knowledge, attitudes and behavior of Filipino youth in a wide range of sexual and non-sexual issues including those related to social institutions, including the family. The survey respondents consisted

of nearly 20,000 Filipino males and females of ages 15-27. This analysis was restricted to the sample of 16,651 adolescents (15-24 years old).

Family Processes Variables

The analysis centered on three family processes—family connectedness, parental permissiveness and parent-child communication. Indices were constructed to measure each of these variables. Family connectedness measures family closeness and the extent to which adolescents gets along with his parents. The first was determined using responses to six statements describing the youth's family life when he was about 12 to 18 years old. These statements include: 1) "Family members are supportive of each other during difficult times"; 2) "Family members know each other's close friends"; 3) "Discipline is fair in our family"; 4) "In our family, everyone shares responsibilities"; 5) "It is easier to discuss problems with people outside the family than with my family member"; and 6) "In our family, everyone goes his/her own way." Adolescents responded to each of these items using a five-point Likert scale ranging from one (Almost always) to five (Almost never). A score of one was given to responses of "Almost always" to the first four statements and to responses of "Almost never" to the last two statements. Respondents were also asked two questions regarding the extent to which adolescents get along with their parents: one concerns their relationship with their father and the other with their mother. A response of "we get along well all the time" to each of these questions was likewise given a score of one. All of the responses were added to form an index with a total score ranging from 0 to 8 with higher scores reflecting greater connectedness. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the index was 0.6814.

Parental permissiveness was determined from a seven-item scale that elicited the youth's perception of the attitudes of each of their parents (or the persons who raised them) towards certain social activities or situations (when respondents were still single, if they were already married at interview time). Specifically, respondents were asked whether or not they think their father or mother would usually approve of these activities: 1) Going to a party on short notice; 2) Going out on a date un-chaperoned; 3) Going to excursions or picnics with friends; 4) Joining clubs or organizations either in the school or in the community; 5) Living away from home; 6) Getting

married at an early age; and 7) Spending overnight at a friend's house. The questions were asked separately for each parent. Responses to the seven items were summed to produce an index of parental permissiveness with higher scores denoting greater level of permissiveness. The index ranges from 1 to 14 and has an alpha coefficient of 0.8158.

Parent-child communication was assessed using three questions: 1) "Who was the person or group of persons most helpful in what you know about puberty?"; 2) "If you wanted some instruction or information on sex, whom would you most likely to consult?"; and 3) "With whom do/did you discuss sex at home?" If respondents mentioned either their father or mother in each of these questions, a score of one was given; if they mentioned both parents, a score of two was given thereby creating an index that ranges from 0 (did not mention any of the parents at all) to 6 (mentioned both parents in all three questions). Higher scores in this index correspond to greater parent-child communication. The alpha coefficient for the index was 0.5656.

Risky Sexual Behavior Variables

Adolescents' risky sexual behavior, referred to as such because it carries the risk of contracting HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections, pertains to the following:

- 1) Commercial sex includes any sexual encounter that involves exchanges either for money or other favor. Specifically, the adolescents were asked whether they have paid or have been paid in cash or in kind in exchange for sexual intercourse;
- 2) Sex with the same gender was determined from responses to questions on whether or not any of the adolescents' sexual contacts are with someone of the same gender in situations such as premarital sex, having "gone all the way" during dates, commercial sex as a client and sexual intercourse in the last twelve months. Affirmative responses to any of these questions indicate sexual experience with the same gender;
- 3) Sex with multiple partners was derived from affirmative responses on whether or not the adolescents have engaged in premarital sex with someone other than their first partner and whether or not they have engaged in commercial sex with several partners. In addition,

married respondents were asked whether or not they have had sex with someone other than their spouse or live-in partner while they were married;

- 4) Sex with a casual partner involves premarital sexual encounter with a person other than his/her boyfriend/girlfriend or fiancé/fiancée, or with persons whom the adolescent has no serious commitment such as an acquaintance, friend, admirer, classmate, neighbor or a board mate; and
- 5) Unprotected sex refers to non-use of condom, regardless of whether or not they were used alone or in combination with another method, during any premarital, commercial or extramarital sexual encounters.

Each of these five items denoting specific types of risky sex was transformed into a dichotomous variable with a score of either 0 (never engaged in the behavior) or 1 (ever engaged in the behavior).

In addition, two measures of overall sexual risk-taking were created. The first is a dichotomous variable coded as either 0 (have never engaged in any of the risky sexual behaviors under study) and 1 (have engaged in any of the five types of risky sexual activities). An additional measure was constructed to measure the extent of multiple sexual risk-taking. This measure is a composite index based on the total number of risky sexual behaviors that the adolescent engaged in (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.7015$). This index ranges from 0 (no sexual risk-taking) to 5 (engaging in five different types of risky sexual behavior). Each of the five indicators measuring the specific risky sexual behaviors was analyzed individually along with the overall measure of sexual risk-taking.

Analysis

Binary logistic regression analysis was used to identify which family processes predicted sexual risk-taking. Logistic regression determines the likelihood of engaging in risky sexual behaviors when other factors are controlled. All in all, six separate logistic regression models were developed regressing the overall measure of sexual risk-taking as well as each of the five specific risky sexual behaviors.

To simplify the modeling process, only two covariates believed to be most influential on sexual risk-taking were included in the model. The age of the respondent was included as a predictor in the models since age has the potential of being associated with both risky sexual behaviors and family processes. Likewise, since gender differences may qualify the linkages between parenting behaviors and adolescent sexual risk-taking, gender was also included as a covariate. Furthermore, to incorporate the joint effect of gender with each of the family processes variables on sexual risk-taking, multiplicative product interaction terms were added to the model. In order to reduce multi-collinearity that might arise with the inclusion of cross-product interaction terms in the model, the main effects were centered prior to analysis. Centering the variables was done by subtracting the mean of the variable from the value of each case as outlined by Aiken & West (1991). The centered main effects were then multiplied and the resulting products used as additional predictors in the regression models.

RESULTS

Profile of Respondents

Females (52.5%) outnumber males (47.5%) in the sample of 16,651. Six of every 10 of them belong to the younger age group (15-19) while the rest are older (20-24). Given the young composition of the sample, it comes as no surprise that the adolescents are predominantly single. This is especially true among males of whom nine of ten have never been married. In contrast, nearly a quarter of the females are married confirming women's earlier entry into marital union compared to their male counterparts.

Eight of 10 adolescents were raised by both parents while 7% were brought up alone by a single parent. Three percent were raised by one parent along with another person. Nearly 6% of males and 7% of females were raised by people other than their fathers and mothers.

In terms of their current residential arrangement, majority of the youth reside with both parents. This is especially pronounced among males of whom 67% are co-residing with both mother and father while only 55% of females do so. Worth noting is the substantial proportion (31.2%) of females who are no longer residing with their parents, a figure that is nearly double

of that of males (16.4%). The higher level of females who are not living with their parents compared to males may also be attributed to the substantial proportion of married females (as noted earlier) who could have either established a separate household or resided with the family of their husbands. A clear gender differential with regards to sexual experience is evident from the data. Two of three adolescent males have reportedly never engaged in sexual intercourse while nearly three-quarters of female youth remained sexually inexperienced (Table 1).

TABLE 1. Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

Characteristics	Male (N = 7,903)	Female (N = 8,747)	Both sexes (N = 16,651)
Age			
15-19	62.3	58.8	60.4
20-24	37.7	41.2	39.6
Marital status			
Never married	92.0	76.7	84.0
Ever married	8.0	23.3	16.0
Person(s) who raised the youth			
Both parents	84.4	82.1	83.2
One parent alone	6.9	7.4	7.2
One parent with another	3.0	3.6	3.3
Other people	5.7	7.0	6.4
Residential arrangement			
Living with both parents	67.1	55.4	60.9
Living with one parent	6.4	5.0	5.7
Living with one parent (one parent is dead)	9.2	7.3	8.2
Not living with parents	16.4	31.2	24.1
Both parents are dead	0.8	1.0	1.0
Sexual experience			
Ever had sex	33.8	26.6	30.0
Never had sex	66.2	73.4	70.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Respondents' Family Processes Index Scores

The means and standard deviations of the family processes indices are provided in Table 2. No substantial gender difference was found with regard to family connectedness which is an indicator of the adolescent's closeness to his parents and other family members. Males registered an average score of 3.5 while females recorded a mean of 3.4 in the index.

TABLE 2. Respondents' family processes index scores

Family processes	Range	Male (N = 7,903)		Female (N = 8,747)		Both sexes (N = 16,651)	
		Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
Family connectedness	0-8	3.5	2.1	3.4	2.2	3.4	2.1
Parental permissiveness	0-14	8.2	3.4	6.4	3.2	7.2	3.4
Parent-child communication	0-6	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.0	1.2	1.1

In the parental permissiveness scale, males posted a substantially higher average relative to females. The males' mean score of 8.2 is nearly two points higher than the females' (6.4). These figures signify that relative to males, female youth regard their parents as less permissive. Female respondents enjoyed a slight advantage over males (1.3 vs. 1.1) in so far as parent-child communication is concerned. However, the average scores are relatively on the low side considering that six is the possible maximum score in the scale. The low averages imply that the youth commonly consult or discuss intimate topics such as sex and puberty with only one parent.

Respondents' Risky Sexual Behaviors

Table 3 displays the prevalence levels of both the overall and specific risky sexual behaviors disaggregated by gender. A little more than a quarter of young Filipinos has engaged in risky sex. Males, as expected, exhibit greater proclivity to these problem behaviors as three of every 10 of them reported having engaged in at least one risky sexual activity. In contrast, only 22% of their female counterparts admitted engaging in such behavior. Males consistently posted higher prevalence levels in each of the risky sexual

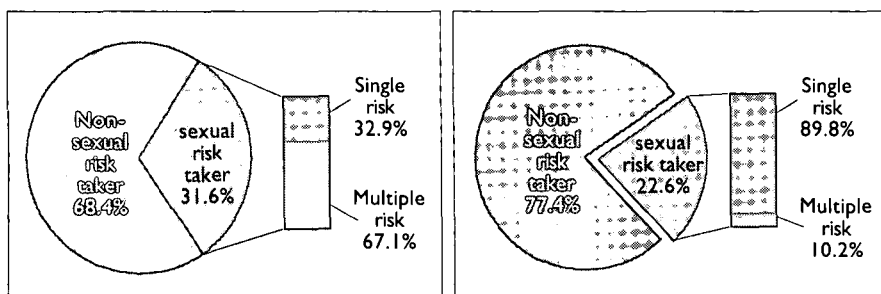
practices with the greatest gender differential observed in sex with multiple partners (16.5% for males vs. 1.7% for females). In all but one risky sexual behavior (unprotected sex), females recorded negligible proportions. Unprotected sex is the most common risky sexual activity while sex with multiple partners, casual sex, commercial sex and sex with the same gender appear to be less preponderant among young people, most especially among females.

TABLE 3. Percentage of respondents engaged in risky sexual behaviors

Risky sexual behavior	Male (N = 7,903)	Female (N = 8,747)	Both sexes (N = 16,651)
Commercial sex	8.9	0.1	4.3
Sex with same gender	5.5	1.0	3.2
Sex with multiple partners	16.5	1.7	8.8
Sex with a casual partner	13.1	0.7	6.6
Unprotected sex	27.0	21.9	24.3
Overall risky sex	31.6	22.6	26.9

Figure 1 depicts the extent of sexual risk-taking among the adolescents. Again, an obvious gender disparity is apparent. Multiple sexual risk-taking tends to be more the domain of males than of females. Among male sexual risk-takers, two-thirds have engaged in at least two risky sexual activities while only 1 of 10 of their female counterparts is a multiple risk-taker.

Figure 1
Percentage distribution of adolescents by sexual risk-taking behavior



Family Processes Factors Influencing Sexual Risk-Taking: Multivariate Analysis

The results of logistic regression analyses predicting overall and specific risky sexual activities are displayed in Table 4. Both gender and age exhibit significant associations with overall sexual risk-taking as well as with all types of risky sexual behaviors. Age demonstrates the expected positive association with sexual risk-taking while males exhibit greater propensity to engage in risky sexual activities relative to females.

With respect to overall risky sexual behavior, an increase in age raises the odds of engaging in overall risky sexual behavior by 1.5. Males are 1.8 times more likely to engage in sexual risk-taking than females. All of the main effects of the three family processes emerged as significant predictors of overall sexual risk-taking. For every one-point increase in the family connectedness score, the odds of engaging in risky sex decreases by 0.96. Similarly, an increase in parent-child communication is significantly associated with a 0.81% reduction in the likelihood of overall risky sex. However, higher levels of perceived parental permissiveness increase the odds by 1.02. Looking at the interaction terms, the effect of parent-child communication disappears signifying that the influence of parent-child communication does not depend on gender.

Table 4 also reveals that only the main effect of parent-child communication appears to exert a significant effect on commercial sex activities. A one-unit increase in parent-child communication decreases by half the odds of engaging in commercial sex among adolescents. In addition to age and sex, the main effects of all familial variables are significantly associated with engaging in sex with the same gender. Increases in family connectedness and parent-child communication scales reduce the odds of engaging in same-sex relations by 0.91 and 0.83, respectively. In contrast, an increase in parental permissiveness raises the odds by a factor of 1.07. Among the three interaction effects, only the interaction of parental permissiveness with gender is a statistically significant predictor of sex with the same gender.

Family connectedness is strongly associated with multiple sex. Both its main effect and interaction term with gender are statistically significant. The association of parental permissiveness is dependent on gender as its main effect was not found to be significant but the interaction term with

gender emerged as a significant predictor of sex with multiple partners. In contrast, the association of parental communication with multiple sex does not differ by gender but appears to affect multiple-partner sex independently.

The data in Table 4 also show that both the main and interaction effects of family connectedness are significant predictors of sex with a casual partner. However, for parent-child communication, only the main effect demonstrates significant association while for parental permissiveness, both the main effect and its interaction with gender are not statistically significant.

The association of the set of variables predicting unprotected sex mirrors those of overall risky sexual behavior and, in fact, the coefficients of family process variables reflect the same direction and nearly equal levels as those of overall risky sex. All of the familial factors are highly associated with the risk of engaging in unprotected sex with the exception of the interaction of parental communication with gender which did not emerge as statistically significant. Again, for each unit increase in both family connectedness and parent-child communication lowers the odds by 0.96 and 0.81, respectively. Adolescents with higher levels of perceived parental permissiveness are more likely than their peers to practice unprotected sex.

DISCUSSION

The findings discussed in this report extend current knowledge on the influence of the family on sexual risk-taking behaviors by examining the relationship between family connectedness, parental permissiveness and parent-child communication, on one hand and commercial sex, sex with the same gender, multiple sex, casual sex and unprotected sex along with an overall indicator of sexual risk-taking on the other. Results of the multivariate analyses have established the protective influence of both family connectedness and parent-child communication as well as the promotive effect of parental permissiveness on risky sexual behaviors.

While majority of the Filipino youth remain sexually inactive, the sheer size of the Filipino adolescent population which stands at 15.1 million as of the 2000 census (Ericta, 2003) underscores the importance of interventions geared towards the youth. The 26.9% of adolescents who have engaged in any of the risky sexual practices explored in the analysis may not be

TABLE 4. Summary statistics from logistic regression equations predicting the risk of respondents to engage in overall and specific risky sexual behaviors

Predictors	Overall risky sex		Commercial sex		Sex with same gender		Sex with multiple partners		Sex with a casual partner		Unprotected sex	
	Exp β	S.E.	Exp β	S.E.	Exp β	S.E.	Exp β	S.E.	Exp β	S.E.	Exp B	S.E.
Gender (Ref. = Female)	1.79***	0.04	98.89***	0.40	10.88***	0.10	12.90***	0.10	23.97***	0.15	1.38***	0.04
Age	1.49***	0.01	1.29***	0.02	1.17***	0.01	1.33***	0.01	1.25***	0.01	1.47***	0.01
Family connectedness	0.96***	0.01	0.89	0.08	0.91*	0.02	0.94**	0.02	0.92*	0.04	0.96***	0.01
Parental permissiveness	1.02***	0.01	1.07	0.04	1.07**	0.01	1.00	0.01	1.02	0.02	1.02**	0.01
Parent-child communication	0.81***	0.02	0.57**	0.21	0.83*	0.05	0.85**	0.05	0.82*	0.08	0.81***	0.02
Gender x Family connectedness	1.08***	0.02	1.23	0.15	1.07	0.04	1.12**	0.04	1.16*	0.07	1.08***	0.02
Gender x Parental permissiveness	1.09***	0.01	0.97	0.08	0.90*	0.03	1.12***	0.03	1.06	0.04	1.08***	0.01
Gender x Parent-child communication	1.05	0.04	2.20	0.41	0.96	0.10	1.06	0.10	1.14	0.15	1.04	0.04
R ²	0.2016		0.2326		0.1267		0.2195		0.2104		0.1861	

Notes: * p < 0.05 ** p < 0.01 *** p < 0.001

staggering. However, when this proportion is translated into an absolute number, it points to a sizeable four million young people who, on account of not exercising caution in their sexual activities, increase their risk of contracting STIs and HIV-AIDS, not to mention unwanted pregnancies.

Consistent with the findings of previous studies, sexual risk-taking increases with age. This holds true for each and every specific risky sex activity as well as for overall or composite sexual risk-taking behavior. The evidence in this report demonstrating that gender moderates the relationship between family process variables and sexual risk-taking lends support to the similar findings of prior investigations. Males overwhelmingly exhibited increased odds of engaging in risky sex while females recorded reduced likelihood, underscoring the importance of developing gender-specific intervention programs. On account of males' higher proclivity towards sexual risk-taking, greater efforts should be extended to male adolescents. However, females should not be altogether neglected since the burdens of the adverse consequences of risky sex are far greater on girls than on boys.

For both sexes, the study indicates that cultivating closer relationship between parents and children may be a deterrent to sexual risk-taking as adolescents who felt highly connected with their family are more likely to refrain from venturing into risky sexual activities. Youth who perceived their parents to be permissive are far more likely than their peers to engage in sexual risk-taking. As Rodgers (1999) explains, a solid parent-child bond can create an atmosphere in which parents' views of adolescent sexual behavior (expressed either directly or indirectly) may be internalized by the adolescent and may thus play a protective role by encouraging sexually active youth to minimize their sexual risk. In other words, a close parent-child relationship may foster willingness on the part of adolescents to consider parental wishes and concerns when they face varied options concerning sexual behavior.

More than family connectedness and parental permissiveness, it is parent-child communication which emerged as a consistent significant predictor of all types of risky sexual activities. Increased parental communication consistently predicted a decrease in the likelihood of the young to engage in sexual risk-taking activities although its association

with risky sex is not moderated by gender as all its interaction terms were not found to be statistically significant as shown in the logistic regression analyses. The exact mechanism by which communication influences adolescent behavior is beyond the scope of the analysis, but it is an important research agenda. Rodgers (1999) proffers, however, that positive communication may foster an individual to identify with parental values and knowledge of parental expectations regarding sexual responsibility as well as specific ways to minimize sexual risks.

Indeed, in the area of sexuality, parents are considered to be the ideal sources of information (Tan, Batangan & Espanola, 2001). At an age where increasing dependence on peers and easy access to all forms of mass media such as the Internet may provide the youth erroneous and biased information, the role of parents should gain more prominence. Parents with their richer and lengthier life experiences as well as the undeniably greater concern for their adolescent children are indeed the best option as far as being the providers of sexual information is concerned. However, it is a sad reality that while families are often cited as preferred sources of information on sex, discussions between Filipino parents and children often revolve around information on gender roles and prohibitions and warnings about sexual activity (Tan, Batangan & Espanola, 2001); deeper discussions of sexual issues are generally absent. Being an intimate, intensely private experience, sex as a topic for open discussions is made difficult by cultural taboos and by the "secrecy" surrounding it. As Ujano-Batangan (2003) had observed, "the most serious problem elicited in relation to sexual risks among young individuals is an imposed silence within families that prevents discussion of sexual issues." As a subject matter for discussion between parents and children, sex is often shrouded in secrecy and guilt and discomfort. Nowhere is this truer than in parental discussion about contraception to which many object on moral and religious grounds.

Towards this end, efforts should therefore be directed to helping parents become effective sex educators, so that they become skilled, comfortable and open in discussions about sexuality and risks related to sexual behavior. The parents themselves should therefore be equipped with adequate communication skills to better impart to the young accurate and value-

laden information as well as developmentally-appropriate messages.

The findings suggest that parents need to be key players in prevention efforts as they can serve as shields from situations where overwhelming peer pressure to engage in risky sex mounts among adolescents. The family, as the primary socializing agent, should shoulder the responsibility of ensuring proper values orientation of the young. As such, parental behavior and attitudes are considered critical in the sexual socialization of adolescents. The present evidence underscores the need for gender-sensitive activities that foster closer parent-child relationship and enhance parent-child communication to increase the effectiveness of intervention programs aimed at reducing sexual risk-taking among Filipino youth.

Several methodological limitations of the study should be noted. First, since the data were collected through self-report, the perceptions of the young respondents about their parents' behavior may not accurately characterize the actual level of parental behavior. Secondly, it should also be noted that the relatively low reliability levels of parent-child communication and parental connectedness indices do not negate the study's findings but call for a need to exercise caution in the generalization of findings and for the development of more refined measures of these constructs.

On account of data limitation, the present study did not go beyond other dimensions of parent-child communication. In order to gain a more thorough understanding of the precise mechanisms by which parental communication influences risk-taking activities among the young, dimensions of the parental communication process such as the content of information that is being communicated, the manner in which the information is being discussed and the frequency of communication could also be worth exploring. An additional avenue for future inquiry would be the examination of other indicators of adolescent sexual behavior such as age at first intercourse, number of sex partners and frequency of intercourse, to name a few, in order to arrive at a more complete picture of sexual risk-taking. Finally, the study looked at the combined influence of parents (e.g., in parent-child communication and parental permissiveness) on adolescent sexual behavior. It would also be worthwhile to segregate the effect of mothers and fathers and examine parenting behaviors separately.

REFERENCES

- Aiken, L. S. & West, S. G. (1991). *Multiple regression: Testing and interpreting interactions*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Baker, S. A., Thalberg, S. P. & Morrison D. M. (1988). Parents' behavioral norms as predictors of adolescent sexual activity and contraceptive use. *Adolescence*, 23 (90), 265-282.
- Blake, S. M., Simkin, L., Ledsy, R., Perkins C. & Calabrese, J. M. (2001). Effects of a parent-child communications intervention on young adolescents' risk for early onset of sexual intercourse. *Family Planning Perspectives*, 33(2), 52-61.
- Cruz, G. T., Laguna, E. P. & Raymundo, C. M. (2001). Family influences on the lifestyle of Filipino adolescents. *Philippine Population Review*, 1(1), 39-63.
- Donenberg, G. R., Wilson, H. W., Emerson E., & Bryant, F. B. (2002). Holding the line with a watchful eye: The impact of perceived parental permissiveness and parental monitoring on risky sexual behavior among adolescents in psychiatric care. *AIDS Education and Prevention*, 14(2), 138-157.
- Ericka, C. N. (2003, May 15-17). *The Filipino youth: A statistical profile*. Paper presented at the 5th National Social Science Congress. Philippine Social Science Council, Diliman, Quezon City.
- Gillmore, M. R., Butler, S. S., Lohr, M. J. & Gilchrist, L. (1992). Substance use and other factors associated with risky sexual behavior among pregnant adolescents. *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health*, 24(6), 255-262.
- Hovell, M., Sipan, C., Blumberg, E., Atkins, C., Hofstetter, C. R. & Kreitner, S. (1994). Family influences on Latino and Anglo adolescents' sexual behavior. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 56 (4), 973-986.
- Jaccard, J., Dittus, P. J. & Gordon, V. V. (1996). Maternal correlates of adolescent sexual and contraceptive behavior. *Family Planning Perspectives*, 28(4), 159-166.
- Markham, C. M., Tortolero, S. R., Escobar-Chaves S. L., Parcel G. S. *et al.* (2004). Family connectedness and sexual risk-taking among urban youth attending alternative high schools. *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health*, 35(4), 174-179.
- Miller, K. S., Forehand, R. & Kotchick, B. A. (1999). Adolescent sexual behavior in two ethnic minority samples: The role of family variables. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 61(1), 85-98.
- O'Connor, M. L. (2000). Social factors play major role in making young people sexual risk-takers. *Family Planning Perspectives* 32 (1), 50-51.
- Raymundo, C. M. & Lusterio, C. L. (1996, April 14-16). *Premarital sex among the Filipino youth*. Paper presented at the 5th International Philippine Studies Conference. University of Hawaii, Honolulu, Hawaii.

- Rodgers, K. B. (1999). Parenting processes related to sexual risk-taking behaviors of adolescent males and females. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 61(1), 99-109.
- Small, S. A. & Luster, T. (1994). Adolescent sexual activity: an ecological, risk factor approach. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 56 (1), 181-192.
- Smith, C. A. (1996). Factors associated with early sexual activity among urban adolescents. *Social Work*, 42 (4), 334-346.
- Tan, M. L., Batangan, M. T. U. & Espanola, H. (2001). *Love and desire: young filipinos and sexual risks*. Quezon City: University of the Philippines Center for Women's Studies and The Ford Foundation.
- Thornton, A. & Camburn, D. (1987). The influence of the family on premarital sexual attitudes and behavior. *Demography*, 24(3), 323-340.
- Ujano-Batangan, M. T. D. (2003). The context of sexual risks among Filipino adolescents: a review of literature. *Philippine Population Review*, 2 (1), 1-21.
- Werner-Wilson, R. J. (1998). Gender differences in adolescent sexual attitudes: the influence of individual and family factors. *Adolescence*, 33 (131), 519-531.
- Whitaker, D. J., Miller, K. S., May, D. S. & Levin, M. L. (1999). Teenage partners' communication about sexual risk and condom use: The importance of parent-teenager discussions. *Family Planning Perspectives*, 31 (3), 117-121.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

MARIA PAZ N. MARQUEZ is Assistant Professor and Academic Program Coordinator at the UP Population Institute. Email: babymarquez@gmail.com